

Dowry

Summer 2019 Issue N° 42

“O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England thy Dowry.”



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Picture: Solemn High Mass in the traditional form at the high altar of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, on 29th May 2013 - © Gonzague Bridault. After the recent devastation, it is good to recall what this building was designed for, and to pray for its prompt return to divine worship.

Editorial: Blasé, Blazing, Blessed



Last Holy Monday night, the sight of the Notre-Dame spire collapsing in huge flames awoke our blasé times. If we cared little for truth, at least beauty could end, we realised in shock. Whose fault was it? – some enquired.

News from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Middle-East, Africa, China and more had made the public so familiar with the violent persecution of Catholic communities that no reactions seemed to occur any more. Why did the Notre-Dame blaze prompt such emotion then?

Although the fire may be accidental, it raged like a timely symbol of Catholic apostasy and Christian persecution. The flames destroying this Gothic jewel evoked the sabotaging of the Christian legacy of Europe and further afield by our Western elites. France is no exception where, under ‘Catholic’ presidents, for decades the ‘enlightened’ intelligentsia has imposed the public display of blasphemous so-called works of art such as Andres Serrano’s *P... Christ*; and the performance of playwright Rodrigo García’s infamous *Golgota P.....* to mention only a couple. Over the past year, dozens of churches across France were vandalised or even set afire, not to mention the priests attacked or stabbed.

Media and politicians hush or deny the crimes fuelled by their long term dechristianizing of the population, of the legal and educational systems, of the culture and of the family. As a catalyst, the fire at Notre-Dame displayed this shameful reality across the world, on the screens of millions of phones and television sets. Many a lapsed Christian, and even agnostics, suddenly discovered that they cared

for Notre-Dame. They were not sure why, though. But we know. As the spire collapsed, they felt their soul deprived of its invisible antenna and admitted, perhaps too late, that they belonged to civilisation, not to chaos.

Let us pray that all may realise what the civilised world owes to the centuries of Christendom past, and to Europe, its crucible. Let all tourists fall on their knees and become pilgrims or, more fittingly, penitents with us for whom also the Lord died,

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on Good Friday. Through pictures online, let all children for whom ‘Notre-Dame’ only evoked a Disney cartoon be taught the splendour of the Truth once displayed on the inspired stained glass windows.

The French Revolution had suppressed Catholic worship and turned Notre-Dame into a ‘temple to the goddess Reason’, whose part was played by a prostitute standing on the altar. Through God’s mercy and after many martyrs, Paris’ glorious cathedral was given back to the true worship of the true God, Jesus Christ, the divine Logos, soon gracing the altar again with His Eucharistic presence. Let us beg God for the same outcome to be granted us before long, not only in Notre-

Dame, but all across our former Christian countries, and the world over.

As an encouragement, you may like to take a prayerful look at the pictures of last year’s Pilgrimage of Christendom, starting from Notre-Dame every Eve of Pentecost: www.nd-chretiente.com. Every year, up to 15,000 pilgrims, including British and Irish ones, walk the 70 miles to the other Notre-Dame cathedral, in Chartres. It is an inspiration for us all. Back in England, by God’s grace, let us accelerate this momentum of penance, of intercession and of evangelisation. If the days are evil, they are also numbered and soon blessed – for the Lord is nigh.

Dear friends, Europe must find its soul again, and its soul is Christian. We are few and frail, but human nature does not change: neither do God’s answers and gifts. The Roman traditions of the Church, which a growing number of humble souls are discovering, are just what is needed to exit the cultural and spiritual void in which we agonise. Let us pray for our children and young people, our engaged couples and our families, for our bishops and the Holy Father, for our religious, our priests and seminarians. In particular, let us pray for many to enter the lists, together with the three young men from the UK preparing to begin formation at our seminary next September.

We assure you of our prayer during this month of June, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP,
Superior of the English FSSP
Apostolate □

Malleray

Interview with an Ex-Mason

The courageous person interviewed is known to the redaction of Dowry and deemed trustworthy.

Q: Can you tell me about Freemasonry?

A: On the face of it they appear like any other Fraternity/men's club, with their own buildings ('Lodges'). They have a website and open days which any-one can access, and host many 'Old English Night's, where Masons are encouraged to invite their male friends.

Normally a 'Lodge', would contain multiple 'Lodges', group of freemasons. Each has its own particular identity, and would normally meet once a month.

Whilst there are Lodges for the army, the police, thespians and so on, others are generic. There are also visits made to other Lodges

For a meeting, one dresses up in a suit and black tie. It starts informally. Then one is called to the 'Temple'.

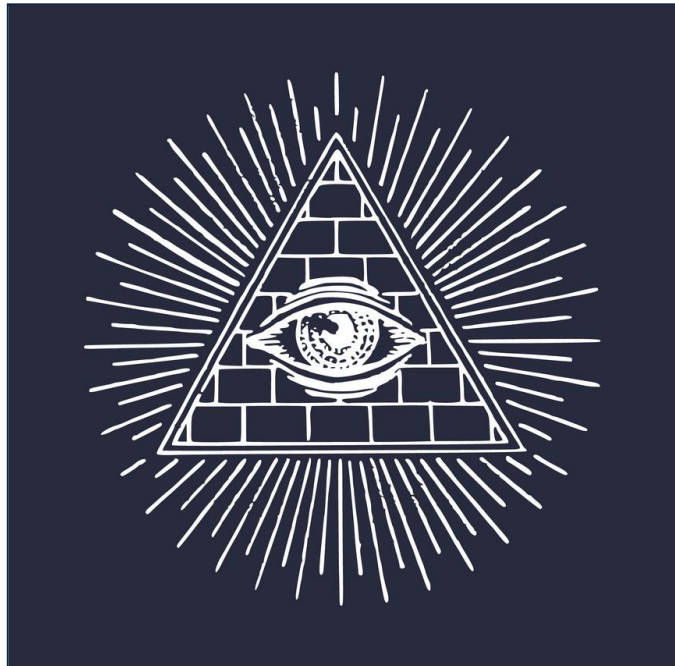
Here a ritual is performed up to an hour. Afterwards, the men adjourn to a dining-room for a formal meal with speeches.

It's very traditional: many of the Lodges go back centuries. We live in times where many are seeking to return to greater stability, and when masculinity is discouraged in general by society. Both elements explain how men are attracted to Freemasonry and its fraternal aspect. They offer a social life – dances, dinners etc, where wives, family, and friends are invited. These normally take place in the Lodge rooms, but not in the Temple.

So on the face of it there is nothing sinister about Freemasonry.

Q: On the face of it?

A: Physically they're like any other men's club or dining-club. However, spiritually they involve themselves in rituals. These rituals have layered



meanings: you see the lower/initial meaning, but the rituals also hold higher/deeper significance. You only learn about this later, as you progress, if ever.

Willing to be a part of rituals which you don't understand makes you submissive. Your involvement pushes you 'deeper in', affects your mind. Freemasonry gradually affects life-decisions, your job, partners, and even your faith. I saw few people who took their faith seriously, but I saw many ex-Catholics.

Masonry is like a building with many rooms. At the beginning you only see the foyer, later other 'rooms'. You only are 'selected', invited into other rooms/side degrees.

Q: Did you not have concerns? You must have read some of the things said about Freemasonry?

Yes, bad things are written about it; however, much of what is in the public domain contains inaccuracies. They use these 'faults', to re-inforce the message that they are being misrepresented, implying that other things will also be mistaken.

They raise money for Masonic and non-Masonic charities. Certain Lodges open their doors as cafes or dining spaces, which are also ways to draw in new members. Others offer space for community meetings.

They speak about clergy being Freemasons and I have seen this myself. As a Freemason I attended Masonic funerals in churches, including a Catholic church, though the latter was without the full Masonic honours. However, it's all a 'smoke-screen', protecting their rituals from scrutiny, which are the principle reason for concern.

Q: How did you get involved?

A: I'm Catholic. I wanted to come closer to God. I thought I had a

vocation and explored this. I wanted the impact of Catholicism to be deeper in my life. I recall asking a priest for help, but I didn't know what to ask for. My only experience of the Church was the Novus Ordo; I did not know that there was anything more. He couldn't give me answers. My life challenges grew deeper, but the Church didn't help, so I began looking elsewhere.

I gave up attending Mass in my mid-20's. I was lost. I tried other avenues to find God. A work-colleague mentioned the Masons. He described the spiritual effects of being involved with the rituals, and implied that it would be good for my spiritual health. I saw Freemasonry as a way of getting closer to God, to use a Freemasonic phrase, 'to find what was lost'. He invited me in.

Q: So what happened?

A: My first experience was 'The Old English Night'. I was picked up from home and taken to the Lodge. We sat in the bar and talked for around 25 minutes, before a man came and asked all Masons into the Lodge. We, (non-Masons) were left in the bar. There were 8 of us, including two men from my regiment. One of the Masons, (I now know to be a Steward) was detailed to accompany us. He spoke about Freemasonry and how it could make a 'good man a better man'. I was later invited to eat with them, where there was enthusiastic talk about the proceedings in the Temple. One naturally grew curious. However, no non-Mason is allowed to be in the Temple during open Lodge. I was later visited at home by two Masons, before being invited to a formal interview by the Lodge committee.



Q: What are they looking for?

A: 'Traditional Gentlemen': integrity, trustworthiness, someone who keeps his word, will not betray a confidence, a man with a sense of self-reliance, of justice, honour, loyalty and charity to those less fortunate than himself, also stable, self-thinking men. They seek men with an affinity for what is outside this physical world – be that in a traditional 'Christian', or vaguely theistic, sense.

They tend to reject men with criminal convictions, those divorced or who



have been associated with scandal. This could include a man whose partner had had an abortion. They would also reject men interested in Freemasonry for their own business interests or career advancement.

Your entrance to Freemasonry would be discussed with other Masons. If after this stage you are approved, your name is formally announced to the Masons, in open Lodge. You are then voted on by a system of white and black balls. Few are accepted.

Q: Why would this be?

A: They seek a good man, to make him a better man. They use the analogy of a stone. If a stonemason is to form a stone for a building, the first step is to select suitable raw material. A stone which is cracked, flaky or misshaped would be unsuitable. Further action shapes the stone ever more finely to fit the required space, 'to serve its destiny'.

Q: So a person becomes 'better' by his own actions and does not require God?

A: Yes. You are given goals to attain, and as a result you are being drawn further and further away from the power of the sacrifice of Jesus and from Grace. This journey is 'hidden in plain sight' from initiation onwards.

Q: What's the initiation?

A: You arrive in a suit and black tie, with white gloves. You are told nothing of what's in store. You are asked to wait in the bar area. After a few minutes, they come for you. You are told to take off a shoe and roll up the trouser-leg to the knee; given a kind of slipper to wear. You bare one breast and remove any money and jewellery: wedding-ring,

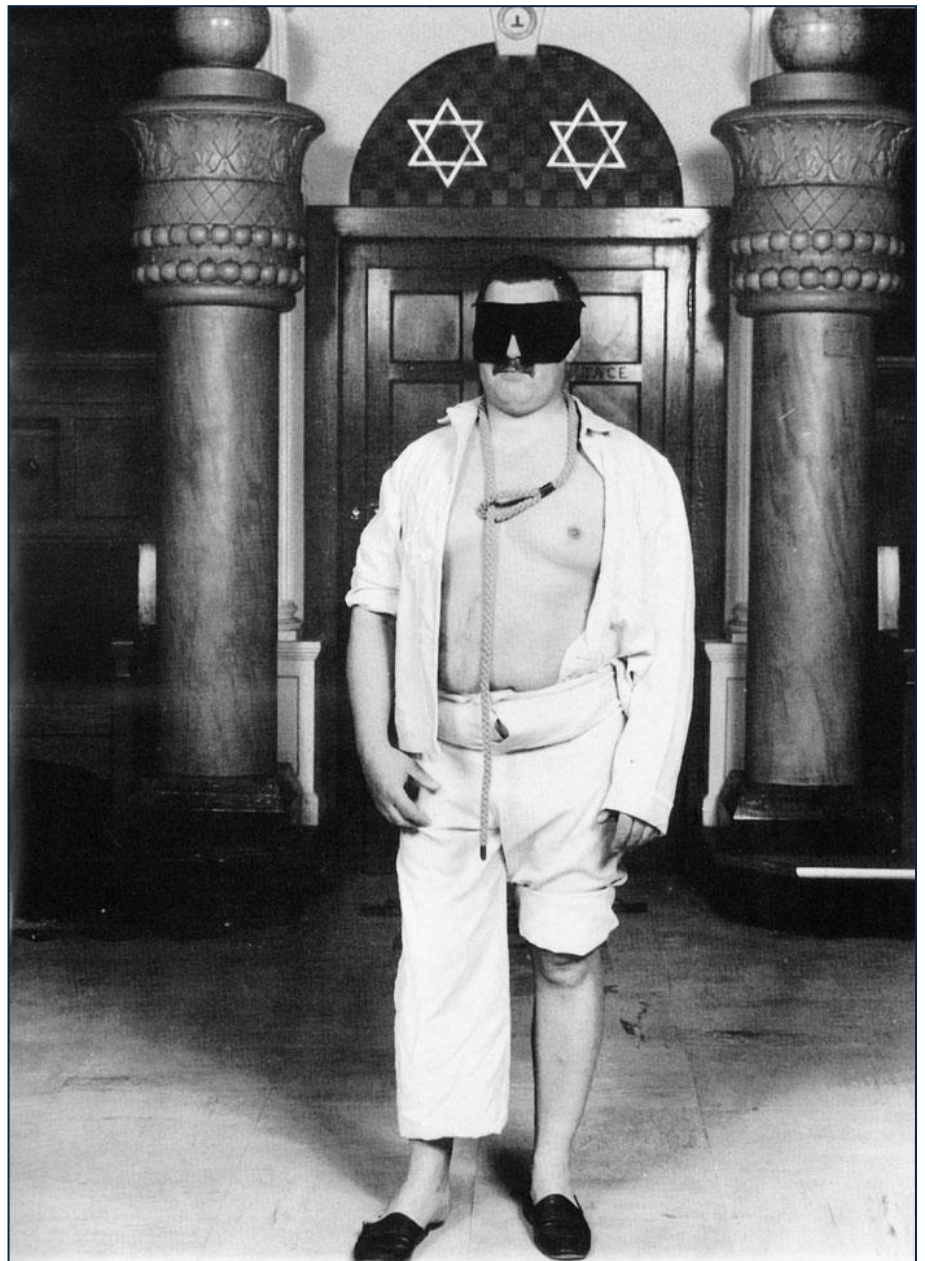
crucifixes etc. Then a noose is put around the neck and you are blindfolded. You are announced. As you enter the room, a sharp dagger is pressed against your bare chest. You are led into the Temple, helpless, dependent on strangers. As you are lead around, questions and answers are given by the Masons. After some ten terrifying minutes you are taken to a place where you are asked: ‘What do you wish most?’ The answer is given to you: ‘To see the light’. As this point the blindfold is removed and you find yourself in a Masonic Temple surrounded by strangers. The first degree grip (handshake) and a password are passed onto you. You are told: ‘When you entered this Lodge you were poor, you had nothing and you should never forget this’. Now you are a Mason and you make your first Masonic vows. The consequences of forsaking/breaking these vows are horrendous, and, given what you have just witnessed, the very thought of doing so is terrifying.

Q: What about the other degrees?

A: In the third degree a murder is enacted and a person raised from the dead by a fellow Mason.

Q: So what happens?

A: You are led into a dark room dimly lit by small pocket lights. In the middle of the floor is a coffin, but it’s too dark to see it. During the course of the ritual, a murder is enacted and you are lowered into the coffin, as though you yourself were dead. A Mason makes as if to draw you out of it with the Masonic hand-clasp of the first degree, then of the second, then of the third. Only the Mason with the clasp of the third degree succeeds. The suggestion is that only a third degree Mason, a ‘Master Mason’, can raise from the dead. There are also vows: you vow loyalty to all Masons, to help them in times of need. If you betray them, you wish evil on yourself in all your ventures and endeavours, and



other dark things too ghastly to mention here. Thus you prefer to die rather than to reveal the Masonic secrets. You are gradually being lead deeper into the darkness.

Q: They say it’s compatible with Religion. Is this true on the practical level?

A: If you were a Church-goer, you find yourself going less often. Freemasonry begins to take over your life. Evil is drawing you away from Good. God and Jesus are never mentioned, only the ‘Great Architect’.

Q: Who’s he?

A: It is not said. You are allowed to discern for yourself – or perhaps it’s something revealed to you at a higher degree.

Q: I read that they are deliberately ambiguous, so that everyone can interpret things as he likes.

A: Freemasonry tends to act like a chameleon. This means that it will appeal to different people, but also that people can deceive themselves that there is nothing wrong in what they are experiencing. However, as one cuts through the layers, there are deeper and deeper meanings, that you only learn as you progress.



Q: So what prompted you to leave?

A: I was deeply concerned by the third degree: I felt it made a mockery of Christ's Resurrection. In addition I was drifting further away from God. Many Freemasons openly mocked religion and particularly the Catholic faith. In fact one of them revealed himself as a Satanist openly. I thought: I don't want to be around such people. I wanted to leave, but felt trapped.

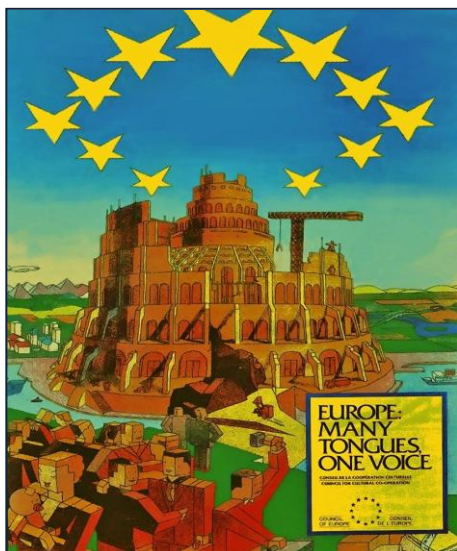
You have forged bonds with the other Masons socially, but also on a deep psychological level your joint experience of frightening rituals holds you together, like men with whom you have shared active (military) service. Then there are the vows, spiritual bonds, ties. You want to leave, but you're on your own, with no-one to help you. You feel powerless.

This went on a long time. I approached people for help and tended to get one of two reactions: The first was horror, disgust and

disdain, telling me that I should leave as it would lead me to Hell (but not helping me to leave). The second was: 'I can't see what the problem is, in fact some of my congregation are Freemasons'. Even when I committed to leaving, there was a series of awkward 'coincidences', which almost reversed my decision.

Q: So what was the catalyst for you to leave?

A: I had tried other things, the Novus Ordo, and even other Christian churches, before I chanced on a



Tridentine Mass. Experiencing this Mass allowed me to witness God’s presence undiluted by the World. I had resigned myself to the fact that I could not leave by my own power, but there I witnessed something much more powerful than myself.

Q: You meant the Church was stronger than Masonry and Holy Mass stronger than their rituals. But were you strong enough to break these bonds?

A: Yes, with the help of the clergy, the faithful, and my prayers to Our Lady.

Q: So you returned to God’s Church?

A: I made my first confession in more than a decade, which was something I found daunting, and returned to the Church.

Q: How has it been since you have returned as a Catholic?

A: I have found peace and a spiritual home. However it’s not been easy, there have been a lot of obstruction/difficulties, both in my business and personal life: my ‘ventures and endeavours’ meeting with failure.

Q: Except for your return to God.

A: Indeed. I imagine that it takes time to shake off the badness I have been exposed to over the years.

Q: What advice would you give to some-one still tied up in Masonry?

A: That Jesus died for you, for your sins, and that God will never turn away a repentant sinner. That there is help available, particularly within the Traditional Catholic world, that priests understand that getting out is difficult and that they will help you.

Q: And for those with loved ones, friends, partners, potential son-in-laws, who are involved in Freemasonry?

A: Don’t be too direct; don’t challenge them or ask them to leave immediately. Don’t face them with ultimata. They have made vows and have loyalties. They may not recognise the problem; they might see it as ‘normal’, not unsafe. Pray for them. Speak to somebody from the church, even if you have to use the confessional. Specialist help is available. These things can take time. Share with them your personal experience of the Mass and your relationship with God. Try to get them to come with you to a Latin Mass; the

Pictures:

The spontaneous reaction of many averagely informed readers, rightly thinking themselves reasonable citizens and not conspiracy theorists, is to dismiss the mere connection between well-known Masonic symbols and the emblems and monuments of some official world institutions. However, the visual similarities are sometimes striking, as acknowledged even by freemasons.

For example, ‘*In Freemasonry, the broken column is, as Master Freemasons well know, the emblem of the fall of one of the chief supporters of the Craft*’ (cf online Masonic dictionary). Also, ‘*the 33rd Degree (Scottish Rite) is the highest Masonic distinction*’.

God knows whether such analogies are intentional or imaginary. What is certain is that the Lord’s criterion does apply: ‘*Ye shall know them by their fruits*’ (Matthew 7:16).

A Catholic should not be afraid of asking himself: Do these institutions *actually* promote divine and natural laws? Do they support and protect divine worship, marriage, family life, unborn lives, education, virtue?

Needless to say, questioning the institutions does not mean condemning those working for them, but surely praying and acting for any ungodly agenda to be exposed and for every soul to be converted, protected and hallowed, for ‘*God is light, and in him there is no darkness*’ (1 John 1:5).

Clockwise, two pages:

Masonic emblems and United Nations flag; Cathedral of Evry, opened 1995; European Parliament building in Strasbourg; *The Tower of Babel*, painting by Pieter Brueghel the Elder; an official poster of the European Union.



Mass will have a cleansing effect on them and might help to break the hold which evil has on them.

Q: How can readers help?

A: It would be really kind if readers could dedicate their next Rosary intention for those men trapped in Freemasonry, that they might seek help, and for those who they turn to, to be blessed to say the right things to help them.

Q: Thank you for this, it has been very informative.

A: If there are any questions that readers have, I can try to answer them.

Notes from the Redaction:

Masonry claims to originate in the Masonic guilds of the Middle Ages, but in fact derives from the rebellion of Lucifer and Adam at the beginning of time. It is a Gnostic sect, the most powerful and widespread existent today. As such it proposes arcane knowledge ('Gnosis' in Greek) and esoteric practices, directed towards man's self-divinisation by his own

efforts: to exalt himself in place of God. The Catholic religion, by contrast, proposes knowledge accessible to all (the Faith) and good works (Charity) directed at self-divinisation through Grace, humility, and subjection to God. Masonry has constantly been condemned by the Catholic Church, and is described as 'demonic' by Pope Leo XIII in *Humanum Genus*. Just as the devil imitates God, so the rituals imitate the sacraments; the Lodge and its members imitate the Church and Her members made up of spiritual stones; the 'light' the light of Truth. Its societal aim is world hegemony; its principal enemy is the Catholic Church.

The latest and highest magisterial pronouncement about Freemasonry is the *Declaration on Masonic Associations* issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, signed on 26th November 1983 by Cardinal Ratzinger with approval from Pope John-Paul II. It states: 'Therefore the Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic association remains unchanged since

their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and therefore membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enrol in Masonic associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion'.

More recently, Pope Francis stressed the incompatibility of Catholicism with Freemasonry in his *Address to Young People* in Turin on 21st June 2015: 'At the end of the 19th century there were the worst conditions for young people's development: freemasonry was in full swing, not even the Church could do anything, there were priest-haters, there were also Satanists.... It was one of the worst moments and one of the worst places in the history of Italy. However, if you would like to do a nice homework assignment, go and find out how many men and women saints were born during that time. Why? Because they realized that they had to go against the tide with respect to the culture, to that lifestyle'. □



Forthcoming Events

Day on the Holy Eucharist for Young Adults 18-35, Saturday 15th June 2019 at St Mary Moorfields, London 4-5 Eldon St, London EC2M 7LS. Organised by Juventutem London. Preacher: Fr de Malleray, FSSP

Confirmations on Thursday 4th July 2019 7pm, by His Grace Archbishop Malcolm McMahon, OP of Liverpool, at St Mary's Shrine in Warrington. Late bookings: padrek@libero.it.

Becoming Saints in an Anti-Christian World
Douai Abbey RG7 5TQ, Berks, **19-21 July 2019**
Convivial Weekend for young adults 18-35 with doctrinal and spiritual talks, debates, Holy Mass, Confessions and Eucharistic Adoration. All meals provided, limited places available. Single room (en-suite): £150; Shared room (cottage): £110*
*Student discount available. Led by Fr Armand de Malleray FSSP, with Fr Patrick O'Donohue, FSSP. Organised by Juventutem London & FSSP England. For more info or to reserve a place, please contact: juventutemldn@gmail.com or +44 7768 060068

All to the Peak District next August!

Our two summer camps will take place at Savio House, Ingersley Road, Bollington, Macclesfield SK10 5RW.

St Peter's Summer Camp 2019 for Boys (age 10-13 & 14-17) from 3pm, Monday 5 August 2019 to 3pm, Saturday 10 August 2019.

St Petronilla's Summer Camp 2019 for Girls

(age 10-13 & 14-17) from 3pm, Monday 12 August 2019 to 3pm, Saturday 17 August 2019.

Ask Fr O'Donohue for a booking form for your child(ren):

odonohue@fssp.org –

St John Fisher House, 17, Eastern Avenue, Reading RG1 5RU – Tel: 0118 966 5284

Dedicated sponsors are needed to help cover the cost of running the boys camp this summer.

Cost: 1) Full estimated cost per child: **£210**

2) Subsidised rate per child: **£100** (let us know how much you can afford if below £100).

Treat your daughter

or your niece to a memorable Catholic holiday, giving her a chance to improve her faith while starting lasting friendships with Catholic girls her age!

While our *Boys Camp* is nearly full, the *Girls'* is only **half booked**. Don't miss this opportunity!

Want to see what girls do all day at our camps? Visit now our great picture albums on <https://www.flickr.com/photos/138056205@N08/albums>

Email your queries to Fr O'Donohue, FSSP: odonohue@fssp.org

Evangelium Conference 16-18 August 2019, Reading:

explaining the Catholic faith in the modern world. Set in the beautiful grounds of the Oratory School, the acclaimed *Evangelium* Conference combines a unique residential weekend break with the opportunity to learn more about the Catholic faith, assisting participants to live, share, and defend the faith today. Talks and workshops are combined with daily Mass (including daily EF by Fr de Malleray, FSSP), Eucharistic adoration, and social events. As every year, Fr de Malleray will be present and will give doctrinal talks.



Fr John Gerard: The *Jesuit* Pimpernel

Fr Gerard S.J. (1564 –1637) could have been the inspiration for Baroness Orczy's celebrated novel The Scarlet Pimpernel (1905) where in 1793 a chivalrous baronet masquerades as a fop to better delude French revolutionaries and save aristocrats from the guillotine. It was English Catholics though, whom Fr Gerard rescued from Elizabethan gaols, and many Anglicans whom he saved from the spiritual dungeon of schism and heresy, reconciling them with the Church of Christ at his life's peril. Fr Konrad Loewenstein, FSSP reviews a too little-known classic autobiography of this heroic and humorous Englishman.

The book is a memorandum of the exploits of the Jesuit priest, Fr. John Gerard, on the English Mission in 1588, translated from the Latin by Fr. Caraman and first published by him with the title 'John Gerard, portrait of an Elizabethan' (perhaps a more

felicitous title).

He arrives at night by boat, accompanied by three other priests, all destined for martyrdom. Posing as a falconer in search of a lost falcon, he is soon directed by Divine Providence into the arms of the most outspoken opponent of Anglicanism and the

Elizabethan Reform in the county. The latter, an influential member of the local gentry, welcomes him into his home and helps him initiate an apostolate amongst friends and their servants in the other great houses in the area.

Numerous are the people he converts, re-converts, strengthens in the Faith, sends to the Continent for studies, for priestly formation, or to enter convents. His work does not long escape the notice of the authorities. Houses in which he stays are searched unexpectedly by the 'poursuivants', whom he eludes often only by a hair's breadth – on horse-back or in priest-holes sometimes for days on end.

On one occasion he comes face to face with the Dean of Winchester, one of his deadliest enemies, a well-known persecutor of Catholics, who had even written a book against him. Fr. Gerard is speaking on spiritual matters in the dining-room of an Oxfordshire house after dinner. The mistress of the house and maids-in-waiting are listening to him, cards spread out on the table to delude any servants who might chance by. Suddenly the Dean is announced and enters the room. In an era prior to the media age his enemy of course does not recognise him.

'After an exchange of courtesies he began talking volubly. It is all these men can do... so after a lot of frivolous talk, this man came out



with the latest news from London: the story of a puritan who had thrown himself from a church tower...

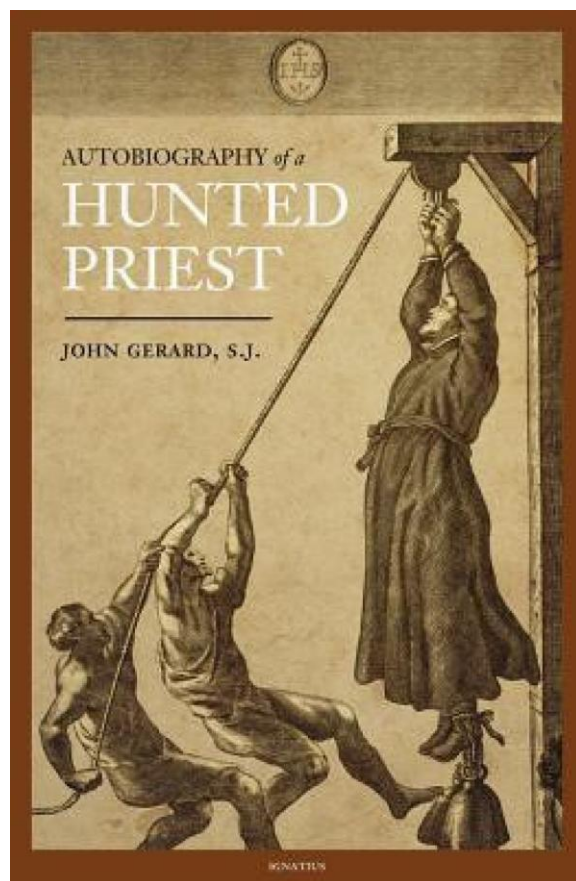
“Poor fellow”, I said “What could have induced him to destroy his body and soul in one fell act?” “Sir”, answered the doctor in a learned and magisterial manner, “it is not for us to pass judgment on any man”... “Quite so” I said, “it is possible, of course, that the man repented of his sin as he was still falling... but it is very unlikely. The man’s last act which we have any means of judging was a mortal sin and merited damnation.” “But,” said the doctor, “we don’t know whether this was such a sin.” “Pardon me, I said, “it is not a case here of our own judgment, but of God’s; he forbids us under pain of Hell to kill any-one, and particularly ourselves, for charity begins at home.” The good doctor was caught. He said nothing more on the point, but he turned the subject, saying with a smile: “Gentlemen should not dispute on theological questions.” “I agree”, I said. “We don’t of course pretend to know theology, but we should at least know the law of God, even if our profession is to play cards.” When the lady I was playing with heard the retort she could hardly keep a straight face. What would he have thought if he had known whom he was talking to?”

Imprisoned in the Tower of London, he describes his torture in a manner as moving as the Faith which informs it is profound. Never at a loss for a cunning scheme, he sends crosses made of orange-peel to the Catholic prisoner in the tower opposite. On the paper in which he wraps them, he has written a message in orange-juice. When the prisoner holds the paper to the fire, words appear telling him to ask the priest to dinner, which he does.

They plan an escape across the Thames on a rope, which fails the first

night due to unexpectedly strong tides thwarting the efforts of his friends in a boat below, but on the second night they succeed, despite the fact that the priest’s hands, weakened by torture, almost let him fall. True to his love for his neighbour and for souls, he also succeeds in rescuing the gaoler and his wife, and finding them a house, and an annuity on which to live for the rest of their days. The gaoler converts, and he remarks: ‘While in prison I had probed him frequently on his faith – his mind was made, but I could not work on his will. My escape was, I hope, in God’s kind disposing, the occasion of his escaping from Hell.’

In these times characterised by disengagement from reality, by an obtuse worldliness, by a tepid indifference to the one true Faith, by an ignorance or complete disregard for the multifarious dangers threatening our salvation, dangers all the greater for their covertness, let this book serve to enkindle or to re-enkindle in the hearts of those that read it that ardour for Our Blessed Lord Who said: ‘I have come to bring fire upon this earth, and would that it were burning already’ (Luke 12:49). □



Picture: ‘They seek him here; they seek him there...’ The elusive Fr Gerard escaped the Protestant police thanks to his many disguises.

But our Warrington-based *Dowry* illustrator was not more successful in pinning down the ubiquitous Jesuit, for the sake of this article. He first mistook him for John Gerard, an Elizabethan herbalist (c. 1545–1612) who lived in Nantwich, 20 minutes south from Warrington. Further research proved that our hero surprisingly grew up in Bryn, 20 minutes north from Warrington.

However, the cunning Jesuit escaped yet another time, when his plausible depiction at the National Portrait Gallery, painted in 1587 (he would have been 23 years old), proved to be that of a third Elizabethan gentleman born in 1555, probably from the Netherlands... where young Gerard studied and later ‘retired’.

What if the three men where one: a posthumous trick from Fr Gerard to elude personality cult and intercede for England, from the powerful recess of humility? Nevertheless, the age and clothes of the sitter make this superb painting a very fitting illustration for our *Jesuit Pimpernel*.

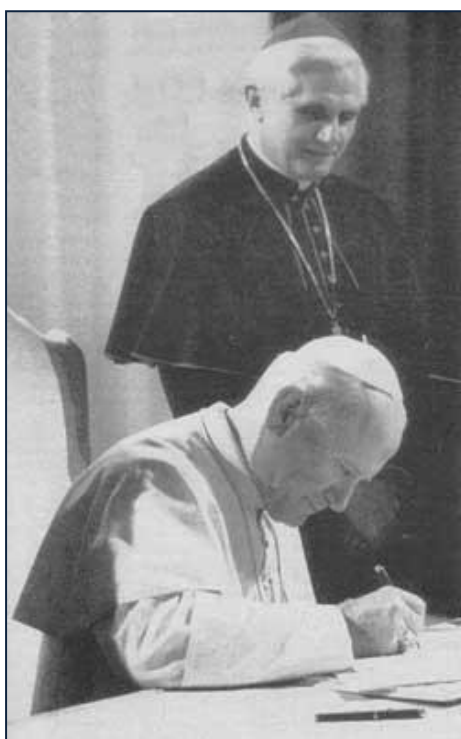
Death Penalty and Church Teaching

Article by Cyrille Dounot, Professor of History of Law at the University of Clermont-Auvergne, and Lawyer at the Interdiocesan Ecclesiastical Tribunal of Lyon; kindly translated by Fr. Ross Crichton

“If the Gospel forbids Nations from ever applying the death penalty, then St. Paul himself has betrayed the Gospel”, wrote Cardinal Journet.¹

On the 11th of May, the Pope approved a new version of § 2267 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* in which it was stated, “...consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that the death penalty is inadmissible...” This doctrinal modification came into effect through a simple rescript, a written administrative response given at an ordinary audience “*ex audientia Sanctissimi.*” Dated the 1st of August 2018, it simply indicates that the new text will be promulgated “*by print in the Osservatore Romano and take effect that same day, thereafter being published in the Acta Apostolicae Sedis.*” This concerns a juridical text of limited scope, ordinarily used for statutory questions, not doctrinal questions. Moreover, pontifical approval of this new paragraph was not made in *forma specifica* (specific form) which would have abrogated all former legislation relating to this matter. The Latin text implies that the Pope simply “*approved its formulation.*” This concerns an approval in *forma generica* (generic form) which permits one to maintain that previous dispositions to the contrary may still

be held to be valid. This text, in a minor juridical form, barely conceals its disdain of forms and institutions by establishing that its coming into force depends on publication in the official press of the Holy See (derogating



from the principle established by c. 8, §1).

In that regard, this modification of the CCC represents a considerable departure from established formalities, whether in the adoption of the original text by the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei depositum* on the 11th of October 1992, or its revision in 1997 by the Apostolic Letter *Laetamur Magnopere* which resulted in the typical edition in Latin, the official text, which has not been modified since then. The recent

change undertaken does not follow similar procedure; neither does it respect any parallelism of forms. It does not have its origins in an Ecumenical Council, supported by a Synod of Bishops backed up by a commission of experts, but in a private opinion of the reigning pontiff which, since the beginning of his pontificate, has been expressed in texts lacking strong magisterial authority.

For instance, there is a *Letter to the Participants in the XIXth Congress of the International Association of Penal Law and The Third Congress of the Latin-American Association of Penal Law and Criminology*, dated the 30th May 2014. There is a *Speech to a delegation of the International Association of Penal Law* on the 23rd October 2014, and again a *Letter to the President of the International Commission against the death penalty* on the 20th March, 2015.

The new formulation of the paragraph in question is influenced by this since the only doctrinal authority quoted in support of the subject is another text of the same Pontiff, a *Speech to the Participants in the meeting organised by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation* dated the 11th October 2017.

This external approach should not conceal the most delicate and painful point of this expression of the pontifical will, that is, the break in doctrinal continuity. However the question is approached, the Catholic is

¹ CH. JOURNET, *L'Église du Verbe incarné*, t. 1, *La hiérarchie apostolique*, Saint-Maurice, 1998, p. 575.

faced with a mystery. Right up to the present Pope, the Catechism explained that “*assuming that the guilty party’s identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty*” (CCC, § 2267). Now, the Pope affirms that this recourse is unacceptable “*in the light of the Gospel*”. These positions seem irreconcilable and we leave the conclusion of this problem to theologians and pastors. Let us content ourselves firstly by calling to mind the perennial teaching of the Church on the question of the death penalty, and then evaluate the reasons given for such a shift in opinion.

A. The Perennial Teaching of the Church

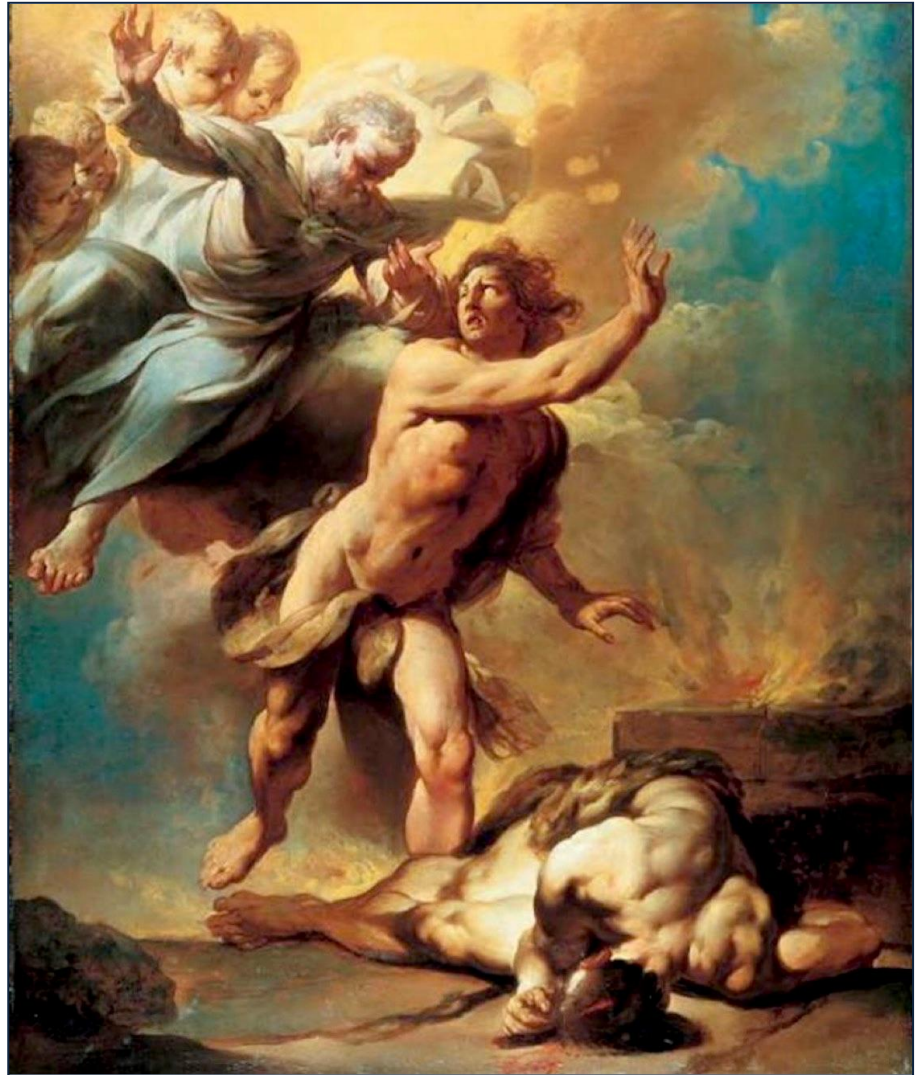
I. Sacred Scripture

Scripture is the primary theological locus to examine concerning this topic. The prohibition imposed by the Decalogue under the concise form *non occides* (Ex.20:13) is accompanied by exceptions which clarify its meaning. This prohibition is applied in an absolute way only to the innocent person. Beginning with the Book of Genesis, the principle of executing the murderer is given: “*Whosoever shall shed man’s blood, his blood shall be shed: for man was made to the image of God.*” (Gen.9:6). In the Law of Moses, a whole series of crimes and offences are punishable by death, proving that this penalty is legitimate.

The New Testament, which takes a less favourable approach to capital punishment does not lessen the legitimacy of the principle. As Cardinal Journet affirms, “*The New Testament did not abolish the ‘right of*

the sword’ ... in stating that ‘he who strikes with the sword shall perish by the sword’, Christ does not condemn the sword; He sets out a universal law of action, temporal and transitive, a law which had moreover already been set out in Genesis: ‘Whosoever shall shed man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed’ (9:6) and which is taken up again in the Book of the

The Gospel shows the death penalty being used by political authorities, although it could be applied at the request of the religious authorities as the Passion narrative demonstrates. “*According to the law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God*” (Jn. 19:7). Capital punishment plays a major role, being the juridical means of the Redemption. That at



Picture: *God reproving Cain for slaying Abel*, by Giovanni Domenico Ferretti, 1740.

*Apocalypse (13:10) ‘He that shall kill by the sword, must be killed by the sword’*².

² CH. JOURNET, *L’Église du Verbe incarné*, t. 1, *La hiérarchie apostolique*, Saint-Maurice, 1998, p. 568-570, which

least establishes a decent reason for not declaring it unacceptable. Moreover, the Gospel presents Our Saviour as accepting this penalty, not denying this prerogative of Pilate or

borrowed the passage from R. MARITAIN, *Le prince de ce monde*, Paris, 1932, p. 17.

the Sanhedrin (*Jn. 19:11*). If the redeeming death of Christ is the height of iniquity and the greatest injustice ever to be committed, it is not because the process is reprehensible, but because the condemned man is the Sinless One.

In the Gospel according to St. Luke, capital punishment is mentioned in the presence of Christ who has nothing to say about it, either when St. Peter says to Him, “*Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death.*” (*Lk. 22:33*) or when the good thief states before Him, without being rebuffed, the principle of a just payment by death for his offences: “*And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds*” (*Lk. 23:41*). Similarly, with the parables which present the death penalty in a favourable light, as in the parable of the talents (*Lk. 19:27*) or that of the unfaithful vineyard labourers (*Mt. 21:41; Mk. 12:9, Lk. 20:16*).

It is St. Paul who paves the way in a more theoretically precise manner. He proposes a double acceptance of the legitimacy of capital punishment, firstly in practice before Festus, “*For if I have injured them, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die.*” (*Acts 25:11*); and then in theory, by laying the scriptural foundation of the legitimacy of the death penalty, “*For princes are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil [...] but if thou do that which is evil, fear: for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God’s minister: an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*” (*Rm. 13:3,4*). Likewise, having stated “*...that a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump*” he urges the Corinthians to “*...put away the evil one from among yourselves.*” (*1 Cor. 5:13*).

II. The Fathers

The second theological locus to explore is that of Tradition, as expressed most notably by the Fathers of the Church. Rather than undertaking exhaustive research, it

Anger of God, 17) we find justifications for the principle. For St. Ambrose, the death penalty has “*the authority of the Apostle*” and he says of the judge, “*he is not permitted to refrain from using the sword in a number of cases, because he/it is at the service of law.*” (*Super Ps. XXXVII, 51*). St. Hilary of Poitiers, in



will suffice to look at some of the principal texts. Even in the writings of those who appear to be personally against capital punishment, such as Tertullian (*Scorpiace, 14; De anima, 56*), St. Cyprian (*Exhortation to Martyrdom V*) or Lactantius (*On the*

his commentaries on St. Matthew’s Gospel indicated that there are two legitimate uses of the sword, “*either for executing judgement or when it is necessary to resist brigands.*” (*XXXII, 2*).

Among all the Church Fathers, St. Augustine appears to have the most to say concerning this subject and tirelessly employs the same reasoning: *“As to killing others in order to defend one’s own life, I do not approve of this, unless one happen to be a soldier or public functionary acting, not for himself, but in defence of others or of the city in which he resides, if he act according to the commission lawfully given him, and in the manner becoming his office.”* (Ep. 47:5). The City of God contains similar

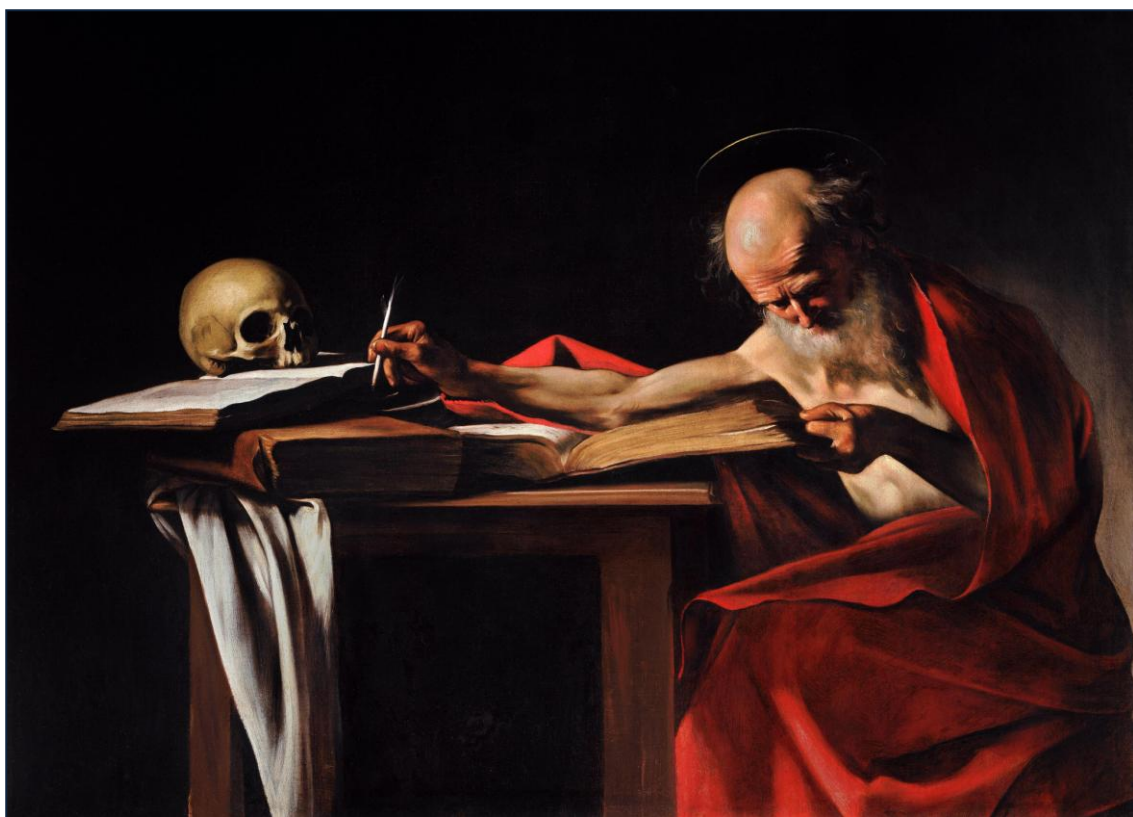
passages:

“However, there are some exceptions made by the divine authority to its own law, that men may not be put to death. These exceptions are of two kinds, being justified either by a general law, or by a special commission granted for a time to some individual. And in this latter case, he to whom authority is delegated, and who is but the sword in the hand of him who uses it, is not himself responsible for the death he deals. And, accordingly, they who have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in conformity with His laws, have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to death wicked men; such persons have by no means violated the

commandment, You shall not kill.” (I,21)

For St. Jerome, *“He who strikes the wicked because of their wrongdoing, and holds the instruments of death in order to remove those who are worse, is the minister of the Lord.”* (On Ezekiel III, 9, 1). He explains that executioners *“are not just men [but] are the ministers and executors of God’s wrath against those who do evil and it is not without reason that they carry the sword.”* (On Joel, II, 27)

character of the death penalty as a means of *“punishing evil-doers”* (I Pt. 2:13-14). The first to develop this topic was Innocent I, in 405, who was questioned concerning the fate of those *“who have imposed the death sentence”* (Consulenti tibi, Ch.III). The Pope affirms that *“the sword had been permitted in order to avenge crimes. It is as ministers of God that they are permitted to carry out such acts of vengeance”* and it lies within the power of the prince, *“after the*



Picture left: *St Augustine*, Sandro Botticelli, Florence, 1480;
Above: *St Jerome Writing*, Caravaggio, Rome, 1605

and as a result, *“to punish [by death] murders, sacrileges and adulteries is not to shed blood, but to administer laws.”* (On Jeremiah, IV, 22,3). St. John Chrysostom says the same. (4th Homily on Genesis § 3).

III. The Thinking of the Popes

1. General Justification

The Popes, from St. Peter to John Paul II, have affirmed the legal

rebirth of baptism, to condemn an accused man to death or to shed his blood” having heard the case.

St. Gregory the Great, Pope as well as Doctor and Father of the Church, upholds the legitimacy of capital punishment in many of his letters, recognising that it is merited in the case of serious crimes. He links this recourse to the death penalty to Roman Law, with reference to two

Imperial Constitutions (C.1,3,10 and C.1,12,2)

St. Nicholas I, in his Response to the Bulgarians of 866, validates the principle of having recourse to the death penalty and explains that such sentences “can be employed without incurring blame (*sine culpa valeat exerceri*)” (Ch.12).

Urban II, in a decretal addressed to the Bishop of Lucca, declares the legitimacy of a death penalty which has not yet been juridically declared and refuses to call “murderers, those who in the fervour of their zeal for their Holy Mother the Church have put the excommunicated to death.”

Asking nevertheless that a suitable penance should be imposed on them.

Innocent III legitimized the death penalty in a Profession of Faith composed for the Waldensians in 1208-1210: “On the subject of secular power, we affirm that it may, without mortal sin, pass sentence for the shedding of blood provided that, in exercising this condemnation, it does not act through hatred but by a judgement, nor with imprudence but with moderation.”

The Catechism of the Council of Trent, published by St. Pius V, takes up this teaching by declaring permissible “homicides ordered by

magistrates who have the right of life and death in order to deal with criminals condemned by courts and to protect the innocent.” (III,33). The Catechism of St. Pius X develops the teaching, listing the cases in which it is “permitted to kill one’s neighbour” notably, “when, by order of the supreme authority, one carries out the death sentence, as a punishment for some crime.” (III, 3,2, n. 413). Pius XI recalls the existence of this “*ius gladii*, which applies only to the guilty.” (*Casti connubii* II,2, § 64).

Picture right: *The Execution of Savonarola*, Stefano Ussi, Florence;
Below: *St Joan of Arc tied to the Stake*, in *Vigiles de Charles VII* by Martial d'Auvergne, 1484;
Next: *Martyrdom of St John Fisher*, Paul Rainer, 1960s;
The Beheading of St John the Baptist, Puvis de Chavannes, 1869, London
Detail of a chasuble, 1882, G. F. Bodley, Watts & Co.



Pius XII took up and developed the Church's teaching on the death sentence. In 1944, before the war was ended, he calls to mind the only exceptions permitted to the inviolability of human life. *"Except in cases of legitimate private defence, of just war directed through legitimate means, of the death sentence inflicted by public authority for very serious crimes tried and proven, human life is inviolable."* (Speech to Parish Priests and Lenten Preachers in Rome, 22 Feb. 1944). In another text, he clarifies the impact of the death penalty. *"When dealing with the execution of a man condemned to death, the State does not possess the individual's right to life. It is reserved to the authorities to deprive the condemned man of the possession of life, in expiation of his crime, after which, by his crime, he is already dispossessed of his right to life."* (Speech to the First Congress of Histopathology, 13 Sept. 1952).

St. John Paul II, with great doctrinal continuity, takes up this teaching. In the first version of the CCC, he wrote, *"The traditional teaching of the Church has recognised the soundness of the law and duty of legitimate public authority to punish with penalties proportionate to the gravity of the crime, without excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty"* (§ 2266). The same Catechism teaches that *"the legitimate defence of persons and societies is not an exception to the prohibition of the murder of the innocent"* because it is not murder in this case (§ 2263).

The Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* of 25th March 1995 marks a prudent, but not doctrinal, turning point, since the Pope recognises the theoretical possibility of the State having



recourse to capital punishment, presented as *"a means of 'legitimate defence' on the part of society"* (n.27). He points to this hypothesis of legitimate social defence of which, *"the fatal outcome is attributable to the aggressor whose action brought it about"* (n.55) and declares the suppression of the offender licit *"in cases of absolute necessity: in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society"* (n.56). This text is found in the *edition typica* of the CCC: *"The traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude, presupposing full ascertainment of the identity and responsibility of the offender, recourse to the death penalty, when this is the only practicable way to defend the lives of human beings effectively against the aggressor"* (§ 2267)³.

2. Particular Justification

These affirmations are coupled with a legitimisation in a particular case, namely that of the heretic delivered to

the secular authorities. St. Leo the Great, Doctor of the Church, congratulates himself on the handing over of a heretic and his followers in his Decretal *Quam laudabiliter* in 447, while censuring the errors of the Priscillianists. This text is taken up by the Third Lateran Council (11th Ecumenical Council) just before the anathema against the Albigensians.

The same justification is given by Pope Simplicius in the fifth century (Ep. XII), Pelagius I in the sixth century (Ep. I) and again by Honorius I in the seventh century (Ep. XIII).

In the era of medieval Christendom, Popes Lucius III, Innocent III, Gregory IX and Boniface VIII adopted decretals which passed into universal legislation, which provided for the handing over of heretics to secular authority.⁴ One of the most well-known texts, the decretal *Vergentis*, states, *"As, according to*

³ The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, published in 2004 by the Pontifical Council Justice and Peace, takes up this teaching in § 405.

⁴ X, 5, 7, 9 ; 13 ; 15 and VI, 5, 2, 18. See also VI, 5, 9, 5, where Boniface VIII makes provision for delivering those who kill Cardinals to the State, *"We do not remove from secular authorities the faculty of using against them those laws which Catholic Princes have issued against sacrileges"* that is to say, death.

legitimate penalties, those who are guilty of treason are punished by death [...] how much more should heretics who offend Jesus Christ be separated from our head who is Christ” (X,5,7,10). These decretals provide for the transfer of the offender “to be punished with the penalty which is their due.” A gloss adds, “The due penalty is burning by fire.” Boniface VIII goes as far as threatening temporal authorities with sanctions should they fail to execute heretics without delay.

In 1215, at the time of the Fourth Lateran Council (12th Ecumenical Council), the canon *Excommunicamus* was adopted which orders that condemned heretics should be handed over to “secular powers”(can.3). This solution was taken up again by the

Council of Constance (16th Ecumenical Council) against the Wycliffists and Hussites. Pope Martin V, in 1418, composed a list of questions concerning the faith, asking explicitly if it was believed that prelates had the possibility of “*appeal to the secular authorities*” (art.32). Leo X, in 1520, in condemning the falsehoods of Luther, finds among them the reprobate idea “*It is against the will of the Holy Spirit that heretics should be burnt.*”

3. Indirect Justification

A final proof of the legitimacy of the death penalty is found in the practice of the Supreme Pontiffs. Here, there are only grounds for an indirect justification, but it is obvious that if such a practice were contrary to the Gospel, it would not have not

obtained the force of law within the Pontifical States. Yet, we find the exact opposite to be the case. Provision was made for the death penalty and it was applied by successive Pontiffs until the suppression of the Papal States in 1870. Provision was even made for the death penalty in the Penal Code of the Holy See from 1929 to 1969 in the case of assassination attempts on the person of the Pope. In the Papal States, the Popes did not display the clemency of the abolitionists towards offenders. From 1796 to 1865, Giovanni Battista Bugatti, the Papal Executioner nicknamed the “*Master of Justice*” executed 516 criminals condemned to death under pontifical justice, sometimes even for armed theft. The Roman Bullary contains an impressive list of texts which

recommend the death penalty for a variety of different crimes:

- accapareurs
- [speculators],
- astrologers,
- counterfeiters, those who use explosives, forgers, bankrupters, fornicators etc.

IV. The Thinking of the Doctors of the Church

The Doctors of the Church have also taught with striking unanimity that the death penalty is legitimate: St. Anselm, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Anthony, St. Peter Canisius, St. Robert Bellarmine and St. Alphonsus de Liguori. St. Thomas Aquinas devotes an



article of his *Summa Theologica* to justify the use of capital punishment by the authority invested with safeguarding the common good (II^a II^{ae}, q. 64, a. 2 ; cf. also I^a II^{ae}, q. 100, a. 8, ad 3^{um}). His conclusion is precise: “*If therefore some individual becomes a danger to society and his sin risks destroying that society, it is praiseworthy and beneficial to put him to death in order to safeguard the common good; for ‘a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump’ (1 Cor. 5:6).*” He responds in advance to arguments taken from the concept of human dignity. “*By sin, man removes himself from the order stipulated by reason; that is why he is stripped of human dignity.*”

Moralists and Catholic theologians unanimously confirm this teaching among whom we find names such as

the Salmanticenses, Cajetan, Vitoria, Suarez, Laymann, John of St. Thomas, Billuart, Tanquerey, Labourdette, etc.

B. The reasons for the change

Faced with such an overwhelming list of authorities, and doctrinal agreement, it is only right to ask questions about why this revision was made. The *Letter to Bishops regarding the new revision of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the Death Penalty* of the 1st of August 2018 argues from the standpoint of “*the new understanding of penal sanctions applied by the modern State*” (no.7) as against “*a social context in which the penal sanctions were understood differently*” (no.8.). This results in an alignment with the

contemporary, social concept which considers punishment as being “*oriented above all to the rehabilitation and social reintegration of the criminal*” (no.7). This “*new understanding*” of punishment leads to the doctrinal rallying cry of abolitionism, in other words, the invalidation in principle of having recourse to the death penalty, considered (wrongly) as not being medicinal. Formulated by the Waldensian heretics of the thirteenth century, this philosophical current comes fully to birth in an adapted form with the Enlightenment, most particularly in the writings of the Italian Criminal Law specialist Cesare Beccaria (*On Crime and Punishment, 1764*) followed by the Utilitarian Jeremy Bentham (*Théorie des peines et des récompenses, 1811*⁵).

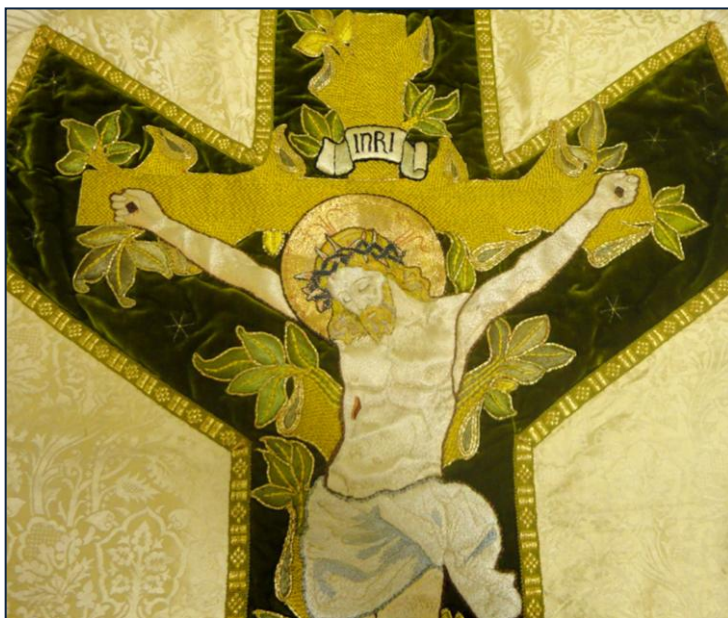


Yet, classically, punishment has three functions: a punitive function which seeks to restore order and atone for the crime; an exemplary function which seeks to discourage repeat offenders and intimidate potential criminals; a medicinal function which aims at the reformation of the criminal and his rehabilitation. This function, far from being the most important is only the least, even superfluous, as the CCC states, *“Punishment has the primary aim of redressing the disorder introduced by the offense. When it is willingly accepted by the guilty party, it assumes the value of expiation. Punishment then, in addition to defending public order and protecting people’s safety, has a medicinal purpose: as far as possible, it must contribute to the correction of the guilty party”* (§ 2266).

This vision, which gives primacy to the *“wrath of God”* (Rom.13:4) and the punitive aspect which alone is mentioned in the Scriptures, has endured the assaults of a modern philosophical current developed in the wake of the Second World War, by the school of thought named ‘Social Defence’ promoted by the French magistrate Marc Ancel and the Italian lawyer Felipo Gramatica whose intention was to reject completely the punitive aspect in favour of the medicinal aspect. Pius XII, aware of this danger, spoke out against those who *“reject punitive punishment”* and prefer novelty in place of doctrinal continuity. He affirms that the Church, *“in theory and in practice has always maintained the double purpose of punishment (medicinal and punitive)*

and this is more in conformity with what the sources of revelation and traditional doctrine uphold on the subject of the constraining power of legitimate human authority” (Speech to Italian Catholic Jurists, 5th Feb. 1955).

Already in 1953, Pius XII had responded to the concerns of criminal lawyers about this change which was underway: *“But do not refuse to consider this ultimate reason for punishment (punitive), merely because it does not seem likely to produce immediate practical results.”* (Speech to the Sixth International Congress on



Penal Law, 3rd Oct. 1953). In his profound reflection on the role of punishment, Pius XII taught that it accomplishes its purpose *“in its own way, in so far as it compels the criminal, because of the act performed, to suffer, that is, it deprives him of a good and imposes upon him an evil”* (Speech to Italian Jurists, 5th Dec. 1954). In that way, *“it would not be just to reject completely, and as a matter of principle, the function of vindictive punishment. As long as man is on earth, such punishment can and*

should help toward his definitive rehabilitation.”

The consequences of this doctrinal change, from the point of view of the role and mission of the Sovereign Pontiff, prove to be weighty. If the death penalty belongs indeed to natural law, and if the Church has constantly upheld its legitimacy, then beyond the simple prudential aspect of accepting or opposing capital punishment *hic et nunc*, the question arises whether or not the Pope can alter the doctrine or if, like a soothsayer of old, he may make contradictory statements. John Paul II, faithful to Tradition, taught that the pontifical *sacra potestas* *“does not include per se any power over the divine law, natural or positive”* (Speech to the Roman Rota, 21st Jan. 2000). The Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus* (Vatican I) made clear, *“For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter that by His revelation they might make known new doctrine, but that by His assistance they*

might inviolably keep and faithfully expound the Revelation, the Deposit of Faith, delivered through the Apostles.” Beyond the singular question of the death penalty, questions arise concerning a conceivable break with Tradition, opening the door to subsequent doctrinal changes.

[This article was published in French in 2018 in *Tu Es Petrus*, the quarterly magazine of the Priestly Fraternity of St Peter in France. It is an abbreviated version of that which appeared in the review *Catholica* n° 141, autumn 2018, p. 46-73.] □

Young Men Travel To Amsterdam And Beyond

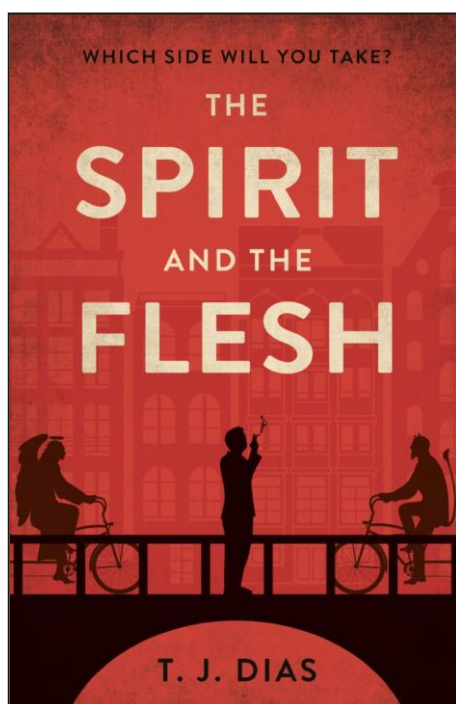
Review of a recently published conversion narrative, by Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP

At the end of a retreat I recently preached on the Holy Eucharist, a participant approached me to tell me about his first book soon to be released. *The Spirit and the Flesh* is set in Amsterdam near where the author once lived. His book is a puzzling little story (160 pages). The word ‘novel’ is not displayed on the front cover. This is accurate, because the light fictional setting is clearly a rhetorical device for presenting arguments for and against Catholicism. A similar narrative convention was used in Plato’s dialogues, in Methodius’ *Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, in Marguerite of Navarre’s *Heptameron*, and in many others books.

However, T. J. Dias writes in a very accessible style. You will find in *The Spirit and the Flesh* no philosophical jargon or esoteric references. The book could almost have been called *The 1001 Pubs*, as each further stage in the discussion coincides with a change of venue and the ordering of yet another pint (these young men are surely no teetotalers). But the apologetic themes are convincingly and clearly brought across, in a way plainly intelligible to untrained readers.

As noted, the plot is very simple. Paul Thompson, a lapsed Catholic, is departing from England for a weekend in Amsterdam with his university housemates – Roger, a non-religious liberal interested in pleasure-seeking, and Sean, a theology student and Catholic with strong religious convictions. An unlikely group, they nevertheless head to the pubs and restaurants of Amsterdam, arguing

and debating life’s deepest moral and spiritual issues along the way. Roger would not understand the biblical title *The Spirit and the Flesh* since in his opinion (as for many young men, sadly) any ‘spirit’ is to be sipped from a glass or straight from the bottle, but not welcomed into one’s soul.



As the conversation winds through the vivid setting of Amsterdam, Paul finds himself intellectually brought closer to his faith, while the other two develop their arguments for and against the Catholic religion. When a moral temptation is thrown into his path, Paul is left to his own internal debate: listen to an angel or a demon? Submit to the spirit or the flesh?

The reactions and behaviours of the protagonists feel genuine and the

Catholic statements are doctrinally reliable. In the risky context of a trip to sinful Amsterdam, the author also manages to avoid improper descriptions. It makes the book fit for reading by average adult Catholics in my opinion, provided they accept that a narrative thread is prostitution (obviously not condoned). However, lapsed Catholic readers and ‘nones’ are more likely to benefit from the book, which is written at their intention.

The ending is encouraging, although a dramatic warning to agnostic readers might have been more effective. There could also have been some exposure to Catholic liturgy and devotions, possibly in the context of the beautiful St Agnes Church run by the Priestly Fraternity of St Peter (Sint-Agneskerk, Amstelveenseweg 163, 1075 XA).

Had the three lads ventured to the Rijksmuseum, they could have glanced at Rembrandt’s masterpiece, *The Night Watch*, a depiction of a militia company about to march. Analogically though, our three Brits could find help during their adventurous stroll through the night of sin, not from burghers with lances, but from invisible (winged) guardians.

In conclusion, I find that T. J. Dias presents a useful clash of opposing worldviews in his thought-provoking but not preachy narrative. This short book might be a timely present for turbulent and ‘emancipated’ young adults.

The Spirit and the Flesh by Troubador Publishing, 28 Apr 2019, is available for £9.99 from all major book sellers, including Amazon. □

The Case of Pope Liberius and St Athanasius

By Fr Seth Phipps, FSSP, who holds a PhD in Classics from Oxford University and whose conclusions are drawn from his own readings of the sources, as well as from secondary literature.

Did a reigning pope, Liberius, fall into heresy? And did he excommunicate the thoroughly orthodox and great saint, Athanasius?

The background facts are these. The Council of Nicaea in 325 ought to have resolved the doctrinal issue, having unambiguously condemned Arius and asserted the Trinitarian faith. But the Arian factions continued to operate: holy and orthodox men such as St Athanasius and Bishop Hosius of Cordoba remained a constant obstacle, and they sought repeatedly to undermine them.

In 337, St Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria succeeding Alexander, suffered his first exile at the hands of Eusebius of Nicomedia: the Arians tricked the Emperor Constantine I into ratifying the exile. When Constantine died the Arians gained a powerful

ally in Constantius II (who succeeded eventually in unifying the Roman empire under his control, overcoming Constans II in the West). This Emperor reasserted the condemnation of Athanasius in 338, but Athanasius

appealed to Pope Julius I, and was eventually reinstated (340). His innocence was confirmed by the Council of Serdica (343) and he occupied his See until the third exile, in 356, when he fled to Upper Egypt



after being interrupted by an armed guard in the midst of divine services. Athanasius was restored in 362 under Julian the Apostate, only to be exiled again by the same Emperor that same year; the Emperor Jovian restored him in 363, but he suffered yet another exile in 364 by Valens. It was only the accession of Pope St Damasus I to the Holy See in Rome that permitted

Athanasius to return to Alexandria in 366 one last time before his death in 373. Everyone is agreed that at all times Athanasius remained strong and unwavering in defence of the orthodox faith.

Pope Liberius took office in AD 352. In 347 and 351 there had been councils at Smirmium (where

Constantius II resided) that drew up Arian creeds: the second of these was the so-called ‘Blasphemy of Smirmium’, the most forcefully Arian of the texts. In AD 352, Liberius succeeded Julius I, as the Arian controversy continued to rage. At Liberius’ request, Constantius called a council at Arles, at which the participants (which included papal

(Below: an imaginary description of Alexandria as St Athanasius may have known it.

Alexandria was then the intellectual centre of the world.

Five times the holy Patriarch was exiled from his episcopal city, in which he returned to died eventually.)



legates) condemned the orthodox Athanasius, who continued to be a thorn in their side. Whether or not Liberius acquiesced to this at all, in 355 there was another council, this time at Milan, which – apparently due to considerable intimidation from the Arian-imperial faction – repeated the condemnation of Athanasius. Shortly after, Liberius seems to have gone into exile and an anti-pope, Felix, imposed at Rome; Liberius returned, probably in 357 or 358, and continued ruling until his death in 366. His successor, St Damasus, spoke of him favourably, as did others such as St Ambrose, and in some places he was and still is venerated as a saint.

So far, this narrative is not contested. But when we start to investigate Liberius' attitudes towards the heresy and St Athanasius, things start to get murky.

It seems that in 352, at the start of his pontificate, the new pope received letters that had been sent to his predecessor, Julius, from eastern bishops who wanted him to join them in condemning Athanasius. What was Liberius's response? According to St Athanasius himself, who relates the affair in his *Historia contra Arianos*, the pope at this stage remained steadfastly orthodox, and resisted the efforts of the heretics. Athanasius had letters drawn up in his defence by the Egyptian bishops, and in a letter ascribed to Liberius and addressed to the Emperor (*Obsecro*) – the authenticity of which is not seriously doubted – Liberius expressly refused to condemn Athanasius; he also rejected communion with those eastern bishops who will not reject Arianism. Moreover, we have another letter addressed to Bishop Hosius of Cordoba (256-358) – a defender of Athanasius: in this, he laments what happened at the council of Arles (353). Then in 355, Liberius wrote to bishops who had suffered exile for their orthodoxy (*Quamvis sub*

imagine), and predicted that he would suffer the same fate – which is precisely what happened after the council of Milan.

So far so good: we have a clear enough picture of an orthodox pope resisting Arian overtures. It corresponds with the account of Theodoret (393-c.456), who entertainingly relates the interview between Liberius and Constantius, in which the pope magnificently stands up to the Emperor, the consequence of which was his exile.

However, there is another letter, which is preserved in the writings of the staunchly orthodox western bishop St Hilary of Poitiers, known as *Studens paci* ('Eager for peace/communion'). This purports to

(Right: Altar of St Athanasius in the Chiesa di San Zaccaria in Venice, where his remains were later transferred from Alexandria.)

have been written later, from exile, although the date of composition is unclear, and in it the pope *apparently* states that he had already excommunicated Athanasius as early as 352. He gives the reason that Athanasius had failed to come to Rome when summoned in response to the aforementioned letters from the eastern bishops. St Hilary comments on this letter with (presumably) irony: 'What is there in this letter that is not of sanctity?' Elsewhere, Hilary condemns Liberius in the harshest terms: *Anathema tibi a me dictum, Liberi, et sociis tuis; iterum tibi anathema et tertio, praevaricator Liberi* ('I pronounce anathema upon you, Liberius, and upon your allies; a second, and third time, anathema upon you, wicked Liberius!').

St Hilary also preserves three other letters (*Pro deifico timore*, *Quia scio*, and *Non doceo*), in which Liberius reasserts his communion with Constantius and the Arian bishops, and distances himself from Athanasius. They are all of a similar tenor, and evidently by the same author.

It is difficult to square the image of the bravely orthodox pope that I outlined above with these letters: one cannot imagine the author of *Obsecro* or *Quamvis sub imagine* also doing what is claimed in *Studens paci* at the same time! As a result, some have doubted the authenticity of the pro-Arian letters. Indeed, we cannot exclude the possibility that they are forgeries. This is the opinion, for example, of the formidable E. Amman, in his seminal article in the *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique*. There may be some circumstantial evidence in favour of this claim: the four exile letters can be read as parodies, or at least reversals, of the contents of the four orthodox letters of Liberius that we have already mentioned. To quote the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1913):

These (pro-Arian letters) correspond to the authentic letters which have preceded, each to each: the first, "Pro deifico timore" is a parody of "Obsecro"; the second "Quia scio uos", is a reversal of everything said in "Quamvis"; the third "Non doceo", is a palinode, painful to read, of the letter to Hosius" (s.v. 'Pope Liberius').

If a certain faction had wished to forge letters showing a reversal of the pope's opinion, this would certainly be a good way to do it – to take existing letters and simply twist them to an opposite meaning. However, this author is unconvinced that the correspondence is quite as clear as the *Catholic Encyclopedia* suggests.



ALTAR
DEI BILGANO

IOHANNES
DE PETRI I. JO.

CORPUS S. ATHANASII PATR. ALEX. CONF. ECCL. DOCTORIS

CORPUS S. ZACHARIAE
PATRIS S. JO. BAPTISTAE



On the other hand, it is not so hard to envisage all the pro-Arian letters being written at the same time from exile. *Studens paci*, we note, only implies that Liberius had already excommunicated Athanasius in 352 – in fact, all it says is that Athanasius was informed this would be the outcome.

It is entirely conceivable Liberius did threaten him with this at the time, but did not carry out the threat (perhaps after receiving the letter of the Egyptian bishops), and only now in exile asserted that Athanasius was separated from the communion. This is the view of the Jesuit scholar, P. Smoulders, who believes that Liberius ‘backdated’ the excommunication. Smoulders also argues that the letters represent ‘progressive involvement of the Pope in the doctrinal question’, and accepts them all as genuine (P. Smoulders SJ, *Hilary of Poitiers’ Preface to his Opus Historicum* (Leiden; Brill, 1995 p.26-7).

In reality, there is no way to know the condition of Liberius when he wrote them, or to what extent he truly subscribed to their contents – it is quite possible that they were all written *vi et metu* (i.e. under duress), or they could equally represent the sincere *volte face* of the pope in confusing times. Since there is no explicit admission of heretical teaching in the letters, the excommunication of Athanasius could have been a purely political move.

At any rate, St Athanasius and St Jerome both assert that Liberius did yield to heresy when in exile – according to Jerome, *taedio victus exsilii* (‘overcome by the tedium of exile’). Athanasius says this was after two years, placing it around 357. Jerome tells us that Liberius went in to exile for his faith, implying he had not yet given way to the Emperor (casting further doubt on the obvious reading of *Studens paci*); he was then

‘broken’ by Fortunatian. Jerome also says in another work Liberius returned to Rome ‘victorious’, presumably meaning that he was now recognised as the true pope rather than the anti-pope, Felix. Athanasius relates the whole episode very sympathetically, and makes no reference to Liberius condemning him or excommunicating him at any point, which would seem surprising if this had really happened.

Unfortunately, neither makes it clear to which heretical formulation Liberius subscribed; another author, Sozomen (400-450), relates that in 357, Constantius summoned Liberius to Smirmium and had him sign a document rejecting *homoousios* (‘consubstantial’) but perhaps not precisely containing heresy. It is

(Right: Mosaic of St Athanasius.)

important to remember that at this stage the full implications of all such terms as *homoousios* was still being teased out. Sozomen also has Athanasius signing the same document! On the other hand, according to Sozomen, the Arian Eudoxius put it about that Liberius had in fact consented to the ‘blasphemy of Smirmium’ (the second creed, which contained the strongest Arian teachings).

The strange thing is that Liberius appears to have been welcomed back after exile among the Roman people, who had stubbornly resisted the attempt to impose Felix as their pope (the story is related with some minor differences by both Theodoret and Sulpitius Severus, who omits any mention of Liberius subscribing to

heresy). Were the Romans unaware that Liberius had fallen, or is this confirmation that he had in fact not done so?

As if things were not already confusing enough, we then have the testimony of the *Liber Pontificalis* and the *Acts of Eusebius*, which both assert that Liberius forcibly imposed heresy on the people of Rome after returning from exile. If this is true, there is remarkable little other record of it – the rest of Liberius’s pontificate seems instead to be marked by silence, a silence that some have characterised as that of a broken man. But in history, silence is often a poor witness.

So what are we to make of all this?

It seems likelier than not that Liberius did subscribe to some sort of heretical formulation, and if this happened in exile, then one ought in charity to assume that it was not a fully willed act. However, it is doubtful that he would have been restored to Rome unless he had given Constantius and the Arian factions something. One can guess that at the same time Liberius would have condemned Athanasius – since this had long been a goal of the Arian factions, it is improbable they would have settled for anything less – but we cannot be confident as to the extent of this condemnation, and it would be rash to accept uncritically the sequence of events given in the letter *Studens paci*.

The Catholic today may wonder where this leaves him. It is unfortunate that many people try to adopt this episode for apologetics purposes. The late, great Michael Davies, for example, saw in Liberius excommunicating Athanasius a parallel with John Paul II and Archbishop Lefebvre. On the other hand, some of the most vehement defenders of Liberius’s orthodoxy today are sedevacantists: since many

justify their position by the (unproven) claim that a pope loses his office on commission of heresy, they cannot allow that in Church history a pope did fall into heresy and yet remained as pope!

We will probably never get to the bottom of it with any degree of certainty: Aristotle famously remarked that we must not look for a science to give us greater certitude than its methods are capable of rendering – and this is very clear in history. There are too many gaps in our sources, and texts do not always allow us a good glimpse into the motivations of their authors.

All that said, we may be able to draw a few general conclusions. Firstly, there seems little question of papal infallibility being compromised – papal acts committed *vi et metu* are not imputable, and even if Liberius had been more willing to cooperate with the heretics, there is no indication that he attempted to enforce heresy on the universal Church. However, it was certainly believed by some in antiquity that Liberius did fall into heresy, and even willingly – and even if they were wrong in this judgment, it is telling that no one at any point ever seems to have suggested that *ipso facto* he lost his office. Finally, whether or not

Liberius did excommunicate or otherwise condemn Athanasius, there is no evidence whatsoever that Athanasius defied such a ruling or denied his authority to make it. We find instead a constant tone of deference towards the Pope, and a genuine sorrow that he was convinced to subscribe to heresy. Indeed, whereas Athanasius was constantly a victim of injustices perpetrated by his enemies, he never sought to fight back in like manner – his life is one of astonishing obedience to a Church that he must have often felt abandoned him. We cannot find in him a justification for disobedience or schism. □



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(Picture: Ordination of our Welsh seminarian Gwilym as Exorcist and Acolyte on 16th February 2019 at our Bavarian seminary.

Please pray for Harry, Conan and Tom, from the UK, who were admitted to begin formation at our American seminary next September)

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