Radiating the Word of Truth
Editorial

Lumen Gentium and the Place of Mary
Fr Ross Campbell

Chastity and Same-Sex Attraction
James Parker

Woman and the Cardinal Virtue of Justice
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A Tribute to Fr John Edwards SJ, 1929-2012
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Outside the Church many of our contemporaries have been scandalised. One might query whether in all cases they have been truly of their faith, or that the Church was not appropos of its predecessor Paul VI, who exhorts us to strive after “an exact knowledge of the faith, so as to reinvigorate it, purify it, confirm it, and confess it” (Porta Fidei 4). The Holy Father continues: “In order to arrive at a systemic knowledge of the content of the faith, all can find in the Catechism of the Catholic Church a precious and indispensable tool” (PF11). The Catholic faith is not amorphous and vacuous. It has a definite content; it has a past and a present, and it is not simply dry nuggets of information. They centre upon and lead us to the living person of Christ, and through Christ to the inner life of God: the Trinity. But, nonetheless, they are dogmas and Pope Benedict wants us to know them. He wants us to apply our minds in this Year of Faith, so as to reinvigorate it, purify it, confirm it, and confess it. In our society, even now, there is still a basic consensus that the natural nuclear family is inherently a good thing. Why else are politicians forever posing for photo opportunities with their families? Why is it that the great and the good have replaced the images of the Holy Family on their annual Christmas cards with pictures not of Father Christmas or robin red-breasts but of their own families? Why is it that advertising agencies use the family to sell anything from holidays to department stores, from cars to brands of gravy? These are all cynical forms of cashing in on the family, but why is it that this cashing in itself lends itself to such forms of exploitation? The simple answer is that, even though our own families often fail to live up to these idealised images, we still intuitively grasp the goodness and value of the traditional family. In our jaded, consumerist society we still aspire to family life and desire it for ourselves because wherever deep down we recognise that family life is good, beautiful and true.

The Church’s Role

The Church is the sustaining, knowlgeable and informing key in which we find ourselves. Through the agency of a deeply hostile media. Nonetheless, in their eyes the priestly and religious life appears incapable of radiating anything good. Even among those who have not been entirely at one with the Church, there is a sense that the human structure of the family, which even those outside the Church grasp as good. There is something special and uncompromising about the Catholic vision of the Family. The Church always has been and still is not only the depository of the relationship of marriage is the environment God intended for the bringing about of new life. Marriage is the bed-rock of family life. The Church has never and could never compromise on the three is life of the degree of self-giving this relationship is exclusively faithful. Marriage is an indissoluble lifelong commitment. Marriage is at least in principle open to new life. The Church is not being judgmental in this. She is supporting marriage, and because she uncompromisingly supports marriage she uncompromisingly supports the family.

However, the Church doesn’t just support the natural human good of marriage. Through the sacrament of marriage the Church raises marriage and family life to an even higher nobility and beauty. The point of the three goods of marriage is that the spouses become living images of Christ’s complete self-sacrificing love. The exclusive fidelity is much more than a negative prohibition and its demands go much further than simply the physical intimacy of marriage. When Christ’s side is pierced in order for his blood to flow forth blood and water and the interpretation of this episode, aside from the eucharistic and baptismal symbolism, is that the water flows forth as a sign that Christ has given himself entirely for us. He has no blood left to shed for us. In the same way the sacrament of marriage challenges spouses to give themselves so generously to each other that their self-gift is complete. If you give yourself in a married way completely to your spouse then you cannot simultaneously give yourself in a married way to another. And herein lies the rationale for the exclusivity of marriage. It is not primarily about temptations of the flesh and holiness is about the degree of self-giving within marriage. Marriage is for life. Again this is a corollary of the generosity and completeness of the self-donation that is required of the spouses. When you give yourself completely that includes your tomorrow as well as your today. Someone who says “I love you just for today” doesn’t really understand what love is. And finally marriage is open to new life. This again is patterned upon Christ’s love for us. Christ’s love is always creative and always life-giving in one way or another and this is reflected within the spousal love of marriage.

By no means are we arguing that a marriage cannot survive the use of artificial contraception. There are any number of marriages, even happy marriages, in which spouses choose to use artificial contraception. But we would ask how much more demand should have been made of the Church’s current teaching on family life. The use of artificial contraception undermines the physical unity of a couple and therefore must to some degree compromise their sexual identity. The Church is similar to the situation in the family, where the sexuality of its unity touches even the smallest details of a married couple’s life together and it gives their marriage a fateful beauty that radiates to the utmost “the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us”.

The Pastoral Reality

Nearly half a century has passed since Paul VI wrote Humanae Vitae and things have changed. The teachings of that encyclical have not been passed on to the lay faithful. At least two generations of Catholics in our pews on a Sunday have not heard the Church’s teaching on sex and loving. And among those few who have heard it proclaimed, how many have had it proposed as a realistic possibility for their
lives here and now? There is a world of difference between seeing the teaching of the Church as hygiene or a commodity, and grasping the difference it makes and, for example, being told by a tired, cynical RE teacher: “Well, no one believes it anyway!”. We should remember that now menace the family. And in our society, and for our families in order to flourish. Only the fullness of the Church’s teaching is the final chapter of the Lumen Gentium document on the Church. This article will focus on the first two periods. In the hope of elucidating some of these issues this article offers a thumbnail sketch of the history of Mariological development during the second half of the 20th century. For the sake of clarity this can be broken into three periods: the situation prior to the Second Vatican Council and the teaching of chapter VIII of Lumen Gentium; the ecclesiological developments immediately following the Vatican II; and finally the rediscovery of the Marian profile of the Church, in particular as expressed in the ecclesiology of the great Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar.

This third period is the focus for the second half of this article, to be publish in the next edition of Faith magazine. This article will focus on the first two periods. The Second Vatican Council Chapter VIII of Lumen Gentium is the final chapter of the Council’s document on the Church. It is titled The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church. This chapter was intended to mark both a point of arrival for the theological debates regarding Mary which preceded the Council and also a point of departure for further theological reflection in the years following the Council. The chapter offers a synthesis of what had gone before, but it in no way is it meant to have the final say: it offers no real dogmatic definitions. Thus, the Council Fathers wrote the document with the intention that it would lead to further theological development.

In fact the discussion on the role of Mary in the economy of salvation was one of the emotive and debated themes of the Council. Three times the Fathers changed their minds on whether Mary’s role should be treated in a separate document or included within the document on the Church. When it was finally decided to include Mary in Lumen Gentium it was the closest vote of the entire Council (1,114 in favour, 1074 against).

Vatican II as a Point of Arrival In the years prior to the Council there were two seemingly opposing tendencies that dominated much of Mariological debate. The “Christo-typical” approach tended to consider Mary in relation to her Son; the “Ecclesiological” approach saw her relationship with the Son of God as integral to the development of her role and her importance as the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The second Mariological approach may be called “ecclesio-typical”. This approach emphasised Mary as a figure or type of the Church, which implies that her privileges must be understood in light of the Church of which she is the first and pre-eminent member.

Interestingly, Pope Benedict, writing then as Cardinal Ratzinger, suggests that these two approaches were in fact linked to two broader spiritual movements that existed before the Council. The Marian movement (for the Christo-typical) was a charismatic movement emphasising the privileges of Mary. It gave prominence to Mary’s closeness to Christ and was based on a subjective and personal piety. The second was the liturgical movement (from which the ecclesio-typical school emerged), which sought a renewal of the Church from the Scriptures and the Fathers. This movement was characterised by an objective and sacramental piety.1

Anyhow, this issue split the Council Fathers. Cardinal Ruffini, arguing that Mariology also had close links with Christology and soteriology, was the main proponent of having a separate document on the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church. This chapter was intended to mark both a point of arrival for the theological debates regarding Mary which preceded the Council and also a point of departure for further theological reflection in the years following the Council. The
Perhaps one reason for such a strong reaction against a separate document for Mary was the fact that the proposed document (De Beata) completely neglected Mary in relation to the Church. Nevertheless, to see chapter VIII as an overwhelming victory for the ecclesio-typical movement the Church. Nevertheless, to see chapter VIII as an overwhelming victory for the ecclesio-typical movement is to oversimplify things. The chapter includes elements of both approaches. It begins by speaking of Mary in relation to Christ and goes on to speak of her in relation to the Church. It is in this sense that the document can be seen as offering a synthesis of the theological debates that had emerged in the years before the Council.

**Vatican II as a Point of Departure**

"Wherefore this holy symphony…[does not], however, have it in mind to give a complete doctrine on Mary, nor does it wish to decide those questions which the work of theologians has not yet fully clarified…"1

Paragraphs 63-65 of Lumen Gentium detail the relationship between Mary and the Church. Paragraph 63 begins by reaffirming the Christological teaching that had been stated at the start of the chapter. Mary is united to the redemptive work of her Son. It then asserts that in terms of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ, she is the type of the Church. Here the document is alluding to some idea of a future reality: Mary, as virgin and mother, is the perfect type of what the Church is called to be. Paragraph 64 speaks of the response of the Church in light of Mary who is her type. By following the example of Mary, the Church becomes Mary in responding to the will of God. After the example of Mary the Church is both Mother (of the faithful, through preaching and baptism) and Virgin (through keeping the pledge of fidelity to Christ her spouse, keeping the purity of faith intact). It is that same faith of Mary that enables her to utter her fiat.

Paragraph 65 builds on the previous two paragraphs but moves from typology to moral example. It seeks to show the relevance of this Marian dimension which shapes the Church for ecclesial life. Just as Mary is the model of the Church, so she is the model for each member of the Church. Her example prompts the faithful to come to her Son, thereby shaping the Church’s apostolic activity. By following Mary the Church enables Christ to be born in the hearts and minds of the faithful.

In terms of her divine motherhood Mary is the example for the Church to imitate. In terms of her motherhood in grace, Mary is the model for each disciple who is called to bring Christ into the world. Mary is therefore viewed in her relation to Christ and in her relation to the Church. Again we see attempts to reconcile the two Mariological schools.

**Post-Conciliar Developments**

Although the intention of the Council Fathers was to provide a framework for further theological reflection on the role of Mary within the life of the Church, this never really happened. In the years immediately after the Council things stagnated.

Mariorists such as Stefano De Fiore and Herbert Mühlen put down to a number of factors. First, there were weaknesses in chapter VIII. It did not adequately deal with Mary’s relation to the Holy Spirit. It did not make the necessary clarifications between acts attributed to Mary and acts attributed to the Holy Spirit. In the years after the Council this led to a trend which drew people’s attention away from Mary to focus on the Holy Spirit. Secondly, chapter VIII said nothing of Mary’s relationship to the Father.

Consequently Mariology was untouched by the general theological renewal that came in the years after the Council. According to Ratzinger, the victory of the ecclesio-centric approach at the Council led to the collapse of Mariology altogether and the development of new forms of theology, such as liberation theology, that attempted to replace the Marian dimension of the Church.

The fact that later this two fell apart, that Mary was portrayed as an individual showered with privileges and thereby infinitely removed from us, while the Church was seen as being non-personal and merely institutional, damaged both Mariology and ecclesiology in equal measure.2

A further factor was the dominance of the ecclesiology of Karl Rahner in the years immediately after the Council. He concentrated on developing certain parts of Lumen Gentium and despite his vast theological output, he gave no real emphasis to the relation between Mary and the Church. In fact, he appeared not to like using feminine terminology when describing the Church. Again this led to a further separation of Mary from the Church.

**The Consequences of this Separation**

According to Ratzinger, to understand the Church merely as sacramental and as the people of God is to see her in a predominantly masculine sense.3 He believes that the feminine dimension is essential in that it clarifies and deepens the concept of the Church. Only by recognising this dimension can we understand the Church’s maternal and bridal nature and so move beyond a mere sociological understanding of the Church:

“The Church is more than ‘people’, more than structure and action: the Church contains the living mystery of maternity and bridal love that makes maternity possible. There can be ecclesial piety, love for the Church, only if this mystery exists.”4

To reduce the Church to the mere masculine is to lose what is authentically ecclesial about the nature of the Church. For Ratzinger, Mary’s motherhood gives the Church her ultimate authenticity of this ecclesial life falls into the trap of masculine rationality.5 This reduces the Church to a merely human-rational institution, which thus ceases to be the maternal womb of Christ.6 This loss in the understanding of the Church’s feminine nature, together with an inaccurate and unprecise notion of papacy, has led to the Church becoming excessively bureaucratic - which, ironically, is something that Rahner himself had initially sought to prevent.

According to Henri De Lubac, the dominance of such an understanding of the Church leads to the following problems in ecclesial life: a dry practice of the faith; an abstract theology which is expressed in objective rather than personal categories; and a danger of reducing theological mysteries, as well as ecclesial relations, to the impersonal.7

“‘The loss of this feminine dimension of the Church gives rise to a false femininity in the Church’”

In this context Hans Urs Von Balthasar observed that since the Council the Church has become more than ever a male institution, which without the Marian dimension threatens to become inhuman and irrelevant.8 It is essential that we rediscover the feminine, Marian dimension of the Church because viewing the Church as a mere organisational or institutional entity not only impoverishes her from within but also “severely diminishes her authentic religious appeal and misleads women who are seeking a legitimate and fruitful role.”9 The loss of this feminine dimension of the Church gives rise to a false feminism in the Church – one which expresses itself in appeals for the ordination of women. It has led to an emphasis on the ideology of doing at the expense of contemplation. This in turn makes the Church over-bureaucratic and functional.

Ultimately, for Balthasar, the answer to these difficulties which arose in the postconciliar understanding of the Church can be found in the concrete, living person of Mary, who constitutes the true life and mission of the Church.

Notes

2. Lumen Gentium 54.  
4. Ibid.  
5. Ibid.  
9. Ibid.

Chastity and Same-Sex Attraction

By James Parker

James Parker, facilitator of the London Chapter of EnCourage, gives an insight into the aims, ideals and work of EnCourage in supporting people who experience same-sex attraction.

EnCourage is a part of Courage International (http:// courageweb.net), a ministry of the Catholic Church which ministers to persons with same-sex attraction and their loved ones.

**Five Goals of EnCourage**

1. Live chaste lives in accordance with the Catholic Church’s teaching on homosexuality. (Chastity)  
2. Dedicate one’s life to Christ through service to others, spiritual reading, prayer, meditation, individual spiritual direction, frequent attendance at Mass, and the frequent reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist. (Prayer and Dedication)

3. Foster a spirit of fellowship in which all may share thoughts and experiences, and so ensure that no one will have to face the problems of homosexuality alone. (Fellowship)  
4. Be mindful of the truth that chaste friendships are not only possible but necessary in a chaste Christian life and in doing so provide encouragement to one another in forming and sustaining them. (Support)  
5. Live lives that may serve as good examples to others. (Good Example/Role Model)

Looking at the Western Church of the 21st century, you would think it was preoccupied with the topic of same-sex

Faith | Lumen Gentium and the Place of Mary

Lumen Gentium and the Place of Mary continued
Chastity and Same-Sex Attraction

relationships. Maybe you wouldn’t be far wrong. Never before has the need been so great for the people of God to provide spiritual and truly fraternal support for persons who experience differing degrees of same-sex attraction or gender uncertainty. The Church needs to be the place where truth can be looked in the eye without fear and without a person being pigeon-holed or stereotyped because of what they might, or indeed might not, feel. It is for this reason that the Church, out of great love and wisdom, rejects contemporary labels such as “homosexual”, “gay” and “queer” while taking very seriously someone’s sexual attractions.

More than 30 years ago, Cardinal Cooke of New York saw the need to provide a setting where Catholics, their families and friends, plus any interested others, could gather in confidence and safely address questions on human sexuality in a setting of prayer and celebration of the Sacraments while remaining wholly rooted in the mainstream Church. And so Courage was born, a spiritual and fraternal support group of Catholic lay men and women who aspire to live chaste lives in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Courage, currently known as EnCourage in Britain, but soon to change its name to Courage in union with the international Catholic apostolate, has been in operation for more than 20 years across the country.

What does EnCourage offer? We meet in the evening at least twice a month as a group in the centre of London and sometimes have a midweek celebration of the Mass. More groups are being set up across the country as priests request help to deal with the growing pastoral issues they are being present with.

With more parents of children with same-sex attractions wanting support we have begun a system to help them to be in touch with one another. We are beginning a women’s group, a group for married men and another for young adults. We have regular retreat days and social events and welcome others who do not experience same-sex attraction or gender uncertainty but who share our vision, values and goals. We also help the clergy to understand more deeply the labyrinth that same-sex attraction and gender uncertainty can be.

Above all, we keep returning to the truth that living chaste lives in accordance with the Catholic Church’s teaching truly does bring about a deep joy and peace to the soul, whatever one’s sexual attractions. We aspires to serve as good examples to others, being mindful of and witness to the truth that chaste friendships are not only possible but also necessary as Christians.

There is a strong sense of genuine companionship and healthy intimacy among those who attend. Our gatherings are made up of people of every age and from every continent, as well as others from different denominations and occasionally different faiths. We place enjoy strong relationships with other Courage chapters across the world. Whatever same-sex attraction or gender uncertainty a person may experience, whether outright or only very slightly, EnCourage seeks to provide a spiritual place where each story is listened to, heard and understood.

We place no expectations upon a person but merely hold each individual in a place of prayer and genuine support wherever they are at on their journey. In his recent visit to the London group, Archbishop Vincent Nichols praised those present for their commitment and said that “many will be encouraged by the example that the group will give.”

Above all we are about deeply respecting and honouring one another. We don’t demand or expect change, yet this often takes place as a gradual unseen process and looks different for every individual once a significant spiritual walk with Christ begins to take root. Some people attend EnCourage never having practised sexually. Others have practised for years but sense there genuinely has to be more to life. Some attend while still in short-term or even long-term partnerships, desiring a safe place to assess where they are at and to ask some deeper questions.

Above all, the group is very much a hospital for sinners rather than a hotel for saints. And yet the call remains the same: to be holy and chaste before God, however often, much or little we may fall into sinful patterns of behaviour.

Aside from offering support to individuals only just beginning to discuss their sexual attractions, EnCourage seeks to provide space for those who have already identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender and who wish to explore moving beyond a socio-political mindset to an eternal perspective rooted in their true identity in Christ.

More and more people are beginning to see this as a second and more significant and life-giving “coming out”. This often leads to them taking their rightful place alongside the thousands of others who, week in and week out, stand on our sanctuaries and in our pews and offer their challenging same-sex attractions and temptations to the Lord along with everyone else’s problems and struggles.

With genuine love and understanding, and without fear or prejudice, that is what EnCourage seeks to help individuals achieve. But then again, isn’t that what the Church has always been about?

If you want to know more about EnCourage or its goals, visit http://couragerc.net/, email encouragementlondon@yahoo.co.uk or call 077 9921 6623.

Pastoral Recommendations for the Year of Faith

In January of last year the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a series of recommendations for the implementation of the Year of Faith. We reprint below the recommendations aimed at parishes.

1. In preparation for the Year of Faith, all of the faithful are invited to read closely and meditate upon Pope Benedict XVI’s Apostolic Letter Porta Fidei.

2. The Year of Faith “will also be a good opportunity to intensify the celebration of the faith in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist”. In the Eucharist, mystery of faith and source of the new evangelisation, the faith of the Church is proclaimed, celebrated and strengthened. All of the faithful are invited to participate in the Eucharist actively, fruitfully and with awareness, in order to be authentic witnesses of the Lord.

3. Priests should devote greater attention to the study of the documents of Vatican Council II and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, drawing from them resources for the pastoral care of their parishes – catechesis, preaching, sacramental preparation. They should also offer cycles of homilies on the faith or on specific aspects, such as “the encounter with Christ”, “the fundamental contents of the Creed”, and “faith and the Church.”

4. Catechists should hold more firmly to the doctrinal richness of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and, under the direction of their pastors, offer guidance in reading this precious document to groups of faithful, working toward a deeper common understanding thereof, with the goal of creating small communities of faith, and of giving witness to the Lord Jesus.

5. It is hoped that there will be a renewed commitment in parishes to the distribution of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and of other resources appropriate for families, which are true domestic churches and the primary setting for the transmission of the faith. This might be done, for example, during the blessing of homes, the baptism of adults, confirmations and marriages. This can contribute to the deepening of Catholic teaching “in our homes and among our families, so that everyone may feel a strong need to know better and to transmit to future generations the faith of all times.”

6. The promotion of missions and other popular programmes in parishes and in the workplace can help the faithful to rediscover the gift of baptismal faith and the task of giving witness, knowing that the Christian vocation “by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate”.

7. During this time, members of Institutes of Consecrated Life and of Societies of Apostolic Life are asked to work towards the new evangelisation with a renewed union to the Lord Jesus, each according to their proper charism, in fidelity to the Holy Father and to sound doctrine.

8. Contemplative communities, during the Year of Faith, should pray specifically for the renewal of the faith among the People of God and for a new impulse for its transmission to the young.

9. Associations and Ecclesial Movements are invited to promote specific initiatives which, through the contribution of their proper charism and in collaboration with their local pastors, will contribute to the wider experience of the Year of Faith. The new Communities and Ecclesial Movements, in a creative and generous way, will be able to find the most appropriate ways in which to offer their witness to the faith in service to the Church.

10. All of the faithful, called to renew the gift of faith, should try to communicate their own experience of faith and charity to their brothers and sisters of other religions, with those who do not believe, and with those who are just indifferent. In this way, it is hoped that the entire Christian people will begin a kind of mission towards those with whom they live and work, knowing that they “have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man”. 
Introduction

Justice is the virtue by which we habitually give to each his due: what is owed to him or her. Justice also applies to our relations with the governing authority, or the government with regard to what is owed to or by another. The two are closely related and most questions of justice arise between individuals; then we have what is termed commutative justice.

A just society is one where each gets his or her due. I have a right to what is due to me. And by the same token I have a duty to respect or give what is due to others. The upsetting factor here is the tendency, deeply rooted in all of us, to think much more of “my rights” than of “my duties”. That self-centred tendency is the main obstacle to a just and harmonious society and to the personal, human fulfilment of each one.

Pope John Paul II points out that “if the promotion of the self is understood in terms of absolute autonomy, people inevitably reach the point of rejecting one another... society becomes a mass of individuals placed side by side, but without any mutual bonds” (Evangelium Vitae, 20).

We live in an agrarian world. An ever-growing number of people feel exploited, victimised, and entitled to compensation. There is a real temptation for people to take what is their own; then it becomes what is my own; then it becomes my own; and finally it becomes one’s own. If one does, one must give it back. This of course applies also to gifts. I can give what is my own; then it becomes another’s possession, not mine. I cannot take that back, without injustice.

It is against justice to violate the rights of another by taking or damaging what is his or hers, and not just in relation to material goods. A person has a right to his good name. A person has a right to their good name. A person has a right to their good name. A person has a right to their good name.

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Issues of justice arise when there is a contract or a mutual agreement between two people by which one does something for the other and the other agrees to give something equivalent in return; this equivalence is what is termed the quid pro quo. For instance, one agrees to build a house for another and the other agrees to pay for the finishing. The two people may agree to work together to achieve something together, with or perhaps without a clear agreement as to a specific division of responsibilities and payments or returns.

Justice and Marriage

Matters of justice might seem to have little to do with whether one is a man or a woman. A thief is a thief whether he or she is a thief. And it is fraud whether one defrauds a man or a woman. Yet it is true that sex and justice may on occasions have a particular relationship. This certainly arises in that very special area of human life which is marriage.

It is too often said today that marriage is a matter of love, and since I love, I agree, marriage is with it. This reflects a false idea of marriage and a poor idea of marital love.

Marriage is more than an emotion; marriage involves love into a lifelong commitment to be mutually faithful and to accept and care for the children that may be born of this commitment.

We can speak of marriage in different ways. It is a sacrament. It is a covenant. It is a contract. These last two terms mean basically the same thing: that to marry creates a real legal relationship, with specific rights and obligations between a man and a woman: in relation to each other, to society, and to God.

What is the object of marital consent? The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives an appealing but also a very self-committing description, saying that consent is the act “by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another” (no. 1639). So the marriage contract or covenant means that each spouse undertakes to give his or her own self, and each undertakes to accept the self-gift of the other, as she or he is actually.

But what exactly does this mean? Does “giving oneself” actually mean that each spouse becomes the possession of the other, losing all rights over himself or herself? No, that is not possible. There are certain personal rights and duties that are unique; for instance, one’s place is to work for one’s own salvation; or, for that matter, the right to vote in an election according to one’s personal convictions.

Nevertheless, the phrase “mutually give and accept each other” has a real and profound meaning that corresponds precisely to the nature of true spousal love. Two people in love marry because they want to be united, to be one. He wants to feel that she is his, and she that he is hers. Now, for a man and a woman to become truly one is not possible. What they can become, in the biblical phrase, is “one flesh”, which occurs through the conjugal act carried out in all its human fullness, meaning and dignity. There the spouses achieve conjugal oneness as they in effect say to each other: I share with you what I will not share with anyone else, I give to you what I give to no one else, and that is my seed, my procreative power, which, united to your seed, can incarnate our love, take on flesh that will be the living fruit of our love, the proof also that we want our love to be a gift to God and to the future.

I have expanded on this at length elsewhere.1 Holding to our present topic, let us look at a bit more closely at those issues of justice involved in this divine plan of the union of man and woman in marriage.

It should be obvious that the greatest infringement of justice in this matter is when husband or wife, by having sex with a third party, violates the exclusive right to intercourse which they have solemnly pledged to their spouse. The crime of adultery is not only a grave sin against chastity but equally a grave violation of justice towards the other spouse and towards the children there may be. Given the close association of the sexes in modern working life, men or women need to observe delicate respect for the community’s view of married colleagues; carelessness here could make them responsible for the collapse of a marriage and the destruction of a family.

The “Marriage Debt”

Now let us examine what is due in justice between husband and wife themselves. Moral theologians would probably single out the debitum or “marriage debt”, that is, the right to receive from the other spouse what each spouse has promised in regard to the other. It is a matter of justice that binds whenever reasonably requested by the other. The husband should know it when it is not reasonable to make that request: for instance, when his wife is ill or at periods late in pregnancy or just after childbirth.

The debt is of course equally owed by the wife. One particular case might be referred to in this regard, and that’s where a wife denies the conjugal act to the husband because she is annoyed with him for some real or imagined fault. This form of vengeance, taking advantage of male weakness, is unwise as well as usually unjust. It solves nothing and tends to make relations worse.

Married life cannot be lived on the basis of tit-for-tat. When justice becomes an issue between husband and wife, the marriage is entering serious difficulties. After all, where there is love and above all committed love, matters of justice, of rights and wrongs, claims and debts, should be easily solved. Love does not stand on its rights; it forgives. Love does not think of its rights or measure its wrongs. To do so is to fall into calculation. And love does not calculate. It does not centre on its own “rights”, but thinks of the rights, or the simple likes, of the other.

A wife might say that in that case her husband will always win. A husband, equally, might say that in that case his wife will always win. Yet it is not a question of winning but of loving. If one were to try to base a marriage on a strict quid pro quo, on well-measured calculations, given as the other gives, it would not work. But then he will take advantage of me, the wife might say. He might, but a husband certainly won’t learn to love his wife more if he sees that she is a calculator. After all, Jesus himself said that it is happier to give than to receive. But our modern world seems far from understanding or heeding that divine pointer to happiness.

“Love does not stand on its rights; it forgives. Love does not think of its rights or measure its wrongs”.

The individualist who marries just out of interest in his or her personal happiness, no more, is not really in love, except with himself or herself. Even if we take the frequent case of a slightly toned-down individualism – I’ll make some effort to make you happy, provided you make as much of an effort to keep me happy – true love is not managed love either. It may indeed be the approach of both spouses; but it is still the meeting of two selfishnesses, from two fundamentally inward-looking persons, who are simply not up to forgoing a happy marriage.

In most cases this is the result of a lack of real marital commitment from the very beginning. In the words of Pope John Paul II, “the couple who is committed to marriage can change the mutual love of husband and wife into two loves of self – two loves existing side by side until they end in separation.”

The problem that John Paul warns against is not inevitable. Self-love remains in all of us as an obstacle to growth in true oblative love. A true commitment to marriage gives the grace and strength for one to gradually overcome individual self-love, to learn understanding the other in depth, to learn to forgive and to ask for forgiveness, to be tolerant with the defects of the other and intolerant with one’s own defects.

In short, married love, to be true, must be more determined to make the other person happy than to be made happy by that other person. Otherwise it is not true married love and will be too weak to make either happy. That is one side of the story.

However, there are further aspects to marriage where important issues of justice enter. Justice towards the...
children. Justice towards the world. Justice towards God. Let us take a brief look at these two important points in mind. First, nothing that follows will have any impact on those for whom marriage is simply a self-satisfying venture and who are incapable of seeing it as a calling, a mission, and a commitment of service and love. And secondly, in principle, the themes of justice and mission in marriage apply equally to both husband and wife. Yet the bringing of children into the world asks more of the woman than of the man. The unfair burden is the modern feminist tendency. It takes prudence and wisdom, as well as fortitude, on a woman’s part to see it as a distinctive feminine privilege.

Justice Towards the Children

Children are not an optional extra to marriage. To choose to marry is to choose to form a family; that is the only natural approach, and the only one likely to give happiness.1 So, the other side of the story is that couples have a mission to form a family, open to the natural fruit of their love.

This is a God-given mission. Most married people are strangely unaware of what this implies, in terms of both privilege and responsibility. They think that the number of children, along with how spaced out they are in age, is their choice and no one else should have a say in the matter.

Well, first of all the children should have a say. The spouses are called to be parents, to form a family; but not a family most convenient to their calculated way of thinking, but one most generously conducive to the children making it up. That generally means a family of four or five children (or more), who are close enough in age to be able to fight together, to learn to make up, to realise that one cannot always have one’s own way, to be loyal to each other. And all of that under the dedicated and impartial refereeing of the parents, who too are kept together by their shared resolve to teach humanity to the unroy brood God has given them.

Couples marrying are called not just to be a good husband and wife to each other, but to be good parents together towards their children. There are fewer greater missions: to form a real family where children find the atmosphere that helps mature them as honest, generous and responsible citizens.

Justice Towards Society

Modern western society is beset with problems. Humanly speaking it can be said to be sick.2 The problem is not poverty; most people in the West have plenty to live on. Speaking it can be said to be sick.5 The problem is not over-population but of an ageing population (more and more), who are close enough in age to be able to fight together, to learn to make up, to realise that one cannot always have one’s own way, to be loyal to each other. And all of that under the dedicated and impartial refereeing of the parents, who too are kept together by their shared resolve to teach humanity to the unroy brood God has given them.

Finally, apart from being a matter of justice, it is also of course a question of faith and trust in God — always tests of the Christian life. As the prophet Isaiah says: “The Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. At the sound of your cry, when he hears it, he will answer you. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it’, when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left” (Is 30:19-21).

God indicates the way. The question is whether we trust and love him enough to walk in it.

Notes

1 In the measure in which one grasps this, one will be closer to understanding how a couple can find marital love and at the same time the spouses, but tend to reject them.


4 Allow me to add the few cases where a couple turn out to be naturally sterile. It is John Paul II who makes this grave diagnosis: “our society... from various points of view is a society which is sick, and is creating profound disturbances in man” (Letter in Famiglia, 1994, no. 22).

5 “The bringing of children into the world asks more of the woman than of the man” (24) In the course of time, the Lord Jesus forms His Church by means of the sacraments emanating from His plentitude. (25)

By these she makes her members participants in the Mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, in the grace of the Holy Spirit who gives her life and movement. (26) She is therefore holy, though she has sinners in her bosom, because she herself has no other life but that of grace: it is by living by her life that her members are sanctified; it is by removing themselves from her life that they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity. This is why she suffers and does penance for these offences, of which she has the power to heal her children through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Paul VI and the Year of Faith

In 1968 at the close of the last Year of Faith Paul VI published a motu proprio, the Credo of the People of God. Below we publish the text of article 19, On the Church.

We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, built by Jesus Christ on that rock which is Peter. She is the Mystical Body of Christ; at the same time a visible society instituted with hierarchical organs, and a spiritual community; the Church on earth, the pilgrim People of God here below, and the Church filled with heavenly blessings; the germ and the first fruits of the Kingdom of God, through which the work and the sufferings of Redemption are continued throughout human history, and which looks for its perfect accomplishment beyond time in glory.24 In the course of time, the Lord Jesus forms His Church by means of the sacraments emanating from His plentitude.25

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“Preach to the people with simplicity and piety… tell them the meaning of virtue and the danger of vice” – that was the style and content of Fr Edwards”
The Pro-life Voice on Campus

By Alithea Williams

Alithea Williams, a recent graduate from Cardiff University and the former president of Cardiff University Students for Life, is now a director and founding member of the Alliance of Pro-Life Students (APS). In this article she explains the origins and aims and ideals of APS.

The Pro-life Voice in Universities

It often seems that there is an ever expanding number of pro-life organisations demanding our attention, and ultimately looking for our financial support. There are those who engage with the law, others who provide for women in crisis pregnancies, those who educate, those who hold demonstrations or prayer vigils... the list goes on. Consequently people rightly ask, do we really need another pro-life society? Can’t those already existing just all work together? This is a common response made by those sympathetic to the pro-life cause upon hearing about the mission of the Alliance of Pro-Life Students, a new organisation dedicated to building, supporting and connecting pro-life students. Although at APS we are all for co-operation, and although we fully support the fantastic work of existing pro-life organisations, we nonetheless firmly believe that APS addresses a real need. Now, more than ever, we need a dedicated body to encourage and protect the interests of pro-life students.

The last few years have seen a real surge in student pro-life activism. Hundreds of young people have been brought together at events like SPUC’s youth conference, and Life training days. New student pro-life societies have been formed and up and down the country, from Exeter to St Andrews. However, despite these positives, or perhaps because of them, students who stray from the so-called pro-choice line that is so entrenched in universities today are facing increasing levels of opposition and oppression.

Although the strength of this opposition is a clear indication that student pro-life activism is alarming not least because it endangers the right to free speech. The leadership of APS know, from first-hand experience, how isolating it can be for anyone who criticises the so-called pro-choice line. Consequently people rightly ask, do we really need a dedicated body to encourage and protect the interests of pro-life students?

The story of Bristol University Students For Life (SFL) is a case in point. In March 2010 the Cardiff University pro-life society invited two Bristol students to attend the Third International Youth Pro-Life Conference. Despite not having thought about pro-life issues before, within a year they had started their own group. It would be safe to say that these students were wholly unprepared for the opposition they faced from the outset. At their first public outing, they faced from the outset. At their first public outing, the students union, the only response was to suggest they change their name. The next year, the same feminists put forward a motion that would require all students and student organisations affiliated to the students’ union at Bristol University to take a pro-choice stance. The SFL committee spent months fighting this undemocratic motion, but despite much hard work – which resulted in its members becoming notorious on campus – the motion was sneaked through. It seemed incredible that a society, a students’ union, which is supposed to represent the interests of all students, one group can seek universally to impose one ideological view, and silence those who dissent from it. Fortunately, BSFL has managed to continue despite these restrictions, and later even put forward a joint motion with the feminist society to help student parents. This led to the provision of on-site facilities and more flexible appointment hours for students, thereby allowing Bristol University to become more inclusive towards those students who find themselves with child-care commitments.

Lamentably this attempt to gag open and free debate was not an isolated event. Motions have also been put forward at Oxford, Leeds, Cambridge and UCL. The case at UCL was notorious enough to receive media attention. After the Catholic society hosted a pro-life speaker, a motion was passed stating that “any future open events focusing on the issue of termination must invite an anti-choice speaker and a pro-choice speaker as well as an independent chair, to ensure there is a balance to the argument”. Although this pays lip-service to the notion of being even handed, push it to its logical conclusion and its absurdity is apparent. Would this happen to a pro-choice speaker as well? If the Conservative society be forced to host Labour speakers for “balance” or the Atheist society a Muslim speaker? Of course not. Imagine the uproar if a student Lesbian Gay and Bisexual society were forced to give a platform to homophobic speakers. Why then must those who hold pro-life views be subjected to such draconian measures? The immediate purpose of the motion was to obstruct the work of pro-life students and forcibly to strangle the pro-life voice on campus. The UCL Student Union also voted to adopt a fixed pro-abortion stance and formally affiliate itself to the organisation Abortion Rights.

Fortunately, after a hard battle by students and with advice from the barrister Neil Addison, union trustees were forced to admit that this move was “completely illegal”. In recent weeks, a number of members have left the group in protest at the University of London, but it is expected to return in March and we need to be ready. It is hardly surprising that these motions arise when the official website of the National Union of Students states: “NUS [...] will work against MPs who try to take women’s rights away... NUS believes women should always have the right to choose and is working with Abortion Rights [...]”. So if SFL is going head to head with the biggest and most well financed and resourced student organisation in the country. But the pro-life voice can and must be heard – and victories recognised. Recently, at Queens’ University Belfast students successfully campaigned to have a pro-life choice motion retracted, keeping the students’ union neutral.

98% of the student body in the UK does not even have the chance to hear the pro-life message”

Attempts to silence the pro-life voice at universities remind us just how important it is that pro-life societies continue to exist and grow. A key insight of the Faith movement is that ideas matter. Ideas trickle down from academica and influence and shape our culture. APS shares that insight with the Faith movement and we are deeply conscious that universities are where the leaders of tomorrow are formed. We desperately need pro-life intellectuals, doctors, lawyers and politicians; where will they come from if students never get to hear the message of life? The average student knows next to nothing about abortion, euthanasia and embryo research, and consequently cares even less.

In fact, we often welcome a bit of opposition, because at least we know people are paying attention. It can often feel like a uphill battle just to get people to attend events, but great things can be done. As well as BSFL’s student parents motion, there’s the example of Edinburgh Lifesc, who held a debate with a physical audience of 300 and a Facebook audience of 3,000. Often, such events are the only chance students have to hear crucial facts about life. But, out of 343 universities, only seven so far have pro-life societies. This means that 98% of students in the UK do not even have the chance to hear the pro-life message.

Challenges Facing Pro-life Work on Campus

Another challenge facing student pro-life societies is their transience. Often these societies die out once a key individual has graduated; sometimes they last only as long as their founder’s degree course. Many readers of Faith magazine will have known about, or been involved in, student pro-life work, but the oldest current society (Cardiff SFL) is only in its fifth year. Rather than being able to capitalise on the hard work of a previous generation of students, much time and energy is spent setting up pro-life societies in universities which until recently had one already.

Furthermore, students who are committed to the pro-life cause, even with limited leadership potential, will not necessarily have the know-how or pioneering instinct necessary to start up a pro-life society from scratch. External support, leadership training and connecting with other pro-life students are essential in the work of building a culture of life in our universities.

APS is Launching

Despite these difficulties, APS was formed in a spirit of optimism. In February 2012, 10 students from four universities met to create a national body for pro-life students. For a disparate group of people who at first couldn’t agree on anything, it was a remarkable achievement. But even at the end of that meeting, I think we all had the sense that something significant had happened. We are now a registered company, with a full-time executive director and support from figures including Lord Alton, Ann Widdecombe and Sir Roseanm Reddy. Being a registered company does not mean that we are a profit-making organisation – far from it! However, it does give us a legal structure and a degree of accountability and transparency.

At this early stage of our development we do not have the administrative capacity to fulfil all the stipulations required to become a registered charity. We have just held our first launch event at the Merchant’s Hall in Edinburgh. This was intended as a high-profile gesture that we have turned up to listen and support us, despite being heckled on their way in by protesters, who had even tried to get the venue to cancel our event. A crowd of nearly 200 came to our London launch to support APS and to hear Lord Alton speak eloquently in defence of the unborn. We were delighted with the success of our launches, and heartened by how many people believe in us.

But APS is about so much more that one-off events or high-profile gestures. Our mission is “to build university communities in England, Scotland and Wales that have a lasting and profound respect for human life from fertilisation to natural death”. Essentially, we will be an umbrella group for student pro-life students across the country. Our minimum requirement for societies who affiliate with us is that they share our vision of a just world, and make a genuine attempt that they respect life from conception until natural death. Our role is not to micro-manage individual pro-life societies. APS does not take an official view on many things; for instance if a student pro-life society wanted to use gestures that we advise them on the pros and cons, but would ultimately leave it to their own discretion. We believe very much in the principle of subsidiarity. APS will not control individual societies: they will continue to run themselves as before.

Aims and Ideas

Our key aims and ideas can be summed up in three words: build, connect and support. Following our Edinburgh launch, an eighth student pro-life society has joined the seven existing ones in the UK. We aim to build more. Students for Life Scotland, for example, who we helped find protected 350 societies in six years. If we could achieve even a tiny percentage of that success, think what a difference that would make. We also want to build and train existing societies. We do this by having a full-time member of staff available to talk to students. And we aim to speak at

“APS is going head to head with the biggest and most well financed and resourced student organisation in the country”
universities and hold training events and video conferences. We also aim to produce a handbook, which would include information about how to set up a pro-life society, fundraising ideas, a guide to writing a constitution and a list of useful contacts. This, along with our website, will be a great resource for pro-life students.

We also aim to connect. It is so important that like-minded students are brought together to share and inspire each other. Being part of (a generally disliked) minority in a university can be very isolating, and knowing you are not alone means so much. Events like the SPUC Youth Pro-Life Conference have been instrumental in bringing students together, and have been very fruitful. It was because of events like this that APS could come into being, with four university conferences across the country, in London, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Bristol. We plan to bring students together for training days and a summer pro-life festival, as well as online. Our Facebook page has already been very useful for sharing and stimulating debate. We are also connecting with other organisations, nationally and internationally. We have spoken at events run by SPUC and Life, and are in contact with students from Life for America, Stand True, Priests for Life, Youth Defence in Ireland, and the National Campus Life Network in Canada. We would like to encourage students to work with and perhaps take internships with these groups.

Finally, we aim to support. We will be available to help any pro-life group who needs it, by sharing our experience, providing resources and protecting their interests. We expect that pro-choice motions will continue to be put forward at student unions. We plan to pool the experience of those who have already faced such motions, and put together packs with all the necessary legal information. We also want to provide packs for new groups to use at fresher’s fayres. And with the help of video conferencing we can talk to students face to face whenever they need it.

If you would like to find out more about the work and mission of APS, please visit our website: www.allianceprofestudents.org.uk or call us on 01796 355 677.

Anglicans and Ecumenism

After centuries of “good and truly brotherly relations” things have got rough – there are “tangible difficulties”, in the diplomatic language of church statements – between the Russian Orthodox Church and the churches of the Anglican Communion, and the Orthodox insist it’s the Anglicans’ fault. So writes Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, the Russian Church’s ecumenical officer, to the newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.

He brings up priests and bishops, the blessing of same-sex “unions” and “marriages” (he uses the quotation marks), and the Ordination of Homosexuals.

These “deviations from the tradition of the Early Church ...increasingly estrange Anglicanism from the Orthodox Church and contribute to a further division of Christendom as a whole”. He hopes the Anglicans will listen and that “good fraternal relationships between us will revive”.

We presume he’s not holding his breath.

Liberal Ultramontanism

The distinguished Catholic historian Eamon Duffy is “a theologically liberal ultramontanist” in his fellow Catholic historian William Tighe’s striking phrase, used in a short review we published in November. Bill tells us that he heard one TLS insist that before breakfast the Pope could declare that women could be ordained and then after breakfast ordain as many of them as he liked.

This liberal ultramontanism helps explain the hatred some dissenting Catholics (not Duffy) have for the Pope, writes an English priest, Fr Ray Blake, on his weblog.

“They seem to have the idea that anything they object to is the personal responsibility of the Pope, that he alone is the brake, holding back their own vision of the Church.”

The Pro-life Voice on Campus continued

The Pro-life Voice on Campus

Justice, Peace and the Martyrs

Thousands and possibly tens of thousands of Christians die for the faith every year, notes Daniel Philpott, writing in the Jesuit magazine America. They have died in India, Vietnam, Iraq, Colombia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Mexico, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Sri Lanka, China and Indonesia, most killed by Muslims. Most Christians were martyred in the last century than in all of Church history before 1900.

Their deaths, Christians know, bear much fruit. Writing in America, Dan, who teaches at Notre Dame and wrote “Peace After Genocide” (June/July 2012), offers four ways in which the modern martyrs advance the Church’s work of justice and reconciliation.

First, their deaths testify “to the justice that is violated in their very murder: that of religious freedom.”

Second, their deaths “afford church communities the chance to recognise in each other what all Christians regard as the true devotion to Christ – following him in his death on the cross.” Third, and similarly, “martyrdom witnesses to friendship not only among Christian churches but also between religions,” because “members of different faiths recognise heroism in martyrdom.”

Finally, martyrdom invites forgiveness, which for the Christian not only cancels the debt but invites others to conversion and reconciliation.

Martyrdom, Dan concludes, is an act of remembrance, like the Eucharist, in which “we make the past present”, and is an act we should perform often, and with gratitude. We would add that the highest form of gratitude is imitation.

“More Christians were martyred in the last century than in all of Church history before 1900”

Notes From Across the Atlantic

by David Mills, executive editor of First Things

“Abortion”, writes the political director of the Huffington Post UK, “is one of those rare political issues on which left and right seem to have swapped ideologies: right-wingers talk of equality, human rights and ‘defending the innocent’, while left-wingers fetishise ‘choice’, selfishness and unbridled individualism.”

We think that’s much less of a surprise than he does, but to his credit Mehdi Hasan rejects the cultural left’s “my body, my life, my choice” line. Writing in the New Statesman he says: “Such rhetoric has always left me perplexed. Isn’t socialism about protecting the weak and vulnerable, giving a voice to the voiceless? Who is weaker or more vulnerable than the unborn child? Which member of our society needs a voice more than the mute baby in the womb?”

“I consider abortion to be wrong because of, not in spite of, my progressive principles,” he concludes. “That is I pro-life does not make me any less of a lefty.”
SSPX: Readers may know that the Society of St Pius X, the group that sort of left the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council, still exists. It has insisted that the current pope is the pope but that the Church he runs is somehow deeply defective and “modernist”. The society’s members are, they say, true Roman Catholics, faithful to the Church as she really is, without the deformations brought by the Second Vatican Council (all of whose ideas they consider to be heretical and according to what Archbishop Lefebvre denounced: “This is the destruction of authority. How can authority be exercised if it needs to ask all the members to obey the group’s superior general and his council and write an open letter demanding that the superior general resign?

The SSPX, headquartered in Écône, Switzerland, has insisted that the current pope is the pope but that the Church he runs is somehow deeply defective and “modernist”. However, many of its leaders are scientists and many of its opponents were religious, so it was easy to caricature the debates as a clash between the modern, rational, scientific view and an irrational, religious mindset. However, it was not the science that was in dispute but the ethics, and ethics are not (to use the language of the Faith movement) materially determined — and so cannot be empirically falsified.

It is said that Albert Einstein stated: “The most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible”, in other words governed by scientific laws. Even the strongest scientific arguments concerning the apparently unique human ability to comprehend the material universe fail to explain why this should be so. In his book The Grand Delusion, a criticism of scientists such as Richard Dawkins for viewing humanity’s intellectual achievements merely as examples of a general ability “survival of the fittest”, Hughes points out that we must distinguish science from the opinions of scientists and many of its opponents. He gives the example of the discovery of intelligent life in other places for which recent scientific achievements do not confer any fitness advantage. He gives the example of the way we thought it did.

The consensus on the evolution of primitive life is that simple life forms are described in the article referred to should remind us of the way we thought it did. Science and religion have always had a difficult relationship.

Science and Religion

Notes


2. See Cutting Edge, Faith, May/June 2012.


Comment on the Comments
by William Oddie

Western Leaders and the Persecution of Christians

We have all realised, of course, that we are living in an increasingly secularised society; we don’t need to be told it. Most us above a certain age can remember a time when the Christian religion, or at least Christian values, attracted from the surrounding culture at least a basic minimum of apparent respect. A politician would tend not to draw attention to the fact that he wasn’t particularly a churchgoer. If asked about Christianity, he would make it plain he was in favour of it. Churchill famously said he was “not a pillar of the Church, but a flying buttress, supporting it from the outside”.

But we are now at a different stage in our growing secularity. In the West – and everything I now say applies as much to the US – we have now reached the point at which, not only is there a good deal of overt hostility to Christianity, but even those who say they are themselves Christian behave as though they have no belief in or loyalty to the Christian religion and their fellow Christians.

We are living in a world, for instance, in which Islamic persecution of Christians has in many countries reached crisis point, but no other Western leader has condemned it. Of course, no other Western leader has attempted to defend the Copts, either. But no other Western leader has described himself as a “devout” Christian, certainly not David Cameron, though Cameron does say he’s a believer, of sorts.

“I believe in God and I’m a Christian and I worship – not as regularly as I should, but I go to Church. When I fall into despair, I drop to my knees and ask for guidance whenever an issue comes up. No, I don’t. But it’s part of who I am.”

Not, though, so much part of who he is as to make him want to defend his fellow Christians in Egypt against persecution. He’s a Tory so he’s a Christian seems almost to be what he’s saying, David Miliband, unlike his two immediate predecessors as Labour leader is an atheist, and so is Nick Clegg. The real point is that so far as their social beliefs and values are concerned, all three of our party leaders are as alike as peas in a pod.

Take the recent appeals of four Coptic Christians brought together by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, three of which the Court rejected, one of which it upheld. By a majority of five to two, the European Court of Human Rights supported the claim of Nadia Eweida, a BA check-in clerk who was sent home in November 2006 for refusing to remove a small silver crucifix, that this was a violation of her rights. Mr Cameron truly said that he was “delighted that the principle of wearing religious symbols at work has been upheld”. The genial Eric Pickles said that he too was delighted.

But what about the three Christians whose claims were rejected by the court? Cameron and Pickles said nothing about them; nor, in most reports that I heard, did the BBC (later it mentioned them in passing).

The court ruled against Shirley Chaplin, a nurse who was told to remove a crucifix necklace at work. The judges said Chaplin was “encouraged to wear a crucifix necklace for health and safety reasons, so asking her to remove the symbol was not excessive – though how this argument could be seriously upheld, when after a nursing career of 30 years not a single incident had occurred remotely involving her crucifix in either health or safety, beats me.

The judges also rejected the claims of Lillian Ladele, a local authority registrar who said her Christian faith prevented her from overseeing same-sex civil partnerships, and Gary McFarlane, a marriage counsellor who refused to offer sex therapy to gay couples. In both cases, the court argued that employers had been entitled to strike a balance between claimants’ rights to manifest their religious beliefs and the rights of others not to suffer discrimination.

Freedom of religion, they piously intoned, is “an essential part of the identity of believers and one of the foundations of pluralistic, democratic societies … However, where an individual’s religious observance impinges on the rights of others, some restrictions can be made.”

But exactly how does refusing to conduct a same-sex civil partnership ceremony, or refusing to give sex therapy to gay couples, impinge on anyone’s rights? There are plenty of registrars prepared to carry out this procedure (which did not exist when Ladele became a registrar); and the couples involved would have quite unrawn attempts at “affirming” even if Ulster Ladele’s existence, let alone her views on civil partnerships.

As for giving “sex therapy” to gay couples, how on earth would a heterosexual person remotely know how to do that? And would a gay couple having difficulties in that department really want the advice of someone so totally unqualified to give it? Would a heterosexual couple want the advice of a gay sex therapist? So why did Relate fire Gary McFarlane in the first place?

And why exactly didn’t Cameron and Eric Pickles support them? Even in the case of Nadia Eweida, are we not entitled to doubt their sincerity? If Cameron, in particular, is so keen on religious liberty, whatever happened to his promise to legislate to protect it? This is the Church of the political cult, which is dead already, but the Church of faith.

“She may well no longer be the dominant social power to the extent that she was until recently; but she will enjoy a fresh blossoming and be seen as a force of well-meaning respectability, which will find life and hope beyond death.”

It has become a famous passage; but how are we to respond to its significance? It is undoubtedly full of hope; but it warns us, in an almost Churchillian way, of the possibilities and apparent defeat ahead before the “fresh blossoming”, the broad surliiupts, of life in the true “Church of Faith” of the future.

The wonderful thing about this visionary pope, though, is that even as he looks before the “fresh blossoming”, the “crisis point”, he always keeps faith to the present reality in which we already live. We only need to know convincing his vision of the future: he works it into the present reality in which we already live. We only need to know that these things are true, and that he has seen this future; and lo, it is so.

“Islamic persecution of Christians has in many countries reached crisis point; but the leaders of most formerly Christian countries apparently do not even notice it, let alone protest about it”

Comment on the Comments
Faith
Dear Father Editor,

From time to time William Oddie has asked if “gay rights” are now the most prominent defining issue delineating the gulf between the Catholic Church and the modern world (Faith magazine January-February and November-December 2012). I am not certain. While few reasonable people across the divide dissent from the Catechism of the Catholic Church’s teaching that homosexual people “must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity”, few too, in my experience, support a notion of “gay rights” which involves intolerance and oppression of those whose views differ from “gay opinion”. Writing in The Times, Henrietta Royle, chief executive of the coaching and strategy consultancy firm Fanshaw, Haldin, made the point that while most Conservatives have no difficulty with equality for gay people, “a significant chunk of the Tory party’s core supporters clearly doesn’t think that has to include defining the traditional concepts of marriage to suit a small portion of the population without so much as a by your leave”. She continued: “There are plenty of Labour supporters who feel the same, as that party well knows.”

Tim Montgomerie, founder of the Conservative Home website, also writing in The Times, seemed to question the wisdom of “a plan to introduce gay marriage which will so enrage some Christian voters that they’ll form a campaign that endangers [Tony] Blair’s MPs in marginal seats.” And Paul Simons, writing in the Times correspondence columns, described as “dysfunctional” a society which is willing to “enshrine gay marriage in law on the grounds of equality of right for all, while in the name of the same principle of equality forcing Catholic adoption agencies with long and successful records of placing children in loving homes to close down because those agencies will not place children with homosexual couples”.

The above were writing in a national newspaper of liberal inclination within a few days of each other, so I do not think Catholics or Christians in general can claim a monopoly of concern over aspects of “gay rights” campaigning. Furthermore, the judge who ruled against the Leeds Adoption Agency said very firmly: “Those who follow religious beliefs long established across Europe cannot be equated with racist bigots. Christian views have a legitimate place in a pluralist, tolerant and broad-minded society.” The era when gay presumptions cannot be questioned and challengers are silenced by police intervention or smears as phobic has passed.

Susie Leaf, a member of the General Synod from the Truro Diocese, and a feminist, provided us with a wider and useful analysis. She pointed out that we have become used to thinking that equality has been achieved when the state ensures that everyone is treated equally. She went on to say that George Orwell recognised that “when the authorities claim they are acting in the interests of ‘equality’ it is usually little more than a thinly veiled attempt to establish the supremacy of one factional interest at others’.

She believes that in any organisation which tries to legislate its way to equality some will end up being more equal than others. Homosexual people do not form a homogeneous group: they hold a range of views on issues of equality and tactics. The fanatical impetus for change is coming not from gay people as such but from a small caucus surrounding David Cameron whose interests and affiliations make interesting reading, and from Nick Clegg. With the emergence of the black churches, which are engaged in electoral registration drives and are seeking to become a political force as in America, the Coalition parties risk punishment in the marginal seats. It could be argued that “gay rights” are but a sideshow and that the defining issue delineating the gulf between the Catholic Church and the modern world, or the “wider world” as Dr Rowan Williams calls it, is the acceptance or rejection of the Jesus of history, his Revelation and the structures he left for the transmission of that Revelation.

Yours faithfully,

Kenneth Kavanagh
Byron Crescent
Bedford

RICHARD DAWKINS AND CARDINAL PELL

Dear Father Editor,

I welcomed the commentary in Faith magazine (July-August 2012) regarding the “debate” between Cardinal Pell and Richard Dawkins.

It appears to me that Professor Dawkins is presented as some kind of “bogeyman” to frighten those with faith. Yet having travelled through his book The God Delusion it is clear that Dawkins has a very childlike image of God. He seems incapable of understanding that a mature faith, like a mature relationship, knows and accepts that life between the lover and the loved is not always easy.

Dawkins presents his ridicule of faith as a positive proposition: there is probably no God so we should just get on with life. If he is going to adopt this stance he must be prepared to accept the philosophical burden of proving the non-existence of God.

Dawkins has failed to debate with that excellent American Protestant apologist William Lane Craig – why? Before we were able to view Lane Craig is an apologist for a genocidal deity with an inferiority complex who delights in dashing children’s heads against walls. If this were an issue we could equally argue that Mr Dawkins is an apologist for the men who brought us the Nazi death camps, Cambodia’s Year Zero and the Soviet gulags.

Interestingly, a fellow Oxford professor and atheist, Dr Daniel Came, said: “The absence of a debate with the foremost apostolic apologist for Christian theism is a glaring omission on your CV and is of course apt to be interpreted as cowardice on your part.” If you want to see Lane Craig in action there’s a YouTube video of him beating Christopher Hitchens in a debate.

I have no problem with reconciling a form of evolution with scriptural accounts of creation: does not Genesis tell us that God formed Adam from the (pre-existing) dust and breathed life into Adam? Faith and science are complementary.

Yours faithfully,

Christopher Keeffe
155 Butler Road
West Harrow
Middlesex

EVOLUTION AND THE ORIGIN OF THE HUMAN BODY

Dear Father Editor,

In your comment on Fr Kevin O’Donnell’s letter, in your November-December issue, you use the words “emergence”, “progress” and “evolution” in connection with the origins of the human body. What strikes one about these words – all of which denote a process – is that they owe everything to Charles Darwin and nothing to Holy Scripture. The Bible is eloquent that God created by His Word – by fiat. One has only to read Genesis and the Psalms to see this.

There is also an ineluctable chemical obstacle to Creation as process. There isn’t a shred of evidence of any living thing ever evolving into some different kind of living thing capable of breeding but infertile with its parent stock. All living things go on producing young after their own kind and no other kind.

The Church’s teaching is incompatible with an evolutionary origin for Eve’s body. Leo XIII’s encyclical Divinae Sapientiae speaks in a way that would rule out such an origin. He also uses the word “mirabiliter” to describe Adam’s creation “from the side of the sleeping Adam – indicating an event which transcended the laws of nature.

The doctrines concerning the formation of Adam and Eve were proposed by the Church’s diviners and established for more than 1,800 years before Leo XIII wrote that encyclical. They did this in their role as authentic teachers in the Church. Why does the Faith movement seek to overturn this teaching?

Yours faithfully,

Tim Williams
Madison Terrace,
Hayle, Cornwall

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We are extremely grateful to Mr Williams for his letter. We would wholeheartedly agree with him that God formed Adam from the (pre-existing) dust and breathed life into Adam? Faith and science are complementary.

We are extremely grateful to Mr Williams for his letter. We would wholeheartedly agree with him that God formed Adam from the (pre-existing) dust and breathed life into Adam? Faith and science are complementary. We refer Mr Williams to the great bishop of Rome, Leo XIII, who wrote that encyclical. They did this in their role as authentic teachers in the Church. Why does the Faith movement seek to overturn this teaching?

Yours faithfully,

Christopher Keeffe
155 Butler Road
West Harrow
Middlesex

In any organisation which tries to legislate its way to equality some will end up being more equal than others”

Further we would draw Mr Williams’ attention to the words of Pius XII in his encyclical letter Humani Generis: “For these reasons the Teaching Authority of the Church does not forbid that, in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology, research and discussions, on the part of men experienced in both fields, take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution, in so far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter – for the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God” (Italics added).

The teaching authority of the Church does not define on this issue but does grant that it is quite legitimate to enquire into the origins of the material body. Mr Williams may disagree with us on this matter, and he is free to do so, but we take issue with the implication that we are trying to overturn a settled teaching of the Church.

PRAISE FROM ACROSS THE POND

Dear Father Editor,

Sorry to bug you, but I just wanted to say thanks for making your religion page – http://www.faitth.org.uk/Links/EducationLinks.htm – highly informative and entertaining. While I usually work on the music coordination, I recently have been helping out with a world religion seminar. Your site has been very helpful! Thank you!

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Taylor
Oklahoma

My name is Sarah Taylor and I’m a Sunday School assistant in Oklahoma. While I usually work on the music coordination, I recently have been helping out with a world religion seminar. Your site has been very helpful! Thank you!

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Taylor
Oklahoma
In its layout the Companion is designed to be a working document with space left for notes and reflections. It includes enhanced references to Veritatis Splendor and comes with the original catechism paragraph numbers, which are very useful for cross-referencing. Comparing several paragraphs allows the reader to see how Fr Tolhurst’s intention is to make the experiences of the Catechism more fluid and less academic. It also has an excellent appendix that looks at Catholic Prayers in an attempt to further bolster the link between faith learning and faith practice.

While the language used by Fr Tolhurst is certainly easier to understand, the Companion is by no means simplistic. It requires us to be active participants in our own learning, not passive and unthinking. Not only is Fr Tolhurst encouraging the faithful to use the Catechism as a living document, something that is integral to maturation of faith, but he is also attempting to equip us to answer questions about our faith that others may ask us. He fervently hopes that this volume will help to highlight what is basic and essential in Catholicism and encourage us all to live it in our lives and explain it to those who ask us of it.

The beauty of this Companion is that it is not another person’s take on the Catholic faith. It is the same faith we live and profess, explained in a way that will be much more accessible for many Catholics.

I Believe In One God: The Creed Explained


Both the foreword and the introduction of I Believe In One God: The Creed Explained draw our attention to the monumental opportunity that lies before us in this Year of Faith. It is an opportunity to further develop our own faith but, as the many events and publications planned for this Year testify, it is also an unmissable chance for us to experience and encourage within one another a shared zeal for the truth about God and about our existence.

Praying the Creed together at Mass defines what we believe as a Catholic Community. How we receive, understand and essentially put into practice this belief will, as it were, boil us out as Christians. It is fitting then that Pope Benedict has chosen to explain the Creed further in this book, working his way systematically through each section, hoping throughout to reawaken and re-educate.

What underpins the entire body of this text is the desire of the Holy Father to communicate the essential nature of the love of God. Love as freedom, love as relationship, love as sacrifice and love as hope: “Whoever is moved by love begins to perceive what ‘life’ really is.” He constantly directs us towards understanding our relationship with God as a living and lived reality, always nudging us to take this understanding out into the world in service of our neighbour, which in turn leads us into a deeper and more fulfilling relationship with Christ.

Throughout this book, the Holy Father weaves clarity of understanding of the historical context of the constituent parts of the Creed with success and thought-provoking contemporary insights for Christians today to ponder. Essentially, he brings the Creed to life for us and invites us to respond.

This book is a satisfying and enlightening read, sharpening the focus on something so integral and familiar to us as Catholics. During this Year of Faith, this book could be read in sections as part of a more meditative approach to understanding the Creed or as a resource for use as part of a study group. However it is approached, it is an enhanced and deeper understanding of the core beliefs of our Church will surely follow.

Natalie Finigan

Beauty In the Word – Rethinking the Foundations of Education


Stratford Caldecott is a serious author who has a high view of education, which this book expresses. It is a noble book which will be a stimulus to all concerned with education.

The book considers a Catholic philosophy of education, with especial regard to the Triduum of ancient civilization: grammar, dialectic (logic) and rhetoric. The author outlines what these were in the ancient world, gives something of their development through the centuries and then explains how they fit in today and why they are so important. Those who recommend the book – and there are several celebrated names – are highly distinguished in the world of philosophy.

There is, of course, very much a need for Catholic schools to revisit the core parts of the Creed with succinct and historical context of the constituent elements of the Creed. It is fitting then that Pope Benedict has chosen to explain the Creed further in this book, working his way systematically through each section, hoping throughout to reawaken and re-educate.

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Natalie Finigan

The Unintended Reformation


Nowadays, historians are presenting the Reformation without all the anti-Catholic propaganda: no longer it seen simply as a victory over Roman obscurantism. Cardinal Wolsey was no advertiser for the Church, but the machinations of someone like Thomas Cromwell leave a bad taste. …

Professor Gregory takes an original approach to the upheaval of the 16th century. He divides his book into six sections: God, doxology, the church, morality, capitalism and knowledge. In each section he examines what the reformers taught – with their concentration on the anima verba of Scripture, and the influence of the new

"The English National Curriculum has many weaknesses and they almost all spring from its lack of any coherent philosophical basis"
learning – and the unintended results of their teaching.

In the case of doctrine, the rejection of Rome in favour of Scripture as the sole authority to interpreting the Bible among the reformers themselves concerning who was to interpret the Word of God. Those who argued from the fundamentalist approach were always going to be in the minority. The more latitudinarian majority gradually saw reason as a way to interpret God’s revelation. The view of God as Creator of all tended to give way to the natural science view, which seemed to offer a satisfactory explanation.

The author is particularly interesting in his section on capitalism, which he calls “the goods life”. The Golden Age of Holland plays a major part in the process because it was seen how complete religious toleration went with conspicuous growth in GDP. With less emphasis on a single religious denomination, avarice came to be seen as “at worst a public virtue, despite being a private vice”.

That this mentality spread can be gathered from the portrait of Captain Bernardo de Vargas Machuga, painted in 1598 with the motto “By compasses and the sword, more and more and more.” Whereas surplus income had formerly been diverted to charitable causes, now it was diverted to oneself: “merchandise of gold and silver…wine and oil…charity and slaves, and the souls of men” (Rev 18:12f).

He also highlights the marginalisation of theology – as a result of the nature of interconfessional religious squabbles, and the increasing role of the new learning. This gradually lessened the influence of religion on those who formed national policy and tended to substitute ethical considerations for religious morality – making governments the arbiters, and social expediency the rationale. So now you know…

Catholicism reacted slowly (the Council of Trent’s 18 years make EU summits look like a walk in the park), and in many ways, badly. The Counter-Reformation retained the virtues and devotions and produced saints and new religious orders, but regarded with suspicion any new insights (especially in the sciences). The Jesuits, who made cautious attempts to bridge the gap, ended up being suppressed for their pains by Clement XIV. It is only recently that there has been any sort of a synthesis – and this is still being fiercely resisted in some quarters.

Professor Gregory calls attention to the effect of concentrating on the value of Scripture at the expense of the ordinary pursuit of virtue, bolstered by the sacraments (especially the Mass), the consecrated life of priesthood and religious and the whole devotional life – all banished as papish superstitions. The new houses, “empty, swept and put in order”, brought with it new problems. The reformers paid a dearer price, but the Catholic Church – having corrected many of the abuses of which it was guilty – was then content to insulate itself from new insights, and it too is now suffering the unintended consequences of its isolation.

Readers will have to forgive the technical expressions – some of which may be familiar to Ivy League graduates, though I am still not sure about “superessional”. They will also note that there are nearly 150 pages of notes – in case you think that the author is short-changing you! There are many other little gems in this well-written and frequently amusing book. The author presents cogent arguments which need to be considered. This book should keep you going till Lent.

Fr James Tolhurst
Chislehurst, Kent

The Trinity: An Introduction to the Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God


Anyone educated in theology in the last 30 years might be forgiven for thinking that Trinitarian speculation began with Karl Rahner. Intending no disrespect to the great Jesuit theologian himself, the way Trinitarian theology has been taught, with admittedly a few honourable exceptions, has left many of us unaware of the preceding 2,000 years of reflection on the matter. The course I followed on the Trinity in seminary threw me straight into Rahner’s “grundaxiom” with no background whatsoever. I don’t think I am alone in this experience.

You will have noticed that the price of this book is marked in dollars rather than pounds. At present it is difficult to get hold of in the UK. Nevertheless for anyone trying to plug a hole in their theological knowledge I heartily recommend taking the trouble to find a copy and read it. I am thinking here especially of busy priests in a parish. At 200 or so pages it is relatively short. Not being a French speaker I can’t vouch for the accuracy of the translation, but I can vouch for its readability. One might need some theological background but it is basically accessible. The chapters follow a traditional format moving from Scripture to Tradition and the councils of the Church. After that comes a sort of doctrinal synthesis which is basically Thomistic. This is then followed by an illuminating chapter on how the Trinity relates to us and how our salvation is wrought by the Trinity. This chapter in particular is helpful because it brings home the relevance of the Trinity to our lives.

The book does not, perhaps, offer the most daring of speculative analyses nor is it the last word in Trinitarian theology, but it is full of good, solid Catholic doctrine. This volume is the first to be published in a new series entitled “Ressourcement Thomism” by the Catholic University of America Press. If you are familiar with the great Jesuit theologian himself, the book will be in the minority. The more you know…

Fr Kevin Douglas
Hatchet

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