

Faith of our aunts

UK AUDIENCES can at long last thrill to much-delayed sci-fi blockbuster *Dune*, the second film adaptation of Frank Herbert's classic cult novel. Catholic viewers might well twig that the "Bene Gesserit" – an ascetic order of warrior-mystics bent on changing the course of history via a potent blend of religion and espionage – was inspired in part by the darker side of the Jesuits: an old reliable of the ideas-trapped screenwriter. But there is a major difference between the Bene Gesserit and their real-world counterparts. The Society of Jesus is male-only; Herbert's cabal is a secretive sisterhood. Did the Jesuit-educated Herbert switch the sexes as a nod to modern mores?

Not quite. According to Herbert's son, Brian, the Bene Gesserit drew heavily on his experiences with a coterie of implacable zealots far closer to home: his ten maternal Irish aunts. Interfering, remorseless, devoutly Catholic, they didn't need psychic powers to be absolutely certain. Baby Frank would get a good Catholic education by any means necessary. Herbert's father – a mild-mannered agnostic – didn't stand a chance. By the time he hit his



twenties, Herbert had renounced the faith of his fathers (or in this case, the faith of his aunts). But those enjoying *Dune*'s spectacular, sweeping narrative might still catch echoes of a more prosaic Catholic childhood.

YOU MIGHT have noticed that we have been inviting readers to sponsor a subscription to *The Tablet* for RE teachers. The idea was inspired by conversations we've had with David Bayne, the Head of Sixth Form at St Robert of Newminster in Washington, Tyne & Wear. He told us how an article on the dis-

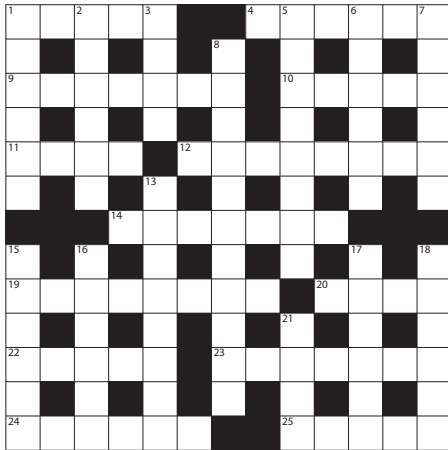
pute between Augustine and Pelagians had enthralled his students. "It showed that theology is constantly evolving and developing. It is the here and now. This is why I promote the use of *The Tablet* in the classroom as much as I can."

David's family moved from Scotland to England in 1978 (Argentina World Cup disaster year). "After trying my vocation at Upholland and Ushaw, I worked in the Department for Education, where I became responsible for the General Teaching Council database. One afternoon, when I was sitting in my garden, I had a Damascus moment. I decided I didn't want to be a computer programmer until I retired. I wanted to teach RE. I was in my mid-30s with no degree and couldn't afford to give up work so I did a part-time distance learning degree course at Maryvale. It took me five years. In 2001, I finally arrived on the database of teachers I had created!"

"I love teaching RE and absolutely love working with sixth-form students. One sixth-form tutor told me she felt that the level of pastoral support she could offer students was much enhanced as a result of reading Kathryn Mannix's *Tablet* article, 'How to truly listen'. That made my day." For more details of the scheme, email ifarrar@thetablet.co.uk.

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 779 Alanus



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 30 October, *The Tablet*, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Saints, Monasticism and Philosophy of Religion – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random. **We are processing entries but there may be a delay in notifying winners and sending out prizes. Please keep entering.**

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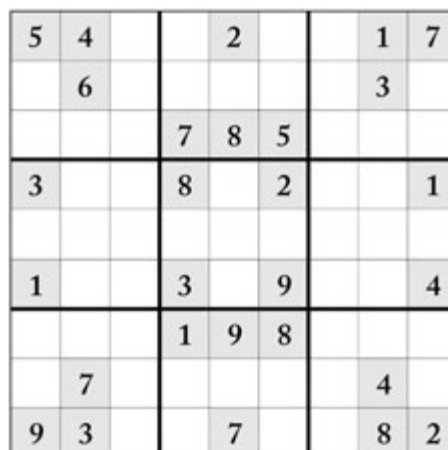
Across

- 1 See 18 Down
4 (& 1 Down): Fear involved in the offing and note its fickle nature (6,2,4)
9 Fear involved with posh car I displayed on the racetrack (7)
10 From the depths of the *De Profundis* (3,2)
11 (& 3 Down): Hysteria madness identifying current time (4,4)
12 Also known as cause of Jesus being born where He was (8)
14 Alice and Queen sign new keyboard for the well-tempered player (7)
19 Those showing appreciation for bell ringers? (8)
20 Short girl with the Spanish minor prophet (4)

- 22 Sea change before Dominican brings in fabulous tale teller (5)
23 Among the tribes of Israel reappears a politician and heir (7)
24 Recess for sacred vessels by a sort of lily arrangement (6)
25 Heard uttered a name for pope's processional chair (5)
Down
1 See 4 Across
2 Religious and solitary reference to woman and her university in Cambridge (6)
3 See 11 Across
5 Marital agreement to follow for pagan worshipper (8)
6 Obtained thick centre of style inspiring Pugin (6)

- 7 Early virgin saint and martyr disguised in a fur (6)
8 New finds with series linked to Covid (11)
13 Travel with academic piece of research for basic pest control (8)
15 First letters with me about church in province of St Paul's missions (6)
16 Sound good-looking church architect and creator of cab transport (6)
17 Sound soil implement and prison section for English Martyr Philip (6)
18 (& 1 Across): Wandering holy nomad of the Orkneys archipelago (3,3,2,3)
21 Questions that evoke a sage quality (4)

SUDOKU | Beginner



Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

Solution to the 9 October puzzle

3	9	2	8	6	1	4	7	5
1	4	8	7	3	5	2	9	6
6	7	5	9	2	4	3	8	1
5	1	9	4	7	8	6	2	3
7	2	3	1	9	6	5	4	8
8	6	4	2	5	3	9	1	7
9	3	7	6	8	2	1	5	4
2	5	1	3	4	7	8	6	9
4	8	6	5	1	9	7	3	2

Solution to the 9 October crossword No. 776

Across: 1 Lucia; 4 Psyche; 9 Vivaldi; 10 Rabbi; 11 Boaz; 12 Athaliah; 14 Sub Rosa; 19 Cambodia; 20 Down; 22 Cotta; 23 Nanjing; 24 Errant; 25 Argot. **Down:** 1 Lavabo; 2 Caveat; 3 Axle; 5 Sargasso; 6 Cuboid; 7 Elisha; 8 Cistercian; 13 Autobahn; 15 Icicle; 16 Emptor; 17 Moling; 18 Knight 21 Anna.