



# *Institute For Theological Encounter With Science and Technology*

Volume 53 - #2

Spring 2022 Bulletin

## **Young People and Faith**

In this issue of the *ITEST Bulletin*, we explore the reasons why young people are abandoning the faith. Sister Carla Mae Streeter's article examines the kind of God we believe in. Another article by Joe Provenzano, Ron Morgan, and Dan Provenzano focuses on bringing back those in the younger generations who have been taught that faith and science are incompatible. Tom Sheahen discusses a pertinent factor in keeping young people connected. Mattheus Uijtewaal shares his thoughts on faith and science. Finally, we present book reviews by Sister Marianne Postiglione and Patrick Panozzo.

The essays in this bulletin were discussed at the ITEST board meeting in January, and the authors provided a synopsis of what they would write. After the bulletin is in draft form, it is my duty as editor to provide an introduction that appears here on our cover page. Often it is a struggle for me to find the right words that not only inspire me, but will hopefully move you to read and share the bulletin with others. Thus, I peruse many magazines looking for inspiration. I found one that did just that.

I was reading another publication, *Our Sunday Visitor*, dated April 10-16, 2022, when I came across an article by Kim Cameron-Smith that inspired me. The article's headline caught my attention: *Worried about your kids leaving the Faith? Here are 3 ways to keep your kids Catholic*. Cameron-Smith provides "three ways that every Catholic parent can help their kids internalize the faith so it will continue to shape their identities and choices in adulthood."

1. **Show your affection for the faith.** What do your children witness in your faith as parents? Is your prayer life vibrant? Is it visible to your kids?
2. **Create a beautiful Catholic culture.** Our literature, art, and music are rich and irresistibly beautiful. Do we fill our homes with the sights and sounds of our faith?
3. **Be firm and warm with your kids.**
  - Authoritarian parents are controlling and harsh. Do your kids obey out of fear? If so, they may very well fall away.
  - Permissive parents are kind, but they do not enforce the rules. Their kids may become controlling in the long run.
  - The best balance is the Authoritative parent. They strike the balance between warmth and rules. They set clear rules that they can enforce with a warm heart.

So which type of parent do you believe you are?

Ralph Olliges, *ITEST Bulletin* Editor

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## Announcements

### ITEST Webinars

Watch our most recent webinars on demand.

- *Transhumanism and Transcendence: What are We Becoming?*
- *Conscious Energy and the Mission of ITEST*
- *Faith and Facebook: Social Media & the New Evangelization*

Find all webinars at [faithscience.org/news-and-events/](http://faithscience.org/news-and-events/)

Register for these upcoming ITEST webinars.

- **Discussion on the Book: A Beautiful Mind & Soul**  
Saturday, May 14, 2022 at 9:00 am (US Central)  
Presenters: Dr. Gerard Verschuuren and  
Dr. Stephen Barr  
Register: [www.faithsience.org/beautifulmindandsoul](http://www.faithsience.org/beautifulmindandsoul)
- **Center for the Study of The Great Ideas:  
Philosophy is Everybody's Business**  
Saturday, May 28, 2022 at 9:00 am (US Central)  
Presenter: Elaine Weismann  
Register: [www.faithsience.org/thegreatideas](http://www.faithsience.org/thegreatideas)
- **Science and Theology of Food**  
Saturday, July 23, 2022 at 9:00 am (US Central)  
Presenters: Fr. Gerald Buonopane, Dr. Thomas  
Marlowe, and Fr. Joseph Laracy  
Registration coming soon.

### In Memoriam—ITEST Members

We ask your prayers for the following ITEST members who recently died and entered Eternal Life.

**Rev. Enrique Fabbri, SJ**                      **06/20/2015**

**Justo Aznar, MD, PhD**                      **11/27/2021**

**Rev. Frederick McLeod, SJ**                      **03/07/2022**

We also ask your prayers for ITEST members who are ill. May they feel the restoring hand of the Lord.

Father Fred McLeod, SJ, long-time ITEST member, died and entered eternal life on March 7, 2022, at the age of 90. This is an excerpt from an intervention Fr. Fred made in response to the question of faith and reason at the 2005 conference on Biotechnology, Patent Law, Theology (p. 212).

*"Christians believe there can be a faith stance that puts us in contact with the truth. Our faith deals with future reality and things that we can't prove or disprove by critical reason. The culture seems to prefer accepting the opposite, namely, that reason is quite sufficient. We have a faith view we believe is correct. We can't prove anything scientifically, but we would like people to be open to our faith, to respect it while they are asking us to respect their faith. The prejudice is that the scientific view is the only way. That's nothing more or less than another faith view."*

### New Book

#### *Living as Long as I Can as Well as I Can*

by James Pomeroy



This is a book that will be helpful to health care providers, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, chaplains, and their patients, because it offers a spiritual foundation for living well, individually and collectively, as demonstrated through one organization's experience.

[www.enroutebooksandmedia.com/living/](http://www.enroutebooksandmedia.com/living/)

Note: If you are receiving a printed copy of this bulletin, and you would like to receive the bulletin by email instead, please send your email address to our Administrative Assistant, Sheila Roth, at [ITEST@archstl.org](mailto:ITEST@archstl.org).



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Sheila Roth, Managing Editor    ISSN 1073-5976 • Copyright © 2022

## Confusion About God: What God Do I Believe In?

By Carla Mae Streeter, OP  
Aquinas Institute of Theology

“Is it ‘May the Force be with you!’ of *Star Wars*? Or maybe it’s the Cosmic Force of New Agism. Or maybe one of the Avatars of the Hindu tradition, or maybe I just shouldn’t worry about it, and settle for focusing on my own consciousness as the Buddhist suggests. Darned if I know... and the view I get depends on the voice I’m listening to. I’m a spiritual person ... but these religions ... I just don’t know ... how do you relate to God ...?”

This is the predicament of many well-meaning folks today, and our young people are among them. With the media coming from all directions and my social media suggesting conspiracy theories at the touch of my hand, it’s no wonder the cacophony of voices have a lot of people confused.

So what do we know of the idea of “God” as it has come down to us throughout history? And who are the credible voices that can give us some solid information? First, history has much to tell us, and reputable scholars agree pretty well on some basic information.

When humans progressed to the stage of having self-reflective consciousness, it is pretty clear that one of the first realizations was of forces that provoked reactions like, “Whoa ... this is beyond me!” The first notion of the transcendent was of the power of water, wind, fire, and earth. The Primal human’s first view of God was *animist*, or identified with the powers of nature. This is still present among tribal peoples. As generations passed, this view morphed into giving these powers human personalities. We have Poseidon, god of the sea, and Zeus, god of the sun.

This view of the Divine prevailed until about 500 BCE, give or take a few decades. Then an interesting shift occurred because of the emergence of a scientific perspective. Humans began to control the natural forces. They dammed up the Nile so it wouldn’t be so destructive. They carefully contained their fire so it wouldn’t burn their hut down. They built their villages beneath hills to be protected from destructive wind storms. They built their houses on stilts or higher ground to protect them from the rising sea tides. And they offered human sacrifice to *pachakama* (earth-father) in Peru so that the earth would not shake and open up, swallowing their villages around the Ring of Fire. This primitive science opened up the distinction

between religion and science, a distinction that would peak in the 1700’s in an Enlightenment that would put science and religion in a fierce competition to this day: Give God his due, but live your life by science.

It is also interesting to note that around 500 BCE the religions of the world are established, solidifying the teachings of the Masters: Confucius in China, and its Taoist response; Shinto in Japan with its reverence for the ancestors; the Hindu tradition in India with its Buddhist response; the Greek and Roman gods; the monotheism of the Zoroastrians in Persia (Iran) and the Jews in the Middle East. It is from this final stream that Christianity and Islam appear. How we worship (ritual), what we believe (doctrine), and how we live (moral code) is gradually set in these various traditions.

**With the media coming from all directions and my social media suggesting conspiracy theories at the touch of my hand, it’s no wonder the cacophony of voices have a lot of people confused.**

It is with the Jewish tradition that the notion of a personal and historically involved God appears. The revelation is built on a covenant relationship between the Divine and the human. This personal relationship with the holy has degenerated into legalism when Jesus appears, and his radical preaching calls the Jewish community back to the covenantal relationship as primary, the law merely being a response to a relationship of love. For this he is rejected and executed by crucifixion, dying at the hands of the Roman occupiers of the Jewish land of Israel.

We could continue the history down to the present day, with the often violent interplay of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions. But *theologically* that would not serve our purpose: What kind of God do I believe in exists ... can I relate to?

The leading figures in these major religions have much wisdom to share with the world. Each of them is worth our study. But for our purpose here we are going to focus in on one figure only and for one reason only. The figure of Jesus is presented to us uniquely, not merely as a holy man, a prophet, or the

*Continues on page 4*

founder of Christianity. He is presented to us as *the final revelation of God*. Now this catches our attention. Mainline Christianity maintains that the concept of God, gradually taking shape as history unfolds, reaches a culminating point in the person of Jesus. This could suggest that the other representations are to be dismissed as wrong, but it might be wiser to understand that they are simply not complete or full. They are to be honored, but we have something new in Jesus.



The basis for this claim of newness is not merely Jesus' teaching. He was, it seems at first glance, simply attempting to bring his fellow Jews back to their primary love: a

covenantal relationship with the Divine, not a focus on keeping laws to assure Divine acceptance. No, the 'something new' was the claim that Jesus himself *was* the New Covenant, the newly restored Relationship. That as the Word of God was given to the Jews through the prophets, and written on scrolls for the people, now that same Word was written on human DNA in the person of Jesus, and his humanness was a unique presence and carrier of the Word of God. In other words, Jesus was a God-Man incarnation, a union never to be separated, and more, he was the final revelation of the destiny of humanity. This was the seeming 'blasphemy' for which Jesus was executed.

This could have been simply dismissed as nonsense, and it was by many, except for one thing. And that one thing was an historical event, witnessed by more than 500 people, so the Christian record states. After being executed, Jesus did not stay dead. He rose from death and displayed a transformed humanness to his followers. Each of the four accepted Gospels attests to this, and gives an account of his appearances after death. Now this too could be dismissed as the delusion of his followers, except for another historical fact. Each of his inner circle of followers was murdered for speaking of this experience, and none of them recanted before dying. Now, statistically, if this was a made-up fabrication, at least someone would have snitched. You don't die for a made-up tale.

So this is what we are faced with: We have a 2000-year-old community that preaches that Jesus is the incarnate Word of God, coming in person to tell us

what the Divine is like. He is crucified and buried. He rises from death, telling us by example not to fear death. He demonstrates the human transformation the entire human race is to go through, and remains visible for 40 days to drive the point home and fix it in the memories of his followers. Then he promises that because his is a transformed humanness, he will remain with this community until the end of time when this transformation is completed. He tells his followers to preach this message everywhere and to everyone, even beyond the Jewish community.

Acceptance of this account depends on the credibility of those witnesses who died rather than retract what they were preaching. Acceptance also depends on a type of knowing that we call *faith*. Reason is knowing based on measurable evidence. Faith is knowing that there are realities beyond the measurable. Because they can't be measured empirically, faith-facts are based on the credibility of the source. No random conspiracy theories need apply.

The source community of the Jesus story has the staying power of two thousand years. Either it is true, or it is not. If Jesus never rose from the dead even if he said he would, the Christian view of God has no credibility no matter who preached it or how long. If Jesus did rise from the dead, if he gave evidence of a transformed humanity after death, then we have a revelation about who God is that has no rival in human history:

- God's Word bonded with our humanness shows an immense love for the human species and material reality.
- This God is involved: with our material world, our history, our physical limitations.
- This God relates: to our ordinary lives, to our sufferings and dying, to our longings to live on after death.
- This God reveals our future: as with all material things, we transition to a form beyond what we are now.
- This God is present: in our beginning, in our now, and in our future, ever drawing us to our fulfillment.
- This God reveals a faithful love: a dynamism that will bring us to our end, and which no evil can destroy, not even death.

These facts in no way demean or negate other spiritual teachers or movements, but affirm the wisdom of their teachings and spiritual disciplines. These facts bring them to their fulfillment, affirming what is true, and leaving behind what is not. These facts do the same with Christianity itself, for it too must continue

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to move into the fullness of what it has been shown, leaving behind understandings that are not adequate to the Mystery as it unfolds in its wonder.

Our times, with its science and crisis of faith, are calling us to revisit our notion of God. Indeed, what kind of God do we believe in? It might be helpful to begin with the image given to the mystic Catherine of Siena (d. 1380): “Catherine, I am the sea, that great sea of peace; and you, Catherine? You are the fish.”

**Sister Carla Mae Streeter, OP, ThD** is a Dominican of the Congregation of Catherine of Siena in Racine, Wisconsin and professor emerita of systematic theology at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis. She is author of *Seasons of the Soul: an Intimate God in Liturgical Time*, *The Foundations of Theology: The Human and the Holy*, and *Avoiding the Sin of Certitude: A Rabbi and a Theologian in Feminine Interfaith Conversations from Disputation to Dialogue*. Sister Carla Mae is also the Convener for the Compassionate Cities Movement in St. Louis.

## Reversing the Trend

*Why are young people abandoning the Catholic faith?*

*Why do they believe faith and science are opposed?*

By Joe P. Provenzano, Deacon Ron D. Morgan, and Dan R. Provenzano, Ph.D.

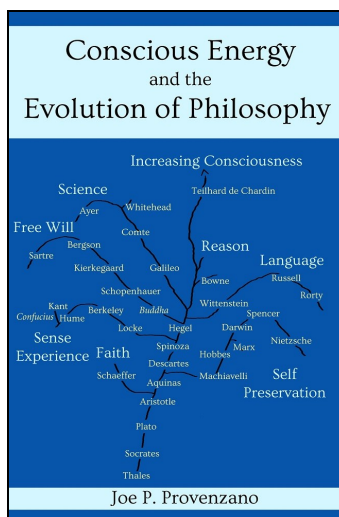
Many young people are leaving our Church because they believe that faith and science are opposed. One of the big reasons for this is the way we present Catholic doctrine. We often use words from the Middle Ages that don't resonate with young people in today's world. On the other hand, scientists and others promote atheism using words like energy, evolution and change of state. It is not a question of truth; it is a question of terminology. But beyond terminology, we need new insights relating science and faith. In order to do that, we must be open to new ideas and open to combining disciplines. We cannot let the world continue to pass us by.

The current assumption underlying Catholic theology is that there are two realms: spiritual and physical, and that these two realms are completely distinct. That assumption is based on an implicit and very hidden assumption. The implicit assumption is that in order to have all the properties associated with the spiritual realm, e.g., eternal, stable, and immortal, the two realms must be distinct. With this current paradigm, there is no possibility for anything to go from the spiritual realm to the physical realm or vice versa. Both assumptions are rooted in ancient philosophy and became entrenched in Catholic theology in the Middle Ages. However, the doctrine does not depend on this paradigm; it's only the current theology that does. That is the problem. For example, Catholic doctrine correctly says that the soul is immortal, but the body is not. Current theology says that the soul cannot evolve from the physical. However, that is an assumption based on the current paradigm and does not account for something called “change of state.”

We know from modern physics that the “physical” universe, at the most basic level, is fields of energy. However, these fields can exist in different states and these states have very different properties. They are so different that they seem to be in distinct realms, but they are not. Aquinas said we live in one universe, not two. Some things can—and do—move from one state to another. Einstein's most famous equation relates two states of energy: matter and radiation. Entities in these two states have completely different properties, but entities can move from one state to another. For example, an electron can lose energy and emit a photon.

Accepting this concept results in a new paradigm, or way of viewing reality. It does much more than just allow us to formulate and present the timeless truths of faith using modern terminology. It provides new and otherwise unavailable insights into mysteries in both science and theology. Three examples are provided below.

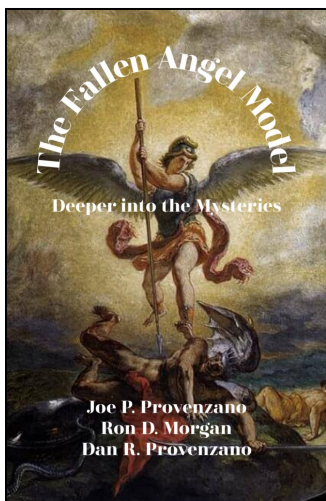
The first example is about the human soul which is immortal and survives bodily death. The soul is not simply a by-product nor is it made up of physical parts. That is Catholic doctrine. But what if some of the energy or fields in the brain could transform, i.e.,



*Continues on page 6*

change state, to become fields of energy with the special, non-physical, property of self-consciousness? Such a field of energy could be aware of itself and be capable of surviving bodily death and going to heaven.\* *Everything* that is currently in Catholic doctrine can be supported by this new paradigm. This is an example of how we can obtain and present new insights of our faith to the scientifically oriented youth today.

In the second example, we'll discuss the elephant that's in the room with the physicists today. For over 100 years, physicists have been trying to give a completely physical explanation of modern physics experiments. Einstein tried hard and failed, but so has everyone else. Eventually, they just quit trying. We believe that no one can explain the properties and behaviors of fundamental particles like photons and electrons using only physical terms *because these "particles" are not completely physical*. We call them "not-so-physical." Following this logic, it is very easy to make the case that our universe is composed of entities that are physical, non-physical, and not-so-physical.\*\* This is a paradigm-changing argument against materialism that is based *only* on the findings of modern physics. Materialism, which assumes that only the physical is real, is simply inadequate to explain the reality discovered by modern physics. It is time to go on the offense against materialism.



The third example of how this new paradigm allows us to gain insights that are not otherwise possible is something we call the Fallen Angel Model\*\* or simply, FAM.

Here's a short summary of the FAM idea:

Scripture and doctrine tell us that God is all good and all that He creates is good. He created the purely spiritual (therefore, non-physical) angels from nothing. They are not puppets. God gave them free will to love Him and be with Him in heaven. Some chose to rebel and were thrown out of heaven. St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that God gave the angels spiritual gifts of knowledge and power which were beyond their nature. When they fell, they lost these gifts.

Consider that these lost gifts could have become unstable and began to devolve/evolve, changing state from non-physical to not-so-physical. It makes sense that this energy could be the energy of the Big Bang. This possibility is consistent with the way that the very early universe is described in modern physics, which is that it was highly ordered, maybe even had zero entropy, and was unstable. This also fits the story of the one lost sheep. God could have ignored this lost energy, but He did not. He chose to deal with the consequences of free will and "worked" with the evolving universe to create as many souls as possible. Christians believe God sent His Son to redeem us.

**He chose to deal with the consequences of free will and "worked" with the evolving universe to create as many souls as possible.**

FAM also gives new insights into why there is so much physical evil, suffering, and death in the evolving universe, billions of years before humans evolved. This is because the physical world is the result of energy falling from a highly ordered state to a lesser ordered state. It's only natural that this brokenness would bring about the imperfections and complications we see resulting in what appears to be evil in the natural world. Furthermore, FAM ties an event from Scripture with an event from science. Think how important that kind of connection would be for reconciling faith and science in today's world. Also note that FAM is consistent with the fact that the Big Bang appears to have come from nothing because the spiritual fields before becoming unstable were completely non-physical and therefore, non-detectable. People are looking for ideas on possible sources of the energy of the Big Bang. Why not let the Catholic Church propose an idea with the Fallen Angel Model?

\* [Conscious Energy and the Evolution of Philosophy](#)  
by Joe P. Provenzano

\*\* [The Fallen Angel Model — Deeper into the Mysteries](#)  
by Joe P. Provenzano, Deacon Ron D. Morgan, and Dan R. Provenzano, Ph.D.  
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## Sacrifice? What's That?

By Thomas P. Sheahen

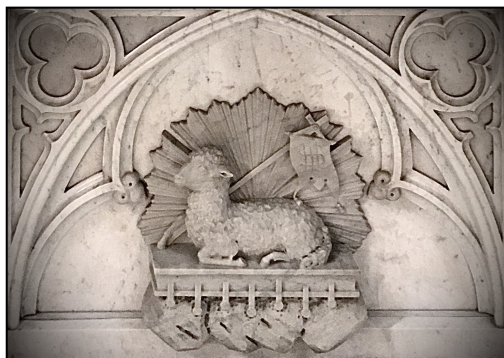
Across a wide spectrum of Catholic leaders, various opinions have been offered about why young Catholics drift away from the Church. The steep deterioration in sexual morality is often cited, as is the influence of TV, social media, internet, and other communication methods. Fr. Robert Spitzer and Bishop Bob Barron have frequently called attention to the faulty perception that science is atheistic, from which it follows that a person must choose between being scientific or believing in God. Every one of these, and others, are contributing factors.

I wish to suggest that another factor, unnoticed so far, pertains to the matter of *sacrifice*. For nearly all young Americans, the entire concept of sacrifice is unknown, and the word is devoid of meaning. Most have no experience of sacrifice, and glaze over at the word. They think it probably has something to do with hardship, something you'd rather not have to do.

Children who have been to Sunday-school lessons might remember the story of Abraham making a burnt-offering of a ram or goat, but have forgotten that Abraham was at first required to kill his son Isaac as a way of showing loyalty to Yahweh. To obey that commitment was Abraham's enormous heart-wrenching sacrifice; but that's lost in a story that has a happy ending. Other Old Testament stories about turtle doves and prophets further soften the meaning of the word *sacrifice*.

**... a prerequisite to appreciating the *Sacrifice of the Mass* is to understand the meaning of *sacrifice* in the first place. They need to see sacrifice as a normal part of life.**

To a contemporary religious child, the word *sacrifice* might translate into giving up candy for Lent, but by the teenage years, that practice seems quaint. It's better to take some positive action. Meanwhile, TV and other media promote *instant gratification* as the standard of pursuing the good life. It's an uphill climb to attain a mature definition of *sacrifice*, and there's



very little external support along the way. Probably those who have served in the military grasp the idea better than civilians.

Now consider the *Sacrifice of the Mass*. We were taught that it's a reenactment of the Last Supper, incorporating the entire passion and death of Jesus Christ on the cross, which was **the** ultimate sacrifice. A young person can see the Last Supper connection, but since no one is tortured or killed, the association with Calvary is very remote. Accompanied by 2000 years of Christian theology about the Mass, we who have paid close attention to the Church get the connection, but a young person has no such experience or detailed education. **And** their life experience so far gives them no context by which to understand the word "sacrifice." Consequently, they can't discern a reason, or "identify with," going to Mass. It becomes an empty experience, a couple of lost hours on a weekend.

Absent such motivation, it's easy to glide down an off ramp to the state of being "religious, but non-affiliated." In the later teenage or college years, a philosophy professor who doesn't know any actual science, but claims the "mantle of science," spins a yarn that provides a slight extra push out the door, to the condition of "none." It's *fashionable* (politically correct) to be non-religious, even disdainful and antagonistic, to religion. Furthermore, such ex-Catholics pull hard on those remaining faithful to Church teaching, causing a hostile environment for a young adult to continue practicing the faith.

When councils of bishops meet to discuss the problem, the sweeping generalization that is easiest to blame is "inadequate catechesis," meaning no one taught them the essentials of Catholicism in their youth. Most Sunday School teachers object that they did their best, but didn't get the necessary reinforcement from the parents. In most cases, the parents were never equipped to teach their children about the centrality of the Mass in Catholicism. We are now well into the second generation of that condition, where both *sacrifice* and *worship* are concepts that are distant and unfamiliar.

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How to overcome this problem? A few students are fortunate enough to see videos from Bishop Barron or Father Spitzer, where they will learn that science certainly doesn't prove that God doesn't exist; rather, science points strongly toward the creative hand of God. Some others will be drawn to the Church by intangibles, such as the love of a future spouse. But that leaves a high percentage out wandering in the wilderness. And all that time, the phrase *Sacrifice of the Mass* is a foreign and remote concept.

Returning to focus on younger children: a prerequi-

site to appreciating the *Sacrifice of the Mass* is to understand the meaning of *sacrifice* in the first place. They need to see sacrifice as a normal part of life. The pull toward instant gratification will always be there, and easy to recognize; but, in a well-off society such as ours, the meaning of the word "sacrifice" has to be taught. Christian parents, teachers, and coaches set a good example by their own sacrifices. But still, it is necessary for a young person to actually experience sacrifice personally before they can recognize or appreciate it.

Watch this video from  
Bishop Barron!  
"Why the Supposed Conflict  
Between Science and  
Religion is Tragic Nonsense"

Have you heard young people say that they left the Church because science opposes religion? This compelling video by Bishop Robert Barron will clear up this myth once and for all. Catholic educators and parents ought to show this video to their students who wonder if science opposes religion.

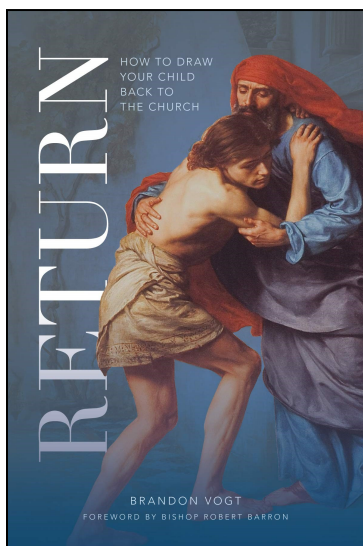
Watch at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zV6pu5R5GBs&t=24s>

"Our Child has left the Church and Has Given up his Faith."

### Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church

Author: Brandon Vogt

Review by Sister Marianne Postiglione, RSM



What do we do? Have we failed as parents? Do we just give up or give in and accept the inevitable -- that our child is no longer part of our church community of faith?

But the situation is not dire! At the end of his insightful book, *Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church*, (Word on Fire, Publisher) author Brandon Vogt, husband and

and the practice of the faith. Rather, it is a book offering practical suggestions and strategies to parents to gently lead back to the faith "those who walk with us no more."

Here are some of the questions Vogt addresses: Why are young people leaving? Where are they going? What is driving young people, say between the teen years and into the early 30's, to simply leave the practice of their faith in the dust, at the wayside? He discusses in Chapter Two the results of studies by the Pew Research Institute on the hemorrhaging of young people from churches and faiths of all denominations. Deadly statistics indeed!

To point out specifics, under the heading of theological objections (pp. 179-182), Vogt covers thoroughly the common objection that faith and science contradict each other and as a result are not complementary. The author cites a comment prevalent among the objections: "Faith and science are at odds, and I choose science." Even after years of Catholic education on the elementary level—grades one through eight—and with solid teaching in science, the objection seems to

father, writes, "God yearns for your child to become a great saint." "Oh, really, good luck, God," you may think. "Not my child; my child will have nothing to do with God, faith, and above all, any church."

Wait! Don't stop reading yet. Let me tell you what **this book is not**; it is not a quick fix with magical potions to draw your "prodigal" child back to church

*Continues on page 9*

hold sway in the minds of many young people.

A few years ago, in a relatively large Archdiocese in the Midwest, a science teacher who also has a theological foundation, asked her incoming freshmen in a physics class to raise their hands if they thought that there is a conflict between the Catholic faith and science. Of the 30 or so in the class, at least 75 percent raised their hands in agreement. Are students simply not listening or is the education lacking? Is it “never the twain shall meet” or is there an effort made to show the compatibility between the two, that science and faith are complementary paths to the same ultimate Truth? In this section, Vogt provides good examples of those who object for ostensibly scientific reasons. You may have heard them in the past, but the author suggests some ways to “encounter” those objections effectively using documents of the Catholic Church on the topic.

Vogt covers a host of other objections from the serious to the merely fatuous:

- “The Mass just has no meaning for me; it’s boring.”
- “I am too busy, working all week, and doing odd jobs on Saturdays. Sunday is the day I can sleep in.”
- “I don’t believe that there is a God since science is the only reliable authority in our world.”
- “I can get any answer I want from science.”
- “I don’t believe that the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is truly the body and blood of Christ; science could analyze the bread and wine and prove it is only bread and wine.”
- “That whole sexual abuse tragedy has left me disgusted with clergy, especially with bishops who knowingly returned pedophile priests to parishes to abuse children again.”
- “I think my family and I lead a good life; we give to charity and help in our soup kitchen; we don’t need a God to make us feel guilty.”

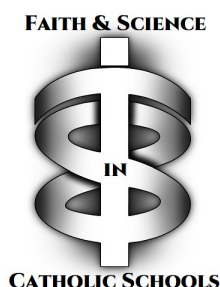
Sound familiar?

The poet admonishes us “Do not go gentle into that good night.” But Vogt might advise the opposite stance: “DO go gentle into that good night” when approaching our children to discuss their decision to leave the church abruptly or to slowly fall off from the practice of their faith. The author cautions patience and gentleness rather than harshness or nagging, dialogue rather than debate, encouragement rather than derisiveness. Parents of teenagers have already learned that these tactics work more often than blaming or censoring.

This book has many good points. The only weakness I could find is the lack of an Index. Yet, the strengths are many. The author supplies stories of those who questioned their faith and who, often after many years, returned because of a gentle “nudging at their elbow” from some caring parent, priest, or friend. Another strength is the list of multiple references and resources, both digital and print, easily available. This book should find a prominent place on every parent’s bookshelf. Finally, I highly recommend this book for adult formation group discussion in parishes and for college level student discussion groups at campus ministry centers.

Buy this book at <https://bookstore.wordonfire.org/products/return>

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### Did You Know?

ITEST has interviewed Catholic school teachers about the various ways they teach their students that there is no conflict between faith and science.

Find the interviews at <https://faithscience.org/catholicschools/>.

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## Should our Faith Fear Disagreement with Science?

By Mattheus Uijtewaal, PhD

I don't think any of you will answer that in the affirmative. But why not actually? One possibility is that there simply is no (and can't be) disagreement with science. After all, both are about finding the Truth, just in a somewhat different way. In theory, that's definitely the case, but in practice, things are a bit more complicated. For one, any scientific result is, to a greater or lesser extent, preliminary. And then there's the human factor, as in every human endeavour, where all too human reasons can factor into scientific claims as well. Where faith is concerned, such a thing is not surprising, but as science is understood to be rational, there it is easily overlooked. And even if we agree that there currently is no disagreement, new results could change that which makes one's faith at least somewhat unsteady. One could, of course, perhaps unconsciously, circumvent the issue by adapting one's faith to anything new and differing in science. Or (more or less equivalently) imagine that any specific scientific result is irrelevant to the faith.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, many (most) scientific results are indeed irrelevant to our faith. Were that to be generally true, however, what relevance would our faith then have for people's everyday material lives? It seems clear to me that a majority in our current society already answers that in the negative, and even for topics such as the meaning of life, people are turning to science for answers.<sup>2</sup> Even worse, our faith is often seen as a hindrance to the progress that science has brought us - the "conflict" view of faith and science.<sup>3</sup>

Let's then at least know our own history properly. An important prerequisite for the genesis of modern science was a just, stable, and flourishing society with a well-organized and international system of learning. And the Catholic Church has played a crucial role in establishing precisely that.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, she has cradled modern science itself, not only by providing the correct worldview and biblical motivation for it, but through active promotion as well.<sup>5</sup> And even the infamous Galileo case, where various issues unrelated to science played a role, actually had its virtue by opposing unscientific claims of the famous scientist such as that the tides were proof of heliocentrism.<sup>6</sup> Let's also not forget that although heliocentric thinking is still the norm today, General Relativity has long done away with the simple cosmic picture of the earth circling the sun.<sup>7</sup> One could even speculate what a more active role of the faith could have brought for

the 19<sup>th</sup> century dilemma between a fully deterministic view of the cosmos and the need for human free will to express itself. It's a real pity that many still aren't aware of how brilliantly Quantum Mechanics has resolved this a century ago.<sup>8</sup>

Just in physics alone, I also see a need for more critical, independent thinking about various "quantum interpretations," multiverse theories, and even the Black Hole concept<sup>9</sup> (for which the Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded last year). All of these introduce fundamentally unobservable concepts into physics. What comes to my mind now are Jesus' words from the famous Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:14-16): "You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"<sup>10</sup>

1. The **NOMA** view: faith and science have **Non-Overlapping MA**gisteria; Galileo once already famously said: "the Bible tells us the way to go to heaven not the way the heavens go."

2. see e.g. [en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meaning\\_of\\_life](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meaning_of_life) or [en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Greatest\\_Story\\_Ever\\_Told%E2%80%94So\\_Far](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Greatest_Story_Ever_Told%E2%80%94So_Far) or [amp.theguardian.com/science/blog/2010/mar/05/meaning-life-evolution-universe](http://amp.theguardian.com/science/blog/2010/mar/05/meaning-life-evolution-universe)

3. see e.g. [www.pewresearch.org/science/2015/10/22/perception-of-conflict-between-science-and-religion](http://www.pewresearch.org/science/2015/10/22/perception-of-conflict-between-science-and-religion)

4. cf. recognized historians such as James Hannam ([jameshannam.com](http://jameshannam.com)) and Stanley Jaki ([www.sljaki.com](http://www.sljaki.com))

5. see e.g. [catholicexchange.com/we-were-the-ones-who-created-europe-the-catholic-church-and-western-civilization](http://catholicexchange.com/we-were-the-ones-who-created-europe-the-catholic-church-and-western-civilization)

6. see e.g. [en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galileo\\_affair](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galileo_affair)

7. All movement is fundamentally relative to the observer's point of view; so from our position we can very well say that the sun revolves around the earth.

8. See my blog post at: [orakelaar.blogspot.com/2021/06/quantum-free-will-entropic.html](http://orakelaar.blogspot.com/2021/06/quantum-free-will-entropic.html).

9. It is surprisingly straightforward to argue that Black Holes conflict with General Relativity; see: [orakelaar.blogspot.com/2021/06/quantum-gravity-black-holes.html](http://orakelaar.blogspot.com/2021/06/quantum-gravity-black-holes.html).

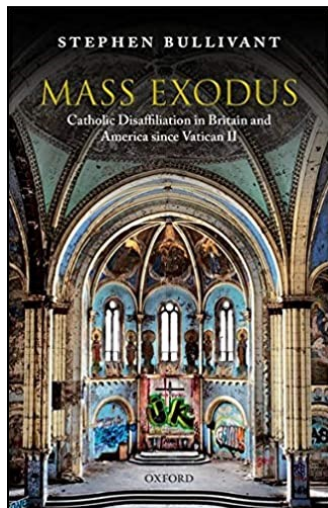
10. Somewhat equivalently, the brilliant lay-theologian Charles Williams wrote in his masterpiece *The Descent of the Dove*: "Faith can take pleasure in the defeat of rational support while taking advantage from rational support."

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## Mass Exodus: Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain and America since Vatican II

Author: Stephen Bullivant

Review by Patrick Panozzo



The phenomenon of religious disaffiliation has been a concern within Catholic circles for well over a decade. Around 23 percent of American adults now consider themselves to have “no religion” and one in three cradle Catholics no longer identify as Catholic. These numbers began to rise around 2004, have more than doubled in the past 15 years, and show no sign of leveling off, much less reversing. Grouped together, “former” Catholics would comprise a “church” larger than any single Protestant denomination in the United States. In *Mass Exodus: Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain and America since Vatican II* (2019), Stephen Bullivant provides insights supported by evidence responding to two of the most critical questions underlying the crisis of disaffiliation. The first, “Who are these people that no longer identify with the Church?” The second, “What has led to or enabled such a large number to abandon Catholic identification and practice?”

The author makes it clear at the outset that the book is primarily a work of sociology – analysis of the who and why of Catholic identification and practice. However, it necessarily draws in the historical and theological questions that undergird the scope of research he has selected. The opening chapter frames the subtitle “... since Vatican II” as primarily a limitation on that scope providing a description of time that will be his focus of analysis. He wishes to dispel some overt insinuation that the Council is the key to understanding the cause (of disaffiliation). Bullivant is quick to acknowledge the debate within the Church concerning the Second Vatican Council’s effects on waning religious practice and sinking membership. He never strays too far from linking the potential causes of disaffiliation to some potential correlation flowing from the Council.

The opening chapter titled “Looking Foolish” identifies three broad tendencies for interpreting the effects of Vatican II on church practice and affiliation.

The first position blames the Council either directly or indirectly for the initially slow trend developing into crisis levels of Catholic disaffiliation. Liturgical reforms are identified as the favorite culprit, but ironically those pertaining to the laity are also given consideration for planting the seeds of disaffiliation. The Council’s impact can be found indirectly in how the reforms were received (or failed to be received) and put into practice. Bullivant acknowledges that the Council itself and the reforms as envisioned, then promulgated, are not necessarily what the average Catholic may have ended up experiencing. He finds ample evidence in his research supporting tremendous levels of chaos and confusion in the years that followed the Council, eventually producing a chaotic and confused laity.

The second position for interpreting the decline in those identifying and practicing as Catholics would not blame the Council, rather its implementation. This position sees the direct thwarting of the Council’s vision by conservatives within the Church, beginning with Pope Paul VI himself and his 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* as exhibit 1A. The argument continues that the snuffing out of the “spirit” of Vatican II by those who wished to reverse the Council’s reforms has done more to promote disaffiliation than anything the Council said or did.

The third position suggests that pastoral reforms at the center of Vatican II’s agenda had no chance in a wider social and cultural revolution. The wave of secularization that was already gaining ground prior to the Council (and in some ways inspired it) would include elements far more relevant to the average Catholic’s day-to-day life, thus affecting people with far greater impact. One of the more interesting conclusions drawn from *Mass Exodus* is that the author does not see these three conclusions as mutually exclusive. In fact, some part of all three may be true, and plenty of sociological evidence is cited that each have been a contributor in various ways and to varying degrees to the current crisis. Bullivant effectively demonstrates the complications and nuances that have undergirded the crisis of disaffiliation on many levels.

*Mass Exodus* addresses the essential question of identifying who disaffiliates in Chapters 2 and 3.

*Continues on page 12*

Chapter 2 takes the big picture approach providing demographics that show a surprising range of diversity among those who identify with no religion. It's not always who you might think. The numbers are sobering, and Bullivant provides four charts and seven tables in this chapter alone. These show that Catholic disaffiliation has been slower and later than every other Christian church (Jewish disaffiliation as well), but it has been a steeper decline with greater impact and further to go. Chapter 3 engages the personal side of disaffiliation. In the same way that the aggregate numbers are broad and diverse, so too are the reasons often given for loss of religious practice and eventual loss of personal identification with the Church.

**Bullivant effectively demonstrates the complications and nuances that have undergirded the crisis of disaffiliation on many levels.**

Having thoroughly analyzed the who (and why) among the disaffiliated, Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 address how such a large number of people could leave the Church in such a relatively short period of time. These chapters provide an in-depth exploration of all the cultural, religious, and political factors that may have contributed to disaffiliation in even the slightest way. Chapter 4 helpfully provides context by reaching back to before the Second Vatican Council. Factors such as the baby boom, increased educational opportunity, suburbanization, growing prosperity, the automobile, and the television all originated in the pre-conciliar period and all impacted Americans' sense of community and belonging. Chapter 5 is really the centerpiece of the book providing a deep dive into what historians, theologians, and sociologists would all agree were the tumultuous sixties. There is only a 5½ year span between the December 1963 promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and Paul VI's announcement of the liturgical calendar reform in May 1969, a remarkable period of sweeping change in a very short span of time. These pages call to mind the debate over interpreting the Council more as having created a rupture with Tradition, rather than marked by continuity with it. Bullivant brings to the forefront the wider cultural trends of the baby boom entering adulthood promoting the new, the modern, and the young as supreme values. The Church was

certainly not immune to these trends, and in many ways sought to capture that energy hoping to engage a world eager for transformation of almost any kind. Chapters 6 and 7 look at the after-shocks of the sixties including some early signs of disaffiliation, the near collapse of many vowed religious communities, and of course, the patterns of sexual abuse by clergy which peaked in the wake of the Council.

The most notable aspect of this analysis is that no single identifiable cause or correlation solves the puzzle. As the personal stories in Chapter 3 indicate, the "average" Catholic who has drifted from religious practice to the point of no longer identifying as Catholic is not easily summed up. Much like those who continue to identify and practice, often with great devotion and zeal, there can be numerous and diverse reasons for their doing so, implicitly and explicitly.

*Mass Exodus* concludes with a short epilogue titled "Did the Council fail?" Bullivant notes that by the standards it set for itself, namely increased participation and ownership of the faith by the laity, you have to conclude the Council has not achieved this most central goal 50 years hence. Yet we may find examples of success through the implementation of dynamic and robust theological principles. We can also find hope in the intentionality of faith (no longer helped along by culture) and identification where Catholic communities do thrive. The groundwork has been laid for what Paul VI and his successors have labeled the New Evangelization. It has always been the case that the harvest is plentiful and there are too few laborers to go out into the fields, but it seems so now more than ever.

Purchase this book on [Amazon](#).

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We welcome your feedback regarding this issue of the *ITEST Bulletin* or any ITEST activity. Write a letter to the editor at [ITEST@archstl.org](mailto:ITEST@archstl.org) or mail to ITEST, 20 Archbishop May Drive, Saint Louis, MO 63119.