

CENTRO PRO UNIONE

N. 82 - Fall 2012
ISSN: 1122-0384



semi-annual Bulletin

In this issue:

<i>Letter from the Director</i>	p. 2
<i>Presentazione di Chiesa cattolica. Essenza—realtà—missione</i> Walter Kasper.	p. 3
<i>Some Philosophical Aspects of Koheleth (Ecclesiastes)</i> Jack Bemporad.....	p. 5

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A Ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement

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Director's Desk

Important announcement

Due to the high cost of printing and postage, the *Bulletin* will no longer appear in hard copy. Starting in 2013, the *Bulletin-Centro pro Unione* will only be available on our web site, free of charge found at:

<https://www.prounione.it> (Bulletin link)

In this issue you will find the presentation of Cardinal Walter Kasper given on the occasion of the Centro's presentation of the Italian translation of Kasper's latest book, *Chiesa cattolica: essenza, realtà, missione* (Brescia: Queriniana, 2012).

The second article is the conference given by Rabbi Jack Bemporad: *Some Philosophical Aspects of Koheleth (Ecclesiastes)*. Rabbi Bemporad observes that wisdom literature has four basic characteristics: it focuses on the individual rather than on society; it is universal rather than national in character; it concerns itself with moral rather than with cultic questions; and, lastly, it is philosophical in its orientation. The article that we publish here will deal principally with the last of these characteristics.

Rev. Hervé Legrand, op, emeritus professor and successor of Cardinal Yves Congar at the Institute catholique of Paris will give the fifteenth annual Lecture in honor of the co-founders of the Society of the Atonement, Fr. Paul Wattson, SA and Mother Lurana White, SA. His lecture on Thursday, 13 December is entitled: "*Les directives du Décret sur l'œcuménisme s'adressaient aux seuls catholiques: quel bilan en tirer cinquante ans après?*" This is also the first in a series of lectures celebrating 50 years of Vatican II. This lecture will be in French with simultaneous translation into English. The second in this series will be given in January on the occasion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Thursday, 24 January 2013 by Prof. Ladislav M. Örsy, sj. Professor of Law at Georgetown University. His lecture is entitled: "*Dignitatis Humanae: What has it given to the Church and the World?*" Following his lecture an ecumenical prayer vigil will be held.

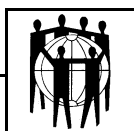
You will find two important pieces of information in this Bulletin. The first is a great joy for all of us here at the Centro. We proudly announce the publication of *Manuale di ecumenismo* by the Associate Director, Teresa Francesca Rossi. This book is intended to be a text book for the required course in ecumenism in Catholic faculties. Collaborating with Dr. Rossi is our web master Espedito Higinio Neto who not only prepared the graphics for the book but also realized the Multimedia CD-ROM which accompanies the *Manual*.

Finally you will find information concerning the Italian formation course "Conosciamo i Fratelli" that the Centro is offering throughout this year.

Check our web site for up to date information on the Centro's activities and realtime information on the theological dialogues.

This *Bulletin* is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Drive, 16th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606 (<http://www.atla.com>).

James F. Puglisi, sa
Director





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Centro Conferenze

Presentazione di
Chiesa cattolica. Essenza—realtà—missione.
Walter Cardinal Kasper
Case editrice *Queriniana*, Brescia 2012

(Conferenza tenuta al **Centro Pro Unione**, giovedì 26 gennaio 2012)

Eminenza, Caro cardinale Koch,
Caro P. Puglisi, Caro Sig. Gibellini,
Cari amici,
Signori e Signore!

Innanzitutto, vorrei salutare tutti coloro che hanno dato seguito all'invito per questa presentazione malgrado i loro tanti impegni. Saluto in particolare il mio successore, il Cardinale Kurt Koch ed i collaboratori dell'*Istituto Cardinale Kasper* a Vallendar (Germania), che mi hanno così tanto aiutato a realizzare la redazione tecnica dell'originale tedesco del libro presentato oggi in versione italiana.

Ringrazio il "*Centro Pro Unione*" e il suo direttore, il Rev.do Professore James Puglisi, per l'ospitalità in questa bellissima sala, per le sue gentili parole d'introduzione, e anche, se posso dirlo, per aver previsto un rinfresco in occasione della presentazione.

Ringrazio il Direttore della Casa Editrice *Queriniana* di Brescia, il Sig. Rosino Gibellini, — con lui ci conosciamo da molti anni —, non solo per aver reso possibile questa presentazione, ma soprattutto per aver realizzato in brevissimo tempo la traduzione di un libro di oltre 500 pagine. L'originale tedesco è stato pubblicato solo nello scorso mese di giugno; mentre le altre traduzioni in inglese, francese e spagnolo sono ancora in preparazione, la versione italiana oggi è pronta già. Cose tanto veloci possono essere fatte soltanto dagli italiani.

Mi fa piacere incontrare di nuovo tante persone che conosco bene dal tempo del mio impegno nel Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani. Con questa presentazione posso mostrarvi che, dopo la conclusione del mio incarico, non sono stato malato di

pigrizia. Anzi ho trovato il tempo di realizzare un desiderio che avevo coltivato da lunghi anni.

Già alla fine della mia carriera accademica, quasi venticinque anni fa, cioè un quarto secolo, ho avuto l'intenzione e il desiderio di pubblicare, dopo i libri sulla Cristologia (*Gesù il Cristo*¹) e su Dio (*Il Dio di Gesù Cristo*²), un libro sulla Chiesa. Il tempo da vescovo di una grande diocesi tedesca e poi da Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani non mi avevano lasciato il tempo di realizzare questa mia aspirazione. D'altra parte, considero questi due impegni un grande vantaggio, poiché essi mi hanno donato una esperienza ecclesiale che non avrei mai potuto avere da professore d'università, e cioè l'esperienza pastorale da vescovo e l'esperienza universale e ecumenica da Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'

Unità dei Cristiani. Già da vescovo ero incaricato dei rapporti della Conferenza episcopale tedesca con il cosiddetto Terzo Mondo, dove ho sperimentato molte situazioni di povertà e di miseria, ma ho potuto anche fare l'esperienza di una Chiesa giovane, vivace, gioiosa ed in crescita. Sin dal primo giorno da Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani ho avuto la sensazione che l'ecumenismo non si può fare solo a *tavolino*, perciò ho attraversato alcune volte il globo per annodare una rete di fiducia e anche di amicizie. Queste due esperienze hanno profondamente cambiato il progetto originale. Ho sperimentato la Chiesa dall'interno e nella sua estensione universale e globale. Così il libro, presentato oggi in versione italiana, è frutto sia della scienza teologica accademica, soprattutto della Scuola Teologica cattolica di Tubinga, che

¹ Biblioteca di teologia contemporanea, 23 (Brescia: Queriniana, 1975).

² Biblioteca di teologia contemporanea, 45 (Brescia: Queriniana, 1984).

dell'esperienza pratica della Chiesa non solo nella mia patria e nel Vaticano ma in nel mondo universale e nelle Chiese e Comunità non cattoliche.

Per mostrare che non volevo scrivere sulla Chiesa solo dal punto di visto accademico e professionale, ma sulla Chiesa che è la mia Chiesa, nella quale vivo da quasi ottanta anni, nella quale da più di cinquanta anni sono impegnato da prete, una Chiesa che amo e con la quale soffro anche a causa della crisi attuale, soprattutto in Europa occidentale —, per mostrare tutto questo ho iniziato il libro con un capitolo biografico, che include un'analisi della crisi attuale.

Il libro vuole essere un modesto contributo a superare questa situazione e a dare un nuovo slancio alla Chiesa. Sono convinto che ciò è possibile solo ricercando e rafforzando le radici profonde dell'essere ecclesiale: Chiesa popolo di Dio, Corpo di Cristo, Comunione nello Spirito santo. Perché occorre che le riforme, senz'altro necessarie, anzi urgenti nella Chiesa attuale, risultino da una riflessione teologica e spirituale approfondita.

Da qui il titolo del libro: *Chiesa cattolica. Essenza — realtà — missione. Essenza*, perché questo scritto non vuole essere un libro sociologico, ma teologico e dogmatico; *realtà*, perché non parla di una Chiesa dipinta dal cielo, ma della Chiesa come essa vive oggi con tutte le sue gioie ed i suoi problemi; *missione*, perché la Chiesa non è una realtà a sé stante, ma ha una missione ed essa ha qualcosa di importante e insostituibile da dire al mondo: cioè il Vangelo liberatore e riconciliatore del Regno di Dio a venire.

Spero che il libro, scritto sulla scia del Concilio Vaticano II, di cui celebriamo quest'anno i cinquanta anni della sua inaugurazione, possa essere un utile strumento della nuova evangelizzazione nell'Anno della fede e essere d'aiuto per un rinnovamento ecclesiale, di cui abbiamo tanto bisogno.

Grazie della vostra presenza, del vostro interesse e del vostro ascolto.

Walter Kasper



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Centro Conferences

Some Philosophical Aspects of Koheleth (Ecclesiastes)

Jack Bemporad

Director, The Center for Interreligious Understanding, Englewood, New Jersey USA

(Conference given at the **Centro Pro Unione**, Thursday 17 May 2012)

The wisdom literature of the Bible has four basic characteristics. It focuses on the individual rather than on society; it is universal rather than national in character; it concerns itself with moral rather than with cultic questions; and, lastly, it is philosophical in its orientation. Although we shall be concerned with all of these aspects, the present essay will endeavor to elaborate on the philosophy implicit in the Book of Koheleth (Ecclesiastes)¹ and its relation to Greek philosophy in general.

The helpfulness of such a study in relationships becomes at once apparent when we remember that Koheleth dates no earlier than the latter half of the third century B.C.E.² By then, the Near East had become Hellenized, its culture completely suffused by Greek cosmology and ethics. The author of Ecclesiastes reacted to the intellectual world of his time and it is only against the background of this world that we can fully understand his work and thought.

The leading themes of Greek philosophy are his themes also: the recognition of the cyclical order of nature, the presumption of man's capacity to find release from this cyclical process by means of wisdom or of a life devoted to pleasure, fame and honor. Koheleth examines these presumptions and finds them wanting.

He begins his analysis with an explication of nature's cyclical state:

¹ Koheleth is the Hebrew name. Ecclesiastes is the Greek name. (In most English Bibles it bears the Greek name.)

² For the dating, see the excellent article by Professor Sheldon Blank on Ecclesiastes in the *Interpreters Bible Dictionary*.

1. The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
2. Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.
3. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?
4. A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.
5. The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises.
6. The wind blows to the south, and goes round to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns.
7. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again.
8. All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.
9. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun.
10. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already, in the ages before us.
11. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to happen among those who come after.

Verses 1-3 present a general statement. Verses 4-7 describe the continual cycles of nature. Verse 8 proclaims all things weary beyond speech. The point of this passage rests in the question, What profit does a man have of all his labor which he laboreth under the sun? The implied answer-none. Why? Because nature is cyclical; that which we accomplish will be undone. The sun, the wind, and the rivers go back and forth. There is no progress in nature; but this is also true in the

human world. Here Koheleth markedly shows the subordination of the human to the non-human realm. At first flush, verse 8 seems unconnected with the cyclical process when it describes all things weary beyond speech. “The eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing.” The verse appears to intrude in the series of verses which summarize the cyclical character of things; indeed were one to leave it out, the passage would seem to be more unified. Yet the author here implicitly hints at something that emerges later, in chapter 2:14 ff., where he states, “I know indeed that one event will happen to all of them”; and again in chapter 3:19, “The fate of the sons of man and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other. They all have the same breath and man has no advantage over the beasts.” The point is that death is the leveler. It is this cyclical process of death and rebirth that makes one say that all things are weary beyond speech, all things will have one end and that end is death. The eye and the ear hope for more,³ but this hope is vanity.

What endures of man’s labor in the face of death and the continual ebb and flow, the continual recurrence of eternity? This is the question posed by Koheleth. It is the question of what man can achieve or accomplish in an alien world whose law man must follow and which will, in the end, triumph over him.

A parallel passage to the first eleven verses of the first chapter can be found in chapter 3. Here Koheleth writes:

1. For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
2. a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
3. a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;
4. a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
5. a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
6. a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
7. a time to rend, and a time to sew; time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
8. a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.
9. What gain has the worker from his toil?

³ For some analogies to the eyes hoping for more, see, cf., PS. 145:15 and Job 19:26.

These verses do not mean that there is an appropriate time for everything to be done, but rather that everything has its appointed time and will disappear, will be gripped, totally consumed by the inevitable cyclical next-phase. *This* is the meaning of the question posed by verse 9: what good is there, everything is subject to time and decay; the only thing that lasts forever is the cyclical process itself.

In Greek thought, it was Anaximander who had first spoken of the cyclic process of nature. Heraclitus continued the trend which culminated in Aristotle, who states in his *Physics*: “A thing then will be affected by time just as we are accustomed to say that time wastes things away and that all things grow old through time, and that there is oblivion owing to the lapse of time... for time is by its nature the cause rather of decay, since it is the measure of change and change removes what is.”⁴

F. M. Cornford summarizes the meaning of time and of natural cycles in Greek thought, when he states:

That Time was regarded as a circle is actually stated in so many words by Aristotle in the *Physics*. Time could not be dissociated from motion, and the motions by which time is measured are recurrent periods—the day, the month, the year—and the corresponding revolutions of the heavenly bodies. All these motions are circular. The attributes and associations of Time in poetry are manifestly borrowed from the cycle of the year, in which the life of nature moves from the death of winter to birth in spring, to maturity and decay, to death and rebirth—the cycle of becoming. If I may take these statements for granted without detailed proof, the point is that these abstract conceptions, which are for the most part tacitly assumed as the common property of a whole culture, entail religious and philosophical consequences of great importance...⁵

Koheleth masterfully explicates the specific religious and philosophical consequences the cyclic process of nature entails, by investigating the main pursuits of man to see whether they can offer him some profit, some substantial result which can endure. The result must not be insubstantial vanity (hevel) but must have lasting being and worth.

Koheleth then looks at the Hellenistic ideals of life to see whether they meet this test; first he examines “wisdom,” and then a life of “fame, honor, and pleasure.”

⁴ Aristotle, *Physics*, Book 4, Chapter 12.

⁵ F. M. CORNFORD, *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950) 45f.

The Value of the Life of Wisdom

Although Koheleth makes several pious remarks about the practical advantages of the life of wisdom (7:19, 8:1 ff., 10:2, 10), his general position indicts it, demonstrating its impotence in relation to the cyclical process of nature.

Wisdom is a method of investigation (similar to the Greek *istoria*). Through wisdom, Koheleth maintains, one can search out what is done in the world. What does wisdom discover? Ultimately, the evil and vanity of all things (7:14). Its first discovery is that there is great injustice in the world. Koheleth states: "There is a righteous man which perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil doing" (7:15 cf 8 :14). Or he affirms: "The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong nor bread to the wise nor fame to men of skill but time and chance happen to them all" (9:11). The wise man not only recognizes great injustice in the world, he also realizes to his dismay that injustice cannot be rectified. Man's wisdom is impotent in the face of it. Koheleth asserts: "The crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking, counted." (1:15 cf 7:13)

Wisdom, ironically, is a curse instead of a blessing since the wise man, through his wisdom, becomes aware that "in much wisdom is much grief and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow." We can learn to know, but what we ultimately know is that there is evil in the world, and wisdom is impotent to overcome it. What good is knowledge without power? Knowledge opens our eyes but it reveals to the wise man his own impotence. Wisdom lacks the strength to conquer injustice.

Wisdom also cannot conquer death. Koheleth states: "Then I said to myself, what befalls the fool will befall me also. Why then have I been so very wise... for of the wise man as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance. The wise man dies just like the fool." (2:15, 16) Not only has the wise man no advantage over the fool in his incapacity to overcome death (8:8), but in this respect he is on the same level with the beasts, "For the fate of the sons of man and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other. They all have the same breath and man has no advantage over the beasts." (3:19) Koheleth goes even further. He rejects all belief that the wise man may have some distinctive quality as an exerciser of wisdom. "One fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil... one fate comes to all." (9:23)

Further, wisdom is vulnerable to oppression, bribery and corruption, as chapter 7:7 illustrates: "Surely

oppression makes the wise man foolish and a bribe corrupts the mind."

Nor can wisdom be vaunted as the ideal of life because of its protective powers; in fact, wisdom protects the wise man no more than does money the ordinary man. Thus chapter 7:11 and 12 states: "Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun. For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it." That is, only if a person is not over wise (7:16) since then his wisdom may become a liability in his survival.

But the most damaging criticism Koheleth makes of wisdom is that it really cannot understand the nature of reality. If indeed nature is cyclical, everything having its appropriate time, each thing coming to be and passing away, then all that transcends one's own particular cycle is inscrutable. Koheleth states: "Man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much he will toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out." (8:17 cf 7:24; 11:5, 6)

As we have seen, Koheleth's evaluation of the cyclical process and its relation to the life of wisdom is not that of stoic, cosmic piety which affirms that the cyclical process manifests order, harmony and divinity, but on the contrary, that the cycles are vanity, insubstantial; they are alien to man and overcome him. Wisdom is impotent in the face of the cosmos since wisdom without the power to affect the processes of the cosmos is self-defeating and increases tribulation. With his dialectical method, Koheleth demonstrates that man cannot dissociate himself from all that he is dependent upon. It is the height of folly to call all that happens good; injustice, justice; or to claim that injustice can be dealt with by an impotent wisdom. Man is dependent on nature and so is his wisdom—it cannot help him escape from nature's inexorable course.

The Value of the Life of Fame, Honor and Pleasure

Koheleth next examines the active life of fame and honor, and the life of pleasure for their presumed abiding worth. He writes: "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it and behold all was vanity and a striving after wind and there was nothing to be gained under the sun." (2:10, 11) Why? Is there not good in the pleasure achieved in toil? (cf 2:10, 24; 3:22) Yes and no. There is pleasure in toil but this is only part of the story. There is also pain and strain. (2:22, 23) A skill in toil comes from envy of man's neighbor. Man toils for fame, for riches, for never-ending pleasure and this leads to envy. It is the very nature of the seeking of fame and riches and pleasure that it cannot be quenched. The test case is

exemplified in chapter 4:8: “A person who has no one, neither a son nor brother, yet there is no end to all his toil and his eyes are never satisfied with riches so that he never asks for whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure.” There seems to be an inner dialectic within the ideal of the life of fame and pleasure which makes it impossible to satiate. Man is incapable of enjoying his lot for his desires overwhelm him. The movement goes from labor to jealousy to avarice and then to misery.

Koheleth continually repeats that pleasure and desire can never be satiated. He states: “He who loves money will never be satisfied with money nor he who loves wealth, with gain.” (5:10 cf 9:3b) Or, again “All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.” (6:7) Furthermore fame, honor, riches and pleasure are impermanent. The cyclical process can overturn everything. (7:14 cf 9:11) Koheleth has seen where “a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them but a stranger enjoys them.” In chapter 2:18 he states: “I hated all my toil seeing that I will leave it to the man who will come after me and who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool.” Injustice is often the rule.

Finally, when we die, we take nothing with us. Koheleth writes: “As he came from his mother’s womb, he shall go again. Naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil which he may carry away in his hand. This also is a grievous evil. Just as he came so shall he go and what gain has he that he toiled for the wind?” (5:15, 16) Koheleth does not deny that wisdom is better than foolishness (10:2), nor does he say that one should enjoy the pleasures that come from one’s toil. But, and this is a resounding but, when one measures against the cyclical processes, the injustices, the impotence of wisdom, the avariciousness of pleasure, the incapacity to act with power so as to establish something lasting and not merely fleeting, one can see that neither the life in pursuit of wisdom nor that in pursuit of fame and fortune will suffice. They will not suffice for the reasons that are part and parcel of the contradiction between nature and man.

Present-day Relevance

Koheleth’s analysis of Hellenistic philosophy—in its demonstration that man cannot escape the cyclical process of nature by means of wisdom or of a life devoted to pleasure, fame, or honor—is pertinent to present-day problems, for contemporary philosophy too is concerned with the antithesis between nature and man. Thus, Bertrand Russell, in his “Free Man’s Worship,” writes:

Brief and powerless is Man’s life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.⁶

This very problem is at the heart of contemporary scientism and contemporary atheism. As long as a man is merely a natural, cosmological and not also a historical, spiritual being, Koheleth’s incisive critique will shake us into reconsidering the place of man in the nature of things. The conflict between the cyclical nature that ultimately engulfs all, and man, whose ultimate nature is to hope and yearn and work to build a society of peace and justice, is at the heart of the dialectic in Koheleth. It is this contradiction that must be overcome.

Koheleth believes that only if the wheel is broken, only if man has being and value and a destiny over and beyond the cyclical order of nature, can his life have meaning. There must be a genuinely historic and divine reality over and above cosmic reality.

In numerous places, Koheleth hints and alludes to a realm which transcends the cyclical order (1:8; 3:11, 14; 5:1, 7; 8:12, 13). One must distinguish between “under the sun,” the mundane realm, and the trans-mundane realm which resides “above the sun,” as it were. Under the sun, a poor wise man delivers a city besieged by a great king. No one remembers that poor man. Under the sun, that poor man’s act is despised and forgotten. Yet Koheleth affirms it has a value greater than the might of the king (9:13-16). The righteous and wise deeds of man are in the hands of God (9:1). Koheleth has seen evil under the sun and for all this God will bring man into judgment (11:9).

As Koheleth, in his poetic way, said: Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth. Before the evil days come and the years draw nigh when you will say, I have no pleasure in them. Before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain. In the

⁶ B.A.W. RUSSELL, *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1932) 54.

day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few; and those that look through the windows are dimmed and the doors on the street are shut; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the voice of a bird and all the daughters of song are brought low; they are afraid also of what is high and terrors are in the way. The almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desires fail because man goes to his eternal home and the mourners go about the streets, before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain or the wheel broken at the cistern and the dust returns to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to God who gave it. (12:1-8)

Henry Wieman's ending of *The Source of Human Good* may be seen as a contemporary commentary on this passage.

The glow of life is always a sunset glow. Every supreme fulfillment is swiftly transitory in love, beauty, wisdom; and none is so swift in waning as the supreme union of these three. It cannot be otherwise. Resources of appreciative consciousness are not sufficient to withstand the onslaughts of change, the evil impulses of the heart, and the wearing down of continued effort. This is the tragedy of man and of creative power; but history is the answer. History cannot lift this fate, but it can make the glow of swift decline cumulative through a succession of generations. History can give to all things mean and noble a voice to speak from out of the past, bringing to the sensitive mind a love of earth and all things in it and the sky above. In this way it can endow the dying day of each generation with a splendor deepening through the ages. History is the field in which creative power wins this tragic victory over time and matter and the evil ways of men.⁷

And yet Koheleth urges more on us. He refuses to reject transcendence and all that it implies. He refuses to embrace the total imminence, the wearisome flux of the eternal return, where nothing, no justice, peace, or hope endure. Koheleth affirms that only God and man's dim awareness of Him can enable man to see and hope for more. Koheleth stressed not the mundane meaning of history which is at the heart of the rest of the Bible, but

⁷ H. N. WIEMAN, *The Source of Human Good* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946) 309.

its trans-mundane meaning. Not just a cumulative labor in this world, but the God who stands beyond, behind, and above this world and who, in His manner, marks in the trans-mundane realm the labor done under the sun. "The end of the matter, all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man, for God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing whether good or evil." (12:13-14)

Many will affirm that the modern temper finds this emphasis on God's judgment alien. Still, the significance of Koheleth's argument cannot be gainsaid, for he demonstrates the illogic of making physics and nature primary and ultimate. Somehow we must re-fashion the relation of man and nature so that there is a place for what man values most deeply. The enduring contribution of Koheleth will become manifest once we read his words in the light of Montague's surmise that "if there truly were at the heart of nature something akin to us, a conserver and increaser of values, and if we could not only know this and act upon it but really feel it, life would suddenly become radiant. For no longer should we be alien accidents in an indifferent world, uncharacteristic by-products of the blindly whirling atoms, and no longer would the things that matter most be at the mercy of the things that matter least."⁸

⁸ W. P. MONTAGUE, *Belief Unbound: A Promethean Religion for the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930) 6-7.

Conosciamo i fratelli

Un'iniziativa di formazione ecumenica del
Centro Pro Unione dei Frati Francescani dell'Atonement

“ I cattolici debitamente preparati devono acquistare una migliore conoscenza della dottrina e della storia, della vita spirituale e liturgica, della psicologia religiosa e della cultura propria dei fratelli.

(Unitatis Redintegratio n.9)

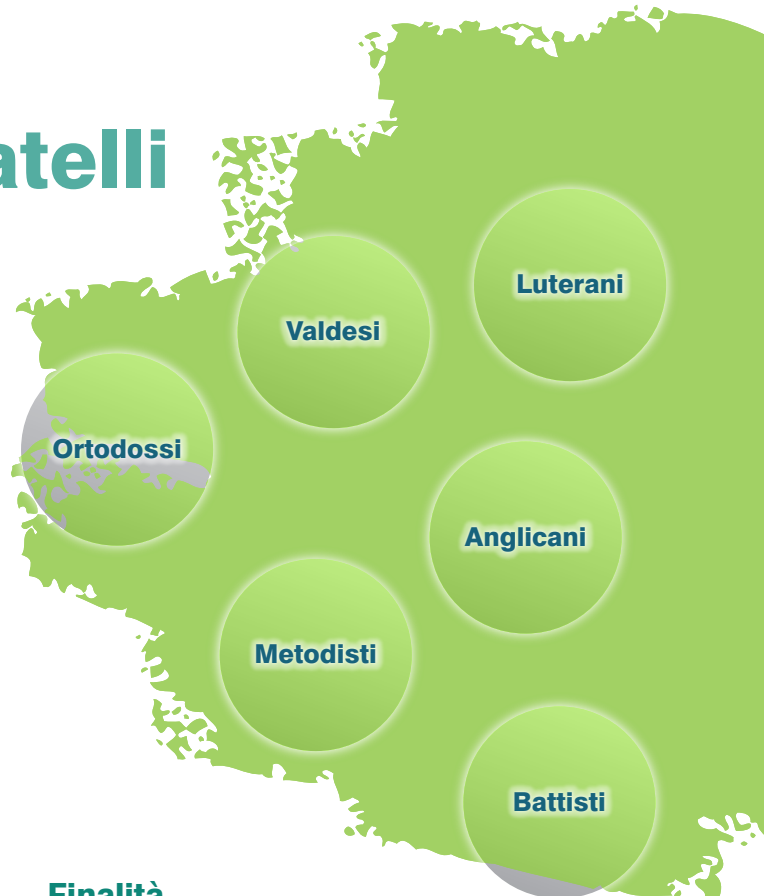


“In quest’ora del mondo, piena di scetticismo e di dubbi, ma anche ricca di desiderio di Dio, riconosciamo nuovamente la nostra missione comune di testimoniare insieme Cristo Signore e, sulla base di quell’unità che ci è già donata, di aiutare il mondo perché creda. E supplichiamo il Signore con tutto il cuore perché ci guidi all’unità piena in modo che lo splendore della verità, che sola può creare l’unità, diventi di nuovo visibile nel mondo”

(Benedetto XVI, Omelia in occasione della celebrazione eucaristica per la solennità dei ss. Pietro e Paolo, 29.06.2005)

Nel solco della sollecitudine della Chiesa Cattolica per la formazione ecumenica e la ricezione del lavoro che si sta attuando a livello mondiale (soprattutto ad opera del Pontificio Consiglio per l’Unità dei Cristiani e del Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese) e a livello locale ad opera di numerosi centri, istituzioni e associazioni, nell’Anno della fede, e in ottemperanza alla relativa Nota con indicazioni pastorali della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede che auspica si intraprendano “varie iniziative ecumeniche volte ad invocare e favorire il ‘ristabilimento dell’unità fra tutti i cristiani’ che è ‘uno dei principali intenti del sacro Concilio Vaticano II’” (Nota n. 8), il Centro Pro Unione è lieto di portare alla Sua conoscenza l’iniziativa: “Conosciamo i fratelli” una serie di conferenze sugli aspetti storici e teologici delle principali confessioni cristiane presenti in Italia.

Le conferenze saranno tenute dai massimi rappresentanti istituzionali e da rappresentanti dei maggiori Centri accademici e di ricerca confessionali.



Finalità

L’iniziativa è rivolta ai formatori di ogni livello, e a quanti siano interessati all’ecumenismo o ad una maggiore conoscenza della realtà multi-confessionale italiana ed è aperta a preti, religiosi/e, laici, docenti, catechisti, operatori pastorali.

Modalità

L’iniziativa prevede due modalità:

- a) partecipazione alle conferenze libera e gratuita;
- b) iscrizione e partecipazione assidua alle conferenze, con rilascio di un Attestato di frequentazione al termine, e un costo di Euro 10,00 per l’intero corso, quale offerta per il fondo di formazione ecumenica del Centro Pro Unione.

Sede

Gli incontri si terranno presso la prestigiosa sede del Centro Pro Unione dei Frati Francescani dell’Atonement, all’interno della Biblioteca Innocenziana (Palazzo Doria Pamphili), nella storica sala che ospitò, durante il Concilio Vaticano II, “gli incontri del giovedì pomeriggio” fra i padri conciliari, i periti, i delegati fraterni e gli ospiti ecumenici del Concilio.

La sede si trova in Roma, Via Santa Maria dell’Anima 30 (Piazza Navona), I piano (non vi è ascensore).

Struttura

Le conferenze si terranno una volta al mese dalle ore 17.30 alle ore alle 19.30 circa, secondo il calendario in calce (ma si raccomanda di controllare il calendario presso il sito: www.prounione.urbe.it in prossimità dell’evento).

Ogni sessione prevede una breve presentazione multimediale degli aspetti storici, seguita da una conferenza sugli aspetti teologici. All’interno di ogni sessione sarà dato ampio spazio al dialogo e al dibattito.

un’iniziativa del



CentroProUnione

Conosciamo i fratelli

Programma

Giovedì 25 ottobre 2012

Introduzione: Che cos'è realmente l'ecumenismo?

Prof. Giacomo Puglisi, SA
*Direttore del Centro Pro Unione;
Ministro generale dei Frati Francescani dell'Atonement*

Prof.ssa Teresa Francesca Rossi
Direttore Associato del Centro Pro Unione

Giovedì 29 novembre 2012

Gli Ortodossi

Rev.mo Archimandrita Simeon Catsinas
*Rettore della Chiesa Greco-Ortodossa di San Teodoro
Megalomartire il Tirone al Palatino*

Ortodossi

Giovedì 20 dicembre 2012

I Luterani

Prof. Martin Wallraff
*Decano della Facoltà di Teologia dell'Università di Basilea,
Membro del Consiglio Direttivo del Centro Melantone di Roma*

Luterani

Giovedì 31 gennaio 2013

I Valdesi

Prof. Yann Redalié
*Decano della Facoltà Valdese di Teologia,
Docente di Nuovo Testamento*

Valdesi

Giovedì 21 febbraio 2013

Gli Anglicani

Archdeacon Jonathan Boardman
*Chaplan della All Saints Church in Rome,
Vicario generale della Chiesa d'Inghilterra in Italia e Malta*

Anglicani

Giovedì 4 aprile 2013

I Metodisti

Rev. Massimo Aquilante
*Presidente della Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche
in Italia (FCEI), già Presidente dell'Opera per le
Chiese Metodiste in Italia (OCEMI)*

Metodisti

Giovedì 18 aprile 2013

I Battisti

Rev. Raffaele Volpe
*Presidente dell'Unione Cristiana Evangelica
Battista d'Italia (UCEBI)*

Battisti

Giovedì 23 maggio 2013

Incontro conclusivo

“ Credere in Cristo significa volere l'unità;
volere l'unità significa volere la chiesa;
volere la chiesa significa volere la comunione
di grazia che corrisponde al disegno del
Padre da tutta l'eternità.
Ecco qual è il significato della preghiera
di Cristo 'Che siano una cosa sola'.”

(Giovanni Paolo II, Ut Unum Sint, n.9)



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Manuale di Ecumenismo

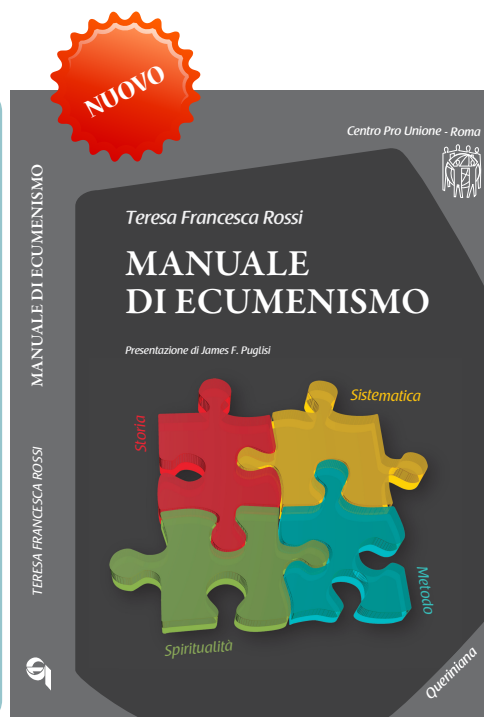


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di **Teresa Francesca Rossi**

Presentazione di James F. Puglisi

Un testo innovativo e originale, per la scuola e per la vita, promosso dall'esperienza del Centro Pro Unione di Roma e che risponde a requisiti di completezza, di rigore epistemologico e di aggiornamento sui temi dell'ecumenismo.



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Collana: Introduzioni e trattati 40
ISBN 978-88-399-2190-1
Pagine: 472
Formato: 16 x 23 cm
© 2012

Note

Questo Manuale di ecumenismo è strutturato in quattro 'moduli' tematici (ciascuno corredato di svariati sussidi): metodo, spiritualità, storia, sistematica. Offre una ricognizione della fisionomia del movimento ecumenico moderno, nel suo sviluppo storico e nelle sue articolazioni principali; una esposizione esaustiva della teologia ecumenica (principi fondamentali, snodi concettuali, correlazioni teoretiche e implicazioni pratiche); una analisi del contributo specificamente cattolico al dialogo ecumenico.

Il manuale propone inoltre delle prospettive sistematiche inedite che, frutto dell'esperienza maturata nella prassi del dialogo, sono tese a suscitare una conoscenza operativa, utile a fini pastorali. Il testo fornisce cioè un accesso all'ecumenismo inteso non solo come sistema di pensiero, ma anche come preghiera e stile di vita cristiana; un'iniziazione all'ermeneutica appropriata dei documenti prodotti all'interno del dialogo; una rassegna della prassi e dei procedimenti specificamente ecumenici.

Il presente Manuale di ecumenismo si propone allora autorevolmente per i corsi sull'argomento che si tengono nelle Facoltà di teologia e negli Istituti di scienze religiose.

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