

**Conference**  
**Religion and the Public Good**  
**Emerging Scholars Forum**  
**October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012**  
**T201 & T202**

**Room 1 – T201 Presenters:**

<b>John Murray</b>	<b>3.00 p.m.</b>
<b>Bernard Barrett</b>	<b>3.30 p.m.</b>
<b>Bryony Hope Foley</b>	<b>3.50 p.m.</b>
<b>Ken Hannaway</b>	<b>4.20 p.m.</b>
<b>Bendan Coughlan</b>	<b>4.40 pm.</b>

**3.00 p.m.**

**John Murray: Religion as a ‘Basic Human Good’ – How the Moral Theory of Germain Grisez and Collaborators Contributes To Understanding *Dignitatis Humanae***

This paper outlines some conclusions from my doctorate: ‘The Role of the Basic Human Good of Religion in the Moral Theory of Germain Grisez’ (St Patrick’s College, Maynooth, 2009). Grisez (and collaborators John Finnis, Joseph Boyle, and Robert George) present an essentially practical understanding of the good of religion, which is harmony in our choices with the transcendent source of meaning and value. Religion is a distinctive open-ended field of opportunity, which provides people with reasons for individual and social religious and moral actions and practices. Understood generally, ‘religion’ is inclusive of theistic and non-theistic beliefs. Religion can be and is understood and embodied, more specifically, and more or less accurately, in various religious traditions. Religion is one of several irreducible and incommensurable basic human goods, and is thus not the only good or the most important: Grisez’s theory helps to explain why religious freedom is not an absolute freedom but one that is qualified by moral truth. (See also *Dignitatis Humanae*’s reference to the ‘due limits’ within which the right to religious freedom should be respected). Precisely as a human good, religion needs always to be pursued freely and conscientiously, the human person individually and in community seeking with integrity and without any external coercion to find and live by objective religious truth. Seeking religious truth is an important aspect of human dignity, which provides the rationale for religious freedom as taught in *Dignitatis Humanae*. This teaching is not based on any relativistic, privatised or subjectivistic understanding of religion, but on one that is open to the objective truth of the Gospel and the power of conscience to respond to this truth in faith and live by it.

**3.30 p.m.**

**Bernard Barrett: ‘Seeking to define key constituents of a religious community’**

Repeated reference is made throughout the Declaration on Religious Freedom to how Religious Freedom is exercised in Human Society (*Dignatatis Humanae*, 7) and how Religious Communities are a requirement of the social nature both of man and of religion itself (*Dignatatis Humanae*, 4). This brief paper seeks to identify what it means to function as a religious community within a secularised society and identify some characteristics of the nature of the freedom that emerges from such participation.

**3.50 p.m.**

**Bryony Hope Foley: Reviewing the Culture: What on Earth Happened?**

Our Conference theme of examining the legitimate place of Religion in society will hopefully prompt many Christian Catholics to evaluate their own personal mission, both at home and abroad. This presentation discusses some of the significant events, perceptions and challenges that have taken place during the last fifty years and how they have affected all people, especially the People of God. Six main topics are presented: A snapshot of the Cultural Revolution of the 1960's; Abortion as ethnically diverse child abuse; Global inequity; Whether the Catholic Church has made a difference; and Religious freedom.

I conclude that in spite of multiculturalism, mass movement of peoples, economic downturns, and the scandal of clerical child abuse, our church has continued to spread the Gospel. During the last fifty years, a huge number of priests, sisters and laity, have travelled to strange lands to serve the poor. Fewer vocations to the priesthood and religious life are a concern. Conversely many ordinary people have heroically taken up lay-ministerial roles in both parish and community, in order to reach out to their brothers and sisters. We are currently being massively challenged by liberal views of tolerance and human rights which deny people of faith – and not only Christians – the right to follow and live what they believe. On a positive note, it does seem that renewal is beginning. We can look forward to the outcome of the Synod of Bishops and The New Evangelisation so long promised by Pope John Paul II.

**4.20 p.m.**

**Ken Hannaway: 'Exploring the relationship between Christian Spirituality and the Professional approach towards suicide prevention'**

Suicide is a source of major social concern in Ireland today. The Irish Government National Suicide Prevention strategy document entitled *Reach Out* does not include spirituality. Ireland is predominantly a Christian society which recognises spirituality as a constitutive human dimension that provides deeper meaning and purpose in life. It is crucial that the spirituality of the suicidal client be considered at the time when they may be deciding to end their life. This study investigates the views of counsellors and psychotherapists working with suicidal clients to establish if Christian Spirituality should be included as part of the therapeutic process in suicide prevention counselling.

Six counsellors were selected for interview. Each counsellor was an experienced and accredited practitioner with at least five years' experience of working directly with suicidal clients. An open-ended narrative inquiry method was chosen for the interviews.

Because spirituality is an interdisciplinary subject Sandra Schneiders' three-step hermeneutical Christian Spirituality framework was employed in this research. This framework was used to consider, analyse and interpret the factors which shaped the conscious spiritual awareness of the counsellors and the subjective appropriation of their Christian Spirituality as they engaged therapeutically with the life-world experiences of suicidal clients who felt isolated and disconnected from their human-spirituality.

There was strong evidence of spirituality in the counselling process. The spiritual perspective of the counsellors is Christian and counsellors actively engage their spirituality with that of the client who feels isolated and disconnected.

The findings suggest that spirituality is a crucial issue in suicide prevention counselling. Including Christian Spirituality in suicide counselling interventions such as the ones tested in this study may be essential in dispelling the notions of a disconnected and separate-self which extinguish the search for deeper meaning and purpose during times of human suffering. Further research is identified and recommended.

**4.40 p.m.**

**Brendan Coughlan: Mimetic Theory and Film. A contemporary medium for 'new evangelisation'.**

This paper will deal with the challenges posed by inculturation. A principal objective of the Second Vatican Council was to articulate the enduring message of the Gospels in a secularized world. One of the greatest obstacles to this mission is the persistent inculturation of Christians through electronic media, and in particular television and film. However, in this paper I will determine that the application of 'mimetic theory' to film can actually elucidate the Gospel message. In particular I will utilize the work of the pre-eminent theologian Raymund Schwager who advanced an existing hypothesis originally espoused by Rene Girard which maintained that the antecedent of communal violence is 'mimetic rivalry'. 'Mimetic theory' asserts that human desire is triangular and has three 'movements', which eventually culminates in the selection of a random 'scapegoat' who is murdered to maintain social equilibrium. For Schwager Jesus is the 'necessary scapegoat' of the New Testament whose death sheds light on our latent tendencies towards violence. In this paper I will establish that this 'Scapegoat mechanism' is visible in contemporary film and conclude that as a medium; film can effectively facilitate new evangelisation.

**Room 2 – T202 Presenters:**

William Swan	3.00 p.m.
Mary Frances McKenna	3.30 p.m.
Marie Hyland	3.50 p.m.
Krzysztof Kielkiewicz	4.20 p.m.
Jacqueline Minnock	4.40 pm.

**3.00 p.m.**

**William Swan: 'Christianity and Irish National Identity: Past, Present and Future**

This conference celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council but with another in anniversary on the horizon: the approaching centenary of the 1916 rising and foundation of the Irish State.

Fifty years ago, *Gaudium et Spes* outlined the Church's essential disposition of service towards the modern world. This paper argues that a crucial way in which contemporary Christianity in Ireland can fulfil that service is by retrieving the concept of true nationhood that in turn clarifies the collective identity and mission of Ireland on the world stage. It argues that the soul of a nation is much greater than economic progress but one that has spiritual roots that were central to the vision of the founding fathers of the Irish state almost one hundred years ago. In the post-Celtic Tiger era that has led to a crisis of confidence and the re-emergence of old insecurities, the people of Ireland need

fresh vision and leadership. This essay maintains that Christianity retains the potential to direct Irish people to a new patriotism and balanced nationalism that is consistent with the past but yet speaks to the imagination of present and future generations.

3.30 p.m.

### **Mary Frances McKenna: 'Continuity or Rupture – Differing Perspectives on Vatican II'**

This paper will explore the differing perspectives on Vatican II as to whether it constituted continuity or a rupture with the past. To explore these two perspectives I will critique Jim Corkery's discussion of the continuity - rupture paradigm in his *Joseph Ratzinger Theological Ideas Legitimate Hopes and Wise Cautions*.<sup>1</sup> In this I will be drawing on my recently defended PhD entitled, *The Female Line in the Bible as Understood by Joseph Ratzinger*.

The paper will seek to understand the wider perspectives of each theologian's approach and how it impacts, and, or reflects their own theological positions and ideas. The issue of Liberation Theology and dissent from Church teaching, which have both been important to post Vatican II theological discourse, will be explored.

I will attempt to draw conclusions on their contrasting approaches, specifically to identify the possible beneficial and negative side effects of each approach. In addition, I will seek to identify areas where Ratzinger and Corkery agree on Vatican II and assess whether this provides a bridge between the continuity and rupture approaches.

Finally, I will look at their contrasting approaches in light of *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Gaudium et Spes* and ask whether each approach re-enforces or undermines the legitimate place of religion in society.

The aim of the paper is to attempt to move this continuity – rupture paradigm to a place where a synthesis could be developed. If a synthesis can be achieved perhaps a more fruitful approach to Vatican II among Catholic theologians may evolve which harnesses the combined energies of the entire Catholic Church. As a consequence the Church may be in a stronger position to engage with the Spirit of the World on fundamental issues.

3.50 p.m.

### **Marie Hyland: Nostra Aetate in the Modern World**

There is statistical evidence to demonstrate that Christianity with 2.18 billion believers and Islam with 1.5 billion believers are the two largest world religions. The documents of Vatican II are an important source for our Christian understanding, and the generosity of language expressed in *Nostra Aetate* concerning the Muslim people is a prompt to appreciate this Abrahamic religion, while recognizing there are similarities and differences. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in the non-Christian religions alluded to in *Nostra Aetate*. The presentation identifies that the destiny of Christians and Muslims, as taught by both faiths, is to see the Face of God. I will make brief references to the connections of *Nostra Aetate/Lumen Gentium/Gaudium et Spes* which are relevant as the Year of Faith commences. In our modern world Muslims are no longer aliens, but are our actual neighbours. I will refer to the work of Augustine of Hippo, Robert Dobie, Dermot Lane, Sachiko Murata, Karl Rahner and Kees Waajimann in the presentation. It behoves Christians to comprehend the eschatological promise. Sufficiently well informed, only then can we enter dialogue with members of the Muslim faith.

4.20 p.m.

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger's Theological Ideas* (Dublin: Dominican Press, 2009)

## **Krzysztof Kielkiewicz: The Mission of the Church in the Modern World**

The Second Vatican Council in the document *Gaudium et spes* visualises the mission of the Church in the modern World. Especially last pages of the Pastoral Constitution portray how the Church supports lay people and how lay people cooperate with the Church. The study among Irish population, which is representative to western society, aimed to define postmodern spirituality. The research provides results which portray influences of spiritual factors such as Faith, Prayer, Culture, Community of the Church and many others on spirituality. Spirituality is based on threefold composition consisted of Transcendent dimension, Immanent sphere and Purpose of spiritual life. The study applies qualitative (Thematic Analysis, Discourse Analysis) and quantitative (Structural Equation Modelling) research methodologies to evaluate the shape of people's spiritual attitudes. The message of *Gaudium et spes* provide interesting inquires regarding the shape of the mission of the Church interpreted in the context of the results of the study. Such aspects as Secularization, separation of spirituality from religion, decrease of influence from institutionalized form of religiosity; provide a new context for current mission of the Church and interpretation of the Council's message.

The aim of this study is to identify a character of spirituality, which functions within current Western culture. The phenomenon that is perceived as indefinable or at least very difficult to be define, is put under a study, which identifies characteristics of spirituality and then transforms them into variables. History of spirituality, current concepts and distinguished representatives of Postmodernism such as Freud, Hillesum, Sheldrake, Walesa and Hetfield supplied with a data, which characterised and still characterise the phenomenon of spirituality. At the next stage, the data was put under a process of verification among a population of current Western society by an application of quantitative survey. 266 participants confirmed the characteristics, which are present today and which portray an influence of such predictors as Church, TV, Culture and others on current spirituality. Latent variable modelling, applied into the study, allowed to discover a shape of postmodern spirituality with a level of prediction. The findings of the study present that some of the characteristics, which were present before do not exist nowadays. Some of new features are more influential than before and also there exist some of them, which were never present before, but now characterise the phenomenon. A uniqueness of this study is based on a use of a new methodology, derived from social sciences, which is rarely applied in religious studies.

**4.40 p.m.**

### **Jackie Minnock: 'Gaudium et Spes' speaks to a generation regardless of the generation'**

The concept of this paper addresses the fact that the principles of *Gaudium et Spes*, together with the other documents of the Second Vatican Council still speak to the world of the twenty-first century, for it and they contain the everlasting truth of God who is unchanging. There are always issues for the world – no matter how modern it was or is or becomes and *Gaudium et Spes* has the ability to address those issues then, now and in the future.

As a child of the Vatican era and an adult of the Catholic Christian Church it is worrying that the Second Vatican Council – in the guise of *Gaudium et Spes* and the other very worthwhile documents – has become a folk memory to a younger Church who, seemingly, have differing views of what the Council means in this 'modern world'. Despite this the hopes of *Gaudium et Spes* and the other documents can never fully be diminished as they speak of a Trinitarian love that holds us all in caring hands, and in that respect speaks to the Church in this modern world. *Gaudium et Spes* grows with us as Christians from age to age and answers our needs along the journey.

