



THE Newman

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Brian Hamill
Whatever happened to Purgatory?

Prof Thomas O'Loughlin
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Cover picture: *Multitudes in search of the Common Good*

Comment

This issue of *The Newman* has been produced in very strange circumstances. Since mid-March all the normal activities of the Association around the country have been suspended and key events including the AGM in June and the London Newman Lecture and the Manchester Newman Lecture, both scheduled for May, have had to be postponed until further notice. The Newman has been in lockdown, in a way which has been unprecedented in the whole of our history which stretches back nearly eighty years.

We are not these days accustomed to experiencing plagues although, as the Old Testament described in great detail in the Book of Exodus, God was prepared to threaten the Egyptians with them, including by turning the Nile red and poisonous and, on another occasion, causing serious outbreaks of skin boils. Much later, in the Middle Ages, there was the shocking disaster of the Black Death and more recently there have been numerous epidemics, in various parts of the world, of Yellow Fever, Cholera, HIV, Influenza, Ebola and now Covid-19.

The impact of epidemics in the modern world has been made worse by the huge increase in the volume of international travel. Local infections can be transported around the world within a day or two and diseases which were once confined to individual countries and regions can become global. We can be grateful that our ability to treat and cure these diseases has become considerably more powerful. But if a virus is as infectious as Covid-19 appears to be, the speed of the spread around the globe no longer allows enough time to develop vaccines before enormous damage is done. In his tenth and final plague, with the Pharaoh still being obstinate, and holding the Israelites in slavery, God struck horribly at midnight by killing the firstborn of Egyptian families. There were chilling echoes of this several millennia later in the disastrous Influenza epidemic of 1918 which caused millions of deaths amongst young people but left the old folk largely unscathed. But in 2020 it is very different: Newman members will be acutely aware that the current epidemic is especially dangerous for older people, whereas most young people can shake off its effects almost without noticing.

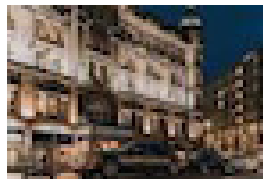
Facing the future

This places the Newman itself in danger. There is not just a threat from the coronavirus to the current programme of the Association but a more sinister risk that the already rapid decline in membership numbers will be accelerated further. Fortunately the Newman still has adequate financial resources; it is, however, seriously short of members, especially young and active ones, and the time may possibly be approaching when the Association's structure and objectives will require to be modified.

In the past the Christian religion has often benefited from the occurrence of plagues because the virtues of the Christian response – love your neighbour as yourself – have become evident. Early Christians would put themselves at risk by caring for everybody, even non-Christians. When an infectious epidemic rages is it a Christian's responsibility to decide that his life is less important than his neighbour's? Let us hope that not many of us will have to face up to such a challenge.

Barry Riley

Events that have been postponed during the lockdown



The **Association's Annual General Meeting** was scheduled for June 13th at the County Hotel, Newcastle. It is now intended to hold it on Saturday, January 16th, 2021 in the same location. Formal notice of this change is given in a leaflet included with this issue of *The Newman*.

Manchester Newman Lecture

Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald was to have delivered a talk on **The Situation of Christians In the Arab World** on May 19th.

It is hoped that the lecture can be delivered at some time later in the year.



London Newman Lecture

Austen Ivereigh was to have delivered a talk on **Freedom, Authority and the Challenge of the 'Isolated Conscience'** on May 28th.

It is hoped that the event will be rescheduled for later in the year.



The Newman Conference (with *Living Theology*) in York, scheduled for July 11th and 12th, on **The God Who Speaks**, has had to be postponed for a year.

Patricia Egerton writes: We recognise that this will be a great disappointment to everyone, as it is to the organising group. However, hoping that the future will be brighter we have asked the Bar Convent, York, to pencil in LTY 2021 for the weekend of 10th and 11th July 2021. If God wills it, we shall be able to run the weekend next year, with the same speakers. We do hope that the Newman Association will be able to promote that, and encourage a large attendance! Please put these dates in your diary!

Andante News:

Sophie Rudge writes: Sadly, the 2020 Study Days **A Vulnerable World Calls for Creative Women** due to have been held in Baden Baden, Germany, in May have been cancelled. But there are plans for study topics for the next three years. They are: 1. Sustainability, creation, environment; 2. Violence against women and children; 3. Empowerment of women in all life situations, sustainability of women's organisations.

Catholic Social Teaching

By Louise Harrison

Introduction

I'll begin with an extract from *The National Catholic Reporter*, the American Catholic newspaper: 'The Catholic church has a *very big secret*. It's so powerful, challenging and relevant that if every bishop, priest, deacon, religious and layperson was committed to communicating and implementing this secret, it would turn society *upside-down and literally transform* the world. However, revealing its contents and urging the application of its message would cause great controversy. The church would come under fierce attack from both conservatives and liberals for being naïve and acting outside acceptable ecclesial boundaries.

Therefore most Catholics, if they've even heard of it, have opted to tread lightly. From time to time, a passing reference is made to Catholic Social Teaching, CST, but these are token efforts, too *weak and infrequent* to make much difference for the poor and war-torn of our world. So, what *is it* about Catholic social teaching that is so threatening to the status quo? The short answer is that *its foundational tenets of justice and love demand that wealth and power are not selfishly hoarded by rich and powerful individuals, corporations and nations, but instead, be placed at the service of all people and all nations*. But because the rich and powerful want to hold on to power, these teachings are seen as threatening.

So – Our best-kept secret is that the Catholic Church is deeply blessed with more than 100 years' worth of *outstanding* social justice and peace documents authored by popes, Vatican II, world synods and national conferences of bishops. But, sadly, these documents attract more dust than readers. Out of these documents, the church has developed a set of principles designed to help guide us in applying the liberating message of the Gospel to the social, economic and political problems facing modern humanity.

Encyclicals

What is called *modern* CST spans almost 130 years of encyclicals, from Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 to the present. I'll now give you a short run-down on them. I'll make reference to them throughout.

It all began with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* in 1891

To commemorate *Rerum Novarum*, Pius XI wrote *Quadragesimo Anno* forty years later. Thirty years later, in 1961, John XXIII gave us *Mater et Magistra*

Two years later, in 1963, he wrote *Pacem et Terris*. In 1965, as part of Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* was written

Paul VI wrote the next two encyclicals, *Populorum Progressio* in 1967 and, in 1971, *Octogesima Adveniens*, which commemorated 80 years since *Rerum Novarum*



Pope Leo XIII

John Paul II was next, with *Laborem Exercens* 1981, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 1987, *Centesimus Annus* 1991 (commemorating 100 years since *Rerum Novarum*) and then *Evangelium Vitae* in 1995

Benedict XVI, with *Caritas in Veritate* 2009 and then *Evangelii Gaudium* in 2013
Finally, *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis in 2015.

Also, a very handy summary of the encyclicals, the *Compendium of Social Justice*, was issued by the Vatican in 2004. An updated edition, though, is greatly needed. *These encyclicals all expound on certain principles that the Church finds to be a necessary foundation in forming a socially just world.* Each pope addressed the most prevalent social dilemmas at the time of their pontificate. The product of much prayer, consultation and reflection, each would take a few years in the making. The pope would state clearly where the Church stood in relation to social issues. Sometimes more or less prominence was given to one or another of the principles, depending both on the issue at hand and on a developing understanding of that pope of what he felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to place emphasis on.

This set of principles serves as a benchmark to test whether we are living well together. In another way, they serve as goals which *guide* us. The Church believes they are the expression of *the whole truth* about the human person known by reason and faith.

The main CST principles are:

Dignity of the human person

The **common good**

The priority of **labour over capital**

The preferential **option for the poor**

The **universal destination** of goods

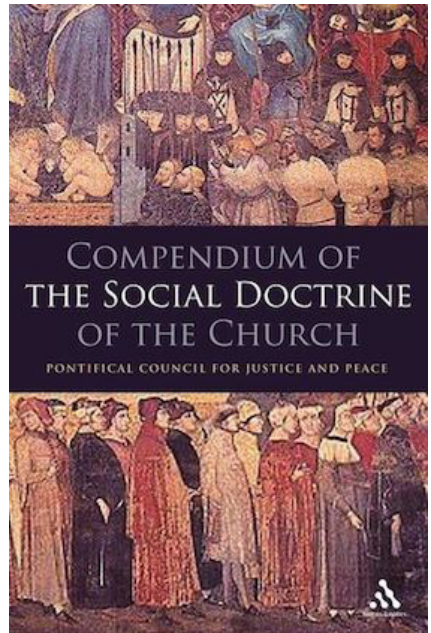
Subsidiarity

Solidarity

Peace and the **care of creation**

The Church's social teaching, as you might expect, confirms the truth of the Gospel, when it focuses on each of us loving God and loving our neighbour. Going about our business in our daily lives, within our own private spheres of existence, we're urged to move out of ourselves and serve others. Over and above this, though, CST is quite extraordinary in its in-depth analysis of the very fundamentals that society runs on—it moves into the socio-political realm when it provides a set of principles which, if applied in world economics, would transform the world we live in.

It's therefore helpful to look at the political and social context out of which the encyclicals were written.



A summary of CST published by the Vatican in 2004

The Socio-political context

Capitalism and socialism have *dominated* political socio-economic thought in the West for the last 200 years. Capitalists believe in the free market while socialists want a new social order based on nationalisation. Neo-liberalism, the *present* form of free market capitalism, dominates global economics today. It is characterised by free market trade, privatisation, individualism, and the shift away from state welfare provision.

The Church *rejected* Communism outright. Its alliance with *conservative* social forces, and hence *capitalism*, was present during Leo XIII's pontificate at the end of the 19th century and continued until the 1960s, when Vatican II documents called for far-reaching political and human rights reform. Yet even in the 1960s, and still today, the Church doesn't *dismiss* the free market totally as this is linked to its view that all workers should have the right to acquire private property, something *Rerum Novarum* had argued for. What it does reject is *the baggage, the excesses* of capitalism — the focus on materialism, a consumerist culture, greed and power. Certainly, though, there was a shift in emphasis from private property in John XXIII's 1961 *Mater et Magistra*, towards a welfare state society, although he does warn of excessive intervention by the state.

Much earlier than this, in the 1930s, a pretty amazing fact is that Pius XI *challenged* the capitalist model and would later go so far as to argue that, in extreme situations involving unjust working conditions, resistance and rebellion could be justified. He spoke of 'the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered propertyless'. The Church is beginning to be seen, in the 30s, as having a '*prophetic*' or challenging role in socio-political and economic affairs.

As part of Vatican II in the 1960s, *Gaudium et Spes* was written. This was a crucial document as it stressed the need for the Church to be completely *immersed* in human affairs as spirituality wasn't something set aside from the rest of life but which saturated all of it. The notions of justice, human dignity and the common good were developed. A clear development of thought can be traced through the 1960s when Paul VI, with *Populorum Progressio*, discussed the international economic system and called for focus to be put on the profit *motive*. His 1971 *Octogesima Adveniens*, influenced *by*, and written just a few years *after*, the Medellin Conference of liberation theologians in South America, refers to an option for the poor, although this principle wouldn't become *explicit* until the 1980s.

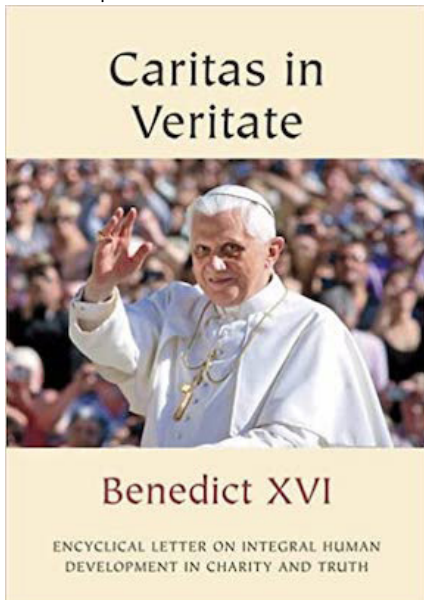
The preferential option for the poor is more simply stated as *opting for the poor first* in decision-making involving society and its institutions, *preferring to opt* for those who exist on the *edges* and who cannot therefore fully participate in bringing about the common good. Government is urged to prioritise a '*bias towards the poor*' being woven into how institutions which perpetuate poverty in society work.

You can see that a lot was changing through these decades. Father Donal Dorr, a CST scholar, sums up how Catholics reacted to these changes from 1961 onwards. Accustomed to a more conservative version, they 'found it hard to believe that major Church leaders were calling for an option for the poor'. Their reaction, continues Dorr, wasn't even one of formal opposition but of *real incomprehension*; and a feeling that there must be a mistake somewhere'. There is even a suspicion that left-wing theorists have managed to delude the bishops or even the pope! Many would say

that this is still the case today, where Catholics mistakenly view the ‘social teaching’ of the Church as a left-wing initiative, with no backing from the Vatican. But, in fact, the teaching could be seen as either upholding a form of socialism, or a form of free market economics, so long as the CST principles are the basis of their vision. Benedict, speaking of post-war *democratic* socialism, an early form of capitalism, declared it close to Catholic social doctrine, contributing to the formation of a social consciousness.

Searching for a model which fits the principles appears to be what Francis has in mind in summoning young economists, change-makers and entrepreneurs from around the globe to a conference in November 2020, at Assisi, to *rethink* the economic paradigms of our time, to come up with a new one that is inclusive and sustainable. *This marks a historic step forward.*

Into the *post-60s* milieu came John Paul II. Driven to restore authority to the Church in the face of communism, capitalism and atheism, he was known as ultra-conservative. Having lived through a communist regime in Poland, he saw it as destroying *human freedom*. Perhaps this explains why he was more ambivalent in condemning capitalism. He saw socialism serving collectivism, where the dignity of the human person disappears as he or she becomes a *part* subsumed into *the whole* i.e. society. He certainly *preferred* the terms ‘business economy’, ‘market economy’ or simply ‘free economy’ to that of *capitalism*, as these weren’t defined by serving capital as the overriding goal. The terms ‘structures of sin’ and ‘option for the poor’ are used. He laments the lack of a justly-ordered international trading system. The increase in refugees was a major concern at this time too, during the severe recession of the mid 80s when gaps between the rich and poor were widening into what has been called ‘turbo-capitalism’.



With *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009, and *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, Benedict addresses global poverty, injustice and the arms race. John XXIII had explored *peace* in the face of nuclear war and weapons of mass destruction in *Mater et Magistra*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Pacem et Terris*. John Paul's *Centesimus Annus* 1991 addresses ‘the insanity of the arms race’. Just a few days ago, in Nagasaki, Pope Francis urged world leaders to scrap nuclear weapons. In fact, the Church had been moving away from its previously-held Just War theory, seeing its focus as on war rather than peace; it argues that key criteria, like proportional use of violence, are never met in modern wars.

Benedict spoke during the fallout from the 2008 global banking crisis, which had a disproportionate effect on the poor of the world. He linked new market-focused

Pope Benedict's encyclical in 2009

policies to the economy of *exclusion*, the downsizing of social security systems and consumerism. This is also where we see the issue of the environment move up the agenda.

Benedict began what Francis would later develop into the groundbreaking *Laudato Si*, 2015. Hugely important, *Laudato Si* acknowledges man's incredible progress in science, business and technology but offsets it against how each has contributed to the *destruction* of the planet. The whole thrust of *Laudato Si* is about leaving a world fit for purpose i.e. human life for future generations. Man's power over nature's resources has not been accompanied by a 21st Century ethic fit for purpose. The *present* economic system, focused on maximising profit, to the point where even water is privatised in some places, plunders the earth's resources, pollutes its oceans, and makes species extinct. Francis calls for a newly-ordered system that 'imitates the systems of *nature*, preserving and *limiting* non-renewable resources use, and urging moderate consumption and the maximisation of recycling by all of us.

Neither socialism nor capitalism

So where exactly can the Church's position on society be placed *politically and economically*? John Paul pointed out that what CST offers isn't a political third way between conservatism and liberalism. While it is a critique of western culture, one reaching into the global world, it doesn't endorse a particular economic or governmental structure. It seems the Church cannot fully endorse any *known* type of politico-economical system. It has always inhabited what's been called a *liminal space* between socialism and capitalism. It doesn't *attach* itself to a particular economic *model*, either free market capitalism or socialism. Yet it doesn't rule out a *free market* economy that can leave the baggage of capitalistic materialism behind. Alongside this, it favours a type of corporatism and this is where the principle of subsidiarity comes in. The Church argues for the development of a variety of civic and vocational institutions embedded within the economy that govern the scope and limits of what government does. Government is in ways *accountable* to these institutions and should perform only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level, such as running the criminal justice system. The role of the State is not to control or regulate everything, but one which *supports* initiatives arising from the different bodies. Communities who *know* what's best for them can *decide* what's best for them without undue interference. Universities, vocational colleges, regional banks, schools and unions are examples of these; others could be formed on the common interests of agricultural, labour, military, scientific, or guild associations.

Relevant to this is Paul VI's call for Catholic lay communities to political action, advising that building a just world could be done by people analysing their own realities and coming up with solutions based on the Gospel. Subsidiarity is present here, as it was way back in 1891 when Leo called for something to replace the tradesmen's guilds which had gone out of existence.

A fundamental principle in relation to economics is the universal destination of goods, formulated for the first time in 1991 in John Paul's *Centesimus Annus*, when, without condemning the free market *outright*, he condemns its *excesses*. For the *first time* the world's goods (including *intellectual* property) are declared as having a '*universal destination*'. God destined the earth for *all* of us so that all things are shared fairly by

all mankind. John Paul still endorses the free economy but only within a tight juridical framework. His yes/no attitude to free market capitalism was based on his seeing the alternative (socialism) as much worse. Yet the Church remained clear in its view that the way the economic system pulls all resources into the ownership of a few staggeringly rich people is ethically *wrong*.

Today in 2020, that the richest 1% in the world own 45% of the world's wealth is a barely *comprehensible* fact. And that divide between global billionaires and the bottom half of humanity is steadily growing. An added concern is that in business it becomes hard to determine who controls what, as there are complex ownership structures operating in a global setting. We *know* that power, politics and money are inextricably linked. Those with great wealth often gather their fortunes on the backs of those around the world working for very low wages *and* in appalling conditions. The Church repeats *over and over* that "the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others'.

The message is unequivocal.

What all popes since Leo XIII have done is to highlight the great disparity between rich and poor, staggering wealth at one end, abject poverty at the other. They urge higher taxes on the rich; they call for regulation of the marketplace but without going into the specifics of how this could be done. Their concern is to place the principles at our feet, in order that society utilises them.

Francis makes the Church's position clear: 'Once greed for money presides over the entire socioeconomic system, it ruins society, enslaves men and women, destroys human fraternity, sets people against one another and even puts at risk our common home'. The present market economy is a system that generates exclusion, poverty, and misery. And, he goes on, the view that economic benefits will 'trickle down' the economic ladder to *the poor and middle classes* is expressing 'a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power.'

More on the principles

CST arises from both the Old and New Testaments. Deuteronomy and Leviticus have liberation themes running through them. God's command is clear: look after the poor, don't steal or take bribes, or oppress aliens; don't take interest on loans. The three main prophets charged with conveying what God wants are Samuel, Nathan and Amos; Amos is most closely associated with CST today. In the New Testament, the message of Jesus is clearly laid out in Matthew 25, where we're charged to look after the sick, hungry, thirsty, the stranger (refugee), naked and imprisoned for whatever we do to them *we do to Christ himself*.

Much of John Paul II's 1981 *Laborem Exercens* would develop the concepts of work and labour. Upholding Leo XIII's 1891 defence of the priority of labour over capital, John Paul claimed that capital cannot be severed from its origin in *labour*—it is 'the result of work and bears the signs of human labour', and from previous generations. This was in contrast to seeing labour merely as a *factor* in production. John Paul framed it all within a *spirituality* of work where 'work' is redefined and broadened to see the worker as a '*maker*', in the image of his Creator. Work no longer solely means *paid* labour --the meaning expands to encompass any meaningful activity which aids the common good. We each participate in the common good in multiple ways – in work,

our local community, the arts, family life, and so on.

New concepts of solidarity and 'indirect employer' emerge strongly with John Paul. Solidarity, he said, isn't a feeling of 'vague compassion' for others but a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good'. Solidarity emerges more as an actual virtue, the quality of a person's character, whereby they have an enduring commitment to seek the common good, and to act in line with the preferential option for the poor. It exists not only between individuals but also *within and between* social institutions, nations, towns, parishes, as a universal bond. Highly aware that the exploitation of workers continued, John Paul also formed the concept of the 'indirect employer'.

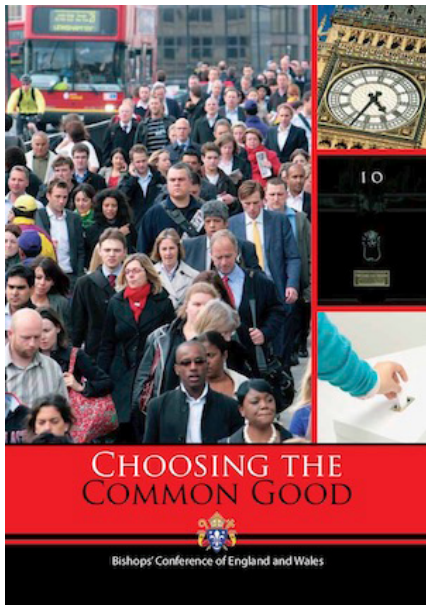
A direct employer is an employer in the usual sense. An indirect employer includes persons and institutions of various types which determine the whole socioeconomic system. This economic factor is what John Paul would pick up and call the indirect employment. Because of their influence on wages and working conditions, *indirect* employers have to be held responsible for the lack of workers' welfare. This also includes the influence which the policies of rich countries can have on the economies of poorer trading partners and debtor countries. What follows is a contemporary example of an indirect employer in operation:

Following the Guardian's exposure of the role of child labour in the tobacco fields of Malawi, in 2018, early in 2020, in a landmark case against British American Tobacco, lawyers will seek compensation for over 350 Malawi child labourers and their families in the High Court in London. Forced to work in shocking conditions, the lump sum paid is no more than £100-£200 for 10 months' work for a family of five. One of the biggest human rights cases lawyers have ever brought, this could transform the lives of children as young as three.

BAT made profits of £9.3bn in 2018, on sales of £24.5bn. Like other big tobacco companies, it distances itself from the farmers by commissioning a separate company to buy a stipulated amount of tobacco leaf each year. *This* company then signs contracts with Malawi landowners, who in turn recruit tenant farmer families to work the fields. Lawyers will argue that responsibility for the tenant families rests ultimately with BAT, as the indirect employer who decides the price that it will pay for tobacco leaf. A report in 2011 estimated 1.3 million children under the age of 14 were working in tobacco around the world. In 2017 the International Labour Organisation reported that this number was on the increase. In April 2019, the same group of lawyers – Leigh Day – won a watershed case against a British mining company, which the high court held responsible for the actions of its subsidiary in polluting farmland in Zambia. That case opened the way to hold other companies responsible for harm caused by those who work for them overseas.

Human Dignity

The principle of human dignity runs through *all* CST principles. Genesis 1 tells us each of us is created in the image and likeness of our Creator. Hence, we're called to treat others with a dignity accorded only to that which has something 'God-imprinted' about it – the human person. The human *person* is the lynchpin of CST. Each encyclical emphasises the centrality of the person and her/his full integral development. Society falls short of the Catholic vision of what it *should* be unless



A short document produced by the English bishops before the 2010 General Election

in participation in society. As we participate in the common good, we generate it too. And it is something which increases rather than diminishes when shared. There is also a sense in which the common good is constantly unfolding as each of us contributes.

The human person is a social being, made for community. How we organise our society, through economics and politics, directly affects human dignity. It is often assumed that economic flourishing within a society is a sign that all is well, that 'the common good' is operative. But this reduces what CST has to say on the common good to the claim that economic growth is a sufficient measure of social wellbeing when, in fact, by itself it is not. What CST sees as both necessary and sufficient is that the conditions of social life, that is, peace, organization of state powers and the provision of essential services allow social groups, and their members, ready access to their own fulfilment. Faith in a Creator, whose plan for creation is to further His Kingdom on earth, wherein each of us has a unique purpose, is the basis for the common good.

We can't achieve our full development by ourselves. We need political institutions, which can make available the necessary material, cultural, moral and spiritual goods. The common good is the very basis of political action. When used in the political arena, more often than not it is merely a description of the general direction of policies, rather than a criterion through which policies are discovered. A political use of the phrase which leaves out dignity for all doesn't meet the CST criterion. If taken seriously, CST and common good thinking can be taken up as a robust form of political reasoning and can influence what economic structures we have in our societies. It can inform policy-making without the Church directly entering the political/socio-economic realm, as is Pope Francis' aim in convening the 2020 conference.

the dignity of all its citizens is upheld. Dignity is also the basis in western society for having human rights. It's *why* we have rights. Recognising these rights as inviolable, we encode many of them into our legal framework. While the CST notion of dignity upholds rights and responsibilities – of course it does – it goes beyond them when it places the rootedness of that dignity in our Creator. Rights and responsibilities are a necessary but not sufficient condition for the CST notion of a good common to all.

There is one principle which is the ground of all the others—the common good. Does society exist for each one of us, or does each one of us exist for society? Jacques Maritain, the great Thomist philosopher, stated that there is nothing more illusory than to pose the problem of the person and the common good in terms of opposition. In reality, they mutually implicate one another. The *human* good is irreducibly common as it is found

Conclusion

Paul VI listed sins against dignity as *subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; shocking working conditions*. This was written in 1965 so we can add to that not only the huge global refugee and environmental crises, but the shocking *increase* in human trafficking and modern slavery.

We've had the recent sickening tragedy of 39 young Vietnamese people attempting to enter the UK and meeting their demise in a horrific way. Their local priest tells us that they were escaping from the economic situation, environmental issues, poor social security, education, human rights abuses. They know it's dangerous to flee but feel they have to take a gamble for a better life.' Families depend on them to find their way into advanced capitalist countries in the west, to work and be breadwinners. The irony is that the very capitalist systems they flee to are those which create the problem in their own countries. The economic growth in Vietnam over recent years is built on the low-cost labour of millions toiling for overseas companies. China alone brings in \$222m in direct investment. And it's the low labour cost that attracts it and other foreign investors.

Closer to home, in the UK we have mental health issues, especially among the young, with resources stretched to the limit. There are huge drug problems, with related knife crime and children involved as county line drug carriers. We have foodbanks, children in care, and many people in deep debt – including students who, at 21, leave university saddled with a minimum £30,000 debt. CST calls us to organise ourselves to protest in whatever ways we can against the way countries and their borders operate, against war, against basic injustices, on both the local and global scene; to get together in our communities, church or local, or do what we can on an individual level with what is close to our hearts.

A recent gathering at a Catholic university of lay leaders from institutions across the US explored how the principles of CST can help advance protection and accountability within a wounded Church, and contribute to the common good. Catholic ministries and institutions can help heal divisions by focusing on the Gospel message to serve the poor and marginalised. They can be the face and voice of the Church.

The Bishops' document

In 1996 the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales issued *The Common Good*. Their aim: to urge educators to communicate CST more fully to *all* Catholics. Just as St John Henry Newman's rationale for his mission was that he wanted Catholics '*who know their religion, what they hold and what they do not*', the bishops believed that lack of familiarity with CST weakens our capacity to be a Church true to the demands of the Gospel. How far this educating process has actually happened is another matter. Why don't we know about this? Why haven't the bishops updated their 1996 publication? Most priests do not receive CST instruction during their theological training. Many Catholics are eager to learn more about their faith, but not all parishes feel equipped to do so. We know what the Church teaches on the Sacraments but what does it teach about social affairs? Religion impacts every aspect of our lives – social issues cannot be boxed off from the rest of life. CST cannot be reduced to an archaic box of dusty papal documents, to be brought out from time to time and reflected on. It is, rather, a movement, stirring new life within the 21st century Church.

Synodality is a recently developing tool of Church reform. It is a concept related to

subsidiarity, for example, the aim of vesting local churches with more decision-making power. Francis wants to promote a synodal, missionary church which has decentralisation at its core.

A final note: what this talk has *not* been about is to lament a lack of social justice projects here in the Northeast. It just takes a glance at the *Northern Cross* each month to see how much is going on in parishes and partnerships. What it HAS been about is to offer an outline of the encyclicals and the developing social context, to open out the ideas and concepts behind CST, and then to briefly examine how those principles relate to the workings of society and government today. Inasmuch, it has hopefully been an awareness-raising exercise about the importance of CST, especially to the lay apostolate. It would seem that lay Catholics need to evangelize their parishes – and their priests – in social justice terms. This is a central part of what I and the rest of the team here are about: we very much hope that people like you will find ways to disseminate among your fellow parishioners the facts about the Church's social teaching. You might consider starting up a parish group, even join us in our CST meetings which usually take place in St Hilda's Diocesan Centre in Newcastle on a bi-monthly basis. Working together as communities, each doing our bit to add to the common good, is how change is brought about.



St Hilda's Centre, Newcastle

Louise Harrison is a member of the CST (Catholic Social Teaching) team in Hexham and Newcastle Diocese; she is the CST representative on Hexham and Newcastle Diocesan Adult Formation team. This article is based on a talk she gave to the Newman's Tyneside Circle in November 2019.

Time for the Rosary

At this time of trial and difficulty many of us are drawn to saying the Rosary. Some may find it helpful to ponder on what St. John Paul has to say:

I look to all of you,
brothers and sisters,
of every state of life,
to you Christian families,
to you, the sick and elderly,
and to you, young people,
confidently take up the Rosary once again.
Rediscover the Rosary
In the light of Scripture,
in harmony with the liturgy,
and in the context of your daily lives.

Anne and John Duddington

Purificandum est Purgatorium:

Flames, pains and indulgences or a most beautiful doctrine?

By Brian Hamill

The doctrine of Purgatory, well-attested in basic form from biblical times, through development in the Patristic era and formally declared at the Councils of Lyons, Florence, Trent and Vatican II, as well as in the Catechisms from Trent to St John Paul II, seems now to have been quietly forgotten. Why?

I suggest the doctrine, as it has been popularly portrayed, has an image problem, to the extent that RCIA programmes seem to ignore it, as do Catholic RE syllabuses. Flames, Pains and Indulgences sums up that image. This is a great misfortune for the Church; when one digs beneath those negative images to the basic concept of the doctrine of Purgatory, we encounter perhaps the most beautiful and consoling doctrine in the Church, the Communion of Saints. I will seek to show how this mining process needs to be done and what solid gold is found in the depths of a much-disgraced and apparently dark doctrine which, when brought to light, shines with a great power to bring Good News to all peoples.

Purgatory is a neglected issue. To illustrate this, I will tell of an incident which happened recently. I was visiting London with my wife Cindy and by chance we were in the Victoria area of the city with a little time in our hands, so we went along to Westminster Cathedral, more as tourists than as pilgrims. Opposite the Cathedral is the Catholic Truth Society bookshop, a place well-known to all Catholic theologians in London. I wanted to buy a book on a specific topic which I knew CTS would have something on, if my youthful memories of the 1950s are anything to go by.

Books on Purgatory

I told Cindy beforehand that, when I asked for this topic, everyone in the shop would turn and look at me. I declined to tell her the topic and went in and asked the elderly shop assistant if they had any books on Purgatory. Sure enough, the four or five people in the shop turned towards me – and the assistant looked a bit startled. I seemed to have named one of the herd of elephants quietly grazing in the contemporary Catholic living-room. I actually had a discussion in the shop with a Heythrop veteran who recommended a 1977 book by the then Fr Ratzinger which he said was recognized as one of the best pieces of work the later Pope Benedict ever produced. I also purchased a book which the staff of the shop brought out, this one by John Salza, which tells me everything you ever wanted to know about Purgatory as it was taught to me in the middle of the last century.

It is a fascinating and informative read but it demonstrates quite clearly why Purgatory is an elephant very rarely, if ever, mentioned in polite theological circles – and anywhere else, for that matter, in its theological sense. Limbo is in the same category, but at least that was given a decent burial a few years ago by the International Theological Commission's report, endorsed by Pope Benedict. Limbo, indeed, was not mentioned in the 1983 edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

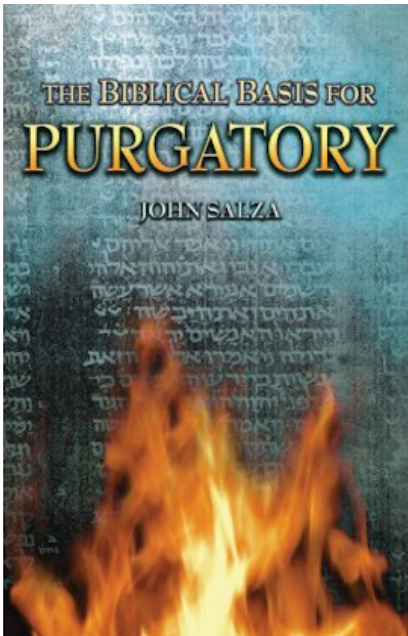
But Purgatory certainly was mentioned, and the relevant paragraphs 1030-1032 of the Catechism are given under the general title *The Final Purification, or Purgatory*. The paragraphs are short and bear reading here.

1030 *All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.*

1031 *The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire.*

1032 *This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: "Therefore [Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin". From the beginning the Church has honoured the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God.*

Some extra points can be taken from the Decree of the Council of Trent *De Purgatorio*: *But let the more difficult and subtle questions which do not make for edification and, for the most part, are not conducive to an increase of piety (cf. Tim. 1-4) be excluded from the popular sermons to uneducated people. Likewise they should not permit opinions that are doubtful and tainted with error to be spread and exposed. As for those things that belong to the realm of curiosity or superstition, or smack of dishonourable gain, they should forbid them as scandalous and injurious to the faithful.*



These final remarks, of course, manifest the reason why Purgatory is a tainted doctrine. In police terms, it has *form*. The doctrine of Purgatory, via an equally valid doctrine on indulgences, led in our fallen world, alas, to the abuses which detonated the Reformation when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses against indulgences to the door of the Church of Wittenburg in 1517. That act, and the underlying reasons for it in widespread sale of indulgences, especially by the Dominican Johann Tetzel, still resonate today. I recently asked a young Evangelical Minister friend what Purgatory meant to him; he immediately mentioned indulgences, and the sale thereof. That episode was also the reason for the calming statement in the Tridentine document. But today, as far as contemporary Catholic theology is concerned, it is an event in the distant past. So what explains our Catholic reticence today? John Salza's book illustrates

the difficulty very well, and that is why it is worth reading. He brings to bear all the scriptural and theological statements of Purgatory, or as it was known before the 11th century, purgatorial fires, since the earliest Christian times, to produce a vision of what happens to us after death which is utterly repugnant to contemporary ways of thought and expression.

I personally had great difficulty in my youth when told that, however great were the pains of my grandmother in dying, they were absolutely nothing to the pains she was going to experience in Purgatory, to which she was almost certainly bound since she was not a "great saint". This carefree and casual remark was matched by a parish curate who calmly told us ten-year-olds in our Primary School that, on the law of averages, half of us were going to Hell! This tended to be the style of thinking in those days.

Read James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and in the sermon of Fr Arnall SJ you will get an extreme example of the cavalier attitude of religious teaching about the Last Things in the "good old days". Such was the theological tradition until the Vatican Council when Purgatory, not as a place but as a reality, was mentioned in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* N 49, when it refers to *some [disciples] having died are [being] purified*.

The Apostolic Constitution on indulgences *Indulgentiarum Doctrina* 3 states:

That punishment or the vestiges of sin may remain to be expiated or cleansed and that they in fact frequently do even after the remission of guilt is clearly demonstrated by the doctrine on Purgatory. In Purgatory, in fact, the souls of those "who died in the charity of God and truly repentant, but before satisfying with worthy fruits of penance for sins committed and for omissions" are **cleansed after death with purgatorial punishment**.

In paragraph 5 it goes on: *For this reason there certainly exists between the faithful who have already reached their heavenly home, **those who are expiating their sins in Purgatory** and those who are still pilgrims on earth **a perennial link of charity and an abundant exchange** of all the goods by which, with the expiation of all the sins of the entire Mystical Body, divine justice is placated.*

Pope Paul VI reiterates this teaching in his Apostolic Letter on **The Credo of the People of God** (1968). N. 28: *We believe in the life eternal. We believe that the souls of all those who die in the grace of Christ **whether they must still be purified in Purgatory**, or whether from the moment they leave their bodies Jesus takes them to paradise as He did for the Good Thief are the People of God in the eternity beyond death, which will be finally conquered on the day of the Resurrection when these souls will be reunited with their bodies...and 30: We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are awaiting their purification, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church.*

Note again the two-connection teaching: Purgatory and the Communion of Saints. The Congregation for the Defence of the Faith (CDF), presumably with the approval of its then Prefect, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, added a comment in 1992 when in a letter to the Bishops on Communion *Communio in Notio* n. 6, it said: *In its invisible elements, this communion exists not only among the members of the pilgrim Church on earth, but also between these and all who, **having passed from this world** in the grace of the Lord, belong to the heavenly Church **or will be incorporated into it after having been fully purified**.*

St John Paul II in his Wednesday Audience of August 4th 1999 stated: The term [Purgatory] does not indicate a place, but a condition of existence. *Those who after death exist in a state of purification are already in the love of Christ who removes from them the remnants of imperfection. Every trace of attachment to evil must be eliminated, every imperfection of the soul corrected. Purification must be complete, and indeed this is precisely what is meant by the Church's teaching on Purgatory.*

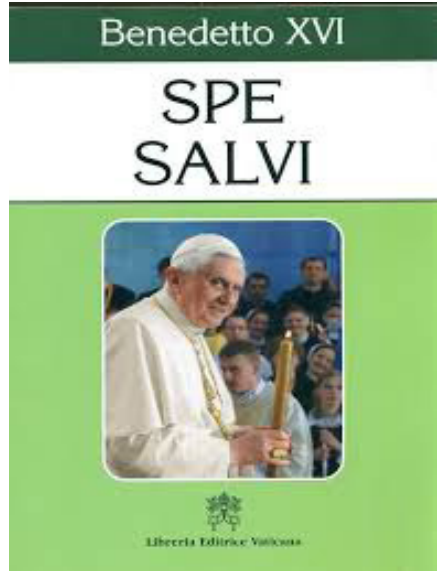
And later in the same talk he said: *Those who live in this state of imperfection after death are not separated from God but are immersed in the love of Christ. Neither are they separated from the saints in heaven – who already enjoy the fulness of life – nor from us on earth – who continue on our pilgrim journey to the Father's house. We all remain united in the mystical Body of Christ, and we can therefore offer up prayers and good works on behalf of our brothers and sisters in Purgatory.*

Note that the Theology of the Mystical Body of Christ is here invoked in support of our prayers and good works on behalf of those who have died.

And finally Pope Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical on Christian Hope *Spe Salvi* (2007), nn. 45-48, states:

*The early Church took up these concepts, and in the Western Church they gradually developed into **the doctrine of Purgatory**. We do not need to examine here the complex historical paths of this development; it is enough to ask what it actually means....St Paul writes in his First Letter to the Corinthians: **If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire**" (1 Cor 3:12-15)....Some recent theologians are of the opinion that the fire which both burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Saviour....His gaze, the touch of his heart, heals us through an unbearably painful transformation "as through fire". But it is a blessed pain, in which the holy power of his love sears through us like a flame, enabling us to become totally ourselves and thus totally of God.*

Fire has always been in the Christian mind concerning Purgatory owing to the passage from First Corinthians and also owing to the cultural point of the practice of purifying metal and sterilizing objects by heat and fire. One has only to recall those dreadful pictures of people leaping from the windows of the Twin Towers on 9/11, choosing to die on the ground rather than be burned to death in the blazing building, to realise what a dreadful and destructive thing fire is. The relationship between Purgatory and Hell has been somewhat ambiguous over the centuries owing to the common factor of "fire", purgatorial fire and infernal fire. That ambiguity has seeped deeply into the Christian conscience and understanding. The fact that one is temporal and the other eternal does not mean a lot when one reads the stories of thousands of years in



Purgatory. That sounds all but eternal to most mortals.

So much for the **Flames, Pains and Indulgences** in my title. It is now time to turn to the alternative part of that heading.

A most beautiful doctrine

I have hinted previously to the other, more fundamental, doctrine on which the whole system of indulgences, and prayers and good works on behalf of the dead, is constructed: namely, the Communion of Saints. In the texts we have seen, this has been developed along the lines of the Pauline-based doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, and Pope Benedict went further into the realms of the Eternal Oneness of Being. All these can be subsumed into the pre-eminent buzzword of our generation, Relationship.

We all need each other, not only economically but metaphysically. Just as there can be no Father or Mother without a child, so there can be no "I" without a "Thou". And we are immediately in the heart of the Trinity. When the author of Genesis 2 had the Lord God declare "It is not good that man should be alone" he was stating universal truth. No man or woman can exist in a fully human form without an "other". Through the doctrine of the Communion of Saints our relationship with the dead is not ended: it is enhanced. The dying person is not 'leaving', he or she is 'coming'.

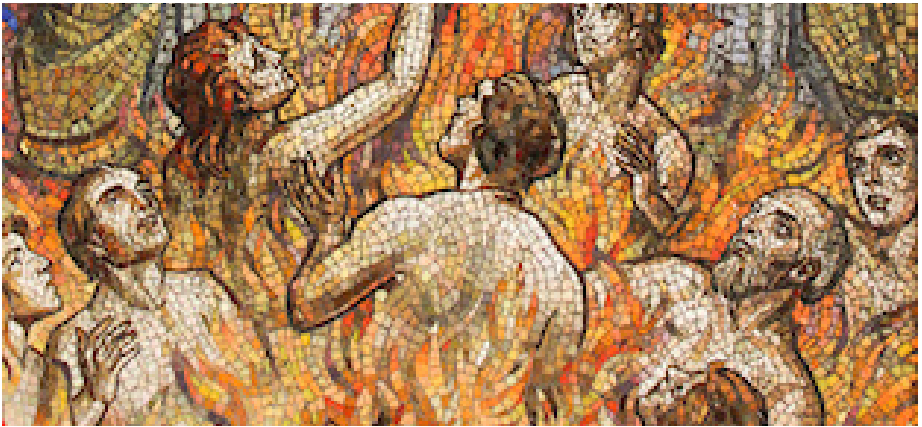
There has always been from earliest times a relationship of prayer with the dead. Christians have always prayed for the dead, and this practice – along the lines of *lex orandi: lex credendi* (the way we pray manifests our beliefs) – was the historical foundation for the development of the doctrine of Purgatory. Likewise, they have always prayed to those who they consider are in heaven – namely the Saints – in times of need or trouble. The Patronage of the Saints invoked in the naming of our churches is clear evidence of this belief and practice. When the Reformers sought to eliminate Purgatory from Christian teaching they were, perhaps unwittingly, destroying at the same time this key, and most consoling, element of our Faith. What the doctrine of the Communion of Saints gives us is an everlasting link in love with those who have gone before us. So, the mother is consoled at the death of her son and the son at the death of his mother, and every other person whom either has ever known.

The great medium of communication is prayer, since true prayer works in time and in eternity. How? I have mentioned "relationship" and who bears that title above all others? The Holy Spirit, He who is Relationship personified since he is the Relationship between Father and Son. The Holy Spirit binds all things, both uncreated and created, into one. The Holy Spirit is the 'Being' of God and the 'Being' of God is Love.

When we pray, it is not we who pray but the Holy Spirit who prays within us. We are in time, he is in eternity and so is unbounded by past present and future. Our prayers for the dead can reach out backwards in our time to the time of their dying and give support in that great event. I use the word 'event' advisedly since there is a failing, I think, in the present official teaching of the Church on this point. Purgatory has now become not a 'place' but a 'state' or a 'condition of existence'. All three concepts share the same mode: stillness, no movement, no development. Since Purgatory is a temporal phenomenon it has a beginning and an end; it is therefore more accurately named as a happening or an event. Therefore, why not say that the event of Purgatory is death, the first great event of the Four Last Things?

Finally, the Holy Spirit has another role to play in Purgatory besides as the binding force of the Communion of Saints since he is named as the Soul of the Church. And the Church, in its fulness, is the Communion of Saints on earth, in heaven and in the anteroom to heaven, Purgatory. The Holy Spirit is the Fire of God's Love and as such he is the fires of Purgatory. He is the cleansing Power in Baptism. Read the Sequence for Pentecost, the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and consider that this is what awaits each of us in death, and be mightily consoled. All that the Fire of the Spirit does for us in Purgatory, either in this life or in death, is to change us into himself so that we become flame within the Flame of God. Now, that fate is worth dying for.

Brian Hamill is the Acting Hon. Secretary of The Newman Association. This talk was originally delivered to a Postgraduate Day at Durham University.



A Holy Week Reflection

By Mark Dowd

When I learned that religious worship would be suspended due to the Coronavirus epidemic, I instantly realized that the traditional Holy Week services were never going to be an option at my local church in south Manchester.

My name is Mark Dowd, and for this special reflection for THINGS UNSEEN, to try and compensate for not being physically in a church, these last few days I've been dwelling on religious art and pondering on *faces*: the expressions of amazement among the apostles in Leonardo Da Vinci's amazing Last Supper; the haunting image in the sixth station of the cross in many churches in which Veronica of Jerusalem wipes the face of Jesus; and finally, Michelangelo's depiction of maternal angst as both Mary and the disciple, John, gaze up helplessly at the image of the crucified Jesus.

All these faces were on my mind when I heard the incredibly sad story of thirteen-year-old Ismail Mohamed Abdulwahab from Brixton. At the time of his death, he was the UK's youngest victim of the Corona virus. In his final hours, because of the disease's highly infectious nature, Ismail died in isolation from his family. Now even Jesus was

able to see and address his mother at the foot of his cross as he approached death, but many people in the nation's hospitals are being offered, in their last moments, perhaps only a fleeting image on a tablet or mobile phone of their loved ones before they say goodbye to them and the world.

Heroes and heroines

I don't know about you, but if that were me, I think this would only enhance the sense of physical separation. So much at the moment is falling to nurses and doctors to squeeze hands, whisper in ears: in effect to be the stand-in for the family. And yet even these latterday heroes and heroines of our NHS can barely show their faces as they strive to save lives. I can't be the only one who finds the daily images of those Hazmat suits accompanied by masks and visors deeply unsettling. The wearers' faces are largely hidden in scenes that look like some kind of dystopian movie. Except it's not: it's regrettably very real and happening probably somewhere at this moment not very far from you.

In her book *Dead Man Walking* the nun, Sister Helen Prejean accompanies Pat, a convicted killer, as the time of his stay on Death Row draws to an end and the day of his execution is named. She writes: "I say to him, if you die, I want to be with you". He says, "no, I don't want you to see it." I say, "I can't bear the thought that you would die without seeing one loving face. I will be the face of Christ for you. Just look at me". He says, "It's terrible to see. I don't want to put you through that. It could break you. It could scar you for life."

I know that it will terrify me. How could it not terrify me? But I feel strength and determination. I tell him it won't break me, that I have plenty of love and support in my life. "God will give me the grace," I tell him. He consents. He nods his head. It is decided. I will be there with him when he dies. Pat needed a face, to enliven the face of the one who for our sake had his brief time on death row and was executed.

In the Bible there are more than seventy references to the "face of God." Many of these occur in the Psalms. "Do not hide your face away from me in the time of my distress" we hear in Psalm 102. And in the Book of Ezekiel we hear the plea: "Make your face to shine upon your servant Lord." Yet we also hear the voice of God saying, in the book of Exodus: "You cannot see my face, for no-one may see me and live." We need to dwell in the *presence* of God, but as God's creatures we are not His equals, such is His transcendent power.

Even if, in their final hours, the victims of this deadly virus are deprived of the solace of the faces of friends and family let us hope that, in the grand scheme of all things, this will be a fleeting moment. That in the fullness of time death will cease to have a hold. In the words of St Paul: "Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

A version of this reflection originally appeared in April on the spiritual website Things Unseen.



*Dead Man Walking:
the DVD*

Papal Infallibility

By Thomas O'Loughlin

I was invited here because just after Christmas last year I took part with Melvyn Bragg in a debate on the radio on Papal Infallibility – you can find it in the BBC archive on-line. And one of the things I meant to say there, but didn't get a chance, was that everyone seems to have an opinion on Papal Infallibility. Some Catholics treat it almost like the centre of their Faith: any questioning is out. Interestingly there is a large group of Protestants who see it equally as the most detestable thing about Catholicism, and assume that the Pope is infallible in everything. It is, likewise, amazing the number of people who come along and use it as a sort of shibboleth. "Do you believe in Papal Infallibility?" And they are waiting for you to say "no", in which case they will tell you that you are a heretic; or they are waiting for you to say "yes", in which case they are going to call you a papalist buffoon.

Why 'infallible'?

The whole problem of Papal Infallibility is far more interesting than the question of whether you accept it, or not, or even the question as to whether the Pope is infallible or not. Because it may show up some of the fundamental problems that Christians – not just Catholics – face in the modern world. The place to start is with the word "infallibility". We do not normally think in terms of being "fallible" or "infallible"; we think of being right and wrong. There are many complex moral situations that we are all familiar with where such right/wrong answers may be problematic, but let us start with some much simpler situations. When we were in school, the first thing we did was some simple sums (two plus two equals four) and we got a tick – correct! Or, later, we are asked to prove that the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares on the other sides, and we either get it "right" or "wrong". And most of us have got to the age at which we know that this is true, but also know that if we tried to prove it, we would probably get the proof wrong. Thus, in our everyday lives, we deal with right and wrong.

So where does the word "infallible" come from? It does not come from either the moral sphere, or the sphere of "knowing", or even the sphere of interpreting; it comes from the sphere of formal logic. Fallacy is when into the reasoning process, assuming that the premises are true, false thinking has intruded, such that the result does not bear any credence. There was a beautiful example of this for many years on the television which was as follows: dirt is biological, Ariel washing powder is biological, Ariel washing powder is good for dealing with dirt. Now, you may think that is true; you may even have gone off and bought a packet of Ariel washing powder and then used it, and said, "Yes! It does wash clothes." But truly, the reasoning there is false, because – in logic – that is what is known as an undistributed middle. I will give you another example of the exact same argument. All sailors are men, all admirals are sailors, all men are admirals: that follows the exact same logical pattern, but we have committed a logical fallacy there – except in this case it is obvious that we have blundered.

Now, fallacy to us is something that belongs to formal logic, the courtroom, and now to computers, where it is a bug in the system. What you typed in is not wrong but



there is something wrong in the system that is making it go awry. Why did the Papacy opt for such an obscure notion of its own perfection? It didn't say: the Pope is an Oracle. It didn't even say that the Pope is able to come to perfect moral judgments. It said, *in the reasoning* the Pope is free from fallacy: infallible.

How much do we know?

One of the problems that separates us from the world where that happened is that until sometime in the late 18th Century there was a widespread belief in all forms of Christianity that *all truth was known*. We have the Truth. We know the truth and we know it in its entirety – if not (yet) in all its details. Now, it could take the form that the truth is contained in the Bible. The truth is all there, and all we have to do is look in the Bible and draw it out. And if it is all there in the Bible you must be able to put certainty into that system. The Evangelicals today would use the term “inerrancy” along with the notion of “the sufficiency of scripture”, and they would say the text is inerrant and one can believe “*sola scriptura*”. People can make mistakes, and there might be “surface-level” contradictions but the text is secure: it was given by the Holy Spirit and, if it is inspired, there is there all the information you could possibly need. You do not require anything else, and so such an Evangelical can say: “Just give me a Bible and it is all there”.

No Catholic would ever say that; we haven't used that sort of reasoning for several centuries. But in the Middle Ages we still believed that *it was all there* in the Scriptures. And so, for instance, we used the Scriptures to explain natural phenomena and, of course, famously we used the Scriptures to challenge empirical phenomena: we are all familiar with the Bellarmine versus Galileo debate. We knew what the content of truth was, therefore you *could not* find out something that would really contradict it. But equally we had a belief that everything we needed to know for religion was already given. The way we put this was: “Revelation was complete with the death of the last apostle”. Therefore (note my use of a logical connective) we knew whatever we needed to know. By direct inference (another logical process), no-one could then discover something that would contradict this body of knowledge.

Do we really grow in knowledge?

By contrast, today we would consider religion as an area where there is room for doubt. We would talk about doubt as the growing edge of Faith. And we would know that Faith is, as Newman said, a moving from shadows and images *into* the Truth (*ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*) – note the implication of motion from shadows into truth: knowing is a journey, a gradual process, a real discovering. But if you met a theologian in the University of Paris in 1530 – I am deliberately picking this date because these were the people who taught John Calvin and were reacting to Luther – indeed many were becoming “reformed”. They would have reacted very differently. They would have admitted that at a very simple level there was empirical certainty but this was not that important because material things are subject to change – the world of the material is the world of contingency: something might be true or it might be false.

Then there is a higher level of certainty, mathematical certainty: we cannot imagine a universe where the angles of a triangle do not equal two right angles – this is real

knowledge because it is free of the contingency – and such a proposition is either true or it is false. This is a world without grey! But there is a higher level of certainty, logical certainty: for example, the whole is greater than the part – this is analytically true without any external testing. That was considered to be such a perfect statement that it had to be true under all circumstances.

Then there was yet a higher level yet: metaphysical certainty. Metaphysical certainty was something like the law of identity. Everything is what it is: a thing both cannot be and not be at the same time and the same relation. That was seen as so perfect that it was a truism – for instance in Aquinas – that this “Law of Contradiction” was the point at which “all reasoning must begin”. Even the simplest factual statement, such as “Lassie is a dog” was thought to assert implicitly the perfection of this law. But then there was a yet still higher level of certainty which was theological certainty. God in his Word could not be untrue to himself and therefore the Revelation had to have the perfection of the Divine Voice: it was nothing other than a manifestation of his own Being. To suggest a defect was contradictory, untrue, and, indeed, blasphemous.



Jan Hus, executed in 1415

and he was burned as heretic. So Luther said, if papal laws have failed, and councils have failed, then we are left with only Scripture as a manifestation of the Divine Mind. And that is what he meant by *Sola Scriptura*, by Scripture alone.

If you went to Paris and met the theologians who were not joining the Reform they would have said: Scripture, we are totally agreed; the Papal Decrees are still there, but they now need to be catalogued more carefully; and the Councils – well, they are perfect. Consequently, in the aftermath of the Reformation, both sides are agreed that theological certainty exists and both sides are agreed that everything is known. But for the Catholics there are more places to learn the details of what is known (i.e. “unknown knows”) and so you get the continual effort for the next three centuries to catalogue what is certain, and what is known, for these form the premises by which one will discover, in the known, ever more detailed answers.

By the middle of the nineteenth century we came up with a famous catalogue



of everything that we were going to stick by. It was called Denzinger*. It was a handbook, still in print, still being updated, where you could find all the decrees of all the Popes and Councils that were considered to be part of the complete fabric of theological knowledge (the so-called “deposit of faith”). If you have all of the knowledge there as a series of inputs, and you have a question over there, all you need is a perfect machine for interpreting the inputs and to generate the outputs, and that is a logical deduction machine. It is all known, and you just do the deductions. And that is the world in which infallibility was used. To assert that “the pope is infallible” is to assert that he is just such a perfect deductive logical machine (*organon*). Moreover, if you live in such a world you can take

great consolation from the fact that one of the guarantees is that the machine has been checked.

Is knowing a matter of discovered fragments?

The problem that we face is that we have left that world where all knowledge is already granted *in nuce*, and we have gradually entered this world of ours where knowledge is fragile, fragmentary, and hard to attain. We took our first very frightened steps into it in the sixteenth century with the whole shift from a geocentric cosmos to a heliocentric cosmos and then on to an expanding universe. The first supernovum was a terrible shock to the system: even the “higher” supra-lunary world was not immune to change: so “certain knowledge” was incomplete. Then we took another step into it when, in the late eighteenth century, we discovered that what we believed was the most wondrous collection of perfect knowledge – the Bible – started to unravel as history. And so, for instance, in the late eighteenth century we no longer read the Gospels using the mechanisms of the Fourth Century so that they are all seen to dovetail. Then we come to see that they do not dovetail, and we produce things like the Synoptic Problem – and notice that “what the Bible says” is not a given but a tentative work of investigation and discovery.

Then in the late nineteenth century an amazing development takes place. Suddenly we realise that we do not know about medicine, and that an unimaginable development in biology seems to change the whole world. This was long before discoveries like DNA, but this changed our understanding about how human sexuality worked. I remember in the 1970s there was the major debate: how was it that contraception was wrong, but the rhythm method was said to be OK? This seemed a silly distinction, but the rationale lay in the fact that there had been approval of the rhythm method long before anyone who was involved in the theological decision-making realised that biology itself had changed. The theologians were working in a world of knowledge where all was known, and so here could not be any profound change; the medics were working in an empirical world where older teaching was simply dumped as outdated and where one expected biology – the actual content of this science – to change, be added to constantly, and every so often for the whole edifice to be turned on its head in what we now call a “paradigm shift”.

This late nineteenth century incident is worth recalling for the clash of the two views

of knowledge. A scrupulous medical doctor went to the Archbishop of Paris and asked whether it was lawful for him to have sex with his wife when (because he had been working on reproduction and was convinced that women only conceived on certain days of their cycle) his wife was temporarily barren every month. The Archbishop of Paris judged if that were true it would have to have been revealed to us. It hasn't been revealed to us, he said, therefore since we must know everything about this because it pertains to sin, this medic's concern is merely a transient factual opinion. It's a little like believing that the Moon is made of green cheese in terms of its status as knowledge. Mutable medical theories (i.e. opinions) cannot be contrasted with the certainty of the *ecclesia docens*: the Church does not have opinions, it teaches.

Alas, the Archbishop decided to send the question up the line. So he sent it to Rome, and they replied to the effect that, what are you worried about? Some mere mechanic in Paris, fiddling around with material things – women's bodies – thinks this is happening but he cannot know. We know what sin is because we have been entrusted with this perfect judgment since the time of the Apostles. And we say, whatever the medic says there is no problem. Because that judgment was made it could not be unmade, and it had to be held alongside the later decisions of 1931 and 1968, and, therefore, the Rhythm Method was, and is, OK. The circle was squared by a "distinction": contraception was not a moral issue at the level of human intentions, but at the material level depending on whether it was "artificial" or "natural".

In which epistemological world do you live?

Slowly as things have evolved in the past 150 years we have moved to a situation where today we think of knowledge not in terms of perfect deductions, but we think and work with "knowledge" in terms of induction and as something provisional and fragmented. What a place to say this: because I am here in St Albans, Verulamium, and the Baron Verulam – Francis Bacon – was, of course, the very first to challenge theological knowledge as being perfect. His famous critique of theology was "They claim to know all, and then just deduce," but Francis Bacon said we must not just deduce but build inductions. It doesn't matter what you *think* you know, you build it up on the basis of your experience.

Now that is the world in which we live. You may not like that fact. I am always intrigued by evangelical Christians who do not like the idea of an empirical world because it undermines the perfection of the Bible. But then they send you nasty messages on their smartphones. Be consistent is my reply: they should join the Hutterites and travel around in a horse and trap! If you don't like the empirical world stay out of it. But if you like your smartphone – and, you know, I am old enough now to need Naproxen for my knee – if you like the fact that this works better than castor oil, say, then that's the world in which you live. And, of course, that's the world in which we discourse religiously. We do not say any more "we know everything." Any religious leader who would get up today – in the face of all our challenges and all the suffering in the world – and say "we have the answers" would be seen as mad: a pied-piper to some false utopia.

Now, that is the challenge of Infallibility. It's not whether the Pope is infallible or not, or whether you like that idea or don't like it, or whether some particular judgment of the Church is infallible or not, or whether you like that or don't like it. The notion of

infallibility raises for us the difference between, on one hand, the world in which we find ourselves and belong – we are not merely castaways in an alien culture – because we know that we do not know; and, on the other hand, the fact that we as Christians inherit material from an earlier world which viewed religion, and religious knowing, in such a completely different way. And, of course, we should always remember that there is something very comforting about the idea of knowing everything and attributing to something or someone. Whether it is a Pope, or a book, or a political system, or even to a conspiracy: the vain idea “all is known” can give you that warm feeling of [false] security.

But let’s take a political system as an example. Marxism was a system that made a claim to knowledge of perfect understanding. Whether it was biology, how to run the economy, how to run the family, how to run the State, it could all be contained within the system. You knew the secret of the entire system. You could put your trust in it. And so the system – if you remember Aldous Huxley’s famous statement, “the Party used only to claim to have invented the helicopter, now they have moved backwards and they claim to have invented the plane, they’ll soon have invented the wheel” – so the problem is that once you start thinking that there is a certainty, certainty starts to creep, and so we have “creeping infallibility”. And once you think you belong to



Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam

a system where there is a perfect body of certainty, and a machine that will chuck out the answers for you, then you have leeching infallibility. The Pope is infallible, so the bishop is infallible, and you find out that suddenly the Parish Priest is infallible.

Do I believe the Pope is infallible? Well, the thing is, I came here by car. I am also pleased that these Naproxen tablets are so brilliant at removing inflammation, and the doctor who prescribed them for me said:

“The next generation will be even better, because there are side-effects to Naproxen.”

So I live in a world where I try to make discoveries. I find myself talking to other Christians and other believers. And I realise

that I have to be ready to learn. So I live in a world that was foreseen by someone who came from St Albans, in his beautiful Novum Organum.

Thomas O’Loughlin is Professor of Historical Theology at Nottingham University. This article is a transcript of a talk given to the Hertfordshire Circle in St Albans in November 2019.

*Heinrich Denzinger produced the *Enchiridion symbolorum et definitionem et declarationem de rebus fidei et morum* in 1854. The most recent English translation was published by Ignatius Press, San Francisco CA, in 2012 with both the Latin title and alongside it this English title: *Compendium of Creed, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*.

An Overview of Medieval Monastic Gardening.

By Maureen Thomas

Although there are no surviving medieval monastic gardens there is archaeological and documentary evidence for their existence such as the records of Christian monasteries from the post-Roman period, through the Dark Ages 500-1000 AD. The medieval monasteries in Britain emerged after the Danish invasions, and were based on the Rule of Saint Benedict who founded the first Italian monastery about 528 AD at Monte Cassino. The Norman Conquest resulted in an increase in Benedictine monasteries, which were all loosely based on the St Gall ideal suggested by Charlemagne in the 9th century. The period became known as the golden era of the medieval monasteries, and lasted into the mid C16th when Henry VIII closed them down at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

The four main orders of monks were the **Benedictines**, the **Cistercians**, the **Carthusians** and the **Cluniacs**, Much Wenlock Priory in Shropshire being the largest of the Cluniac monasteries. The gardens of each foundation had their own recognisable characteristics. The St. Gall Plan contained a list of plants, and is preserved in the monastic library of St Gall in Switzerland. As well as the buildings it shows the **Cloister Garth**, descendant of the Roman peristyle villa at the beginning of the first century, and three gardens, the **Physic Garden**, the **Utilitarian Garden** or vegetable garden and the orchard of the **Cemetery Garden** There are later references to a guest house garden, the prior's garden, vineyards and fish ponds found in subsequent research.

The **Cloister Garth** is the chief characteristic of the medieval Benedictine monastic garden, and there is no evidence that it was planted with anything other than turf, unlike the modern reproduction at Monte Cassino. Occasionally there may be paths, a fountain or lavabo as at the Cluniac Priory at Much Wenlock. The colour green provided refreshment to encloistered eyes and was a metaphysical symbol both of rebirth and everlasting life. The Cloisters which opened



The Monte Cassino Benedictine Cloister Garth was renovated after the ravages of the bombardment by the Allies during WWII; it was photographed on a Newman Pilgrimage visiting the monasteries of Lazio.

on to the Garth were used by the monks when sitting at their desks, illuminating their manuscripts to gain the maximum amount of light. Some monks were artists, some craftsmen, some gardeners and some physicians; the most important contributions to our knowledge of the classical writings and national chronicles were preserved by Benedictine monks at this time.

Benedictine monastic life was often the centre of communal life in a particular area, and lay people supported the monks. The monastery itself was very ordered, and each area was organised by an Obedientiar. The **Physic Garden** situated near the infirmary was the responsibility of the Infirmarer, who grew the herbs used for treating the sick: kidney bean, savory, rose, horsemint, cumin, lovage, fennel, tansy, lily, sage, rue, flag iris, pennyroyal, fenugreek, mint and rosemary. Because the infirmary resembled a nursing home in large monasteries, as well as a rest home for retired monks with incurable diseases of old age, the **Infirmary Garden** contained a wide range of pottage plants as well as medicinal plants. The Cellarer, another Obedientiar was responsible for supplying the monks with vegetables, such as brassicas, leeks, parsley, leafbeet, parsnips, turnips, skirrets; he also provided herbs, hay for latrines and rushes, mints and meadowsweet for stewing. He would, too, supply juices from the orchard fruit and vines. The orchards were planted with medlars, quince, pears, peaches and apples, and were often also the burial grounds for the monks.

At the dissolution of the Monasteries, although the monastic buildings may have been destroyed or sold as private dwellings, lessees often continued to cultivate the outlying monastic orchards. These developed into the nurseries which supplied the thousands of trees needed for the later fashion in landscape gardening. Another important development arose from the monks' knowledge of viticulture and brewing, and which formed the basis of the brewing industry as it has come down to us today.

The lily and the rose

During the early Middle Ages activity in gardening and agriculture was purely for utilitarian purposes, namely growing for food and medicine; any flowers grown such as the rose, lily, peony and violet had symbolic purposes to be used in religious rituals; the lily symbolised purity and the rose was a symbol of the Virgin Mary. Later on, however, flowers were grown for aesthetic reasons to adorn the gardens of guest houses and also for the Abbot's private gardens which were used to entertain important visitors. Haughmond Abbey in Shropshire had very extensive private quarters set aside for the Abbot. The Longnor garden was used by Abbot Nicholas de Longnor, and is known to have contained a dovecote for pigeons, providing not only meat for the dining table but also dung for use as fertiliser.

The characteristics of medieval monastic gardens varied according to the order. The **Cistercians** were unhappy about the increasing worldliness of the Benedictines, and St Bernard of Clairvaux founded a breakaway order which chose to live more closely to the original Benedictine ideals of poverty, chastity and obedience. They refused to accept gifts other than land, and chose remote fertile valleys with running water for their sites. Wilderness was tamed and there was always a high regard for the



A reconstructed monk's cell, with garden, at Mount Grace Priory

Cistercian expertise in water gardens.

Their engineering in this field was reflected in the layout of their monasteries which included sanitation systems, and which were also adapted for the provision of night soil to be used for growing vegetables. Agriculture and sheep farming dominated their manual activities, and the wool trade soon brought them great wealth. Wool was exported to the continent, and was the foundation for the later prominence of the woollen trade.

The **Carthusian** monks were known as the gardening monks. Mount Grace Priory in Yorkshire is an example of why this was so. There are thirteen small cells representing Christ and the twelve apostles, and each cell had its own individual garden; the whole was enclosed by a wall, and each door of the cell opened out on to a broad cloister.

The **Cluniac** order, founded in Cluny in France about 910 did not spread to England until after the Norman Conquest, and Wenlock Priory is a good example of a Cluniac foundation. It was founded in the year 1200 and took over forty years to build with many endowments from Henry III, who was a regular visitor to Wenlock. There was much emphasis on communal worship and ritual, and the monks valued scholarship and manuscript illumination; the library was a purpose-built room which is still recognisable today. Although historians refer to the Cluniacs' concentration on elaborate church services and ritual they were also dedicated to caring for the sick and the poor of the local community. Medicinal herbs would have been grown for this purpose in the infirmary garden, and plants such as saffron and heliotrope might have been grown for the extraction of the yellow and blue dyes for illuminating their manuscripts. Watercolour paints used today would have had their origins in the paints used by the monks in the Middle Ages.

Although our knowledge of Welsh medieval monastic gardens is fragmentary, archaeology and carbon dating is already remedying this situation, notably, according to Stephen Briggs in his article on *Garden Archaeology in Wales*, at Monkash with its fish pond and dovecote, the 12 acres of orchards at Llanthony, Strata Florida (Valley of Flowers) Cistercian Abbey Grange, St David's with vines, pleasure gardens and orchards, and Llandaff Cathedral with its garden wall furnace.

The demise of the Golden Age of monasticism after the Dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII resulted in a landscape dotted with the remains of these wonderful buildings, many of which are cared for today by English Heritage and CADW (the environment service of the Welsh Government).

Some Secondary Sources.

A History of Gardening in England by Alicia Amherst, 1896

Garden Archaeology by Chris Currie, 2005

Medieval Gardens by John Harvey, 1981

Medieval Gardens edited by Elizabeth MacDougall, 1986; includes an essay on *The Medieval Monastic Garden* by Paul Meyvaert, pp23-53

A Little History of English Gardening by Jenny Uglow, 2005

There are guide books for **Haughmond, Buildwas, Basingwork, Much Wenlock, Chester, Shrewsbury and Mount Grace.**

Maureen Thomas, a former President of the Newman Association, has an MA in Garden History from Bristol University

Many events at Newman Circles are being cancelled or postponed because of the Covid-19 epidemic. This reflection by a member in Edinburgh was to have been delivered at a Circle meeting in late March.

The Marriage at Cana

By Jeff Bagnall

Sometimes we read Scripture expecting to find out what Jesus said and did. But the writers of the gospels were not historians but preachers. Their aim was to encourage readers to think of Jesus both as showing us the deeper truths and the purpose of life and how to think and try to live as followers of him – as Christians. In the fourth Gospel there is a very careful plan outlined in the preface to show Jesus as a dramatic life-changing character in the plan of God for the world and for how people should fit into this. So the gospel tells of signs in Jesus' life that teach us something of this. In the first chapter the author links what he has to say with the poetic plan of God at the beginning of the Bible, he tells of just selected incidents and expositions that lead to a climax and conclusion – the conclusion of Jesus' life on earth shown in the Resurrection.

After this preface to John's Gospel Chapter 2 starts on the third day, with Jesus' first sign - which we think of as a miracle - at a marriage feast in Cana. His mother and He with His disciples are guests at this celebration. The wine runs out and Mary draws Jesus attention to this (as though saying "do something about it, it's embarrassing"). He seems to rebuff her, adding that His time isn't yet, but all the same she tells the servants to do what He wants. And He tells them to refill the six stone water containers (probably used for hand washing and holding about 20 gallons each) and from this they present a sample to the "steward" of the feast to test, and he declares this to be the best wine yet.

Questions that arise

John writes that this is the first sign of Jesus revealing His glory. Various questions arise from this account. What is meant by this being the third day; does Mary expect a miracle from Jesus; what is His hour which hasn't yet come; is it only the servants who know the source of this newly-produced wine; how would this have revealed His glory, and indeed what is meant by His glory; and how come this convinced the disciples to believe in Him? In addition it might be wondered why none of the other gospels seem to know of this miracle despite the presence of the disciples at the wedding.

There are some key concepts and incidents that need explaining and some questions that arise. After what precedes this story in the Gospel it could be the 7th day like the day for the completion of creation in Genesis Chapter One. Or it could allude to the Resurrection as the climax of Christ's human life on the third day after death. John's gospel relates several events that are called signs – signifying the situation and effects of the reality of Jesus as God incarnate. The marriage feast at Cana is the first such sign. It is likely that there are six other signs culminating in the Resurrection; though some commentators treat the cleansing of the Temple as a sign and the raising of Lazarus as the climatic seventh.

This Gospel also refers to the climax of Jesus' human life as His hour – the time when his incarnation is completed with His passing from this world. This is a process that

begins once His life becomes public and begins to manifest His special status as God incarnate, and completes with His death and resurrection. When Mary brings to His attention the lack of further wine, it might just show a natural concern for her friend's potential embarrassment, and being a widow she draws this to the attention of her grown-up son, who with his friends may have swelled the expected number of guests and caused the deficiency.

Jesus' seeming rebuke of His mother might not be as blunt as it appears in translation, but might well indicate that He did not see His life's purpose to include doing anything about it – yet Mary seems to assume He will. If this miracle was as discreet as it might well have been with only the servants knowing the source of the new wine, how would this instigate the disciples' belief in Jesus is definitely a question. And finally, if this story is not just fiction but a real miracle (even the first) of Jesus, then how is it that none of the earlier gospels refer to this miracle which is supposed to have initiated the disciples' belief in Him?

Rather than trying to establish what historically happened (which cannot be achieved) we should hope to grasp what it is that the author of the Gospel is trying to tell us; in this we have a better chance of success but even then it is the words of someone from a different era than ours and a different culture and language. So the "story" of the wedding feast at Cana opens as a symbol of heaven and the end – the completion – of this life.

But something is seriously missing in the way the world is (chiefly its sinfulness) like the wine running out. So Mary, who brought this ideal life of Jesus into the world, points out this "embarrassment", and His response is so very understandable for a human being in this world with all its deficiencies – saying "so what". But we must learn from the story to "do whatever he tells you" as Mary says to the servants; our obedience to what God wants is like that of the servants and its results can exceed even our normal expectations. And this series of events should enable us "followers" of Jesus to become believers – that is, Christians – who try to live the way humans should and Jesus did. And that is the purpose of the reading of the Good News (the Gospel).

Letters to the Editor

Clericalism: A 'Cancer' in the Church?

Dear Sir

To call the concentration of power in the Church in the clergy a 'cancer' may seem harsh but, as Michael Kerrigan explained in a talk to the Tyneside Circle of the Newman Association on October 30th, it is a metaphor employed by Pope Francis himself. He told the Curia in 2014 that clericalism was 'a disease of closed circles, where belonging to a clique becomes more powerful than belonging to the Body [of Christ]'. This disease can become 'a cancer which threatens the harmony of the Body' causing 'immense evil'. Clericalism causes priests to 'feel superior' and 'distance themselves from the people'.

Michael Kerrigan took a sociological approach to the problem, based on the work on George Wilson, an American Jesuit. Wilson finds a similar dynamic in a range

of institutions, including medicine, law, education and the army, in which a group of people come to be seen as having special knowledge or competence. Doctors, lawyers, teachers and the military enjoy special status and privileges not accorded to others in the society, often symbolised in their titles. Such differentiation into 'clergies' is necessary but can also have harmful effects. And this is what Wilson calls 'clericalism', when the characteristics of 'clergies' degenerate into 'clericalism'.

Kerrigan went on to illustrate some of the ways in which such degeneration happens. Belonging to a clergy, for example bestows automatic status, a special position in society. Clericalism, however, involves an attitude of entitlement, while the laity can be overawed by the cleric and place him (or her in normal societies) on a pedestal. Another trait of clericalism is sensitivity to criticism. Every profession, every 'clergy', has some special expertise and develops defences to protect itself and the service it provides: authorised training, examinations for admission, legal advice, and so on. Clericalism occurs when this natural defensiveness develops into a resistance, a resentment of any criticism from outside.

Clergies rely on maintaining a good image: a profession need a good reputation and makes a natural and healthy response to what might tarnish it, and threaten the trust of those it serves. Clericalism occurs when more attention is given to protecting the institution's image than to the well-being of those it is supposed to serve.

Clergies use specialist language so that experts can talk precisely and accurately to each other. Clericalism involves the use of their jargon to bamboozle the 'laity', excluding them from their inner circle. Clerics are selected for their special role but with clericalism they lose touch with the ordinary lives of those they serve. This in turn breeds a lack of accountability, making a clergy act as if it is not subject to the rules that the rest of society is obliged to respect.



Mike Kerrigan

In the second half of his talk, Kerrigan applied these general principles to the particular 'clergy' that is constituted by the ordained ministers of a Church – in particular, our Catholic Church? The earliest Christian communities, of course, knew no distinction among their members that would remotely correspond to our contemporary understanding between a clergy of ordained priests and the laity.

But Christianity quickly developed, with the emergence of a 'clergy' of persons, perceived as already having particular gifts. These became leaders, so now we had a 'clergy' in our Church, with all the advantages that this afforded, but with also the risks of 'clericalisation' listed above.

Clerics in our Church enjoy status and are accorded special dress and titles. They are certainly sensitive to criticism, declining to criticise or blow the whistle on each other. Our clerics also display all too often a lack of accountability: who, for example, holds bishops to account? Or parish priests, for that matter? And why should admission

to the clergy – in effect, ordination – be decided exclusively by that same clergy? Shouldn't the priestly people have a say in who among them is chosen for such a role? Kerrigan ended by suggesting certain things that the laity could do to reign in such clericalism. Firstly, we should stop treating our clergy as a class apart, superior to us and should resist using deferential titles such as 'Father'. Secondly, we should demand a parish council, if there isn't one, and, if there is one, get involved in it. Parish councils should be mandatory and have real powers. Thirdly, we should be prepared to argue with our clergy if we think them wrong on something. Finally, we should advocate the broadening of the clergy to include people in the state of life typical of those they serve, married men and women.

Discussion after the talk, as can be imagined, was lively. The laity who attend the meetings of the Newman Association didn't seem too much in awe of their clergy while the clergy present were happy not to defend the evil of clericalism. Would this were the case throughout the Church.

Terry Wright of the Tyneside Circle

Thoughts on Easter Monday, 2020: Passover - Pandemic

Dear Sir

In the weeks before the Last Supper, the disciples were undoubtedly aware of increased tensions in Jerusalem: more threats from certain quarters, and rising excitement among the people. Maybe they thought Jesus was taking more risks than usual – "Let's go to Judea and die with him" – but when he rode into the city on a donkey (mimicking the pageantry of Pilate's entry) they saw the crowds cheering and waving palm branches, very much on Jesus' side. So nothing could really go wrong, could it? When things got tight, Jesus would just slip away from trouble – as he had many times before. They did not know that this Passover would see the end of their way of life until then.

They will have had plans for after the festival. Perhaps Mary was hoping Jesus would go back with her to Nazareth for a few days' rest; maybe Peter needed to go north to see his family; James and John were looking forward to some fishing with their father; Joanna and Mary the Magdalene were planning some fund-raising sessions among the ladies of the court. But Jesus was aware that God had other plans; he knew the likelihood was that coming events would end his earthly life, and turn his friends' expectations upside down. He also knew that after his Resurrection, on reflection the disciples would remember the preparation he had given them. They would, guided by his Holy Spirit, work out how they should best proceed to support each other and spread his Good News throughout the world.

Two months ago we did not know that our lives were about to be turned upside down, and that the rapid, worldwide spread of the Coronavirus would bring to an end our way of life up until now. We had all sorts of plans: for family visits and summer holidays, for celebrations, concerts and sports fixtures, for projects and club activities. We thought our plans were sensible: had we forgotten the old joke "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans"?

It is possible that for our generation, as for the disciples after the first Good Friday, life will never be the same again. After this global crisis, with its medical, social and economic dimensions, there may be less travel overall and no more long-haul holidays, less international trade in non-essentials, ongoing restrictions on large gatherings, and maybe – even – no more handshaking. But God’s plan is always for us to deal with the life we are actually living, not the life we thought we would have. He guides us so that we can continue supporting each other and spreading his Good News.

Learning to live in the throes of a pandemic, we should confirm our trust in God. Acknowledging so many family tragedies we need to mourn the thousands who are dying, focusing not only on our loss but also on their joy entering heaven before us. We should be grateful to all who offer help, especially those putting themselves at risk, and look to support the disadvantaged here and abroad. Despite “social distancing” we must keep in contact with our networks and communities, since we are all God’s children, each needing support at different times.

The disciples in the early church had to face difficult questions, and we also must be prepared to meet challenges in our church practice. How can we build up our Church communities? If large gatherings are impossible, can we celebrate in small group house Masses? And if we need more priests for this, should our deacons and other *virii probati* be ordained? Perhaps “remote attendance” at Mass, watching on a TV or computer screen, will be authorised and regularised? Maybe there will be wider development of prayer groups and Liturgies of the Word? God’s Spirit is already offering us suggestions for living with the Coronavirus: can we listen, discern, then act?

Patricia Egerton of the Cleveland Circle

Book Reviews

**Human Dignity in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition; John Loughlin (ed.),
Bloomsbury Publishing, hardback £85.00**

This book, sub-titled “*Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox Perspectives*”, is one which I have been awaiting for a long time. For when Catholics engage in debates on such topics as abortion and euthanasia and put forward our view that these are fundamentally wrong then, when we are asked to justify our position, we inevitably say that it is because as Catholics – and indeed as Christians – we hold to the unique dignity of each human being. Exactly the same point applies when we consider the existence of social evils such as poverty, lack of care for the disabled and slavery.

The question then becomes: “But what do you mean by human dignity?” Our answer is, of course, that we are made in the image and likeness of God. However, as John Day asks in his essay “*So God Created Man in His Own Image*” (*Genesis 1:27*), *what does the Bible mean and what Have people thought it meant?* The distinction between image and likeness is misleading: although it can be traced back to St. Irenaeus there is in fact no difference between the two. That being so, what then does “dignity” consist

in? As Day explains, the term has a variety of meanings but it is clear that its essence is that we all have something Godlike about us. That in itself is a tremendous claim but where does it lead to?

One argument is that dignity is then something functional, in that it gives us dominion over the earth and all its living creatures. I would not myself be comfortable with this view with its connotation of power, and would prefer what Day explains as a view of St. Paul (Rom. 8:29) that we are to be “conformed to the image of His Son”. Although there is a conclusion to this essay, I would have preferred the author’s voice to have come out more strongly and to have had more insight into what his view is on what human dignity actually is.

There are altogether thirteen chapters. Some of these are strictly theological, for example, Chapter 5 where Richard Conrad OP, of Blackfriars, Oxford, looks at *The Holy Trinity as Source of Human Dignity according to St. Thomas Aquinas*, where he points out that Aquinas in his *De Veritate* sees human dignity as consisting in our reason, an idea that I personally find attractive. Others look at, in effect, applications of the principle of human dignity as in Chapter 13 where Calum MacKellar considers *Bioethics and the Secular Belief of Inherent Human Dignity*. He argues that although the secular idea of human dignity has been criticised, “what other fundamental principle can civilised society be founded on? Equality? But equality of what? The only answer can be inherent human dignity”.

Another chapter of especial interest to Catholics is that by Miguel Acosta on *Recovering Human Dignity: John Paul II’s Personalist Philosophy*, where it is explained that: “The core of personalism is to recover the value of each human being as a member of a unique human species. This means a creature with rational faculties and a special richness and perfection that we much respect.” There follows an excellent account of the development of John Paul’s thought here, reminding us that he was an eminent philosopher in his own right; but a small quibble is that there is no clear and succinct account of how personalism differs from the prevailing secular notion of individualism. This would have strengthened this piece considerably.

The whole collection is edited by John Loughlin, now a Fellow at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, who has contributed a lively and stimulating introduction, and this book is thoroughly recommended as a contribution of lasting value to the Christian notion of human dignity.

John Duddington

One Book, Two Faiths

***A History of the Bible: The Book and its Faiths*, by John Barton; Allen Lane £25 (paperback £12.99)**

A history book with scarcely any dates sounds like a schoolboy’s dream but the shortage of firm historical data is the key challenge for the author, John Barton. The Bible is not a book but a loosely-organised project that developed over many centuries and at one point generated a Christian supplement, the New Testament, which also lacked editorial clarity. Why on earth, for instance, did Paul neglect to add dates to his letters, as nowadays we all do as a matter of standard practice?

The Bible is an inspirational work for two religions, Judaism and Christianity. And

yet, in neither case is it fully in the centre of these Faiths: Judaism depends more fundamentally on The Torah, and Roman Christianity, at least, has depended on a Credo or Tradition developed over 2,000 years and only loosely linked to the Bible – the core doctrine of the Trinity, for instance, is scarcely found in the Gospels and was not clarified until the Fourth Century. Eventually the Reformers rejected much of Papal Doctrine and sought to return only to Biblical truth, enshrined as “Scripture”. As John Barton emphasises, however, that has posed problems when there are four separate Gospels which tell the same story but not always consistently. It may be the Gospel Truth, but from which Gospel?

Isaiah’s different authors

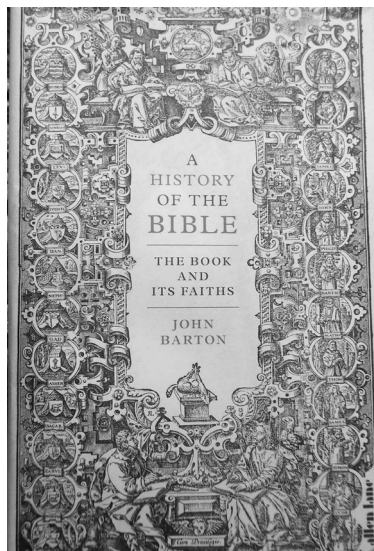
Both Testaments were put together as anthologies of works by many different authors. John Barton goes diligently through such evidence as there is but the facts are hard to pin down. The Book of Isaiah, he says, was the most protracted editorial effort and sections of it may differ in age by as much as 500 years. Much research has been done into historical editions of the Bible and how they differ in the inclusion and ordering of the individual books.

We have to guess about the role of the scribes, a professional class for which there is really no equivalent today. They read and copied documents at a time when most people – even the wealthier and more powerful ones – were more or less illiterate. Perhaps the scribes made mistakes, or deliberately left out sections they disagreed with. They left no clear historical record.

There is a little more information about the Christian era. John Barton does not think that there was a systematic selection of the books of the New Testament, rather that books were written within different Christian communities and then came together, their acceptance as canonical being a natural process of selection by the congregations. Beyond a certain date quite early in the second century (possibly around the date of John’s Gospel) other works which were circulating came to be

excluded. Some, though, were influential in their day, including *The Shepherd* by Hermas and *The Protevangelium of James*. *The Gospel of Thomas*, which John Barton says could possibly be older than the canonical Gospels, also fell by the wayside and was forgotten (until it was unearthed by archaeologists in Egypt in 1945). Much later the Reformation generated disputes about the seven or so deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament which most Protestants rejected but Catholics confirmed as canonical at the Council of Trent in 1546.

As for the four Christian Gospels, a great deal of work has been done by many other authors and John Barton is able to present a broad summary. He believes stories about Jesus were circulating by word of mouth and Matthew, Mark and Luke individually assembled the material into their



three "Synoptic" books. German scholars believe that they also relied on a now-lost source of the sayings of Jesus, called "Q", but English experts are not convinced. John's Gospel is quite different, however, with very little overlap on the sayings. It may have emerged from a Christian community away from Palestine, perhaps in Ephesus.

The earliest writings in the New Testament are, of course, by Paul, who displays in them no knowledge of the future Gospels. His letters seem to have been written in the late 40s and the 50s AD. John Barton says there are serious discrepancies between the evidence of Paul's own letters and the version of events, including the pattern of Paul's travels, described in the Acts of the Apostles, probably written thirty or forty years later. The tension between the independent missionary Paul and the apostles back in Jerusalem, led by Peter, is a major part of the history of the early Church.

Subsequently the Catholic Church isolated the Gospels (and the Letters) into the short extracts read at Mass (in Latin only, for nearly 2,000 years) and academic analysis was discouraged. The Bible was too dangerous for the laity to study unsupervised. When eventually the brave William Tyndale translated the Bible into English he was forced to flee but was captured in Holland and burnt at the stake in 1536. From then on the academic study of the Bible was an opportunity only for Protestants. When in the early 1960s Bible study groups were set up within the Newman Association they were diplomatically called Theological Studies Groups in order to distract attention from what might have been regarded as dangerously Protestant activities. But this changed greatly after Vatican II.

This book is the impressive result of a lifetime of study by John Barton, formerly a Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford, and also an Anglican priest with, he says, Lutheran leanings. In his conclusion he discusses the conflicts between academic study and religious faith: "Freedom of interpretation, yet commitment to religious faith, need to go hand in hand". This is possible "if we accept the Bible as a crucial yet not infallible document of Christian faith". Such a compromise will not satisfy more conservative Christians who are looking for a solid foundation for their Faith rather than a pick-and-mix source of occasional wisdom. But we are fortunate today in that we have access to the Bible in ways denied to many Christians over the past 2,000 years.

Barry Riley

Membership Report

We welcome the following three new members of the Newman Association: Mrs Mandy Woollorton and Mr Roy Hawkins (Coventry Circle), and Mr Kenneth Forbes Rankin (Herts Circle).

Sadly we have been informed of the recent deaths of: Mgr Louis McRaye (a past member of Coventry Circle), Dr Ed Echlin (Eastbourne and Bexhill Circle), Mr Eric Hopkins (Herts Circle), Mrs Frances Brown (Coventry Circle), Prof Richard Pulfrey (Cleveland Circle) and Mr Patrick Daniels (unattached). May they rest in peace, and may God console their families and friends.

Patricia Egerton

Spirituality Page

Simone Weil

Simone Weil was not a Catholic and nor indeed technically a Christian. She was Jewish and was born in Paris in 1903. She qualified in Philosophy and taught this subject in school and also took breaks to work in the fields as an agricultural labourer, to experience life on the Catalonian front in the Spanish Civil War, and to work in the Renault car factory.



In 1942 she was called on to serve the French Provisional Government and at their request she prepared a study, *The Need for Roots*, which dealt with the need for the French people to rediscover their real spiritual roots. She refused to take more food than the rations given to ordinary people in France and, probably partly as a result of this, died in a sanatorium at Ashford, Kent, in 1943 where, somewhat bizarrely, a bypass is now named after her.

These bald facts disguise a personality of intense spirituality and a mind of genius who was also something of a mystic. As T.S. Eliot wrote in an introduction to *The Need for Roots*, she "might have become a saint" but, as he then observed: "A potential saint can be a very difficult person". Her great friendship was with a Fr. Perrin, to whom she wrote what she called her "Spiritual Autobiography" and many other letters.

She was never baptised a Catholic but it was the Catholic faith to which she was strongly drawn. She wrote movingly of how she first encountered Catholicism one evening in a Portuguese village where the patronal festival was being commemorated and:

The wives of the fishermen were going in procession to make a tour of all the ships, carrying candles and singing what must be very ancient hymns of a heart-rending sadness... I have never heard anything so poignant unless it were the song of the boatmen on the Volga.

Yet something drew her back from baptism. She hints at something in this passage, where she speaks of the establishment by the Church of a "rough sort of totalitarianism in Europe" with the persecution of the Albigenses in the Thirteenth century, and in particular the words *anathema sit*. So she argues that:

In order that the present attitude of the Church should be effective and that she should penetrate like a wedge into social existence, she would have to say openly that she had changed or wished to change.

However, she does write movingly about traditional Catholic teaching, as in this passage on the Christian vocation:

In the state of perfection, which is the vocation of each one of us, we no longer live in ourselves, but Christ lives in us; so that through our perfection Christ in his integrity and in his indivisible unity becomes in a sense one of us, as he is completely in each host.

Anne and John Duddington

Good Friday Evening 2020

Down below the virus hems us in,
Painfully separating one from another,
Instilling fear in all
And searing grief in those so cruelly bereaved –
A kind of darkness over all the earth.

But, up above, perched on the highest branch,
A blackbird sings his sumptuous song,
So many variations on a theme
To call his mate and thrill the human ear,
While the sun streams down
From a cloudless, azure sky.
I, in self-isolated garden, sit entranced
By this glimpse of the heaven to come.

John Mulholland
Good Friday, April 10th 2020



John Mulholland, a member of the Manchester and North Cheshire Circle, was inspired to compose this verse while sitting in his garden on Good Friday.