

## **About the Cover**

The devotional painting of Johann Melchior Georg Schmittndner featured on the front of this issue depicts, “Mary Undoer of Knots.” Upon initial inspection, this painting has the power to evoke tremendous response through its use of colour, symbolism and scale. Mary remains the only part of the painting in full colour, wearing red and blue to symbolize, I think, both her humanity (blood red) and her graced divinity, through the blue heavenly mantle. Further, the very centre of the painting is taken up by a dazzling white knotted rope which flows freely from her hands, as she unties it. Lastly, the painting stands at 6 feet tall, meaning in person, Mary would match the size of a regular woman, giving the painting a sense of vitality.

Painted in 1700 Germany, this piece of artwork spurred on great devotion to Our Lady Undoer of Knots throughout Eastern Europe in the following centuries. Its inspiration comes from a line in St. Ireneaus of Lyon’s *Against Heresies* III.XXII, “the knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith.” In this way, devotion to Our Lady Undoer of Knots is born out of a human desire to rely on Mary to untie the knots of sin and destruction ushered in by humanity throughout time.

We chose this particular piece for this issue entitled, “Crisis, Revolution and Reform” because it highlights various knots that have featured prominently throughout the history of the Church. Destruction, challenge and change have been featured through human failures and shortcomings. Our Lady Undoer of Knots may be read as representing the power of the Church on earth to survive crises, to respond creatively to revolutions and to enact programmes of reform, despite the various knots that may have been tied by human beings.

These four articles span the history of the Church from the first century to modern day, including crises surrounding the authority of St. Paul’s Epistles, Anti-Judaism in 12<sup>th</sup> century England, French Religious Reforms in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and Catholic modernization in the 1960’s in Canada. What these four articles have in common is a deep connection to the often precarious nature of the Church and her members, during times of challenge and change. I see each of these articles reflected in this painting through their awareness of the shortcomings of the physical church, and acknowledgement of the promise of the eternal church.

Lepekhn’s fictional letter from Phoebe to Paul invents a narrative based on other Pauline letters from the first century. It is clear through the text that there was unease in the early Church about which authorities to trust and an overwhelming desire to ‘detangle’ the true church from the claims of imposters. Contrastingly, in “The Missing Accusation”, the failures of the Church to be faithful to the teachings of Christ are highlighted through a detailed case study of a circumcision in Norwich. Here, the author questions the growth of Anti-Semitism within the Christian European world. Further, Kerr addresses the issue of political intervention in Church reform and how the need for political stability can vastly affect the trajectory of the Church at any given time. Finally, Wilcox’ article addresses the ways that modernization created the conditions for the development an extreme aversion to the clergy and Church, provoking a crisis in Canada in the 1960’s during the Quiet Revolution.

In each of these instances, the Church comes under great duress in order to resolve an issue, dispute or concern, ultimately resulting in some sort of resolution. We can look to the common devotion to Our Lady Undoer of Knots as an icon of a Church on earth that is both continually tied in knots and constantly seeking to untie them and find peace.

Emma Graham  
Associate Editor

## **From the Editor's Desk**

The theme for this issue of *Saeculum* is “Crisis, Revolution, and Reform.” As we move through Christian history, as each of our essays will do, we see Christianity’s response to crisis and revolution, and examine how it reforms itself in light of these. We also see how Christianity has been forced to undergo reform through the interventions of the state. Though the reforms instituted and the responses to these reforms are not all positive, it illustrates how Christianity can strengthen its existence through its ability to respond to the questions of its time.

This issue features the winner of the Gershon and Roza Lewkowicz Prize, “The Missing Accusation: The Circumcision Case of Odard and the Legacy of St William of Norwich,” by Julia Tomlinson. Tomlinson examines the case of Odard, a Christian boy from Norwich, who was circumcised by Jews in 1230. She advances the claim that the cult of St. William of Norwich, who was supposed to have died as a result of Jewish ritual murder, was created by the Benedictine community in Norwich, and not by the laity. Thus, the Christian laity were not thinking about the similarities between the murder of St. William, and the case of Odard, even as they pursued the prosecution of the Jews who kidnapped and circumcised Odard. Ultimately, Tomlinson’s argument concludes that the length of time between St. William of Norwich’s martyrdom and the circumcision of Odard meant that the laity saw no connection between the two. Tomlinson sheds light on the difference in belief that can exist between the laity and the religious within the Church, and how this might have affected relationships between Christians and Jews in the medieval period.

The next piece is unique in that it was created through an examination of the Christian scriptures, specifically the letters of St. Paul, and of critical scholarship on the New Testament. Kirill Lepekhin’s “Letter from Phoebe to Paul” is a fictional letter in which Phoebe, a deaconess and fellow worker of Paul the Apostle, seeks his advice. Phoebe informs Paul about Simeon bar Eleazar, a Jewish Christian from Rome who disagrees with Paul’s teachings. Simeon also calls for the strict obedience of the law, which Phoebe believes will ultimately lead to Christians not believing in Christ. Phoebe calls on Paul to write a letter to Rome to rebuke those who follow Simeon’s teachings in order to follow Christ again. Lepekhin portrays the need to respond to a crisis in the early Church, which threatened the very belief in Christ.

From the early Church, we move on to the European Reformations, and, specifically, their impact on France. “Religious Reform as Political Stability in France Under Henry IV and Louis XIV” by Elisabetta Kerr examines the responses of Henry IV and Louis XIV to the European Reformations. Kerr analyzes two pieces of legislation which highlight the differences in the

religious policies of Henry IV and Louis XIV: The Edict of Nantes of 1598, and the Edict of Fontainebleau of 1685. She examines the impact of these legislations on Huguenots in France. Overall, she argues that these two pieces of legislation allowed for the supremacy of Catholicism over the Huguenots and the consolidation of the power of the monarchy. The changes signified in these pieces of legislation, the first of which granted religious freedom to the Huguenots and the second of which revoked this same freedom, reflect the desire for political stability and a vested interest in creating policies that would benefit the King, rather than the people of France.

Our final essay moves us into the modern period in North America and is a reminder of the importance of the laity within the Church. “A Great Light: The Effect of Modernisation within the Catholic Church in Quebec on the Development of the Quiet Revolution” by Elspeth Gibson examines the Catholic Church in Quebec as it underwent the Quiet Revolution. Gibson argues that the “Great Light” of modernization in Quebec, which led to the decreased influence of the Church in Quebec, began due to young, Catholic Quebecois. These groups sought to redefine the relationship of the Church in the modernising world, and ensured that it would have a role within the world. Gibson argues that these youth, who became part of Catholic Action Groups and other organizations, believed in the creation of a society that would respond to the teachings of the Church directly, without the political influence of the clerical elite. As well, the changes that were made in Quebec as a result of modernization were reinforced by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council on the relation between the church and the state. Gibson demonstrates that the Church can respond to times of revolution through the dedication of its members to its teachings and through the work of the laity in ensuring that it is able to respond to their needs.

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Editor-in-Chief