

It is reasonable, of course, to ask whether praising Catholicism is the appropriate thing to do. To be sure, the critics of the Catholic Church today form an exceptionally audible choir. Nevertheless, the libretto performed by this group, even when it does reference facts, too often resembles a caricature of reality. I therefore propose to set the record straight and restore at least some measure of proportion to the discussion by shedding light onto matters that are overlooked by the critics. In doing so, I have no intention of falling into the opposite extreme, namely, ignoring or negating certain weakness and problems. Even the most casual reader will observe that I do not shy away from problematic issues concerning the Church today, and in fact address them in this introduction. The choice I make is rather one of adopting a particular perspective. Put simply, each of us has a choice between the lens of Aristotle and that of Hobbes. Neither is likely perfect, but the former enables us to seek the truth, while the latter does not, because it distorts, from the very start, our view of humanity and reality. Let us give ourselves a chance, and make an effort to avoid running aground on the shoals of falsehood. One might respond with the question: If there is anything praiseworthy about Catholicism, then why the modesty? Why is this praise “small”? Well, I must preface this book with the disclaimer that it is rather modest in its ambitions. Anyone who has ever heard the words: ‘I absolve you from all your sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,’ knows that Christianity is concerned with truly important matters: eternal happiness in God, anticipated by the faithful here on earth, and the transformation of our lives in the manner of Christ himself. I leave the matter of writing a large apology (in the appropriate sense) of the Catholic faith to more competent minds. Here, I concern myself only with the less important “small” issues that are connected to politics. In the end, they are of some relevance to our lives, as well.

In the first part of this book, I attempt to shed light on the fundamental importance of Christianity – and especially Catholicism and its attendant political theory – to those aspects of contemporary politics in which we often eagerly take pride today: rational public debate and civic agency; the democratic rule of law founded on the innate dignity of humans; European integration, which ensures peace and prosperity in Europe and guards our freedom of religion and conscience, etc. In the handful of essays that make up the opening chapters of this book, I wish to share with readers the discoveries I have made in the course of my political analyses. As I studied political phenomena and processes, I discovered – sometimes to my surprise – that fundamental aspects of politics, in the modern sense of the word, are bound to the problem of faith by a fine yet indispensable thread. It follows that they deteriorate in proportion to the degree in which they are deprived of their openness to God. There is significant

evidence that, contrary to what the heralds of “total secularisation” would have us believe, contemporary politics would benefit from a “fashion for Catholicism.” As odd as it might sound, the Church would also stand to benefit from such a trend. Make no mistake: my thesis is not that the Church has abandoned Catholicism. But one can hardly ignore the fact that the problem of paedophilia is closely linked to the problem of denying one’s loyalty to Christ, and that the most attention-grabbing issues in Catholic debates verge – with disturbing frequency – on heresy. George Weigel once wrote, in the context of the 2005 conclave, that ‘the forty-year effort to compel the Catholic Church to bend its doctrine and moral teaching to the pressures of late modernity is over’. He added, with a hint of sarcasm, that some would keep trying, but that they would ‘increasingly be seen as the ecclesiastical equivalent of those soldiers on remote Pacific islands who never got the word that Emperor Hirohito had surrendered in 1945’. Though Weigel’s comment still elicits a smile today, it does so – at least for some people – for different reasons than it did fifteen years ago.

Excerpt translated by Arthur Barys



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#### Selected works

*Europejski spór o człowieka. Studium z antropologii politycznej [European Dispute Over the Concept of Man. A Study in Political Anthropology], 2017*

*Chrześcijaństwo i Unia Europejska. Rola religii w procesie integracji europejskiej, 2008*

#### Foreign language translations

*European Dispute...* has been translated into English.

#### Selected awards

Catholic Publishers' Association FENIKS Award (2018)