

Presentation of the book "*La Cultura Católica*" by Fr. Dr. Aníbal E. Fosbery - Bilingual edition

ICUSTA Biennial Conference 2022- Mar del Plata – October 14, 2022

Silvano A. Penna

Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs – FASTA University

Presenting a book fulfils two useful functions: on the one hand, it tries to inform the potential reader and guide them in the interpretation of the meaning of the text; and, on the other hand, it tries to persuade, motivate and interest them in reading the book.

In turn, for those who are invited to present the book, as in my case, it means not only taking on this useful double challenge, but it also tends to motivate a double feeling: an honour and a responsibility. In addition, if the author of the text is a "spiritual father" of the guest who presents the book, as it is also my case, you may well imagine how these feelings move the heart towards gratitude and veneration, virtues joined to justice, as St Thomas Aquinas teaches.

Father Fosbery is, for so many children, young people and adults —especially for those of us who are members of the work he founded more than 60 years ago— the Fraternity of St Thomas Aquinas Associations (FASTA), the place where he started his activities, and 30 years ago, FASTA University. He is the one who with paternal authority pointed us out and accompanied us on an intellectual, moral and religious path, ordered to reach holiness, to which we are called by Christian vocation.

Moreover, we can add a very significant event that happened this year: on May 5, the Easter of our Founder took place. His death, however, for his holiness and example of life as well as for his spiritual and doctrinal legacy, gives us serene recollection.

And, within the framework of this legacy, the work we are presenting today, "*La Cultura Católica*" [*Catholic Culture*], is undoubtedly his most important work in terms of its historical and cultural content, a theme frequently present in many of his works.

To speak of culture is to speak of people, social groups, languages, environment, tools, crafts, knowledge, science, technology, art, traditions, social institutions more or less sketched or made, myths, beliefs and religion.

However, in any case, the human person is always at the centre of the cultural fact, who, in his natural appetite for perfection, will demand from the culture he creates and in which he lives, fundamental answers to that appetite. And, in this sense, the author we are commenting on here will conclude that man is a corporeal, living, rational, free and spiritual being. Therefore, the only way to achieve this full development will require divine help, which from the Incarnation of the Word, from the historical and living presence of God, is realised through the gift of Grace, present in the heart of man. From there man becomes the subject and object of a whole culture, capable of giving a total response to the thirst for transcendence, proper to a spiritual and immortal soul. Beyond the customs, the particular ways of life, his nation or his race, he will develop an entitative and operative perfection from which will emerge the distinctive and founding fact that will make him a cultivated man. Let's see.

Culture, in general and in a strictly human aspect, is a movement that flows from human nature and towards nature, human and non-human, by which man "breathes" into the realities that surround his spirit, that is to say, his freedom, his will and his action, his intellectual knowledge and his historical and social mobility. This is also established in the Catholic culture, but with the highest plenitude, as of the free and merciful initiation of God's life in the heart of man, called Grace. For that reason, every culture is both an ascending relation, i.e. worship, and a descending relation, i.e. cultivation. In the case of the Catholic culture, thanks to the work of Grace, perfective habits of nature, theology, and morality will develop in the spirit of man, which will elevate him to the supernatural order. Then man truly and fully starts being cultivated.

From there, participating in the holiness and consecration of the Word, the testimony of the mysteries of God will spread over society and the world. It will project an action that will not only transform nature, but also transfigure it, waiting for the final consummation of the earth and humanity. That is the last answer to the question about the origin and the destiny of cultivated man: he comes from God and wishes to go back to God.

For Father Fosbery, the Catholic Culture is presented as the fullest, most complete, and perfective cultural expression of the human person, as it provides the most complete answers to the fundamental questions of man, about his origin and destiny. From these answers, human reality acquires a personal nature, enlightened by Revelation and assisted by God's Grace.

According to Father Fosbery: *"The Catholic Culture is wisdom and, as such, it is expressed in a sequence of illuminative and ordering principles that arise from the encounter of faith with reason, of nature with grace, of natural order with supernatural order, which make possible what is catholic as culture. These principles express transcendence and universality notes from which it is possible to distinguish the legitimacy of culture in catholic terms."* Fosbery (1999).

These principles are the following:

1. Prioritizing God over the creature, the Creator over the creation, and the history of salvation over the history of man.

This principle recognizes an ontological priority: God creates. Also, it recognizes a historical priority: ultimately, the History of Salvation explains the history of man.

2. Prioritizing the spiritual over the material.

This is a philosophical and formally anthropological principle. The human person is blessed with a spiritual soul, with a vocation for eternity.

3. Prioritizing the ontological order over the gnoseological order.

This is the basic principle of metaphysical and gnoseological education.

4. Prioritizing the natural order over any empirical positivism, whether it is legal, political, scientific, or technical.

This principle provides the basis for a straight understanding of law, politics, science, and technology, and their rules.

5. Prioritizing what is moral over what is scientific and technological.

This principle is the basis of ethical education.

6. Prioritizing what is political over what is economic.

This principle provides information on the political and economic activity in social life.

7. Prioritizing decorum and dignity goods over useful and delightful goods.

This is a principle that, from the Catholic Culture, also provides information on economic, personal, family, and social life, every time that, in relation to the goods to which man has access, there are priorities. This happens as it is not advisable to prioritise access to luxury or pleasure goods, for example, since a hedonistic society tends to become corrupt, as history has shown on many occasions.

8. Prioritizing beauty as a sensitive manifestation of splendour and harmony of the human being, as opposed to the detriment of what is pragmatic and hedonistic.

This is a principle that provides information on artistic training and life, in their various manifestations.

9. Prioritizing the perfection of man and nature over all progressive relativism.

This principle provides the basis for the interpretation and evaluation of history.