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## Catholic Education and the Bureaucratic Usurpation of Grace

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Tracey Rowland

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There are striking similarities between the story of St Marguerite Bourgeoys and that of Australia's first saint, Mary MacKillop. In both cases a young woman struggled to educate children in a developing colony thousands of miles from the centre of Christian civilisation while contending with authorities who were not always people of equal vision and imagination. As Joseph Ratzinger once observed, 'the saints were all people of imagination, not functionaries of apparatuses'.<sup>1</sup>

Writing earlier in the twentieth century, the French poet Paul Claudel spoke of the 'tragedy of a starved imagination' and he blamed the Jansenist movement in France for holding the noble faculties of imagination and sensibility in contempt, to which, he suggested, certain lunatics would have added reason itself, but for some sustained opposition from Jesuit quarters. Clearly St. Marguerite had not been infected with the Jansenist mentality although it was the most influential heresy of her time. On the contrary she is someone who in her life's achievements exemplified what Pope Benedict has called 'the humanism of the Incarnation'. This is a humanism founded on the idea that all human persons have been made in the image of God to grow into the likeness of Christ. As the idea was expressed in paragraph 22 of the Conciliar document *Gaudium et spes*, Jesus Christ, the redeemer of man, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. This Conciliar theme was reiterated by Pope Benedict in a more recent address delivered to the International Federation of Catholic Universities in 2009. On that occasion the pope exhorted the leaders of Catholic universities to understand that "revelation must constitute the central point of teaching and research", because the human person "is incapable of fully understanding himself and the world without Jesus Christ"<sup>2</sup>

Paragraph 22 of *Gaudium et spes* was the most often cited of all the paragraphs of the Second Vatican Council in the speeches and homilies of Blessed John Paul II. It was, one might say, the 'signature tune' of his pontificate.

In his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, (10.1) the late pontiff followed through the logic of paragraph 22 with his statement that the person who wishes to understand himself must appropriate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and redemption in order to find himself. He also observed that through the gift of grace, which comes from the Holy Spirit, the human person's social horizons are broadened and raised up to the supernatural level of divine life (DV 58.3). People are then able to free themselves from various forms of social conditioning (DV 60.1). As G.K. Chesterton expressed the concept, the Catholic Church is the only thing that stands between the human person and the indignity of being a child of one's time. Or, as Friedrich Nietzsche would have it, the indignity of being merely another member of the herd – someone who blindly follows social fashions without any evaluation of their meaning.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Images of Hope*, 67.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

Early in the twentieth century, the Bolshevik theoretician Nikolai Bukharin famously argued that human beings are nothing more than collections of social influences united in a small unit as the skin of a sausage is crammed with sausage meat. It is precisely from this kind of predicament that the Church strives to liberate people. As John Paul II remarked in an address to the scholars of Lublin University in 1987 in the dying days of the Communist regime, “the human person must stave off a double-temptation: the temptation to make the truth about himself subordinate to his freedom and the temptation to subordinate himself to the world of objects: he has to refuse to succumb to the temptation of both self-idolatry and of self-subjectification”.<sup>3</sup>

More recently, another Russian writer called Alexander Boot who is definitely not a Bolshevik, wrote a book with the title *How the West was Lost*. A central thesis of the book is that there are basically three types of people found in the Western world today. He called them *Westman*, (a generic term for Christians), and *Modman Nihilist* and *Modman Philistine*. He probably should have included a fourth type, Islamic Man, but he didn't, so I will confine my remarks to what he said about the relationship between *Westman* and *Modman Nihilist* and *Modman Philistine*. His notion of Modman nihilist would seem to equate with the type of person who succumbs to what John Paul II called ‘the temptation of self-idolatry’. The nihilist idolizes himself and acknowledges very few limits to the exercise of his freedom. The typical academic nihilist believes that nature can be controlled and manipulated by science and thus scientific research becomes a kind of holy-grail which promises to free people from the burdens of genetics and perhaps, one day, even death itself. The limits to which the nihilist is prepared to push social boundaries may be found in the publications of the Australian philosopher Peter Singer who is a Professor of Princeton University. Although Singer describes himself as a utilitarian, not a nihilist, his utilitarianism seems to be founded on the idea of giving the maximum number of people the maximum amount of freedom to do whatever they like without any reference to any objective good. Singer not only believes that abortion, euthanasia, and infanticide are acceptable, but he adds to his list, sexual intimacy with one's pets. In short, he eschews any suggestion that there is any order, any inherent logic, within nature, and this is a key hallmark of a nihilist.

The philistine is different. In Nietzschean parlance the philistine is a typical member of the herd who has no higher aspirations than to be a member of the herd. Unlike the nihilist he isn't interested in asserting his individuality against social conventions. Instead, the philistine succumbs to the second temptation identified by John Paul II, that of subordinating himself to the world of objects, allowing his life-style choices to be determined by the most immediately and easily available commodities presented to him in popular culture.

Boot argues that Christians are often defeated in social battles because the nihilist and philistine forces exist in a symbiotic relationship. Although they do not work together in any organisational sense, the arguments of the nihilist are buttressed by the behaviour of the philistine. If Boot is correct in his sociological analysis, then this means that Christian leaders need to fight on a double-front: against high-brow academic nihilism on the one side and low-brow anti-intellectual philistinism on the other.

One might argue therefore that at the heart of Catholic education at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary, there needs to be an objective to inoculate students against the world-

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<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Journey to Poland. Address of John Paul II to the World Culture. Aula Magna of the Catholic University of Lublin*, June 9, 1987, sec. 6:3, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1987/june/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19870609\\_mondo-cultura.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1987/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19870609_mondo-cultura.html)

views of the nihilist and the philistine. Positively students need to understand that they have some fundamental choices to make between the humanism of the Incarnation as articulated by the Church, the Social Darwinism of Friedrich Nietzsche and his followers with its materialist cosmology, and the equally materialist cosmology of the philistine who is defined precisely by his lack of interest in projects of self-transcendence.

The first step towards this is to have a vision of Catholic education based on a Christocentric Trinitarian theological anthropology. One cannot get beyond first base with students unless they have some rudimentary understanding that they have been created in the image of a Tri-personal God and some understanding of how it is possible for them to relate to each of the Persons of the Trinity. In other words, students need to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives, the role of Christ, and the role of God the Father.

One of my Dominican friends, Fr Peter Knowles, who has now gone to his eternal reward, would often complain that young men entered seminaries believing that the Trinity is an old man, a young man and a bird. That is exactly how the Trinity is represented above the altar of the Holy Trinity Church in Krakow which is the home to the largest Dominican priory in the world. It was perhaps for such reasons that John Paul II wrote a trilogy of encyclicals explaining how the human person stands in relation to each particular Person of the Trinity. The theological content of these Trinitarian encyclicals (*Redemptor Hominis* 1979, *Dives in Misericordia* 1980 and *Dominium et vivificantem* 1986) provides a summary of two millennia of theological reflection and is, arguably, the cement upon which a Catholic notion of education can be built. In *Dives in Misericordia* John Paul II went so far as to assert that linking theo-centrism with anthropocentrism, or we might say, emphasising the relationship between divinity and humanity, rather than setting the two in opposition to each other, is ‘one of the basic principles, perhaps the most important one, of the teaching of the last Council’.<sup>4</sup> While Immanuel Kant thought that it made no difference whether people believe that there are 3 persons in the deity or 10, two millennia of Catholic scholarship has taken a different position.

In his work *Augustine and Modernity*, Michael Hanby in fact argued that the key issue in contemporary Catholic life is whether the meaning of human nature and human agency are understood to occur within Christ’s mediation of the love and delight shared as a gift between the Father and the Son, or beyond it. He further suggested that one of the many errors of the classical Pelagians was that they attempted to create possibilities for human nature ‘outside’ the Trinity and the mediation of Christ and in particular that they tried to smuggle a Stoic account of human volition into the Christian tradition.

In contrast to the Stoic tendency to suppress delight and desire in relation to the will, and the Kantian tendency to suppress delight and desire in relation to the intellect, in Catholic anthropology love and reason stand together and work in tandem as the ‘twin pillars of all reality’.

Love, along with faith and hope, is a theological virtue. While John Paul II wrote a trilogy of encyclicals dedicated to each Person of the Trinity, Benedict XVI is working on a parallel trilogy on the theological virtues: the first encyclical of his pontificate *Deus Caritas Est*, focused on love, the second encyclical *Spe Salvi*, focused on hope, and we are anticipating a third encyclical on faith.

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<sup>4</sup> DM 1.4

The theological virtue of faith operates on the human intellect to lead it to truth, the theological virtue of love operates on the human will to lead it to goodness and the theological virtue of hope has a special association with the human memory and imagination leading these faculties to presentiments of divine glory and beauty. What we call spirituality is therefore, at least in part, a kind of pathology report on how each of the theological virtues is operating within the human person's soul. Different spiritual disorders arise when one or more of the theological virtues are weak.

Pope Benedict has written that two common contemporary spiritual disorders are those he labels "bourgeois pelagianism" and "pious pelagianism". Here his use of the word 'bourgeois' has nothing to do with being a member of the middle class, or at least, not necessarily. He uses the adjective in the same sense as sociologists like Werner Sombart and the historian Christopher Dawson. Sociologists commonly assert that protestant cultures are bourgeois, while Catholic cultures are erotic and aristocratic. The bourgeois mentality is about fitting in with contemporary social norms and being practical and efficient in one's use of resources. The bourgeois temperament is calculating, pragmatic, focused on efficiency and predictable outcomes. It discourages moral heroism as unreasonable and gives priority to the goods of efficacy over the goods of excellence. In contrast, the erotic or aristocratic mentality is all about the passionate pursuit of excellence. Here 'erotic' means passionate in the broadest sense, not in a narrow sexual sense, while aristocratic does not mean born with a title, but the highest or most excellent. It is often said that the movie *Babette's Feast* is an excellent dramatic illustration of the aristocratic or erotic personality type. Babette spends her entire fortune on one party and invites the entire village. There is nothing left over, nothing held in reserve.

Transferred to the spiritual plane the problem Pope Benedict identifies with the bourgeois pelagian is the attitude that God doesn't really expect people to be saints. Benedict diagnoses this mentality as evidence of the spiritual disease of *acedia* – a kind of anxious vertigo that overcomes people when they are presented with the idea that they have been made in the image of God to grow into the likeness of Christ.

The alternative spiritual pathology is that of the pious pelagian. This type of person seeks a relationship with God that is modelled on contemporary professional practices, in particular the practice of enhancing one's *curriculum vitae*. The pious pelagian performs certain works and says certain prayers and expects to get a return on his spiritual investment. While the bourgeois pelagian is guilty of the sin of despair, regarding sanctity as an impossible pursuit, the pious pelagian is guilty of the sin of presumption, assuming that he can have a contractual relationship with God. The bourgeois pelagian is particularly lacking in the theological virtue of hope, the pious pelagian is quite anaemic in relation to the theological virtue of love. Both have a warped understanding of faith.

Saints, like Marguerite, are not lacking in any of the theological virtues, though in many cases they need a particularly strong dose of hope to carry them through all manner of persecutions. No doubt St Marguerite carried in her memory the beauty of the Catholic culture she found in her home town of Troyes and used her imagination under the influence of the theological virtue of hope, to envisage the wilds of 17<sup>th</sup> century Quebec as valleys of pristine Catholic villages. She was not in any sense bourgeois apart from the sound of her surname to Anglophone ears. When presented with the project of travelling to a colony thousands of miles from her home, indeed another continent, where the climactic conditions were harsh and European settlements were frequently attacked by members of the indigenous

population, she didn't make any calculations about the risk. She responded to a divine invitation to invest her life in the erotic project of bringing the faith to Quebec.

In the twentieth century another French Catholic, the author George Bernanos, was also interested in the idea that there is something aristocratic and erotic about authentic Catholic spirituality. He was concerned about the problem which the young Karol Wojtyła described as 'servile conformism' or we might say, 'herd-like' or philistine behaviour. Bernanos wrote of a 'flight to conformism' – 'the blissful servitude that dispenses one from both willing and acting, that doles out a little task to each one and that, and in the near future, will have transformed man into the biggest and most ingenious of insects – a colossal ant'.<sup>5</sup> He believed that modern man adores bureaucratic systems because it dispenses him from the daily risk of judging. His choices are made by the system for him. The analogue in Bernanos's writings between the bourgeois spiritual disposition and the aristocratic spiritual disposition is between the dispositions of the imbecile and the *honnête homme*, between a technocratic servility and an 'aristocracy of the spirit'. One might argue that for Bernanos the imbecile embodies the worst elements of bourgeois pelagianism and philistinism. In his work, *We, the French*, Bernanos wrote:

There exists a Christian order. This order is the order of Christ, and the Catholic tradition has preserved its essential principles. But the temporal realization of this order does not belong to the theologians, the casuists, or the doctors, but to us Christians. And it seems that the majority of Christians are forgetting this elementary truth. They believe that the Kingdom of God will happen all by itself, providing they obey the moral rules (which, in any event, are common to all decent people), abstain from working on Sunday (if, that is, their business doesn't suffer too much for it), attend a Low Mass on this same day, and above all have great respect for clerics....This would be tantamount to saying that, in times of war, an army could quite fulfil the nation's expectations if its men were squeaky clean, if they marched in step behind the band, and saluted their officers correctly.<sup>6</sup>

These words were composed in 1939 and the examples today would be different. We rarely distinguish between high Masses and low Masses since most of our Masses are low Masses, and it has being a long time since I confessed to spending my Sundays writing papers, but Bernanos' point is still relevant, that Christianity is not really about following rules and regulations. These have their place but they are very much ancillary to the personal relationship to the Persons of the Trinity. It is perhaps for this reason that Pope Benedict began his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* by emphasising that Truth is a Person.

Implicit within the mentality of the bourgeois Pelagian is a failure to critically analyse contemporary culture from a theological standpoint. This is not only a spiritual pathology of the individual but when it becomes a prevalent pathology it adversely affects the mission of the Church to be the light of the world.

In an essay on the Christocentrism of John Paul II, Cardinal Angelo Scola concluded with the rather chilling observation that 'only Christians can make the antichrist possible since the anti-Christ is possible only if he maintains a Christianity without Christ as the point of reference'.<sup>7</sup> In other words, an anti-Christ never arises without his anti-Christian culture or

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<sup>5</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Bernanos: An Ecclesial Existence*, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996), p.588.

<sup>6</sup> As quoted by von Balthasar in *Bernanos: An Ecclesial Existence* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996): 555.

<sup>7</sup> Angelo Scola, "Claim" of Christ, "claim" of the world: On the Trinitarian Encyclicals of John Paul II; *Communio*, 18 (Fall, 1991): 322-331 at 331.

movement being in some sense parasitic on the Christian tradition. For example, Marxism was a system of thought which substituted a materialist cosmology for a Christian cosmology but otherwise sought to offer people many of the soteriological benefits of Christianity while Adolf Hitler's peculiar intellectual cocktail included a diabolical appropriation of a Christian liturgical sensibility. This means that one of the greatest dangers for Catholic educational institutions in our present time, when governments throughout the western world are actively promoting the ideology of secularism as a new social glue and civic virtue, is that Catholic educational leaders might be tempted, for reasons of avoiding friction with governments, to offer students a package of "Christian values" somehow distilled from Christ and his grace. To borrow an expression from William T Cavanaugh, the temptation is for people to think that Christian symbols need to be 'run through the sausage-grinder of social ethics before coming out at the other end as publicly digestible policy'. In other words, the idea is that since many people desire the social side-benefits of Christianity, but they don't want to buy the whole package, the best way forward is for some corporate governance "sausage grinder" to extract the Christian values from the Christian cosmology and anthropology before offering the sanitised values to the post-Christian world. Such practices have a self-secularising effect on Catholic institutions.

John Henry Newman alluded to this problem when he wrote that 'in every age of Christianity, since it was first preached, there has been what may be called a religion of the world, which so far imitates the one true religion, as to deceive the unstable and unwary'. Newman went on to explain that different generations have a tendency to fasten on to some one aspect of Christianity, profess to embody this in its practice, while neglecting all other parts of the Church's teaching. He concluded that those who cultivate 'only one precept of the Gospel to the exclusion of the rest, in reality attends to no part at all'. The whole tendency he associated with the mind of the devil.<sup>8</sup> As Joseph Ratzinger once remarked:

"...a Christianity and a theology that reduce[s] the core of Jesus [‘s] message, the ‘kingdom of God’ to the ‘values of the kingdom’ while identifying these values with the main watchwords of political moralism, and proclaiming them, at the same time, to be the synthesis of all religions – all the while forgetting about God, despite the fact that it is precisely he who is the subject and the cause of the kingdom of God’, ‘does not open the way to regeneration, it actually blocks it.’"<sup>9</sup>

What Ratzinger identified in this passage was a slippery slope. First the notion of the 'kingdom of God', that is, of the reign of Christ over the entire world, his sovereignty one might say, is toned down to a package of values or dispositions. While such dispositions may very well include a belief that love of one's neighbour is a good thing or mercy and compassion are good things, the tendency is for the values to lose their specific Christian difference and become correlated to what Ratzinger called 'the watchwords of political moralism' or the fashionable secular political projects, most of which tend to be based on the master narrative of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the idea that freedom and enlightenment flow from liberation from various traditions, especially liberation from Christianity.

The classic example of this sort of practice is found in Catholic educational institutions where employees are instructed not to make too much fuss about Christ and the

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<sup>8</sup> John Henry Newman, *The Heart of Newman: A Synthesis*, Erich Przywara (ed), (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1947): 371.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, 'Europe in the Crisis of Cultures', *Communio: International Catholic Review*, 32 (2005): 345-56 at 346-7.

Trinity but to focus on social justice projects within the local community. This is especially so in Catholic Universities where a large percentage of the student body is not Christian, let alone Catholic. The idea is that no one can seriously have a problem with philanthropy and thus one can detach the socially acceptable Catholic philanthropy from the socially contentious claims about the sovereignty of Christ or kingdom of God. Ratzinger's point is that when these practices take root in Catholic institutions as general policy orientations they render those institutions impotent as far as the task of proclaiming the Gospel is concerned.

As early as 1963 Hans Urs von Balthasar was alert to this problem. In a work on aspects of the theology of history he argued that:

The Gospel and the Church [may be] plundered like a fruit tree, but the fruits, once separated from the tree, go rotten and are no longer fruitful. The 'ideas' of Christ cannot be separated from Him, and so they are of no use to the world unless they are fought for by Christians who believe in Christ, or at least by men who are inwardly, though unconsciously, open to Him and governed by Him. Radiance, [he said] is only possible when the radiant centre [that is, Christ] is active and alive. There can be no shining from stars long dead.<sup>10</sup>

Balthasar noted that whereas in Patristic times people spoke of the Christian practice of 'plundering the spoils of the Egyptians' that is, assimilating the best of pagan thought into Christian theology, over the past couple of centuries there has been a reverse practice of neo-pagans plundering the spoils of Christianity by taking over Christian concepts and values, detaching them from the core principles of the Creed, and assimilating them to fashionable contemporary ideologies. Balthasar exhorted Christians not to be gulled into believing that the neo-pagans mean the same things by the same concepts. Similarly, Georges Bernanos suggested that each time Christians try to dress up Christian ideas in secular dress and send them out into the world of ideas, they 'get raped at the next corner by some slogan in uniform'.

More recently, in a commentary on *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict's encyclical on charity, Cardinal Paul Cordes had this to say:

Sometimes Church discussion gives the impression that we could construct a just world through the consensus of men and women of good will and through common sense. Doing so would make faith appear as a beautiful ornament, like an extension on a building – decorative, but superfluous. And when we look deeper, we discover that the assent of reason and good will is always dubious and obstructed by original sin – not only does faith tell us this, but experience, too. So we come to the realization that Revelation is needed also for the Church's social directives: the source of our understanding for "justice" thus becomes the LOGOS made flesh.<sup>11</sup>

In *Caritas in Veritate* Benedict XVI also wrote that a 'humanism that excludes Christ is an inhuman humanism'. This is consistent with his earlier statements in the second half of *Deus Caritas Est* where he emphasised that Christian charity is essentially different from other forms of social welfare. While professional competence is a fundamental requirement of the work of Christians in charitable institutions, it is not alone sufficient. Christian love

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<sup>10</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Das Ganze in Fragment, Aspekte de Geschichtestheologie* (Einsiedeln: 1963) as quoted in John Saward, "Chesterton and Balthasar: the Likeness is Greater", *Chesterton Review*, Volume XXII, Number 3, (August 1996):314.

<sup>11</sup> Address to the Australian Catholic University, Sydney, 2009.

should transform the very ethos, the fundamental practices, of Christian institutions. In practice this means that Catholic schools should not be just like government schools with an extra class called religious education, and Catholic hospitals should not be just like government sponsored hospitals with the occasional crucifix, statue of a saint or prayer room. This is because Christian love, if authentic, changes everything.

Speaking of the Church's philanthropic work, Cordes rhetorically asks: what kind of person do we wish to promote? Do we desire development that limits the human person to a purely worldly horizon, consisting only in material well-being?

This raises a theological question of how the grace of the Incarnation is mediated through the Church's educational institutions and her social agencies? And this issue in turn leads into the territory of institutional practices and what is often called the ethos of institutions.

My particular interest is in how contemporary bureaucratic practices operate to usurp the work of grace in our educational institutions, and thus become a barrier to the humanism of the Incarnation. Just as Alasdair MacIntyre argued in his work *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, that there are at least three rival versions of justice and rationality operative in western societies today, there are also, I would argue, at least three rival tables of virtues and vices to govern institutional practices: one associated with the Catholic tradition, one with the Liberal tradition and one with the Post-Modern tradition, though I think that in most institutions the practices are more liberal than post-modern. Fundamental to this framework is the idea that institutional cultures are formed by different modes of participation in various social practices.

In his analysis of these issues Alasdair MacIntyre famously draws upon the Thomistic observation that every human action has both a transitive and intransitive dimension, that is to say that every human act has an impact on the world at large, and an internal impact on the soul of the person performing the action. John Paul II took up this theme in the first of his social encyclicals *Laborem Exercens* in which he argued that the intransitive dimension of human labour, that is the internal effect of one's work, is actually much more important than the transitive dimension. The Catholic tradition is therefore keenly interested in the relationship between actions and character-formation.

It is for this reason that it is often said that authority within the Catholic Church is usually a mixture of traditional and Charismatic authority rather than rational-legal or bureaucratic authority. These terms, traditional, charismatic and rational-legal are taken from the discipline of sociology, in particular from Max Weber's classification. According to Weber, the legitimacy of traditional authority comes from some particular intellectual tradition; the legitimacy of charismatic authority comes from the personality and leadership qualities of the individual; and the legitimacy of rational-legal derives from powers that are bureaucratically and legally attached to certain positions. The key difference between what Max Weber called charismatic authority and bureaucratic authority is that bureaucratic authority is based on academic qualifications not reputation of character, and operates in such a way that the personal judgements of the bureaucrat do not inform his decision-making, whereas, with charismatic authority, personal judgements can and usually do inform decision-making and the basis of charismatic authority tends to be a combination of qualifications and character with character being the more important issue. When explaining the difference between charismatic and bureaucratic authority Weber used the Catholic

hierarchy and religious orders as his key example of institutions operating by reference to charismatic authority. Prior to the 1960s the culture or ethos of most Catholic institutions was fostered by a mixture of traditional and charismatic authority where the tradition was the Catholic faith itself, understood both as a collection of beliefs and also a collection of liturgical practices.

With the crisis in religious life that followed the cultural revolution of the 1960s the governance of many Catholic institutions, including educational institutions, transferred from religious Orders to professional laity. There is nothing in itself wrong with this, but the demise of the charismatic authority of the religious orders has coincided with the ascendancy of rational-legal authority in other social institutions, such as courts, parliaments, the public service, indeed almost every significant social institution, except, to some degree at least, the military. In this general social climate, Catholic institutions seem to be going out of their way to mimic the bureaucratic practices of the corporate world without any awareness of the philosophical and theological principles in play and at stake. This danger appears to have two sources: one internal and one external.

The internal source is the desire of Catholic leaders to appear competent and professional in the eyes of the world. This is a laudable desire. There is nothing inherently virtuous about being a misfit, odd or idiosyncratic. But any conformity should not be uncritical. Catholic educational leaders need to be at least conscious of the character and limitations of rational-legal bureaucratic authority.

Quite an extensive analysis of the problems with rational-legal bureaucratic authority can be found in Alasdair MacIntyre's early publications. MacIntyre formed his judgments on this mode of authority during a period in his life when he was a Marxist. He now describes this period as 'wrong-headed' but it gave him lots of insights into contemporary political theory, and in particular, the power-games played through the exercise of bureaucratic authority. It taught him that materialists, that is, people who don't believe in things like souls, almost always end up in a love affair with policies, procedures and bureaucracy in general. This was especially true of Marxist regimes. This is because of their inherent distrust of the individual and because they find it difficult to make distinctions between persons on the basis of standards such as wisdom and prudence. The moment one walks into the territory of wisdom and prudence one has to acknowledge that some people are better at making judgments than others and then one flounders about looking for some purely biological explanation which leads into the dangerous territory of racism, or, eschewing a purely biological explanation, one is confronted with the terrible reality that there might be some value in the Christian cosmology. Thus materialists of all species, including the Marxist and the Liberal, have a tendency to use bureaucracy as a means of controlling human behaviour to achieve their social engineering objectives. It is an approach to governance which is designed to side-step character judgments.

Against the background of his personal experience as a Trotskyite, the most intellectual species of the Marxist genus, MacIntyre argues that the appeal to "managerial skills or expertise" as the source of bureaucratic authority is often an attempt to blur the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative conduct.<sup>12</sup> Instead of the authority of institutions resting upon what Weber called rational-legal authority, MacIntyre suggests that

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<sup>12</sup> Alasdair C. MacIntyre. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 3rd ed. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

institutions should derive their authority from the tradition upon which they were founded and that this was the case in pre-modern societies, including the society of the great universities established before the 18th century - Oxford, Cambridge, Bologna, the Sorbonne, Cologne, Salamanca etc. He acknowledges that such societies had formal organisations, that is, they had administration, but he argues that those in authority always had to justify their decisions against appeals to the authority of the tradition upon which the organisation was originally established.<sup>13</sup> He further argues that it is precisely because of the breakdown of traditions that bureaucratic modes of organisation arise; and that it is of the nature of bureaucratic ideology to conceal the features of contestable concepts and situations which arise as a consequence of the breakdown. Where viable traditions do exist however they shape the ethos of the organisations which are founded upon them and the extent to which an organisation is flourishing can be determined by reference to the degree to which it reaches the ends and objectivise prescribed by the tradition. For example, a Catholic school could be said to be more or less flourishing with reference to the degree to which it produces graduates who are participants in the humanism of the Incarnation, or less poetically, people who are actually practising Catholics.

David L Schindler has added to this basic Thomistic insight the idea that practices all have their own internal logic and he has drawn a distinction between practices and ways of thinking which have the form or logos of the machine and the form or logos of love.

It is typical of bureaucratic practices that they take the form of the machine. Their rationality is a bureaucratic rationality which is not connected to the pursuit of any transcendental such as truth or beauty or goodness.

Moreover, Schindler argues that the contest between the form of the machine and the form of love is also at the heart of the contemporary secularisation of many Catholic educational institutions. He believes that as a matter of principle ‘the order of knowledge itself is to be drawn first...from the order of love as revealed in the divine and indeed sacramental realities of God, Christ and the Church, and not first from the order of physics, mechanistically conceived’.<sup>14</sup> He concludes that:

The basic flaw of the modern academy lies in the presumption that the order of the mind is primarily mechanistic and the life of the spirit primarily voluntaristic; in the presumption that contemplation and worship and love and service have nothing to do with the inner workings of ‘critical’ intelligence, with the very form and content of intelligence as such, as it operates down through all the disciplines, including the “natural-physical” sciences.<sup>15</sup>

A similar argument has been made by Adrian Walker in the following terms:

...there exists an intimate relation between human knowing and Christ such that the decision for or against Christ that *in concreto* occurs in all knowing because of the universality of the offer of grace does not determine only one’s openness or closure to Christ himself, but also the openness or closure of reason itself to reality as a whole (which, indeed,

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<sup>13</sup> “Social Science Methodology as the Ideology of Bureaucratic Authority: in M. S. Falco (ed); *Through the Looking Glass: Epistemology and the Conduct of Enquiry* (Washington University Press, 1979): 57-58.

<sup>14</sup> David L Schindler, ‘The Catholic Academy and the Order of Intelligence: The Dying of the Light’, *Communio*, 26 (Winter, 1999): 722-745 at 736.

<sup>15</sup> David L. Schindler, 741.

holds together in Christ) – and therefore, affects, either positively or negatively, but, in any case, from top to bottom, the quality of one’s every explicit cognitive engagement with particulars within that reality.<sup>16</sup>

Schindler and Walker agree that unless Catholic educators get the anthropological foundations right, especially the relationships between faith and reason and between love and reason, the nominally Catholic school and university will merely be ‘the place where modern liberalism continues to do its (mechanistic) thinking, albeit in a moral-social environment provided by the Church’.<sup>17</sup>

The external source of the danger that Catholic educational institutions will unreflectively go about mimicking the rational-legal bureaucratic practices of the corporate world comes from the modern state. America’s William T Cavanaugh and, following Cavanaugh, Australia’s Matthew Tan, have both examined the modern state’s attempt to offer itself as a parody of the Body of Christ. Cavanaugh argues that the modern state is best understood as a source of an alternative soteriology to that of the Church. It parodies the body of Christ by offering itself as the source of salvation for human kind. It is based on theories about human nature and the origins of human conflict which are alternative and contrary to those offered by Revelation. According to this new political theory religion is the source of conflict in the world. It therefore needs to be tamed and managed by the post-Christian state. This state pretends to offer its citizens nothing other than efficiently run public utilities like airports, telephone and Internet services, gas and electricity, and protection from the aggression (including all manner of negative “value” judgments) of other citizens. However it also controls taxation and, to a large degree, it regulates the education sector. Its taxation policies are rarely ever “family friendly” and its educational institutions serve as a vehicle for the promotion of the post-Christian mythos.

In addition to the developments in liberal political philosophy which seek to justify the state’s promotion of a secularist ideology, there has been a general social trend toward mis-trusting the judgment of professional people. This trend gained momentum in the late 1960s with the popularisation of Antonio Gramsci’s theory that professionalism is linked to the bourgeois mystification of knowledge. In his work *Ontology and Pardon*, John Milbank observed that ‘professionals are no longer trusted, but instead must be endlessly spied upon, and measured against a spatial check-list of routinized procedure that is alien to all genuine inculcation of excellence’.<sup>18</sup> Everyone from talented academics who would like to have time to intellectually engage with their students, to policemen who joined the police force so that they could catch criminals, complain that by the time they finish their mountains of paper-work each day, the objective of which is to prove to some government department official that they have faithfully followed procedural protocols, there is no time left for things like intellectual conversations or catching criminals.

We see the bureaucratic interference with the work of professionals operating across all our institutions. Judges, for example, are now routinely sent on ‘social awareness’ camps to discourage them from embodying socially conservative values in their decisions. The great Lord Denning who in 1968 was given an honorary doctorate by the University of McGill would not survive in the modern judiciary. In the famous case of *Miller v Jackson* where he

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<sup>16</sup> Adrian Walker, ‘Christ and Cosmology’ Methodological Considerations for Catholic Educators’ *Communio: International catholic review* 429-449 at 444.

<sup>17</sup> David L. Schindler, 745.

<sup>18</sup> John Milbank, 2003, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon*, 185.

was called upon to make a judgement about the conflicting interests of a village cricket club and a property developer, he held in favour of the cricket club on the grounds that the game of cricket brings the old men and the young men of the village together, that the old men would be lonely without the company of the young men and the young men might get themselves into all manner of trouble if they are not focused on something wholesome like sport. Furthermore, Lord Denning noted that before the property developer moved in the cricket field was surrounded by grazing cattle and, quote, 'the animals [unlike the property developer] did not mind the cricket'.

The point I want to illustrate is that this kind of professional exercise of prudential judgment is no longer tolerated. Lord Denning thought that playing cricket kept young men out of trouble and gave them a point of contact and common interest with the old men in the village and that this social value was higher than the financial interests of any property developer. This is a classic case of a professional allowing his own values to influence a prudential judgment. The point about bureaucratic practices is that they exist to thwart this kind of practice.

The problem for the Church is that we want our institutions to foster some particular list of goods. The Church is not neutral in relation to the various ends to which human actions can tend.

It is perhaps for this reason that one can find in the works of Joseph Ratzinger many negative references to the work of bureaucracy. Not only has he said that 'the saints were all people of imagination, not functionaries of apparatuses' but he has also written that 'the Saints...reformed the Church in depth, not by working up plans for new structures, but by reforming themselves. What the Church needs in order to respond to the needs of man in every age is holiness, not management'.<sup>19</sup> The Church, he says, has 'too much bureaucracy' - 'everything should not take place by way of committees; there must even also be the personal encounter'.<sup>20</sup> In that particular statement he appears to be referring to the corporate practice of taking decision-making authority away from individuals by running decisions which require the operation of individual judgment through a committee structure. As anyone who has ever sat on committees knows, this leads to judgments that are based on all manner of internal committee compromises, including the normal horse-trading of you support me on this motion and I will support you on some other motion. Decision-making by committee is a double-edged sword. Positively it does provide scope for more expertise to be brought into play, but negatively it takes the weight of responsibility from the individual which has the effect of opening the individual to the influence of internal committee political considerations which may have very little to do with the actual good to be pursued by the decision.

A rather popular contemporary bureaucratic practice is the production of a mission statement. These are often constructed at staff weekend retreats where professional facilitators drawn from the world of psychology help the institution's employees to get in contact with their deepest dreams and desires for the said institution. The dreams and desires are then written on butcher paper in coloured crayons and eventually get converted into pitchy statements which can appear on the institutions' marketing brochures. I have read many mission statements of Catholic schools and tertiary institutions but I have rarely come across one which says, we exist to promote the humanism of the Incarnation or to teach

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1985), p. 53.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996). p. 266.

people to know love and serve God on earth so as to spend eternity in heaven, or even, more simply to educate people with reference to the revelation of Jesus Christ. Rather, there tends to be a lot of references to a spirit of compassion and inclusivity which gives the rather negative impression that the given institution is likely to be a sheltered workshop for people who are unwelcome elsewhere. Unlike the enthusiasm for producing mission statements, Ratzinger has written that “St. Paul was effective, not because of brilliant rhetoric and sophisticated strategies, but rather because he exerted himself and left himself vulnerable in the service of the Gospel’.<sup>21</sup>

This is not to suggest that Pope Benedict is some kind of anarchist, or that there is no value in administrative work at all, but it is to say that the leaders of Catholic educational institutions need to be conscious of the ways in which bureaucratic practices may actually act as a barrier to the work of grace. As members of the voting public they should pay very close attention to the anthropological foundations of the policy objectives of politicians and public servants.

In his book *After Liberalism* Paul Edward Gottfried focused on this issue of the acquiescence of voters in the expansion of the powers of public administrators. Gottfried observed that contrary to the spirit of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism with its emphasis on individuality, the contemporary liberal state is more interested in the promotion of cultural uniformity. This task has provided employment within the state bureaucracy for psychiatrists and social psychologists and even people with the job description ‘behavioural economist’ whose moral and political judgments are taken as “expert” opinions. Gottfried calls them ‘psychiatric theologians’ since they are a modern secular analogue for a priesthood.

Following in the general direction of Alasdair MacIntyre’s criticisms, Gottfried argues that much of the rhetoric of modern political life is designed to conceal both the power of these ‘psychiatric theologians’ and the questionable legitimacy of their “expert” status. In Gottfried’s judgment, the contemporary liberal state is a classic example of a political culture which seeks to hide the nature and exercise of its power behind technical jargon. It does this by down-playing political differences and claiming to be “neutral” in its treatment of contentious moral questions. Gottfried concludes that:

Governing goes on in a blurred zone, between consent and non-accountable control [and] unlike the Communist garrison-state or the Italian fascist “total state” the managerial state succeeds by denying that it exercises power.

Gottfried describes himself as a ‘bourgeois-modernist’ - which probably means that he is not looking to Christianity to provide a route out of this impasse. However, from an explicitly Christian perspective, the MacIntyrean solution is to foster the development of educational institutions in which the Catholic faith is not some optional extra for those who want to take it, but something that is infrastructural, which determines the whole ethos of the institution from top to bottom, including, and above all, the curriculum. One might say that MacIntyre’s recommendations are for Catholic educational institutions to be run on what Schindler calls the ‘form of love’ rather than ‘the form of the machine’. At their heart there will be a group of priests and religious women who can provide the spiritual capital upon which the whole enterprise runs and such institutions will typically be small and financially self-reliant, private rather than public.

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<sup>21</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Images of Hope*, op. cit. p. 26.

The problems generated by the Church's receipt of government money for her educational institutions is summarised in an article called "The Fatal Blow: The Case of the Stinking Corpse", written by the American Jesuit Martin X Moleski and published in the magazine *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*. The thesis of Fr Moleski's article is that there are whole institutions which hold themselves out as being Catholic in their marketing materials but whose ethos and curricula is almost indistinguishable from the government run institutions. Fr Moleski traces the decline in the health of such institutions to a time when their administrators decided to receive government funding. He believes that the administrators and accountants who serve on corporate boards of management of ostensibly Catholic higher educational institutions are terrified of antagonising government education department policy makers. As he explains the problem:

The great crisis for administrators watching over the carcass of Catholic universities is this: if they give too much attention to the relationship between their institutions and the Church, they may actually be sued for discriminating between Catholics and non-Catholics in their hiring practices...If there is sufficient evidence of a living, meaningful link to the Catholic Church – evidence that could stand up in court - the schools will lose access to federal funding. [As a consequence] every step must therefore be taken, with proper documentation, so that the charge of being a Catholic institution could not be proven against them.<sup>22</sup>

Not only does the modern state try to control hiring practices but perhaps even more insidiously it attempts to control the curricula, especially in areas like history. While there are certain historical facts which are not linked to any theological predisposition, for example, that the first human being to walk on the moon was called Neil Armstrong, or the first dog in space was called Laika, or that World War II officially began on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1939, the fact that world history and what theologians call salvation history are intermeshed in time means that there is a very close association of the academic disciplines of history and theology. To give a contemporary example, one of my friends who is a professor at a Polish University has told me that the current generation of Polish children are not being taught about the heroism of the Solidarity generation that brought an end to Communism in 1989. This is because of a decision made by the Solidarity leaders not to have anything like the equivalent of a Nuremberg trial of the former Communist officials. In 1989 I was living in Poland and I can remember how scared people were of a Soviet invasion. The day of the transition from a Communist to a Solidarity government, people huddled around televisions waiting for news of the response from Moscow. The 'no-recriminations-deal' had the effect of securing a peaceful transition. There was no invasion of Poland. I can fully understand why that decision was made, and I am not critical of it. However it is now being used by education department bureaucrats to distort the presentation of Polish history. The bureaucrats don't want children to identify the bad guys and the good guys because many of the bad guys are still living and continue to occupy significant social positions. Accordingly, today there are two different histories of Poland between 1945 and 1989. According to one narrative the watershed moment was the election of the Archbishop of Krakow as Pope, for the other, it was the establishment of the European Union. One story tells of the heroism and the violence, including the martyrdom of the chaplain of the Solidarity movement, the beatings and periods of imprisonment endured by the leaders of Solidarity, the intimidation of their families and the help they were given by John Paul II, the Vatican diplomatic corps, the

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<sup>22</sup> Martin X Moleski, "The Fatal Blow: The Case of the Stinking Corpse", Fall, 2008, *Conversations*, page. 4.

Polish diaspora and free trade unions around the world, the CIA and the US State Department. It's a tale about hope and love and truth, about aristocratic daring, about people literally putting their lives on the line in the hope of bringing the Communist era to an end. According to the other narrative, John Paul II was quite incidental. The important thing was the establishment of the European Union with its unification of the European countries in a free market with a common currency. According to this narrative, the EU, not John Paul II, was Poland's saviour, and the history of the twentieth century is thus a history of the gradual emancipation of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe from an attachment to unworkable economic theories by the more enlightened economists working in places like Paris and Brussels. While there is no doubt that the economic liberation of Poland was a good thing, and should be part of the story, the point is that according to one view of history, God, the Catholic hierarchy, and Catholic workers and intellectuals were the important players, while according to the alternative view, the EU and the Liberal tradition of political philosophy emerge as the only significant factors.

While the contemporary practices of the Polish Education Department provide a stark example of the problem, in other countries there are similar education department driven history curricula whose objective it is to air-brush the Catholic Church out of any narrative of development. What is offered instead is some version of the Whig view of history as the progressive liberation of peoples by the twin forces of liberal economics and liberal political theory.

In the early part of this paper I quoted Pope Benedict's remark that the saints were all people of imagination, not functionaries of apparatuses. My conclusion is that today in the field of Catholic education we need leaders who like St. Marguerite are people of imagination and people who love the Church and have an active spiritual life. The dangers today are not harsh climactic conditions. We have electricity and so people can live in places like Quebec without dying from frost bite, and we don't have people actually burning down our buildings because they don't like our presence; but we do have lots of problems trying to present the face of God to the world and we have to be careful not to engage in practices that are themselves self-secularising in effect. We don't want to be the ones who foster anti-Christian ideas by providing the infrastructure in which they can incubate and we don't want to waste our time and our students time withholding the whole Catholic truth from them because we are worried about the loss of government funding.

In his book *Called to Communion*, Pope Benedict wrote that "The more administrative machinery we construct, be it the most modern, the less place there is for the Spirit, the less place there is for the Lord, and the less freedom there is". He added that in his opinion, "we ought to begin an unsparing examination of conscience on this point at all levels in the Church".

Those words were written when he was still a Cardinal and since his accession to the papacy there does not seem to have been much happening by way of an 'unsparing examination of conscience' on the ways that contemporary bureaucratic practices may thwart the work of Providence and grace. He has had too many other battles to fight. However the Church herself is much more than her agencies and institutions. As Pope Benedict himself has noted, the best arguments for Christianity are the saints the Church has produced and the art that has grown in her womb. Speaking of the saints, Henri de Lubac, had this to say:

You do not deliver yourself into the hands of authority like a man tired of using his initiative, abdicating; or like a sailor happy to find a quiet harbour at last after a stormy passage. On the contrary, you receive from authority the *Duc in altum*. You entrust yourself to it as to a ship leaving port for a glorious voyage and high adventure.

St Marguerite did literally this. Transplanting the faith from Brittany to Quebec was her glorious and high adventure. She avoided the warped anthropology of the Jansenists, the tepidity of the bourgeois Pelagians, the pride of the pious Pelagians, and the anti-intellectualism of the philistines. She wasn't an imbecile who was content to surrender her free will to a bureaucratic machine. Positively she established an Order of religious women dedicated to the mission of Catholic education, dedicated we might say, to fostering the humanism of the Incarnation. She laid the seeds of the faith in Quebec.