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<b>Confusion Over the Meanings of Marriage</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Editorial</i>	
<b>Sexual Morality: The "Perverved Faculty Argument"</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Dylan James</i>	
<b>Marriage and the Prophylactic Use of Condoms</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>Luke Gormally</i>	
<b>The Truth Will Set You Free</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Pastoral approaches to controversial teachings</i>	
<b>Letters</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>To the Editor</i>	
<b>Comment on the Comments</b>	<b>40</b>
<i>William Oddie</i>	
<b>Sunday by Sunday</b>	<b>42</b>
<i>Our regular guide to the Word of God in the Sunday Liturgy</i>	
<b>Book Reviews</b>	<b>45</b>
<i>Michael John Galbraith enjoys a robust defence of the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel and the divinity of Christ; Michael Dolman is inspired by a beautiful and personal account of a saint, co-authored by her husband and James Preece on an introduction to the Bible which contains diamonds and mud.</i>	
<b>Notes From Across The Atlantic</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>A survey of religious and public life in America by Richard Neuhaus</i>	
<b>Cutting Edge</b>	<b>51</b>
<i>A special feature keeping us up to date with issues of science and religion</i>	
<b>Faith Online</b>	<b>52</b>
<i>Highlighting Catholic resources on the World Wide Web</i>	

*Plus OTHER ANGLES from Edmund Nash p.14, Fr.Bryan Storey p.24, Fiorella Nash p.25 and Canon Timothy Russ p.38*

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# Confusion Over The Meanings of Marriage

*"He who made them, from the beginning made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one."  
(Matthew 19,4-5)*

*"Sex is not simply for loving. It is for family in a consecrated state of loving, and makes that loving an office and a ministry in the Church, in time and for eternity. It fosters and forms a couple in that unity which is ordered to the ministry of parenthood."*

## The "Ends" of Marriage: An Unresolved Teaching

The old Code of Canon Law (1917) stated that "the primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of offspring; the secondary end is mutual love and support, and the remedying of concupiscence". The new Code (1983) explains that marriage "of its own nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses, and to the procreation and upbringing of children". Some have interpreted this as a reversal of the order of importance and this has caused problems for theology and catechesis.

*Humanae Vitae* (1968) talked of the procreative and unitive meanings of the marital act as governed by "two divine laws" which were in harmony, and the relevant teaching of the Church is often presented in terms of these two equal 'polarities' and their inseparability. *Humanae Vitae* implicitly illustrates the difficulties which the Church has had ever since in handling the 'two poles' idea. In paragraph 24 it encourages scientists to research Natural Family Planning, not directly because of the need to lessen unwelcome pressures upon couples, but because of the need to disprove the potent idea that there might be a "contradiction" between the two ends. Paragraph 13 could be read as suggesting that some of the unitive meaning might remain even if the procreative is actively (and immorally) removed.

This seems to be the line which the distinguished priest-philosopher Martin Rhonheimer develops (certainly beyond Pope's Paul's intention) in his recent controversial suggestion that certain uses of the condom within marriage are permissible. Later in this edition of *Faith*, Professor Luke Gormally articulately highlights the confusion over the concept of 'procreative intention' into which Rhonheimer has slipped.

It is essential, then, that the nature of the link between the procreative and the unitive should be properly explored. Without some clear description of the connection between the two, the coherence of our twentieth century doctrinal development and of our twenty-first century catechesis in this vital area will continue to be undermined. We will suggest below that further development should involve a return, in a certain sense, to the traditional precedence of procreation. Only in this way can we give a coherent explanation of the unitive dimension.

## New Emphasis on the "Unitive"; Risks of Misunderstanding

One increasingly popular way of defending the serious wrongness of contraception is to depict it as an infringement of the unitive meaning of the sexual act. By 'unitive', 'total self-giving' is usually implied; this being undermined by holding back one's faculty of fertility. But this approach is problematic. None of us is perfect, we all hold back in our loving. Perfection in loving intention cannot be expected of spouses, yet such imperfection cannot make a good act intrinsically disordered.

Moreover, emphasising the integrity of the 'unitive' dimension tends to focus on personal, subjective experience—on yearning to *experience* a 'high' in loving as two in one flesh—in which case the procreational potency of this act of communion inevitably becomes consequential, and in that sense secondary.

This approach is not too far from the understanding of so many young people today, who see sex as ‘the highest and fullest expression of loving’. For them the link with procreation is indeed secondary. Procreation may often still be seen as a good thing, even the ideal, but it is the subjective experience of loving that is primary in this approach. Surely it is clear that it is this latter attitude which has been so important in undermining the belief that sex is exclusively for marriage.

The difference in understanding and behaviour between those who went to Catholic schools and those who did not does not seem that large. Any difference between what they were taught at school concerning sex and love usually comes over as quite marginal. And parents, Catholic or not, whilst so often sincerely concerned, can share a similar and genuine confusion.

One thing alone has made a deep impression on so many minds, and it has nothing to do with plain lust. If you love deeply and nobly, then you have a right to sex. Whilst there may be greed, humbug or arrogance in the increasingly frequent experiments of teenagers, there is more often just confusion and ‘a sweet love blasted in the bud.’

### The Exaltation of The Subjective

The emphasis in this line of thought is on sexual union simply as a subjective, interpersonal relationship of ‘loving’; what might be called its ‘unitive aspect.’ The ‘total self-giving’ in this way of thinking lies in the meaning of the *psychological* experience, whether or not it is fertile.

Pope John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body* has provided a much needed boost to recognizing meanings built into the human body. This approach tends to emphasize the *symbolism* of radical mutual self-giving, in the image of Christ and His Church. The challenge then becomes to explain what specifically is the symbolic activity that is necessary for this; how does the symbolism work, and, for orthodoxy, why must it involve openness to procreation? Without answering these questions, this thinking can stray into comparisons (which one has heard made) between the subjective experience of this sexual self-giving and the mutual Self giving in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. One must remember that our Lord’s definition of the greatest love had nothing inherently to do with sex, namely giving up one’s life for one’s friends, as he himself did.

### Putting Procreation Back At the Centre of Sex

In the end one is forced to fall back on the distinction we used to make between the *primary* and the *accompanying* ends of marriage and of the act of sexual communion. In so doing, the modern assumption of the unitive aspect of sexual intercourse as a personal, joy-

giving bonding—primarily subjective and emotional, not objective and procreational in its meaning—is at least challenged. We need to argue that this newly introduced polarity of the ‘unitive’ and the ‘procreative’ can only mean that the unitive is defined *through* the procreative, which involves a primacy of the procreational office of the act. There is no other way of making intelligible sense of the solemn doctrine of the Church.

Few of us would die in the breach for the formulation of the ends of marriage as set out so tersely in the 1917 Code. Actually this formulation was not formally part of the previous tradition. We do need many of the developments of the modern age. We also need to get beyond that crude distinction of ‘ends’, in which they almost seem to compete with each other, such that any link between them seems extrinsic to what they are in themselves.

We offer numerous attempts to do this in this issue. They will all suggest that a certain primacy for the procreative meaning of the marital act should not be dropped. We think such an approach is necessary for an *orthodox* answer to dissent. An approach, moreover, that is in line with the unbroken witness of the Church and the obligations she has imposed on consciences in the name of Christ over two thousand years,

If we do not teach ‘new life’ as the *primary* end of sexual communion and of marriage as a sacrament, then in fact, though not in intention, we will tend to centre the whole meaning of sexual union around the sexual act itself and its bodily pleasure. This is what is happening—the whole experience of sexual love and its definition, in and out of marriage, is slipping into orbit around the sexual act.

### The Second Re-emphasis: Original Sin

If we are to adjust the development of some of the *orthodox* ‘new insights’ concerning marriage, there is one more traditional insight that needs re-emphasis. This concerns the very experience of love, attraction and erotic desire; that experience which is sadly more and more becoming the main criterion by which the act of sex is evaluated. We cannot leave out of our interpretation of the experience of loving union the fact that it, along with all our experience, is not necessarily perfectly good. We are wounded. We suffer from what used to be called *concupiscence* or ‘disordered desire’, an imbalance in all our desires, not least the experience of the erotic.

Recently, in his first Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict has beautifully set the goodness and delight of the love of man and women—and indeed wider loves—in the context of the sacrificial love of *agape* and the ecclesial service of *caritas*. As William Oddie brings out very well later in this issue, this is indeed the primary

message of Christianity with regard to morality, and it is not at all inconsistent with recognition of sin, weakness and the need for purification of which the Pope speaks. When evaluating the meaning of marriage, we need to acknowledge that our normal reactions and desires are not infallibly good. The entire theology of sexuality in the Church, from the Fathers of the East to Augustine and Aquinas in the West and down to our own time, has taken account of the consequences of *concupiscence* in the psyche of human beings.

The familiar complaint about negativity in the Church's teaching in this area has been repeated in the *Tablet's* post *Deus Caritas Est* editorials. Christianity talks of sin, guilt, suffering, evil, disorder not because it is primary—which it is not—and not because it is fun—which it is not—but just because it is *real*. Sometimes this 'negativity' is blamed on St Augustine. Actually one has to go back before the Fall and its 'punishments' to be completely clear of negativity in our assessment of human experience.

## Two Principles of Confusion

In the editorial of *Faith* Sept/Oct 1986, *Holiness in the Twenty-first Century* Edward Holloway wrote:

*"Two principles of error in particular mark present derogation from the Church's traditional and apostolic doctrine of chastity in the human person. The denial of Original Sin as a true fall from harmonious order between body and soul in response to God's will and God's truth, and the denial of any distinction of principle in human nature between body and soul, matter and spirit. If these two errors are linked, there is found the basis for a convenient, and utterly destructive hedonism. If matter and spirit are only the one order of being and of nature, then you can insist that the 'affection' of loving is just one linked and commingling experience of joy and pleasure. If the joy of spirit in the love of a deep and good partner, boy or girl, brings with it the delight of tenderness in caress and touch, you may accept it all as one.*

*If the same twin joys prompt and bring in erotic arousal as well—you may accept all three together as just the 'one affect', one 'loving', one total experience. This last is the modern lie. Body and soul make one person, a spiritual love may lead to and be expressed in the delight of tenderness, yes. The genital pleasure however is not of one kind, species, and natural arousal as 'all human loving'. Once this error is accepted, then you can no more forbid the personal solitary perversion of sexual pleasure, homosexuality, or premarital sex, than you can forbid fornication and adultery. Loving, in body and in soul, in all aspects of the flesh, has become one undivided pleasurable experience, of which the genital, in adulthood is the final 'top up'.*

## Original Human Nature

The reality of Original Sin and of the Body-Soul distinction can be explained and explored by reference to the natural physical world. Nature below man is not a haphazard coupling of blind desire. There is a natural harmony of times and seasons, *governed by natural law*; that is to say, by a successive harmony which turns on, and turns off periods of desire in terms of proper times and seasons. In their natural state, un-confused by human domestication, it is the environment which controls this *ordered* response in all life below mankind.

Creation by evolution would only emphasize this truth, not undermine it. It would mean that the soul was created into a brain-centred animal body which now, as a result of its physical mutation, required this higher principle of being and of determination to intelligent life and purpose.

It would mean that the spiritual soul, which is not a material energy and which *cannot evolve*, would inherit a body already made to obey its natural seasons of purpose and right use. This natural obedience is *now made subject to the soul*. It would be taken up in the order of grace and would be governed by *the wisdom of the soul*, not by the material environment, in terms of right and wrong, good and bad.

## The Real Impact of Original Sin

It is this which would give what theology has called 'immunity from *concupiscence*' in the state of original holiness and justice. In the beginning, by the coming together of a flesh which looked naturally for control and direction, and a spirit which lived in communion with the wisdom of God, there was the perfect and harmonious Adam, 'naked and not ashamed'. In man and woman as God made them there was one harmony of natural law and peace in the spiritual wisdom of God through grace.

Thus Original Sin (and its consequences) is not just the fact of a fall from grace and destination in God, it is also a fact of human biology, a fall from *proper union and harmony* in the flesh and in the psyche of Man. It is therefore a real and an intrinsic wounding of our nature. At the same time, man's body of flesh can never be 'totally corrupt'. A law of 'seeking for its proper good' belongs to everything God has made, including the order of animal life before there was Man. God's lawful rule can never be wholly eradicated from the flesh. But the flesh is also made to be controlled and ruled by the soul, and the fallen intellect has now imposed its own conflicting 'law' of self-adoration and lust within the body. We are redeemable, but we will remain damaged until the resurrection of the flesh in the likeness of the Risen Christ. Nobody has ever put it as poignantly or as clearly as St. Paul in the epistle to the Romans chapters 5 to 8, especially 7:21-23.

### Traditional Distinctions Concerning Joy

Out of this synthesis and vision of Man will—indeed must—arise the doctrine and philosophy of love traditional to the Catholic Christian Church. Because we are unities of spirit and matter, there must be a joy common to all our loving, a joy in soul and body. This joy is naturally expressed in the flesh as tenderness and caress. But some pleasures specific to bodily function are not there to be enjoyed as aspects of enjoyment or ‘loving’ at all times, either in the animal world or even less in man’s higher spiritual order. They belong to their natural function and finality, they are not concomitant with all joy and loving.

Such are eating and drinking and the erotic pleasure; these are specified by the ends they serve. Men destroy themselves by addictions of their own making—alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, and the various addictive, ‘kick’ drugs. These are taken for sensual pleasure of one kind or another as sheer ends in themselves. Sensual addiction of any sort attacks the spiritual life and the experienced joy of communion in God.

Sexual desire is overdeveloped in fallen man, even as a yearning on the biological level. Even in the noblest spirits perfect control is absent. The Catholic Church values the virtue of chastity (along with most serious religions) not as a demeaning of that function which populates heaven, nor of its good and natural pleasure. Rather it serves the re-integration of man’s psyche towards the wise control of the fallen, stormy passions of a damaged nature.

### The Original Meaning of Sex and Love

Sex is not simply for loving. It is for family in a consecrated state of loving, and makes that loving an office and a ministry in the Church, in time and for eternity. It fosters and forms a couple in that unity which is ordered to the ministry of parenthood.

In the state of original holiness, God placed a *law* between the functions and natural pleasures of the flesh, and the wisdom of the soul, which was to interpret that law in terms of truth, good and our personal growth to fulfilment. Sin has confused that ‘natural law’, which is God’s truth in nature, but cannot replace it. Sin has made it so very, very hard for us, but no other law of truth can be given to our nature simply because it is fallen. Christ has restored the dignity and sacrament of the “two in one flesh”. Christ’s grace can heal and does so, but it cannot undo what is a form of *biological* damage in the relationship between body, soul and the original order established by God.

God’s intention was, God’s best intention still is, that every baby be a *wanted* baby. In an unfallen human order, where this outcome were in doubt, sexual union would

not be engaged in. In sexual communion, the spiritual happiness in each other and in God, as well as the total joy of flesh and spirit of the spouses, is meant to be taken up in a common joy unto God. The act of sexual union is truly unitive only to the extent that it is one with the meaning of God’s will, within the covenant of body and soul which is Christian marriage. This is the sincere ‘self-giving’ which is a great sacrament in the Person of Christ and His creative relationship through marriage to His People, the Church (Eph. 5:23-33). If the openness to life is deliberately and completely excluded or blocked later, then the physical aspect of the union does not have its specific finality at all, and neither is the communion *spiritually* unitive as a human relationship. For it is through specific finality that physical things gain holistic unity.

The ‘two in one flesh’ that is achieved through the marriage act integrally ordered to progeny, will itself be ordered to the ministry of their education and formation (cf. Luke Gormally’s article in *Faith*, Nov/Dec 2004, *Marriage: The True Environment of Sexual Love*). Formation for parenthood is inherent to authentically unitive sex.

### Conclusion: Loving in God’s Truth, the Only ‘Free’ Love

Such an approach can reinvigorate our vision of the unitive in married loving which comes from the spirit and transcends sex whilst being built upon it. It will also affect our interpretation of the joys and desires of human loving. For Original Sin is not simply an abstract academic doctrine, as it often tends to be treated.

In *Faith Movement* we find this integrally Catholic approach has helped us in teaching personal discernment between the good and beautiful and the bad and the ugly, whether for the young under so many temptations or for spouses under various pressures. Later in this issue we have attempted to do this for the person-in-the-pew in our introduction to the new, pastorally focused column: ‘The Truth Will Set You Free’

In teaching all this, in making the distinction of order and element, of true and untrue concerning love as a psychological experience, we have to talk clearly and objectively. We have to be able to state that the primary purpose of marriage as a sacrament, and of its bodily union as an act, is the blessing of offspring within a ministry of consecrated love. This covenant and ministry images the communion of Christ with Mankind, through his Church. This human covenant, in its fidelity and indissoluble bonding, fulfils every natural and complementary quality between the sexual natures of the spouses, as John Paul II has brought out for us. Therefore what God has re-united in One Adam—“as it was in the beginning”, reflecting the communion between our flesh and Christ’s—let us not put asunder.



# Sexual Morality: The "Perverted Faculty" Argument

*Dylan James*

*Fr Dylan James, a priest of the Diocese of Plymouth, who is currently studying at the Alphonsianum in Rome, shows how the traditional argument against sexual immorality can be made more holistic through the thought of Janet Smith, Pope John Paul II and Edward Holloway.*

## A Single Positive Account of the Meaning of Sex

This article will outline a modern re-working of the "perverted faculty" argument against sexual immorality, drawing on Janet Smith's *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later*, but adding some use of St. Thomas Aquinas, John Paul II and Edward Holloway, and making a particular reference to the theory of evolution.

The perverted faculty argument says that the only moral use of the sexual faculty is in its non-contracepted heterosexual use between married spouses. Any other use of the faculty is contrary to its purpose and is thus 'perverted'. The strength of this argument is that it is one single argument against *all* forms of sexual immorality: contraception, sodomy, masturbation,<sup>1</sup> promiscuity etc. Furthermore, by approaching sexual morality from this perspective, sexual immorality is shown in the light of the *positive* purpose that sexuality is intended for.

The central core of the perverted faculty argument can be expressed in Janet Smith's repeated refrain that "organs and their related acts have purposes".<sup>2</sup> Smith holds that the perverted faculty argument, in at least some form, is a *part* of any coherent argument against contraception,<sup>3</sup> but claims that her argument is *more* than the classical version of the perverted faculty argument because it dwells on more than the physical end of the faculty.

Before considering the argument in detail, a brief summary of it can be seen in the following three propositions:

- (1) The sexual organs and their related act have a purpose;
- (2) Acts that directly oppose the primary purpose of the sexual act are immoral;
- (3) Acts that satisfy ancillary purposes of the sexual act without directly opposing the primary purpose of the sexual act are moral.

## Beyond The Physical

The third proposition is significant in that it allows for Natural Family Planning to use the sexual act without intending the procreative purpose of the act. However, it is the coherence of the second proposition that has been subjected to the *most* criticism. Older versions of the argument have often been accused of overly focusing on the *physical* object of the sexual act and of the physical workings of the sexual organs, without considering how they relate to the whole person. This article will attempt to indicate how the use of the argument proposed by Smith (and John Paul II) applies it to more than just the physical processes. The contrast between the new and the old versions of this argument can be seen by considering the following two older examples of the perverted faculty argument.

To cite two texts: In a 1929 article, "Birth Control: The Perverted Faculty Argument", Henry Davis says, "...the contraceptive act between a husband and wife is mortally sinful, chiefly, it would seem because it is a grave abuse of a faculty, a gross perversion

*"Human sexual acts mean more than animal sexual acts, they affect man in his deepest being and violating these acts violates man in his deepest being."*

of a means –the act of marital intercourse- which is given by Nature, that is, God, to man for the immediate purpose of generation”.<sup>4</sup>

In a 1971 article, “A Defense of Humanae Vitae”, Richard Connell says:

“The immediate goal toward which coitus—as part of the generative process- is oriented is the depositing of sperm in some proximity to the ovum... The evidence which shows that this is the term for which the act exists is the same as for any natural operation: the activity of coitus terminates once the sperm is deposited. Therefore, the use of devices or chemicals to prevent the achievement of the end-state toward which the natural power is directed before it ever exercises its activity is to interfere with a relation of a function to the goal that is determinative of it.”<sup>5</sup>

### Distinguishing The Faculty and The Act

In considering the use of the faculty and how it can be perverted, it is important to note a distinction that Davis makes between the ‘faculty’ and ‘the use of the faculty’ i.e. the ‘act’. What then is the ‘faculty’? As Connell indicates, termination of the activity of the faculty shows us what its purpose is, its end goal is: the faculty is a *reproductive* faculty.<sup>6</sup> Davis notes that the faculty has other natural purposes and so it may be used in a way that achieves these other purposes, such as the “expression of love and allaying of concupiscence”,<sup>7</sup> but this does not alter the basic fact that the faculty is a reproductive faculty. The ‘sexual act’ is the act that relates to this reproductive faculty. The act has a natural purpose that can be seen from the primary purpose of the faculty it relates to.

In contraception the *faculty* is used but the purpose of the *act* is directly frustrated. Contraception, therefore, is judged to be wrong not primarily because it is a ‘misuse of the faculty’, as such, but because in it “the act itself is misused”<sup>8</sup> by the intention of eliminating from the act its natural purpose, its *finis operis proximus*. This distinction between the act and the faculty is important because ‘acts’ are what humans perform as moral agents, whereas ‘faculties’ in themselves lack the same *direct* moral significance. Hence it is ‘acts’ that are morally evaluated, and it is ‘acts’ that the tradition claims can be judged to be ‘intrinsically evil’.

As is immediately apparent, this approach does not attempt to move beyond the physical, or even argue that the physical is important because of its relevance to the *whole* person. Neither is love considered significant in the definition of the sexual act. This is significantly different to the approach adopted by Smith and John Paul II.

### A Morality of Happiness

If the above argument focuses exclusively on the physical, for what reason does it do so? In order to find there the *design* established by God and thus the moral law that will fulfil man. Hence Davis refers to what “Nature, i.e. God, intended”<sup>9</sup> as the reason why contraception is evil. The pre-Vatican II manuals often took the reference to what God’s intellect established in his design and added a reference to God’s *will* as being determinative of the Natural Law. Thus Suarez says that, “The natural law not only points to good and evil but also contains its own prohibition of evil and command of the good”.<sup>10</sup> It is the decree by God’s will that attaches an obligation to what his intellect has designed. Modern critics of the perverted faculty argument thus complain that it is an argument based on a ‘morality of obligation’, however, this is very far from the truth.

As the following paragraphs indicate, Thomas and Smith can both be clearly seen to follow a ‘morality of happiness’ and make almost no connection between obligation and morality. In a modern world that is largely deaf to the language of obligation a morality of happiness is an important thing to articulate. In this context, the end goal of happiness or fulfilment can be defined as the reason why the ethicist seeks to examine the processes and inclinations of the human body.

### Teleology: A Morality of Happiness and Fulfilment

Thomas starts his moral analysis not with an explanation of law or obligation,<sup>11</sup> but with an explanation of what it is that all men seek when they act. All men act to achieve happiness as their last end,<sup>12</sup> and men cannot help but act for this end. Morality is thus concerned with the achievement of this end, ultimately in God. Similarly, Smith’s approach can best be described as ‘teleological’ i.e. aimed at fulfilling man’s nature by achieving his end. She repeatedly refers to the natural law as not being the ‘laws of nature’ but as referring to the nature of a thing, so that “what is ‘natural’ is in accord with the very being of a thing, and tends to promote what is *good* for that thing” [emphasis added].<sup>13</sup> Two examples can help illustrate the way that her approach focuses on achieving happiness and not on the ‘law’.

First, in keeping with the line of argument that she develops in her popular catechesis on contraception, she argues that contraception fosters divorce.<sup>14</sup> Couples that use Natural Family Planning have a divorce rate of between two and four *per cent*. whereas the average divorce rate in America is about 50%. Smith attributes this remarkable difference to two things:

(i) NFP’s ability to foster mutual self-giving and the virtue of self-mastery;

(ii) The damage caused to marriage by contraception, because an act that is “not open to procreation is not truly unitive”,<sup>15</sup> in fact, it is dis-unitive.

### Design and Purpose, An Evolutionary Perspective

Second, we might also note the way that she refers to evolution (citing Leon Kass<sup>16</sup>) in support of her notion that organs have purposes. The argument might be summarised in this way: Even if there was no divine act of creation, secular evolution can conclude that contraception harms man. The process of evolution adapts an animal to its environment, so that all the body parts of an animal have a purpose that relates to the animal’s survival in that environment. A rabbit has big ears to enable it to detect predators, big back legs to enable it to run fast, big teeth to eat the food that it finds in its environment, and a small brain because a large brain would be superfluous to its needs and pointlessly use up energy. The size and structure of any animal organ relates to the use that the particular species has for that organ.

An organ that is inappropriately large for the needs of a species in a particular environment will waste energy and thus put the animal at an evolutionary disadvantage. Hence, the process of evolution leads to animals having body parts that are appropriate for a pattern of life in a particular environment. It follows that an animal can be seen to be ‘fulfilled’ or ‘happy’ when it acts in a way that is in accordance with the purposes evolution has established in its body. An animal that acts in another manner is dysfunctional. Hence, contraception in an animal would be contrary to its fulfilment, and would be inappropriate.

### The Human Dimension of Sexuality

The above, at a mere physical level, is the ‘physiological argument’ against contraception. Smith, however, notes that “the physiological argument is not sufficient in itself to warrant an *absolute* condemnation of contraception”,<sup>17</sup> it can only argue that contraception is usually wrong, not that it is *always* so. In this light we can observe that the Church does not prohibit contraception for animals (even though it works against an animal’s fulfilment) and in fact widely permits it when some other cause calls for it.

This is because the perverted faculty argument against sexual immorality (at least as Smith develops it) is more than just as ‘physicalist’ argument. The perverted faculty argument is based on the fact that the sexual organs have a more-than-physical significance for man. But the more-than-physical significance that the organs have cannot be separated from the purposes of the body, the purposes of the related acts, and the way that the physical processes help show us what the purposes of certain human acts are.

Hence, man, while he has a rational ‘spiritual’ dimension, cannot be fulfilled if he directly opposes the purposes that he can see manifested in his body. His bodily organs have purposes and his acts must respect those purposes. Contraception violates the clearly reproductive purpose of man’s sexual organs, and in doing this violates not merely the organs but man himself.

It was earlier noted that in the perverted faculty argument the ethicist examines the inclinations and processes of the body in order to know how to lead man to his end of happiness. But we might also define the reason for the ethicist’s enquiry as his desire to know the Natural Law.

### The Natural Law

Both men and animals act seeking fulfilment. However, in Thomas’s thought, the fundamental difference between the way that men and animals act is that man acts as a *rational* being, and this is what connects the pursuit of happiness with the law (and thus the natural law). Law is something that pertains to reason since both law and reason function as “a rule and measure of acts”<sup>18</sup> directing man to his last end of happiness.<sup>19</sup> Law is thus defined in relationship to happiness not in relationship to obligation. But how is man to know this law? The Eternal Law of God governs and directs all things, and the natural law is the rational creature’s participation in the eternal law. This natural law is *in* man in two ways: in precepts and in man’s inclinations.<sup>20</sup> Strictly speaking, the natural law is ‘in’ man when he grasps the eternal law as law by *knowing* it as precepts. In a derivative sense, the natural law is ‘in’ man by the fact that the eternal law imprints ‘inclinations’ to acts and ends in man’s nature.<sup>21</sup> It is in this latter sense that we can speak of the “laws being written into the actual nature of man” (Paul VI *Humanae Vitae* n.12).

As a consequence, man can come to know the natural law that directs him to his last end by first knowing his inclinations and recognising these inclinations as having the imprint of the Creator’s eternal law in them. Man is not inclined to things in an arbitrary manner but in a manner that accords with the nature God has designed him with. Thomas refers to man having inclinations to the goods of life, reproduction, and to know the truth about God and how to live in society, and he says that “whatever the practical reason naturally apprehends as man’s good (or evil) belongs to the precepts of the natural law”.<sup>22</sup>

Some natural law arguments are based on man’s inclinations to these three goods, while other arguments like the perverted faculty argument are based on man’s inclination to certain acts. The purpose of the sexual act in man can be discerned by considering man’s inclination to the sexual act, an inclination that can be perceived



by observing the biological laws of reproduction and how they relate to him not just at an animal biological level but at the level of a person in relationship. In Thomas and Smith the natural law is thus something that pertains to reason, but also something that is 'in' his inclinations. Because the law is 'in' man in this sense his observance of it leads to his happiness.

### How Contraception De-Humanises Sex

Dissenting theologians like Charles Curran often attack the Church's teaching (and the theologians who defend it) by defining it as 'physicalism',<sup>23</sup> as possessing "a definite tendency to identify the demands of the natural law with physical and biological processes"<sup>24</sup> in such a way that man may not interfere in the animal processes and finalities of the body. Smith replies to this attack by noting that the Church fully permits sterilisation, abortion, contraception, and *in vitro* fertilisation for animals, and yet does not permit them for humans. This is because it is not mere physical and biological finalities that need to be respected. Rather, "it is because the generative biological processes of Man mean something greater for Man than they do for animals that the biological processes are evaluated differently".<sup>25</sup>

Deep dimensions of the human person enter into the generative acts. Smith counters that far from it being *her* argument that reduces sex to something merely physical, it is the defenders of contraception that make sex merely physical, something whose finalities can be altered without affecting the persons involved: "allowing the use of contraception seems to suggest that only the organs or processes are violated; that the deeper dimensions of the human person do not enter into these generative acts and thus are not harmed by contraception".<sup>26</sup> Thus Smith argues that her position does not merit the accusation of being called 'physicalism'. Her position is not based on the offence against the physical faculty but on the offence against the human *person's* faculty (which involves the physical processes).

### The Argument

Having made the preceding *general* comments, the following paragraphs will offer a summary of her presentation of the perverted faculty argument.<sup>27</sup> As noted previously, Smith says that 'organs and their related acts have purposes', and that this notion is both in *Humanae Vitae* and is the key to defending *HV*. In keeping with her approach (i.e. of seeking man's good) she quotes *HV* as saying, "what is immoral is by its very nature always opposed to the true good of Man" (*HV* 18).<sup>28</sup>

Man's nature, as a bodily and spiritual whole, is designed by God and manifests his plan and reason, thus "to act

in accord with nature is to act in accord with reason and to act in accord with reason is to act in accord with nature".<sup>29</sup>

Smith quotes a speech from Pius XII to physicians (footnoted in *HV* n.4) which says that, "'God, the Creator, has given its proper function to each of the body's organs' and that [physicians] must respect those functions in all their work".<sup>30</sup> She argues that *HV* itself refers to "the importance of acknowledging and respecting the physiological end of the sexual organs and acts".<sup>31</sup> For example, it says, "human reason has discovered that there are biological laws in the power of procreation that pertain to the human person" (*HV* 10), calls for the "reverence owed to the whole human body and its natural operations" (*HV* 17), and says that "the marriage act, because of its fundamental structure, while it unites husband and wife in the closest intimacy, also brings into operation laws written into the actual nature of man and woman for the generation of new life" (*HV* 12).

In an approach similar to Connell, she says, "The tradition has argued that the primary way of discerning the purpose of organs is to observe what purpose in fact it accomplishes when healthy and functioning properly",<sup>32</sup> and thus the sexual organs are defined as having 'procreation'<sup>33</sup> as their purpose, and always remain inherently ordered to this even when their ability to achieve their end is frustrated by contraception. Thus, in "the case of those who are infertile, the inability to achieve the ordered end is independent of the will of the spouses; [while] in the case of the fertile but contracepting couple, they are deliberately tampering with their fertility; they do not allow it to remain capable of achieving the end to which it is ordered".<sup>34</sup>

### From An Organic To A Personalist Vision

In the above paragraph, Smith referred to *organs* but not to the related *acts*.<sup>35</sup> Thus, making an important distinction, Smith says, "Contraception is intrinsically immoral not because it violates the purpose of the reproductive organs but because it violates the procreative meaning of the sexual acts; because it violates the nature of the conjugal act... [The] procreative meaning of sexual intercourse transcends the mere physiological ordination of the organs"<sup>36</sup>. In a series of five different arguments<sup>37</sup> (from different theologians) she moves *from* the purpose of the sex organs *to conclude* that it is wrong to violate the purpose of the sexual act.

As she summarises them, the different arguments (except Grisez's) all argue that the nature of man is violated in the violation of the purpose of his acts, so that "contraception is wrong not simply because an act of sexual intercourse has a natural physiological end violated but because it is a *human* act of sexual intercourse and thus a violation

of Man not only in his physiological dimension but in his psychological and spiritual dimension".<sup>38</sup> Human sexual acts mean more than animal sexual acts, they affect man in his deepest being and violating these acts violates man in his deepest being.

How then does Smith define the act related to the sexual organ? This is done by examining the physical processes of the related organ, seeing its purpose/end, seeing how this relates to the whole person, and thus giving a definition that is not merely physical. Hence, sexual intercourse is both "an act destined by nature for procreation... [and thus] an act destined by nature to the fostering of conjugal love".<sup>39</sup> Or, as *HV* puts it, the marital act has both a procreative and unitive meaning inherent in it, with these two meanings having an "inseparable connection, established by God" (*HV* 12). The force of the argument in *HV* n.12 is that this inseparability comes from being 'established by God', and *HV* n.13 thus refers to two offences involved in contraception: it both frustrates the design of the Creator *and* contradicts his holy will. Smith's argument clearly draws its force from the violation done to *the nature of man*, a complementary but different emphasis. The above definition of the act has described it as 'procreative and thus unitive', or, 'unitive because it is procreative', and the teaching that procreation is the *primary* purpose of the act (and that the union of the spouses is a secondary purpose) is one that Smith argues at length, examining various Church documents.<sup>40</sup>

#### "Open To Life", What Does It Really Mean?

How then must the act be used to be used *properly*? A frequently used translation of *HV* says that "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life" (n.11).<sup>41</sup> However, Smith argues that the translation 'open' is inadequate because it might imply that the act must be fertile. She offers as a translation, "it is necessary that each and every conjugal act [*matrimonii usus*] remain ordered in itself [*per se destinatus*] to the procreation of human life",<sup>42</sup> so that 'ordered in itself' means 'retain its natural potential', or, 'with no impairment to its natural capacity'.

Such a translation more closely accords with the notion of the proper and improper use of a faculty. However, what is much more significant is the fact that Smith's translation ('remain ordered in itself' rather than 'open') more clearly acknowledges the difference between Natural Family Planning and contraception, and counters the opinion sometimes offered that NFP is only permissible because 'it does not work' and thus that 'open' means that you still might conceive. Her translation might be less technically phrased as noting the difference between something being 'open' and something being 'not closed by the couple'.

Davis makes a similar point when he says, "Married persons who use the intramenstrual period in the hope that they will not generate do not, in the act, attempt to defeat the primary purpose of the act, for they do nothing at all to defeat it... Whereas those who use contraceptive intercourse really do something to the act itself which others do not, they are doing something positive indeed. They are defeating the primary purpose of the act itself. They are frustrating the act, though exercising the faculty"<sup>43</sup>. In *NFP a couple either engages in a normal sexual act or they abstain from sex, they do not change the nature of the acts they actually engage in*. In contrast, contraception changes the structure of the act engaged in. Thus Smith explains how *HV* condemns contraception but not NFP, because *HV* teaches that "couples must not tamper with the natural ordination of their marital acts. It does not mean that couples must be desiring children with each and every act of intercourse".<sup>44</sup>

#### The Spiritual Dimension of Procreation

The above indicates Smith's own attempt to offer a version of the perverted faculty argument that seeks to look deeper than the merely physical processes, to value the physical only because of its significance to the whole person, but also to value the physical precisely because it *does* have significance for the whole person.

It was noted above that Smith outlines five different types of arguments that are offered to argue *from* the statement that the sex organs have a purpose *to conclude* that it is wrong to violate the purpose of the sexual act. As noted, each of these arguments indicates that 'the nature of man' is violated when 'the purpose of his acts' is directly opposed. The remainder of this article will outline two examples of these arguments. First, it will briefly outline the thought of John Paul II as the most influential proponent of the 'Contraception Violates the Unitive Meaning of the Conjugal Act' Argument. Then, it will outline Holloway's thought as an example of what Smith calls The 'Special Act of Creation' Argument, i.e. that procreation is a sharing in God's work of creation. Smith herself defines the marital act's purpose as 'procreation' rather than mere 'reproduction', noting that animals biologically reproduce their species but humans share in God's work of creation by their procreative act (*share* in the act because God directly infuses the soul, while the couple provide the physical elements).

#### John Paul II

Smith comments extensively on the thought of John Paul II and sees his thought as complementary to hers, though starting from a different methodology. John Paul II is a phenomenologist and a personalist and thus bases his argument not on nature (or law) but on a method of examining human experience to seek to

explain the nature of reality and of the human person. Human sexuality can be understood in the light of the original human experience of solitude, of longing for another to complete us, and of love between the sexes being experienced as the giving of self to the other. The body is the “expression of the human person”<sup>45</sup> and the meaning of its expression is far from arbitrary. Rather, the “language of the bodies”<sup>46</sup> expresses our desire to give ourselves to another in bodily actions that “have an inherent meaning”.<sup>47</sup>

When the marital act is closed to procreation there is not a full *gift of self* to the spouse, there is no full union. What language does the body then speak? In contraceptive sex the body ‘lies’ because it speaks of full self-gift while being closed to it because it is closed to procreation, and “acts that destroy the power of human sexual intercourse to represent objectively the mutual, total self-giving of spouses are wrong”.<sup>48</sup> Smith thus sees a ready parallel between the late Pope’s language of the body expressing the purpose of bodily acts and her insistence that ‘organs and their related acts have purposes’. The purpose of the sexual act and the sexual organ is that a married couple use it to fully give themselves to each other, and the notion of ‘gift’ features as the primary motif for understanding sex.

In summary, ‘Contraception Violates the Unitive Meaning of the Conjugal Act’ because it holds back something of the gift of self to your spouse, namely, it holds back your fertility. ‘I give you everything, but not my fertility’. Such a statement is self-contradictory. Such an act is a violation of marriage and a violation of the nature of man and woman. By violating the unitive meaning of the conjugal act it will naturally increase the likelihood of divorce.

### Holloway

In *Catholicism: A New Synthesis* Edward Holloway, the founder of the Faith Movement, does not refer to the perverted faculty argument by name, but his teaching strongly echoes what has been outlined above, and his perspective on evolution provides a more convincing context for the argument. (As this article has already indicated how the theory of evolution can show that the body, its organs, and its related acts have purposes it will not now repeat this line of argumentation.)

Holloway’s Unity-Law of Control and Direction functions in a manner similar to the Eternal Law of Thomas in that it refers to the Plan of God which governs all of creation and directs everything within it. It thus follows that the product of evolution, i.e. man’s body and its sexual structure, is not a random result but something that is planned by God. Evolution implies direction, which gives a purpose to the bodily organs and their related acts. The creation of man

at the apex of creation with a spiritual soul and material body gives a significance to the structure and purpose of the bodily functions that, while it goes beyond that which physical evolution *alone* could give them, is nonetheless based in and indicated by the physical structures.

### The Unitive Derived From The Procreative

Unlike those authors who reject the ‘physicalism’ that *Veritatis Splendor* defends, Holloway repeatedly speaks of the sexual *organs* as not only having a function but of having a ‘meaning’ and ‘purpose’.<sup>49</sup> When man looks at ‘physical nature’ he can see that it gives ‘evidence’ of God’s design in such a way that “the intention of God is embodied in the properties of the organs”.<sup>50</sup> The ‘sexual faculty’ thus has procreation as its primary end. The manner in which Holloway deduces the end of the sexual organ from its physical structure clearly indicates that he is working within the framework of a perverted faculty argument.

In considering the purpose of the sexual *act* itself, the *primary* purpose of sexual intercourse is procreation, and Holloway is keen to stress that the secondary purposes of the act always have reference to the primary end and cannot be seen as independent or parallel ends of the act. Holloway explains this by distinguishing between the sexual act’s purpose before the Fall and its purpose now. The original intention of God, before the Fall, intended sexual intercourse “only for the procreation of men, and was an expression of married love in that sense and in that context only”.<sup>51</sup> Couples engaging in the sexual act would have only done so with the purpose of sharing in God’s creative work to procreate, though in doing so the act would have carried with it other important meanings, uniting the couple, so that the act would have always been “an act of religion [by its reference to God] as well as an act of love [that would follow as a consequence of this act of sharing in God’s creative work]”.<sup>52</sup>

### An Act Clothed In Love, Not An Act of Love *Per Se*

The act of procreation would thus, at the same time as procreating, have brought with it the consequences of: uniting the couple, “spiritual and sacramental love, joy of possession, and the fulfilment of human, complimentary vocation in one flesh, all taken up to God”,<sup>53</sup> as well as a natural organic pleasure (such as accompanies the proper functioning of other human acts (e.g. eating and drinking)<sup>54</sup>. These secondary ends are intrinsically subordinated to the primary end that is their cause (according to the structuring of the act).

Holloway thus emphasises that “sex is not for loving, sex is for children, in a state of loving”<sup>55</sup>, and he goes so far as to say that sex is not even “the expression of human love”<sup>56</sup> *as such*. It is only if the secondary purposes of

the act are mistakenly seen to be purposes *in their own right* that the act can be held to be 'an expression of love'. By saying this Holloway is arguing against many contemporary authors who focus on a supposed primary orientation to love inherent in the structure of the sexual act. Holloway sees an important reference to love in the act, but as a consequence of the act's procreative structure. The loving unitive aspect is an aspect that is subsidiary to and derivative of the act's procreative nature. It is not the procreative nature that is subsequent to the act's nature as an act of love, but vice versa.

Before the Fall man would not have desired sexual intercourse except to achieve its primary end of procreation. However, as man exists in his Fallen state, he experiences concupiscence in an overdeveloped craving of sense, especially for sexual pleasure. While this desire is overdeveloped it is not (necessarily) immoral. The primary end of the sexual act remains the same, even after the Fall, but the secondary purposes that are brought with the act can also be sought, though never in a way that directly opposes the primary end of the act.

#### The Difference With Natural Family Planning

Contraception is wrong because "of its nature and physically, not just morally in the will of the doer, [it] subordinates the primary end potential of the sexual function to the secondary ends, or gives the secondary ends an independent and parallel existence on their own divorced now by human agency from the primary end potential of the function in act".<sup>57</sup> Therefore a couple (improperly) seek sexual pleasure, or even loving union, as an end in itself, without reference to the act's inherent ordering to procreation. This contrasts with the use of Natural Family Planning in "which a couple may take advantage of the secondary ends of intercourse, hoping in their personal minds that they will not conceive, but doing nothing to obstruct the primary potential of their sexual act".<sup>58</sup>

Future developments in science will no doubt make Natural Family Planning increasingly accurate, and a couple will be able to engage in sexual intercourse fully knowing that they will not conceive, but they will still not be tampering with the procreative structure of the act, and so the act is moral. Natural Family Planning is 'open to life' because the inherently procreative structure of the act is not frustrated, *not* because its methods are (or are not) inaccurate.

Holloway distinguishes between the perfect and imperfect use of the sexual act. The use of Natural Family Planning is, as argued above, certainly is not sinful. But by seeking to avoid pregnancy it thereby does not seek the *full* procreative purpose of the sexual act (though it

does not thwart the procreative purpose of the act). It follows that such a use of the sexual act is not an act of perfection, and as a couple grow in holiness and as "time [and deep spirituality] sedates sexual concupiscence"<sup>59</sup> they will seek to use the act only for its full perfection. Holloway does not give a detailed explanation of what he means when he speaks of the 'imperfection' in the act, but it might possibly be compared to the classical classification of acts in the ascent of holiness: mortal sin, deliberate venial sin, inadvertent venial sin, imperfection, perfection.

#### From Precept To Perfection, Via the Imperfect

Another possible comparison might be made with the traditional distinction between the precepts (commands) and the counsels. Everyone is required to keep the precepts (by definition). Everyone is called to keep the Evangelical Counsels (poverty, chastity, obedience) in *some* form, but they do not sin if they do not observe them in the 'State of Perfection' constituted by vowing these three counsels in Religious Life,<sup>60</sup> i.e. everyone is called to observe poverty by living a Christian simplicity of life, but we are not all required to live this in the perfection of vowed Franciscan poverty. The comparison might be: by precept a couple are forbidden to directly oppose the procreative meaning of the marital act; by counsel they are called to use the act only for its perfect and fullest meaning, namely, to seek procreation.

Holloway's reference to a sinful, imperfect, and perfect use of the sexual act might be seen as a fuller development of the weakest stage in the perverted faculty argument: why the act can be used even without the primary purpose. Such a use is not sinful, but it is imperfect. Sinful use of the act directly frustrates its primary purpose of procreation. Imperfect use seeks a secondary purpose without opposing the primary purpose, but also not intending the primary purpose. Perfect use seeks the primary purpose of the act, with the secondary purposes that comes with it.

#### Conclusion

In summary, while Holloway does not structure his argument as a perverted faculty argument as such, his approach is very much in keeping with it. Holloway claims that the purpose of the sexual organ and the sexual act can be deduced from the physical structure of the organ and act, and that the moral use of the act must observe the act's primary purpose.

This article has examined some examples of the perverted faculty argument, illustrating the way in which it can provide a defence of the Church's teaching. But what of Janet Smith's claim that the argument is implicit in *any* coherent defence of the Church's sexual teaching,



that the Church's teaching is founded on the notion that 'organs and their related acts have purposes'? If the sexual organs have a purpose then it would be expected that there would be only one moral use of them, and this is in fact what the Church teaches.

The Church teaches that there are many different sexual sins, but only one appropriate use of human sexuality, namely in the mutual self-giving of married sexual intercourse that must always be exercised in a way that it does not pervert the act's inherent ordering to its primary end of the procreation of life. Any argument supporting this conclusion, as illustrated above, must be based not only on the notion that human sexuality has a purpose, but that the sexual organs have purposes that must be respected.

Clearly, the ability to argue this is dependent on an adequate anthropology that sees man and woman as a body/soul unity, so that the body is not just an instrument of the soul but is an integral part of the very person constituted by his body and soul, and thus the purposes that can be seen in the body must be respected in the actions of the person.

- 1 The Catechism's teaching on masturbation offers a clear example of the perverted faculty argument, citing the 1975 *Persona humana* declaration from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:  
" 'The deliberate use of the sexual faculty, for whatever reason, outside of marriage is essentially contrary to its purpose'. For here sexual pleasure is sought outside of 'the sexual relationship which is demanded by the moral order and in which the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love is achieved (*Persona humana*, 9).'" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2352)  
Here we find an explicit reference to the 'sexual faculty' being used 'contrary to its purpose'.
- 2 Janet Smith, *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later* (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 1991), 68. Note: This article will use the terms 'purpose' and 'end' interchangeably, in keeping with Smith's usage.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 88. As an exception, she notes Grisez's 'contralife will' argument against contraception which does not depend on the perverted faculty argument, however she rejects his thinking (*Ibid.*, 105-7; 340-70).
- 4 Henry Davis, "Birth Control: The Perverted Faculty Argument", *American Ecclesiastical Review* 81 (1929), in Charles E. Curran and A. Richard McCormick S.J., *The Historical Development of Fundamental Moral Theology in the United States Readings in Moral Theology* No. 11 (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 124. Curran, McCormick and Smith (Smith, 384 n.30) all seem to think that this is a significant article.
- 5 Richard Connell, 'A Defense of *Humanae Vitae*', 77, cited in Smith, 87-8.
- 6 As will be noted later, this contrasts with Smith's definition of 'procreation' (sharing in God's creative work) rather than mere biological 'reproduction'. Holloway also defines the purpose of the act as procreation.
- 7 Davis, 130.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*, 128, c.f. 129, 131.
- 10 Suarez *De Legibus ad de Deo Legislator*, I, 4.2. Cited in Robert Fastigi, "Natural Law in the Service of Faith", in *St. Thomas Aquinas and the Natural Law Tradition. Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. John Goyette, Mark S. Latkovic and Richard S. Myers (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2004), 99. In defending the position of Suarez, Robert Fastigi argues that in order for natural law to be perceived as *law* it needs to be seen as more than just indicating right and wrong (or in the above articulation: indicating what is beneficial to the agent/harmful to the agent) but as actually forbidding it. God does not merely point and observe, 'It is wrong to steal', rather, he commands, 'Thou shalt not steal'.
- 11 In the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas's treatment of law comes at the end of (I-II) his introduction to morality not at the beginning. It thus appears as the means to the goal of the moral life, not the purpose of the moral life.
- 12 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), I-II, q.1, a.7.
- 13 Smith, 76-7.

- 14 *Ibid.*, 127-8.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 112. c.f. "Contraception violates the unitive as well as the procreative meaning of conjugal intercourse" (109, c.f. 107ff). Or, in summary: when the procreative and unitive meanings are directly separated in the *act* this separation will tend towards a separating and weakening of the whole man-woman *relationship*.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 75-6.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 88.
- 18 Aquinas, I-II, q.90, a.1, c.
- 19 *Ibid.*, I-II, q.90, a.2, c.
- 20 In contrast with what has been outlined in this article, Grisez *et al* reject the notion that the Natural Law is 'in' the inclinations or body, and that one cannot argue from the 'is' of the body to the 'ought' of the precepts that direct its proper use.
- 21 *Ibid.*, I-II, q.91, a.2. Thomas twice refers to "inclinations to their proper acts and ends".
- 22 *Ibid.*, I-II, q.94, a.2, c.
- 23 *Veritatis Splendor* explicitly defends a morality that bases itself on the physical processes and functions against "the accusation of physicalism or biologism" (John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (London: CTS, 1993), 48). It notes the mistaken tendency to treat "the human body as raw data... materially necessary for freedom to make its choice, yet extrinsic to the person, the subject and the human act. Their functions would not be able to constitute reference points for moral decisions, because these inclinations would be merely 'physical' goods, called by some 'pre-moral'." It notes that the rational soul is the form of the body and that "it is in the unity of the body and soul that the person is the subject of his own moral acts".
- 24 Charles E. Curran, *Directions in Fundamental Moral Theology* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), cited in Smith, 176.
- 25 Smith, 177.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 The following paragraphs are a summary of chapters three and four of her book.
- 28 Smith, 69.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 71.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 73-4.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 74.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 75.
- 33 Smith distinguishes between 'procreation' by which a human couple share in God's bringing of a new immortal being into existence, and 'reproduction' by which animals reproduce their species. (*Ibid.*, 45, 76.)
- 34 *Ibid.*, 81.
- 35 As was noted earlier, Davis was keen to stress the difference between the *faculty* and the *act* related to it.
- 36 Smith, 84-5.
- 37 The five arguments are: 'The Physiological Argument' (*Ibid.*, 87); 'The Intrinsic Worth of Human Life' Argument (p.99); 'The Special Act of Creation' Argument (p.102); 'The Contraception is Contralife' Argument (p.105); 'The Violation of the Unitive Meaning of the Conjugal Act' Argument (p.107). This article will not examine all of these arguments, but will limit itself to outlining JPII and Holloway as examples of two of them.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 100.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 107. She makes this definition while considering one of the five arguments.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 46ff. In the face of the Anglican Church accepting the morality of contraception (1930), Pius XI in *Casti Connubii* reaffirmed that, "The primary end of marriage is the procreation and the education of children" (n.17). Similarly, Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* reiterated that, "Marriage and married love are by nature ordered to the procreation and education of children" (n.50). A fuller treatment of the relationship between the ends of marriage and its articulation by the Magisterium can be found in Smith's book, as cited.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 281, n.12r.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 78.
- 43 Davis, 126-7
- 44 Smith, 82.
- 45 *Ibid.*, "John Paul II and *Humanae Vitae*" in *Why Humanae Vitae Was Right: A Reader* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 239.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 235.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 239.
- 48 *Ibid.*, *Humanae Vitae*, 110.
- 49 Edward Holloway, *Catholicism: A New Synthesis* (Wallington, Surrey: Faith Keyway, 1970), 435-6.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 420-1.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 430.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 424.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 425.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 428.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 422.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 420.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 435-6.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 435, c.f., 434.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 445.
- 60 C.f. "Christ proposes the evangelical counsels, in their great variety, to every disciple" (CCC n.915); *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q.108, a.4; Vowing the counsels is referred to as 'total' consecration (*Lumen Gentium* n.44, *Code of Canon Law*, 573.1, *Summa Theologica* II-II, q.186, a.1) and places a person in the 'State of Perfection'.



## STEM CELLS, THE SCIENTIFIC ESTABLISHMENT AND THE NATURE OF BELIEF

Edmund Nash

Few people watching the news last Christmas can have missed the spectacular downfall of Korean cloning pioneer Hwang Woo Suk. The discrediting of the former Seoul National University professor concludes a case of scientific forgery on a very large scale - perhaps the largest ever, given all that has been at stake scientifically and politically in the international debate over embryonic stem cell (ESC) research.

Now that his human cloning work in its entirety has been exposed as fraud, it seems that the dubious honour of having cloned the first human being now falls to Britain. One author of the British study was Professor Alison Murdoch of the Newcastle Centre for Life, the first UK scientist to be given a cloning license. As part of the frantic damage-limitation exercise that followed the Korean scandal, she stated at a news conference: "It will set us back a bit... when we come to publish *anything*, the validation will have to be more than (*sic!*) 100 percent tight." However, she was content that such a fraud could not happen in Britain because, unlike those reckless Orientals, we have the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) to make sure everything's OK. Really? Presumably the HFEA's current chair Suzi Leather is quite different from the Suzi Leather who said of Hwang's work two years ago: "It's a very exciting advance and it has come from a reputable group in South Korea. I think we can have confidence in their science. These aren't cowboy cloners. I think we can have confidence also in their ethical approach... such work would be permissible in the UK."

Lucky for the UK, then, that no British researcher managed to secure a collaboration with Hwang. Of course, the HFEA doesn't speak for everyone involved in the fertility industry. Media scientist and Labour peer Robert Winston is one of the HFEA's most outspoken critics. But when the Independent asked him what he thought of Hwang's work he replied: "There is a perception that experiments happening in [South Korea] are faintly mysterious and controversial, and are less likely to be subject to ethical scrutiny. But this is not true...I have just returned from a conference on stem cells and cloning in Colorado, in the US. Some 17 papers read there were from South Korea and all demonstrated excellent work carried out to scrupulous ethical standards." When we next hear Professor Winston insisting that we can't be sure God exists perhaps we should ask ourselves can we be sure Robert

Winston knows what he's talking about? The list of clangers goes on: "I came back blown away by the whole thing," said Dr Stephen Minger of King's College London, describing a visit to Hwang's lab. "It was mind boggling to everybody." Dr Minger has presumably been in a permanent state of bogglement ever since.

Yes, even scientists do get it wrong sometimes. But why these unprecedented public declarations of faith in Hwang which are accorded to so few others? The answer lies in the huge amount of political capital that has been built on the false promise of ESC 'therapy' in this country. Things were looking rather bleak for the ESC lobby when Hwang's initial study went to press. Shortly after the HFEA was given permission to grant human cloning licences in late 2001, a successful legal challenge by the Pro-Life Alliance put things on hold. An embarrassed Government was forced to rush through an amendment two weeks later to make the original decision legal in retrospect. But despite such legislative gymnastics, no-one actually applied for a cloning license for almost two years. So the image that had been used to sway MPs - of hordes of eager scientists, champing at the bit and held back only by those nutty religious types - was starting to wear a bit thin. But then Hwang burst onto the scene from relative obscurity and provided exactly the poster boy that the ESC lobby needed. At last, an enlightened genius unburdened by tiresome moral hang-ups and a superstitious public! Letters pages of scientific journals thronged with complaints from the ESC lobby that we in the West had the religious right to thank for letting the Koreans get the upper hand. Religious beliefs, the message was, should never stand in the way of research, especially if that research is going to cure Parkinsons'n'Alzheimers—conditions quoted so frequently whenever ESCs are mentioned that we really need a dedicated abbreviation for them.

It is a dogma of scientific atheism that science is based on objective facts and everything else on subjective beliefs. Therefore, a true scientist can never just 'believe in' anything; he can only cautiously derive facts through the accumulation of evidence. But you could be forgiven for thinking that the plaudits heaped on Hwang by the ESC lobby were anything but cautious. I don't believe that any of the people I quoted earlier had any special knowledge of Hwang's work over and above what was written in his discredited papers. Because these people

are deemed to be experts, the media believed what they had to say. But their plaudits are belief statements. If the Hwang episode has proved anything it is that the above dogma is flawed. To paraphrase Chesterton: if people stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing, they believe in anything. If scientific atheism had treated Hwang's work with the same suspicion as it treats religions doctrine, he would probably never have got away with it for so long.

In the soul-searching that followed Hwang's downfall, media scientists and journal editors who had previously extolled his virtues resorted to explanations that sound suspiciously like a belief system. "In science, the whole thing is based on trust," a former editor of the British Medical Journal affirmed. Indeed, had Hwang's work been (a) genuine and (b) ethically unproblematic, there would have been no reason for him not to be given a certain amount of credit for his findings. But the fact is that Hwang's work was credited far over and above that of others who had achieved much more using adult stem cells. We didn't hear Winston *et al* making such statements about adult stem cell research despite the

fact that this line of work has been far more successful in almost every possible way.

The ESC lobby lionised Hwang because it believed this success would shore up its own article of faith: that ethical objections concerning the humanity of embryos should not stand in the way of scientific progress. Now, all scientists need to have a modicum of unsupported belief in their own work in order to garner interest and funding for novel, untested ideas. But in raising Hwang's work head and shoulders above the findings of others because it suited their credo to do so, the ESC lobby was guilty of exactly the same wishful thinking of which it accuses the religious right. It is at the very least hypocritical to claim that religious types rely on unfounded belief to justify their opposition to destructive embryo research and other morally repugnant practices. Was believing in Hwang *really* more rational than believing in God? Chesterton was right: it is not a case of *whether* we believe, but of *what* we believe—no-one is outside the system, whatever your political interests.

## IS HUMANAЕ VITAE AN INFALLIBLE DECLARATION?

Edward Holloway

It is often stated that "no theologian of any note or worth has ever stated that *Humanae Vitae* was an infallible declaration". I know, and I am delighted to join the worthless ones. *Casti Connubii* made a doctrine already infallible in fact "from universal Catholic doctrine" more surely so from its utter solemnity. the occasion of its issue, (the collapse of authentic Christian moral doctrine at Lambeth a little earlier) and its total acceptance by—the bishops of the universal Catholic Church. *Casti Connubii* confirmed the certain and the Catholic doctrine beyond dogmatic appeal. Now the rebirth of sheer heresy, for that is what it is, against *Casti Connubii*, answered by *Humanae Vitae* makes the latter an *ex cathedra* statement, I will insist. The whole world hung with bated breath upon the words of the Pope, who had reserved to himself "*una parola decisiva*" (a decisive judgment) as he himself had said. in so many words. He was very certainly teaching as supreme pastor in faith and morals for the universal Church, indeed all mankind, especially Christians. The apostles were at sixes and sevens (still are, it seems) and the circumstances fit perfectly the occasions mentioned by Christ in Luke 22:31 & 32, and Matt. 16:18 & 19.

The circumstances of *Humanae Vitae* fit also the precise circumstances the First Vatican Council had in mind, and expressed, in the definition of Papal Infallibility. The "infallibility" of the Pope in a supreme crisis, like that which preceded *Humanae Vitae* in which *Casti Connubii* had been set aside by vast numbers of the "faithful", and by very many bishops, is a functional and organic charism in the constitution of the Church through the office of the Pope. It does not require at all any legalist and specific form of words. It requires merely that the Pope, thrown back upon the bosom of Christ alone, speak in the name of Christ, by the power of Christ, trusting Christ to support his word in the truth. In such cases the Pope cannot help being infallible, whether he likes it or not. Pope Paul VI made it poignantly clear at the time that this condition of being "utterly alone" with Christ alone, was fulfilled in this recent supreme drama of Catholic Christian teaching. So, I am delighted to join the "multitude that knows not the law" and the "little ones" whom Christ declared blessed in their knowledge. The good Lord will be found with them, in wisdom as well as in grace... not with the sophisticates of our time, who have lost their way, and their hope and life in the Lord.

from "Bucharest, The Tablet and *Humanae Vitae*"  
Faith, November 1974

# Marriage and the Prophylactic Use of Condoms

Luke Gormally

*Professor Gormally clarifies what is necessary for the procreative end of the marital act to be present and why it is necessary if the unitive end is to be achieved. He also clarifies the Church's much misunderstood point that, whilst it is not necessary to intend actual conception for an integral marital act, it is necessary to have an intention compatible with the generative nature of the act.*

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*"A marriage is only consummated in sexual intercourse of the generative kind. Consummation belongs at the heart of the symbolic and therefore sacramental significance of marriage."*

## 1. Introduction

The background to this article is a friendly email exchange I had with Fr Martin Rhonheimer in the late summer of 2004 following an article he published in the London *Tablet* for 10 July of that year. In that article he maintained that:

"... a married man who is HIV infected and uses condoms to protect his wife from infection is not acting to render procreation impossible, but to prevent infection. If conception is prevented, this will be an – unintentional – side effect and will not therefore shape the moral meaning of the act as a contraceptive act. There may be other reasons to warn against the use of a condom in such a case, or to advise total continence, but these will not be because of the Church's teaching on contraception but for pastoral or simply prudential reasons – the risk, for example, of the condom not working."<sup>2</sup>

In the email exchange two points emerged as crucial. The first is the requirement that for an act of sexual intercourse to be marital it should be a generative or procreative type of act, an act which *of its kind is apt for generation*. The most fundamental disagreement between Rhonheimer and me is about what is necessary for an act to be of the generative kind. This disagreement underlies the disagreement which arose between us on the second crucial point.

That point is that there are two ways in which a sexual act may embody an intention to act in a manner *per se* inapt for generation. One may do so by deliberately choosing a *behavioural pattern* in sexual activity which is *per se* inapt for generation (as people do, for example, in sodomy), or, secondly, by deliberately producing 'physical circumstances' which render inapt for generation a behavioural pattern which otherwise would be *per se* apt for generation (as happens when women take oral contraceptives to render infertile an act which otherwise might have been fertile).

## Is The Prophylactic Condom Incidental To The Act?

In the email debate I argued that condomistic intercourse exhibits a behavioural pattern which is *per se* inapt for generation. Rhonheimer argued that the behavioural pattern exhibited is that of normal sexual intercourse, and that the use of a latex rubber sheath by the husband is merely a 'physical circumstance' which happens to render the act inapt for generation. But since the condom in the scenario envisaged is not adopted with a contraceptive purpose, use of it does not embody an intention to act in a manner inapt for generation, and so there can be no objection to condomistic intercourse within a marriage on the basis of the type of act it is.

I have no difficulty over agreeing with the claim that in the scenario envisaged by Rhonheimer the husband is not aiming to prevent conception. So his behaviour is not to be faulted on the grounds that, in acting as he does, he has the intention of preventing conception by creating a 'physical circumstance' in virtue of which a generative pattern of behaviour is rendered inapt for generation. On my view, his

behaviour is to be faulted because of the *non-generative* behavioural pattern it exhibits.

In Fr Rhonheimer's recent response to criticism from Fr Guevin he claims that "the act as such [i.e. condomistic intercourse] is of a generative kind, but it is modified by human intervention".<sup>3</sup> And since the modification is prophylactic in intent, not contraceptive, he reasserts his view that the choice of condomistic intercourse within marriage for prophylactic purposes cannot be excluded on the grounds that it is an intrinsically evil choice. He helps himself to this conclusion by insisting that the 'object' of the choice to engage in condomistic intercourse is "an act of preventing HIV transmission".

But preventing HIV transmission can only be the hoped-for objective of first ensuring that ejaculation is into a condom. Fr Rhonheimer surely foreshortens the practical reasoning of the HIV-infected husband who chooses to wear a condom. An accurate representation of the practical reasoning of the husband as exhibited in what he does in choosing to wear a condom would be on the following lines: 'I must wear a condom *in order to ejaculate into it rather than into my wife's vagina so as to prevent the transmission of HIV*'. The "so as to" identifies the *further intention* with which he chooses to wear the condom; the *immediate* (or *proximate*) *object* of his choice is that of ensuring ejaculation into the condom rather than into his wife's vagina.

In what follows I shall seek to show that an essential element of the behavioural pattern required for intercourse to be of the generative kind is ejaculation by the man in the woman's reproductive tract. It is essential to Fr Rhonheimer's case to deny this. The effect of his doing so, I believe, is radically to disconnect the notion of the 'procreative meaning' of sexual intercourse from any reasonable criterion of what is to count as generative behaviour, and by the same stroke to evacuate the notion of the unitive meaning of intercourse of its traditional content.

### An Act That Is "Apt For Generation"

Clearly what is at issue, then, is what has to hold true of a *behavioural pattern* in sexual activity if it is to be characterised as the kind which is *apt for generation*. I shall proceed along the following lines in seeking to settle the issue.

First, in section 2, I shall offer one line of reasoning for the Church's teaching that intercourse should be of the generative kind, and in doing so will seek to bring out precisely what it is in the behavioural pattern of generative intercourse that is the necessary condition of its being unitive, and so marital.

In section 3 I look cursorily at the way the development of canonical jurisprudence, concerning what kind of 'potency' is required in a man for him to be capable of consummating a marriage, has settled on specifying that capacity as a capacity for engaging in a particular kind of *performance* rather than a capacity for achieving the biological goal of that performance.

Finally, I shall conclude with some observations on why it is only if intercourse exhibits the specific behavioural pattern of that performance that it can be said to possess the symbolic, and therefore sacramental, significance that the Church attributes to the consummation of marriage.

## 2. Why Marital Intercourse Should be of the Generative Kind

Marriage realises a unique kind of unity of biological process, sensual experience, emotional responsiveness and human rationality (in which I include the spiritual).

One starting point for understanding what makes marriage necessary, and what kind of set-up it is, is what is evident biologically, namely that the central purpose of sex in human life, as in other forms of animal life, is to produce offspring. Sexual organs are reproductive organs: part of what any biology textbook will tell you is the reproductive system. So how we conduct ourselves in the matter of sex is going to shape our relationship to the central human good of offspring which our sexual powers exist to realise. Human offspring are in fundamental ways different from the offspring of other animals and it is those fundamental differences that make necessary the distinctive kind of relationship marriage is.

Marriage exists for the good of children. Because children are such a fundamental good of human society – a good without which societies could not survive – we have the fundamental institution of marriage. Man is a political animal, Aristotle said, the kind of being who needs a civic community in order to flourish. Man is even more fundamentally a conjugal animal, St Thomas Aquinas added, since what he called "the domestic society of husband and wife" is ordered to meeting the most basic needs without which civil society would not exist – namely, the begetting and rearing of children. That task should not be understood in minimalist terms. It is nothing less, in St Augustine's words, than the task of "receiving [children] lovingly, nourishing them humanely, and educating them religiously".<sup>4</sup>

### Marriage Ordered to the Good of Children

The first thing to be said about the marriage relationship is that it needs to be appropriate to the nature of the child. In thinking in this context about the nature of

the child we should reflect in particular on two truths emphasised in Christian teaching. The first is the truth that each human soul is directly created by God in his own image. Our very existence is a gift of God in a quite distinctive sense. In the normal use of the term, a gift implies a recipient of the gift. If we think of the child herself, then the gift of human existence has no prior recipient, for the gift of human life is what brings the child into existence.

### Human Dignity Rooted In Procreation

Our existence has the character of sheer 'givenness', so that we are radically dependent on God. But God's creative activity in bringing each of us into existence is an activity of collaboration, so to speak, with our parents. So a child is entrusted to his or her parents as a gift which surpasses in its nature anything they are capable of producing by the mastery of material. Which is the reason why children should not be generated in a manner analogous to productive mastery of materials.

The second truth about the child is that God's intention for each of us is that our fulfilment as human beings should be in union with the Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

These two truths mean that each child possesses a 'connatural' dignity – a dignity which belongs to us simply in virtue of our existence as human beings – that is equal in significance to the connatural dignity of his or her parents. This equality is evidently not the equality in utility value of replaceable utility goods. Human beings are not replaceable precisely because each of us is created by God as the individual each of us is for fulfilment in union with Him. All of us are equal in having that kind of awesome dignity, a dignity in virtue of which we are irreplaceable.<sup>5</sup>

### Erotic Faithfulness, The Cradle of Respect For Life

It is these truths about the child that require that the relationship between a man and a woman should be conducive to their treating the child as an irreplaceable gift from God equal in dignity to themselves. The relationship between a man and a woman which securely grounds that kind of relationship to their child is one which has two indispensable features. The first is that the man and the woman are committed to treating each other as irreplaceable in the sexual relationship in which the child is begotten; in other words, they are committed to marriage as a lifelong bond which, negatively, excludes other sexual relationships, and, positively, commits them to a shared life of mutual support.

The commitment of husband and wife to an exclusive sexual relationship in which each seeks the good of the other realises that good of marriage which Catholic

tradition calls *fides* – the faithful commitment to be united in mind and body with one's spouse in that distinctive form of friendship which marriage is.<sup>6</sup> This friendship can be realised only through a self-giving love on the part of each spouse.

A marriage relationship shaped by that kind of commitment provides what one might call the 'moral ecology' the child needs. A couple who treat each other in their sexual relationship as irreplaceable, and to be accepted and loved for just the persons they are, convey to the child a sense of his own dignity as an irreplaceable human being who is cherished for just the person he is.

### Unitive Power of Sex Rooted In Procreative Significance

The second key feature of marriage, dictated by what is needed for the good of children, is that the sexual activity of the man and the woman should be consistent with their relationship being a *marital* relationship in which they are open to children for what they are – gifts of God. What is required if the sexual expression of a relationship is to be truly marital in this sense? What is required is that sexual intercourse should be normal intercourse which is both *unitive* and *procreative* in its *significance*. Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* clearly teaches that there is an "inseparable connection – established by God and not to be broken by human choice – between the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning which are both inherent in the conjugal act".<sup>7</sup> The Church teaches that intercourse does not unite a couple in an authentic way if it does not retain its procreative or generative significance.

Now normal sexual intercourse is of its nature a generative or procreative type of act. It has that meaning because of the fundamental role it plays of generating new human life. It does not have to be the case that each occasion of normal sexual intercourse results in conception for it to qualify as a generative type of act. It retains its generative significance just so long as those who engage in it do not do anything with the purpose of rendering it sterile when it might otherwise be fertile.

There are two reasons why it is important that sexual intercourse should be a generative type of activity, one referring to the good of the child, the other to the good of the couple.

Since children are the central human good that is at issue in sexual activity, it is important that people engage only in such sexual activity as leaves them well disposed to the good of children – and that means, only in marital intercourse. But if people choose to engage in sexual activity which, for one reason or another, is of a kind inapt for generation, and believe themselves justified in doing



so, they embrace a rationale for sexual activity of a kind that excludes its significance as generative activity.

People so disposed to think and act cannot consistently think there is a good reason for confining sexual activity to marriage. If one breaks the link between sex and marriage one undermines the disposition to be open to the gift of a child precisely in and through one's sexual activity. To preserve in oneself the sense that *sexual activity is essentially generative activity* is to preserve in oneself a sense that it belongs only in marriage and, in doing so, to keep oneself rightly disposed to the good of children.

Deliberately non-generative, completed sexual acts are not merely hostile to the good of children but, within marriage, are destructive of the unity proper to marriage. Only completed sexual acts which actualise bodily unity are capable of expressing marital unity.

### Marital Union and the Mutuality of Procreation

Our Lord, in responding to the question of the Pharisees about the permissibility of divorce, recalled the text of *Genesis* (2: 24) which states God's primordial plan for marriage:

"Some Pharisees approached him and to test him they said, 'Is it against the Law for a man to divorce his wife on any pretext whatever?' He answered, 'Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female, and that he said: This is why a man must leave father and mother and cling to his wife and the two become one body? They are no longer two therefore but one body. So then, what God has united, man must not divide.'" (*Mt* 19: 3-6)

A man and a woman are made one body in normal sexual intercourse, for a sexual act which remains generative brings into being a unique kind of oneness. We exercise most of our natural capacities individually even if we depend on others to develop those capacities. I see by myself, think by myself, speak by myself. But a human individual's capacity to reproduce is, you might say, only half a capacity; it is radically incomplete: each needs the complementary capacity and activity of someone of the opposite sex in order to reproduce. It is in acting together in a way that is *apt for reproduction* that a man and a woman form a quasi-organic unity – become in a sense 'one body'.

It is not under their control that they actually conceive a child or that they are fertile. What is under their control is that they *act* in a way which, if they are fertile, leaves open the possibility that their conjoined powers of reproduction cooperate in the conception of a child. But at the level of common sense experience (of a kind that is transculturally

accessible) it is evident that what is required *in the way of chosen behaviour*, for a conjoining of reproductive powers, must involve the husband ejaculating semen into his wife's vagina.

The unity thereby realised is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for marital unity. After all, as St Paul observed, "a man who goes with a prostitute is one body with her" (1 *Cor* 6: 16). Unity at the level of generative performance must be the expression of an exclusive marital commitment, of that self-giving love on the part of husband and wife which is open to the gift of children and bears fruit in a community of life through which each may transcend the confining egoisms to which we are prone. In this way the structure of marriage in working for the good of children simultaneously works for the good of the spouses in drawing them into an ever more generous love for each other and for the children God gives them.

### Acts that are 'Apt For Life' even when Naturally Infertile

So far in exploring the rationale of a Catholic sexual ethic I have tried to show how the requirement that we should engage only in marital sexual activity, understood as sexual activity which is *inseparably* unitive and generative in its significance, is a requirement that can be seen to arise from what is needed for the good of children – the good of children being the central human good at issue in sexual activity.

It has emerged from the account I have given that a necessary condition of the 'one body' unity which should characterise marriage is that sexual intercourse between husband and wife should be of the kind that is *apt for reproduction* – i.e. of the generative kind. As was noted at the outset, sexual activity may fail to be of the generative kind either through the adoption of a pattern of behaviour which is *per se* inapt for generation, or by deliberately producing 'physical circumstances' with the intent of rendering causally inapt for generation a behavioural pattern which is otherwise apt for generation.

It is important to be clear that when we talk of a 'behavioural pattern' we are talking about what can be chosen: about *behaviour* which can be the object of choice. I have suggested that it is phenomenologically evident that, *to be per se apt for generation*, that behaviour must involve the husband's ejaculation of semen into his wife's reproductive tract. I turn now to a consideration of whether canonical jurisprudence bears out this claim.

### 3. Canon Law on the Character of Intercourse Necessary to Consummate a Marriage.<sup>8</sup>

The canon law jurisprudence of marriage is where the Church's theology of marriage engages with the very down to earth realities of the relationship. One of

its central concerns is distinguishing between what is to count as a valid marriage and what fails to be.

### What Does The Church Mean By 'Apt For Life'?

According to Canon 1061 of the current (1983) *Code of Canon Law*:

"A valid marriage between baptised persons is said to be merely ratified, if it is not consummated; ratified and consummated, if the spouses have in a human manner engaged together in a conjugal act in itself apt for the generation of offspring. To this act marriage is by its nature ordered and by it the spouses become one flesh."

And at Canon 1084 we read:

"Antecedent and perpetual impotence to have sexual intercourse, whether on the part of the man or on that of the woman, whether absolute or relative, by its very nature invalidates marriage. The sexual intercourse referred to in this canon is the kind necessary to consummate a marriage, i.e. of the generative kind."<sup>9</sup>

What is meant when canon law speaks of spouses engaging together "in a conjugal act in itself apt for the generation of offspring"? In the history of the Church's doctrine of marriage the procreation of children has been held to be the primary purpose of marital intercourse, but not the sole purpose. From early in the tradition a secondary purpose was recognised. St Augustine put it this way: "Husband and wife owe one another not only the faithful association of sexual union for the sake of getting children – which makes the first society of the human race in this our mortality – but more than that a kind of mutual service of bearing the burden of one another's weakness, so as to prevent unlawful intercourse."<sup>10</sup>

This secondary purpose was known in short as the *remedium concupiscentiae* – the remedy for disordered sexual desire by providing for the satisfaction of sexual desire within the honourable state of marriage.

Marriage is a remedy precisely in transforming what would be disordered through observance of the norms of marital intercourse. The *remedium concupiscentiae* was always regarded as secondary to the primary purpose, which requires that the basic norm for intercourse is that it should always be of the generative kind. But that did not mean that intercourse had to be fertile, or even that a couple had to be fertile to contract a marriage. Providing the secondary end of marriage was realisable a marriage could be consummated. Hence marriage of the elderly, who were believed to be sterile, was permitted provided they were capable of intercourse and their intercourse was – in behavioural pattern – of the generative kind.

### The Minimum Conditions For Valid Consummation

What did 'capable of intercourse' mean? The majority of theologians and canonists prior to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century held that this capacity on the side of the man existed if he was capable of erection, penetration and the ejaculation of some semen into the vagina (whether or not the semen as such was suitable for generation) and, on the side of the woman, if she was capable of receiving the ejaculate in her vagina. Insemination by the husband was deemed necessary to achieving the secondary end of marriage, for without insemination there was held to be no *sedatio concupiscentiae* (assuaging of sensual desire). This view of what counted as 'capacity for intercourse' in the man was compatible in principle with holding that men who had been castrated after reaching sexual maturity and who were capable of erection, penetration and producing a seminal ejaculate were therefore capable of consummating marriage.

This inference about eunuchs came to seem untenable to many commentators in the light of a Papal Brief published in 1587. The Brief was a response to a letter to the Secretariat of State of the Holy See written on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May of the previous year by Cesare Spacciani, Bishop of Novara and the Papal Nuncio to Spain, in which he expressed concern about the serious practical and pastoral implications of the fact that theologians and canonists were divided in Spain (and indeed elsewhere in Europe) about the validity of marriages entered into by men who were eunuchs and castrati.<sup>11</sup> According to Spacciani there were innumerable such marriages in Spain – "*numero infinito*", he wrote.

Little more than a year later, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 1587, Pope Sixtus V issued the Brief *Cum frequenter*. It is a complex document which has given rise to an immense volume of exegesis which of necessity I must largely ignore here. Suffice it to say that the Brief required that those eunuchs, defined not only as men lacking both testicles but also as incapable of intercourse, were to be prohibited from attempting to enter marriage, on the grounds that they were incapable of contracting marriage in any way whatsoever. Those who had already contracted marriages were to be separated and their marriages declared null and invalid.

What is of interest for my argument is that the description of the eunuchs in the preliminary, expository paragraph of the Brief, refers to them as incapable of producing "*verum semen*" – genuine semen. Despite the fact that at the time of *Cum frequenter* the precise contribution of the testicles to the production of semen – namely the contribution of spermatozoa – was unknown, there had emerged by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>, as the most influential interpretation of the phrase '*verum semen*', the view

that it referred to what was produced in the testicles ("*in testiculis elaboratum*"). From which it followed that men who were without testicles are incapable of marriage.

### Confusion and Development, The Search for Clarity

The view that the capacity to consummate a marriage required in a man the capacity to produce semen deriving at least in part from the testicles decisively influenced Rotal jurisprudence, in other words the judgments passed on the validity of marriages by judges of the Roman Rota, the highest tribunal of the Church considering marriage cases. A number of cases came before the Rota of marriages in which, prior to the marriage, the man had undergone vasectomy.

In consequence of the tying or cutting of the *vasa deferentia*, spermatozoa cannot reach the ejaculatory duct. Though a man remains capable of sexual intercourse, his ejaculate contains nothing produced in the testicles. The majority of cases of marriages in which the man had been vasectomised prior to marriage were declared invalid by judges of the Rota over the first six decades or so of the twentieth century. On a number of occasions, however, the Holy Office, the Roman dicastery that is nowadays known as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, rejected the basis of those judgements, declaring that vasectomy is not an impediment to marriage.<sup>13</sup> The situation was extremely confused and could not be allowed to continue.

In consequence in 1972 Pope Paul VI ordered an in-depth investigation of the issue by both the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This resulted in the Congregation issuing on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1977 a Decree in which it is stated that it is not necessary for marital intercourse—that is, intercourse which is *of its kind apt for generation*—that it should involve the ejaculation of semen which at least in part has its origins in the testicles. Since there are good reasons for holding that the papal approval of the Decree was *in forma specifica*, in other words, a solemn approval, the teaching of the Decree rests on the authority of the Pope himself.<sup>14</sup>

### A Matter of Common Sense and Down To Earth Realism

What fundamental consideration lies behind the Decree? The following, I think: marriage belongs to the order of creation, and what is required for the consummation of marriage should therefore be in principle universally graspable. What is universally graspable are the elements of the performance—what I earlier called the 'behavioural pattern'—which embody marital intercourse. Those elements on the side of the man are: erection, penetration and ejaculation within the vagina. The most important of these is the ejaculation of semen:

inability to deposit semen in the vagina amounts to an inability to perform the *kind* of act which is *per se* apt for generation. A sexual performance in which a wife has not received within her reproductive tract her husband's semen is at a phenomenological level clearly not an act 'ordered to procreation'.

It is important to emphasise that the criteria specified in the previous paragraph for the integrity of the act are criteria about the nature of a *performance*. Whether a performance which follows a normal behavioural pattern (and with a view to which neither spouse produces 'physical circumstances' rendering it inapt for procreation) is actually fertile or sterile is not something which is determined by the performance as such.

### Circumstantial and Active Infertility Contrasted As Acts

In Question 15, article 2 of his *Disputed Questions on Evil*, a question about "Whether every act of lust is a mortal sin?", St Thomas Aquinas considers an objection which seeks to infer from the permissibility of intercourse in marriage with a sterile wife, the permissibility of a range of non-generative sexual activities. To which he replies: "that act is said to be contrary to nature in the genus of lust from which, *according to the general character ['species'] of the act generation cannot follow*, but not that act from which it cannot follow because of some particular *incidental ['accidens']* circumstance such as old age or infirmity".

This may sound obscure. What is meant, I think, is that while the character of your performance can ensure that generation cannot follow, if what you do is the normal kind of sexual intercourse your *happening to be sterile* does not alter the character of the act as the kind of performance which, in its behavioural pattern, is apt for generation.

What has all this to do with my argument with Fr Rhonheimer? Well, if a husband ejaculates into a condom his wife is not receiving his ejaculate in her reproductive tract. His chosen act has therefore the character of an act from which generation *cannot* follow. That generation cannot follow is not a *per accidens* feature of the act, arising from biological characteristics of the spouses which are extrinsic to the character of the performance as such.

On the contrary, it is an essential feature of the chosen character of the performance that generation cannot follow from it; it is essentially a type of act inapt for generation.

Recall Fr Rhonheimer's key claims. They are:

1. That condomistic intercourse conforms to the normal behavioural pattern of generative intercourse, and

2. that it is rendered non-generative by producing 'physical circumstances' which make what might have been fertile sterile.

### Condoms Change The Character of the Act Performed

The first of these claims seems to me wholly implausible. The performance that constitutes condomistic intercourse includes the man's chosen act of sheathing his penis in a latex rubber cover in order to ensure that ejaculation is into the condom rather than his wife's vagina. So what happens fails to instantiate an essential feature of the behavioural pattern of generative intercourse: there is no deposition of semen in the woman's reproductive tract. A condom is as inappropriate a receptacle for the deposition of semen as the anus. Choosing to ejaculate into either amounts to choice of a type of act which *in the very character of the performance* plainly detaches sex from its ordering to the good of children. And that, as St Thomas teaches, is the essence of 'unnatural vice'.

Fr Rhonheimer has sought to argue that insistence on the deposition of semen in the woman's reproductive tract as essential to the behavioural pattern of generative intercourse rests on the antiquated 'scientific' assumption that semen is the uniquely generative agent. Since we now know, in the light of more accurate science, that an ovum is necessary as well as sperm for generation, we should, if we were following the logic which originally required the deposition of semen for the completion of marital intercourse, nowadays require the presence of an ovum if there is to be marital intercourse. But we don't. So (he concludes) we should not require the deposition of semen.

However erroneous earlier views may have been about the precise nature of the *biological* contribution husband and wife make to generation, it has always been recognised that each made *some* contribution.<sup>15</sup> The significant difference between them is that, while it is the case that the wife's behaviour in intercourse has to be such that she receives her husband's deposition of semen vaginally, her precise biological contribution to generation remains—as it always has been—*independent* of that behaviour. By contrast, the husband's contribution to generation does depend upon him willing and carrying out the marital act of ejaculating semen in his wife's reproductive tract. If he engages in *coitus interruptus* or condomistic intercourse, he engages in a kind of behaviour which, *qua* performance, precisely does exclude his (possible) biological contribution to generation.

It is because of the distinctive significance for generation of the husband's chosen *behaviour* that the Church's canonical jurisprudence, culminating in the authoritative

determination under Pope Paul VI of what constitutes capacity to consummate a marriage, requires a specific *behavioural pattern* in the husband's performance, including ejaculation of semen in his wife's vagina. It does not require what is not controllable by chosen behaviour, whether that be the condition of the semen or the fertility of the woman.

### Actions Determined By Capacity As Well As Intention

The husband's capacity to perform in accordance with such a behavioural pattern necessarily has a physiological component. There are many kinds of human performance which are not choosable in the absence of capacities which have to be described in physiological terms: think of writing, reading, sprinting, swimming, doing the cartwheel, singing the part of Sarastro in Mozart's *Magic Flute*, and so on. But the criteria of what counts as such chosen performances are not reducible to physiological categories. It is simply a muddle to think that if a person insists that a particular kind of performance requires a certain kind of physiological capacity if one is to engage in it, that person has a 'physicalistic' understanding of the performance, meaning an understanding which fails to recognise the essential role of intention<sup>16</sup> in specifying the character of action. The fact is that one can intend and choose to do only what one is capable of doing.

But intention is not limited just by capacity. It is also the case that only certain kinds of performance can embody certain kinds of intention. As Fr Rhonheimer has rightly noted, "not any intention can reasonably inform any act or behaviour: one cannot swallow stones with the intention of nourishing oneself"<sup>17</sup>; nor, I would add, can one exhibit "openness to serve the task of transmitting human life"<sup>18</sup> by ejaculating into a condom. Fr Rhonheimer's interpretation of *Humanae Vitae* #12 radically disconnects the notion of 'procreative meaning' from what is surely a minimal criterion of what is to count as generative or procreative behaviour. That criterion, as we have seen, is not a criterion which refers to biological conditions of generative success, but rather to a behavioural pattern which, if those conditions are present, is conducive to generation.

What Church teaching and canonical jurisprudence require in the way of physiological capacity is simply what is necessary for a human performance to be the kind that is conducive to generation *qua* performance. The biological conditions for generation do not have to exist for 'one body/one flesh' unity to be actualised; but generative performance is necessary for it to be actualised.<sup>19</sup> Condomistic intercourse being essentially non-generative simply cannot, contrary to Fr Rhonheimer's belief, "still [have] a point as a marital act of loving union".<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. The Symbolic/Sacramental Significance of the Behavioural Pattern of Marital Intercourse.

It should by now be clear that the question about the permissibility of condomistic intercourse within marriage, which may strike some as a marginal issue, in reality goes to the heart of the Christian understanding of marriage. In this final section I would like to bring out how fundamentally Fr Rhonheimer's position departs from the understanding of the significance of marital intercourse within the Christian understanding of marriage as a sacrament.

A marriage is only consummated in sexual intercourse of the generative kind. Consummation belongs at the heart of the symbolic and therefore sacramental significance of marriage.

In the previous section, on the canonical jurisprudence on consummation, I have been considering what is required on the side of the man in the character of sexual intercourse in order to consummate marriage. An inability to so perform is called male impotence, and if it is antecedent and permanent it is an impediment to contracting a valid marriage. In this section, in order to bring out the symbolic and sacramental significance of marital intercourse, I first draw attention to the import of the possible canonical effect of failing to consummate marriage, namely that the marriage can be dissolved, as Canon 1142 says, "by the Roman Pontiff for a just reason". But as the previous Canon (1141) indicates: "A marriage which is ratified and consummated cannot be dissolved by any human power or by any cause other than death."

In the development of the Church's doctrine of marriage and its canonical practice, the rationale for this power to dissolve and its significance crystallised in the twelfth century. In Gratian's *Decretum* we find a transformed text of Pope Leo the Great that reads as follows:

"Since the social bond of marriage was instituted from the beginning in such a way that without sexual intercourse marriages would not contain the symbol of the union of Christ and the Church, there is no doubt that a woman whom we learn to have been without the nuptial mystery does not pertain to marriage".<sup>21</sup>

Professor David d'Avray has shown, in a forthcoming book, that there was extensive scope for the exercise of the power to dissolve in the late Middle Ages since it was not infrequently the case that consummation was delayed, sometimes for a considerable time, after the words of present consent were exchanged by the spouses.

Sometimes this was because the spouses, especially the bride, were deemed too young to consummate; sometimes

the bridegroom would delay consummation until the bride's father had paid the dowry.

#### Sharing In the Union of Christ and His Church

What interests me now, however, is not canonical practice but the theological rationale for the canonical practice. The basis of that rationale is the famous passage in chapter 5 of the *Letter to the Ephesians*:

"... husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church, because we are members of his body. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'. This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church." [Eph 5: 28-32]

In connection with this passage recall the words quoted just previously from Gratian: "... without sexual intercourse marriages would not contain the symbol of the union of Christ and the Church". The 'one body' unity of baptised spouses actualised in intercourse is not an extrinsic symbol<sup>22</sup> of the Church's unity in the body of Christ, it is what St Paul calls a *μυστήριον* (*mysterion*) of that unity, a sacramental realisation of a kind of unity which shares in the unity of Christ and the Church and in doing so reflects the nature of that unity.

Now the unity of Christ and the Church is created by the self-giving love of Christ, centrally through his Passion, Death and Resurrection, and through our participation in his victory over sin and death principally by our partaking of the Risen Body of Christ in the Eucharist. Marriage distinctively shares in the unity of the Body of Christ by husband and wife enacting in their lives both the self-giving of Christ and the receptivity of the Church. And the action which both signifies and realises this unity is marital intercourse. But in order to do so, there clearly must be both a giving by the husband of his substance to his wife and a receiving of it by the wife. When this giving and receiving are fruitful in the birth of children we have the reality that is called 'the domestic church'.

#### Is This the Kind of Act that Could Ever Be Fertile?

On this account of the sacramental significance of marital intercourse, is it not clear that condomistic intercourse could not possibly be described as marital intercourse, for there is neither the giving nor the receiving which are essential features of the symbolism?

It seems to me that the fundamental rationale of marriage as an institution ordered to the good of children and requiring therefore that intercourse should be of the



generative kind, together with the interpretation of that requirement in the canonical jurisprudence of the Church, underpinned by the theology of marriage, all point to the conclusion that condomistic intercourse exhibits a behavioural pattern of a kind that is intrinsically non-generative and hence non-marital. And if that is so, one would have to conclude that there is no possible place for the prophylactic use of condoms within marriage.

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- 1 An ancestor of this paper was delivered as the 2005 Linacre Lecture at Ave Maria School of Law on 13 April 2005. In revising the text for publication I have been helped by observations from some of my original audience as well as from my colleagues Helen Watt and Anthony McCarthy, and most particularly by criticisms from John Finnis and from Fr Aidan McGrath OFM. Since I have not taken all the advice offered me I alone am responsible for remaining errors in the paper. I have not sought to alter its original character as an oral presentation.
- 2 Martin Rhonheimer, 'The Truth about Condoms', *The Tablet* (July 10, 2004): 10-11.
- 3 Benedict Guevin OSB and Martin Rhonheimer, 'On the Use of Condoms to Prevent Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome', *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 5 (2005): 37-48, at 44.
- 4 *De Genesi ad litt.* 9.7.
- 5 On connatural dignity see further Luke Gormally, 'Human dignity: the Christian view and the secularist view', in J Vial Correa and E Sgreccia (eds) *The Culture of Life: Foundations and Dimensions* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2002): 52-66; *idem*, 'Pope John Paul II's teaching on human dignity and its implications for bioethics', in C Tollefsen (ed) *John Paul II's Contribution to Catholic Bioethics (Philosophy and Medicine, vol.84)* (Dordrecht: Springer 2004): 7-33.
- 6 See John Finnis, *Aquinas. Moral, Political and Legal Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998): 145 and references to Aquinas therein.
- 7 Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, #12. "Huiusmodi doctrina, quae ab Ecclesiae Magisterio saepe exposita est, in

- nexu indissolubili nititur, a Deo statuto, quem homini sua sponte infringere non licet, inter significationem unitatis et significationem procreationis, quae ambae in actu coniugali insunt."
- 8 In what follows I rely heavily on Aidan McGrath OFM, *A Controversy concerning Male Impotence (Analecta Gregoriana vol. 247)*, Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana 1988.
  - 9 By which I mean, 'of the generative kind in its behavioural pattern'. The text of the canon was emended to refer explicitly to *impotentia coeundi* in order to dispel any residual confusion over the concept of *impotentia generandi* that affected the debate in the early decades of the twentieth century to which I refer later. See in particular footnote 13 below.
  - 10 Quoted in Elizabeth Anscombe, *Contraception and Chastity* (London: Catholic Truth Society, new edition 2003): 15-16.
  - 11 It is relevant to an accurate understanding of the subsequent Papal Brief (which I cannot discuss in the paper) that probably all of the eunuchs to whom the Nuncio was referring were castrati who had been castrated *prior to puberty* to preserve their treble or alto voices, and whose normal sexual development had in consequence been arrested. That sort of eunuch would have been incapable of what was required for the performance of normal intercourse and so incapable of achieving *sedatio concupiscentiae*.
  - 12 McGrath names Cardinal Gasparri, in the third edition (1904) of his highly influential *Tractatus canonicus de matrimonio*, as the author who gave authoritative currency to the identification of *verum semen* with *semen in testibus elaboratum*.
  - 13 The Holy Office judged that a man who had a vasectomy possessed a *potential coeundi* – in particular that he was capable of ejaculating semen – even if he did not possess a *potentia generandi*, because his semen lacked sperm. See McGrath, pp.159-64.
  - 14 See the argument in McGrath at pp. 251-7 for this understanding of the authority of the Decree.
  - 15 Observations over millennia about the barrenness of certain women rest on a recognition that there is *something* in the woman's physical condition, which may be lacking in some women, which contributes to generation.
  - 16 I use the term 'intention' to refer not just to the 'further intention' with which an act is done but also to the 'proximate object' of the act.
  - 17 *Op.cit.* at n.3, p.44.
  - 18 *Op.cit.* p.46.
  - 19 See section 2 above.
  - 20 *Op.cit.* p.44.
  - 21 Gratian, *Decretum* PARS II, C.27. q.2 c.17, quoted in David d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage: Symbolism and Society* (forthcoming Oxford University Press 2005).
  - 22 An 'extrinsic symbol' could not have the consequence marital intercourse has: indissolubility.

## OTHER ANGLES

### HOW SEX ENHANCES LOVE

Bryan Storey

I well remember an English Benedictine at the time of *Humanae Vitae* (1968), wanting to know why the Pope kept connecting sexuality inextricably with openness to the possibility of life in the natural designs. The answer was not published just then. It is that the very idea of procreation itself generates emotion that deeply unites us with others. Nothing else can do it with any depth and endurance. This is central to all spiritual experience everywhere in every culture.

We're more than capable of seeing it as Pope Paul VI said. Whatever the sexual problem, however difficult it is, this truth stands and needs to be deeply respected to foster a truly loving attitude towards husband, wife, children, neighbour and the world around us. We earnestly need to see sexuality in this way. Dissenting and doubtful Cardinals, Bishops, and Priests all need to cease dissent and doubt and begin to bow before this vital, love generating truth.

Many do not keep to holy purity. It's all very hard; we're all weak and prone to wrong doing. The Fall of human nature is deeper than we ever imagined. So we desperately need the provocation and vitality of the full, undiluted teaching to help us increase in love. Any kind of watering down or provision of loopholes, lessens our necessary efforts. In view of the sexual scandals, if for no other reason, it's vital to have a theology of sex which is brilliantly and provocatively clear, giving us reason often to examine our conscience.

Homosexual activity can only be seen clearly to be wrong if any loophole is firmly rejected. The struggles and challenges are all part of the uphill journey towards abundant and wonderfully real, enduring love. Thousands testify that there's no end to the blessings and love resulting for hearts which are purified by the Lord. The depressing psychological and physical consequences of the reverse are, sad to say, only too apparent.

## THE INCONVENIENCE OF PREGNANCY: A MOTHER'S EXPERIENCE

*Fiorella Nash*

**W**hen I first suspected I was pregnant, I could have been forgiven for thinking that, in Britain, pregnancy is regarded as little more than an embarrassing sexually transmitted disease. The pregnancy test kit I bought at my local chemist came up on the till display as 'chemist goods' to conceal my possible predicament from the other shoppers. When I rang my surgery for the results of the pregnancy test, the nurse pronounced, "it's positive" with the tone of someone telling me that I was terminally ill. The charming doctor who examined me afterwards advised me not get too excited about the prospect of having a baby and informed me that "90% of conceptions end in miscarriage"

"Rubbish!" declared a Catholic doctor I consulted, "that's a political statement. The likelihood is that the baby will be absolutely fine. Pregnancy is a perfectly normal physiological state." But by that stage, I was drowning under an avalanche of paperwork: blood test request forms, suggestions on who should cut the umbilical cord (I suspect I won't give a vanilla ice cream who cuts it when it comes to it), a really scary full-colour booklet about childbirth, dietary advice, exercise advice (no bungee jumping or rugby), leaflets about yoga (over my dead body), aquanatal classes and – for some reason I have yet to ascertain – a free sachet of Ovaltine. I was amazed I was not offered counselling to deal with the stress of dealing with this terrifying condition I had been careless enough to pick up.

Tucked away discreetly amidst information about the correct position to hold a baby during breast feeding and the benefits of a water birth, the free pregnancy and childbirth guide suggested the different kinds of prenatal quality control tests I should subject my baby to - the triple blood test to check for spina bifida and Down's, the 20-week anomaly scan - and how to arrange for him to have potassium chloride injected into his heart if something was wrong. It advised that viewing and holding the dead body after an abortion and having photographs taken would make the baby more 'real'.

**B**ut before I get too cynical about the nationalisation of the British pregnancy, I have to admit that I have discovered something a little more positive about attitudes towards maternity – we are a nation of baby-fanciers. In spite of the concerted efforts of the abortion lobby over a period of nearly forty years, the great British public are still aware in their heart of hearts, that the unborn child is precisely that. Not once during my pregnancy to date have I been asked when my foetus

is due, whether the products of conception have started kicking yet or whether we have thought of a name for the contents of my uterus. The word 'baby' was used by one and all without any prompting from me from the earliest weeks of the pregnancy, including within a medical setting. The books and web sites on pregnancy cheerfully describe the development of 'the baby', my midwife talks about listening to the baby's heartbeat and at the 12-week scan, the time at which the majority of abortions are carried out, I lay in a darkened room and watched as my baby's head and spine and tiny hands were pointed out on a screen.

I am not even convinced that people have become more aware of the humanity of the unborn child with the advent of technologies such as ultrasound, though these windows into the womb have perhaps made it harder to deny. It is more the case that the abortion lobby has failed to dehumanise the unborn child. For centuries, expressions such as 'being with child' have formed a part of the language and with good reason. As I have come to learn, it is impossible for a woman to get through a pregnancy without being acutely aware of the presence of another human life inside her own body. As my baby's movements become more energetic, what I find most startling is that he is beginning to react to certain stimuli. I only have to do something inconsiderate like turn up my music a little too loud or eat spicy food to feel a sudden flurry of protesting feet and fists demanding that I desist.

**T**he first question a pro-abortion feminist will ask a pro-life man is: "When was the last time you were pregnant?" The implication is that only people who are biologically unable to bear children could possibly voice an objection to abortion (presumably, besides men, infertile and post-menopausal women should be excluded from the debate, as well as women of child-bearing age who are not in the fertile period of their monthly cycle) but I wonder whether it is easier to support abortion if you cannot experience a pregnancy first hand. Perhaps the humanity of the unborn child that everyone instinctively recognises is easier to suppress if you don't wake up in the night feeling a baby turning somersaults inside you nor be expected to accept chronic sickness because taking anti-nausea drugs might harm the tiny life you are incubating. It is not so much that people who cannot become pregnant have no excuse to be pro-life; it is that people who have been pregnant have no excuse for not being.

# THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

*During the nineteen-eighties and nineties a typical London parish lost about 100 Sunday Mass-goers a year. When pondering on their next Sunday sermon, parish priests might well wonder what they should say to those in their congregations who are statistically likely to lapse in the near future. Should they shake them up with the a few home truths or draw them in with a compassionate message of love? Jesus actually did both, and the apostle Paul later reminded the Church that Christ must be preached in all his fullness, both "in season and out of season".*

*In the editorial article of the January/February issue of Faith, we argued that it is false to make a dichotomy between truth and compassion, because this is an implicit denial of Our Lord's proclamation that "The Truth will set you free". Yet over recent decades many Catholic teachings that are widely felt to be difficult or unpopular have all too often been quietly dropped from parish preaching and catechesis, perhaps fearing that hard truths drive the people away. And yet it is obvious that watering down or editing out challenging doctrines from pastoral life has not borne fruit in widespread renewal and holiness. Experience shows time and again that the opposite is true. When the faith is taught integrally and explained enthusiastically, people respond. This was true for the prophets of Israel, who announced God's message in the Old Testament and it is true for us now.*

*Faith Movement is particularly blessed with a sizeable number of younger priests who are working in parishes all over the UK. Our shared experience tells us that when the Catholic faith is taught and preached without compromise, far from alienating modern listeners, it attracts, commands respect and awakens a sincere hunger for God. If explained with patience and pastoral insight, integral Catholicism does indeed liberate and enlighten, bringing fuller life and happiness to the people we care for and care about in Christ. We do not pretend that there are no setbacks, heartaches and even failings in our individual pastoral approach at times. But we know that we are not free to bypass any aspect of Catholic truth in the name of compassion or fashion.*

*In this new feature – under the heading "The Truth Will Set You Free" – we will explore a range of pastoral and doctrinal issues from this perspective. We begin our reflections with perhaps the most unfashionable and controversial theme of all, one that is avoided more often than not in popular preaching. We start with the Church's teaching that the Marriage Act must always remain open to life, the doctrine that artificial contraception is against the natural moral law. This first instalment is unavoidably longer than the contributions that will follow. It is adapted from texts serialised as parish handouts last year. We are happy to make it available here for wider use and discussion.*

## A PARISH APPROACH TO THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON THE MARITAL ACT

Five introductory points need to be stated at the outset.

- ❖ This teaching has been formally repeated and fully expounded by virtually all 20<sup>th</sup> century Popes. They have invoked the authority of Christ to proclaim an unpopular truth for the good of humanity.
- ❖ It is not a recent teaching, but has been part of Christian witness and tradition stretching back at least to the fourth century. It is not a personal opinion of this or that Pope which could be changed by the next one. That is never going to happen!
- ❖ If this is the teaching of Christ, it will be a liberating truth, making a beautiful sense of marital and family love. It's not a naïve ideal. It will be possible to live it with God's help. Many couples do.
- ❖ There are some difficult questions which must be answered and difficult situations in which people find themselves. We need to address these issues as best we can.
- ❖ It is very understandable why even many Catholics feel they cannot accept and live this teaching. They have rarely had it explained to them properly.

Before inviting people to explore this sensitive theme in depth, it would be good to make a spiritual appeal to at least approach it with an open mind and heart, allowing God to show us where our thinking and our lives may need to change if we are to discover true happiness. It could perhaps be framed in the following terms: "If this is a challenging truth for you we ask you not to close your mind to it. Let us all ask the Holy Spirit for the light to see better and the will to grow."

What follows is an example of one way to address this controversial issue, broken down into the following sections.

1. An explanation of the core of the teaching.
2. An explanation of why our culture finds this teaching so difficult and what's involved in living counter-culturally.
3. Answers to some classic objections and hard cases.
4. Suggested practical ways forward for those who want to move away, as best they can, from a practice that the Church teaches is intrinsically disordered.

## PART ONE

### THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON THE MARITAL ACT

The Catholic Church teaching on love and sex in general and its prohibition of artificial contraception in particular, is often misrepresented by the media and misunderstood by Catholics themselves. For example, some people think, wrongly, that it means the Church demands that married couples have the maximum number of babies possible; others present this teaching as just an ideal, not something that is an important part of Catholic moral teaching, so that it could easily change if the next Pope so desired; it is often asserted that the Church's teaching on contraception is causing an unsustainable population explosion and even that it is a key cause of deaths from AIDS in the Third World.

We will try to explain this teaching calmly and properly here, to the best of our ability. Our intention is to help our parish community grow in understanding of the truth and in spiritual maturity. We particularly want to help married couples in our parish family to become more and more open to God, so that they can become even better channels of life-giving grace to one another and to the wider community. Whether that be couples who are already attempting to live the Catholic vision of marital love, or those who find it difficult and confusing, or those who have dismissed it as an impossibility, we ask you all to listen, open to the possibility of discovering a new opportunity for humble growth in the life of Christ.

#### 1.1 THE CATHOLIC VISION OF LOVE AND SEX

The Catholic Church believes that sexual union is a special act which creates the human family within the security and commitment of married love. Sex fosters the loving union of a husband and wife and consummates their public and life-long commitment to each other in order to equip them as parents and family builders. Their sexual love-making is an act of mutual self giving that is inherently orientated to the giving of new life, even if it does not actually result in conception. It is not just an act of personal affection. It is an act of bodily and spiritual union which fosters life. It is through its very ordering to procreation that it is a real, personal union of spouses.

There is a built-in meaning to the marital act, a meaning that is written into our very bodies as male and female. When we unite our bodies in this most physically intimate way we automatically bring into action our shared powers of fertility. As such it should only ever take place within the bond of marriage, that full commitment to a love called to form family.

This means that sex cannot simply be a special case of our more general expressions of love, like a smile or a hug. Sex not only joins a couple to one another, it unites them

in the work of life-giving. Through sexual union a couple become more deeply joined to the work of Christ and His Church. They become "one flesh" so that God may bring into being children destined for the Kingdom of God - through their love and their bodily (sacramental) action. Through sex, married couples actually share in God's own creative love and action, even if He does not bless them with the specific fruit of progeny.

Any children born of their love are truly their own as well as God's, and as parents they will go on preparing their children for eternal life for many years, bringing them to baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist and teaching them to know and love God himself. Sex, therefore, is just the beginning of a very special and noble work of life-giving through mutual self-giving.

#### 1.2 THE CORE OF THE TEACHING

The Church has always taught that these two aspects of the sexual act—its power to create life and its power to unite a couple in the loving bond of marriage—are inseparable. They are two sides of the same gold coin—our sharing with God in creating and saving the world through the sacrament of matrimony.

To engage in sex in ways that contradict and exclude its procreative meaning and dynamic will harm its power to unite in fulfilling love. It introduces a lie—an untruth—at the heart of the relationship. Actively to remove its orientation to the creation of new human life is to disorientate the relationship. It will tend to become a force for disunity, even in a relationship which is otherwise positive.

Such denial includes sex outside of heterosexual marriage and artificial contraception. The former fails to provide the proper social and spiritual context for the possible procreation and formation of a new eternal life. The latter involves actively overlaying the procreative orientation with an anti-procreative orientation. Contraception changes the meaning of the marriage act. It ceases to be something that shares in God's creative love and becomes essentially inward looking contrary to integral self-giving in body and soul.

One of the most popular misconceptions of our times is that sex "makes love", but if there is no love in a relationship, then no amount of sex will make up for that. Love comes from the soul, from caring and sharing and spiritual friendship. *Sex enacts a love called to form family.* It "makes family" not love.

#### 1.3 SOCIAL COLLAPSE

If sex is simply for loving without any further meaning, then there is no logical reason to confine it to the institution of marriage nor even to lifelong fidelity. Indeed



its heterosexual context cannot easily be maintained. This is precisely what has happened in our society.

Pope Paul VI predicted in his 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* that if we accept that the procreative aspect of sex can be deliberately excluded from the act, then the whole of human sexuality shifts ground and sooner or later familial and social breakdown must follow. We inevitably turn sex into just a pleasure drive which it is everyone's right to satisfy in some way or another.

Once we separate out the fertile and the faithful aspects of human sexual love, it is inevitable that we end up with massive promiscuity, breakdown of stable family relationships and abortion i.e. sex without procreation and the responsibility and commitment that must go with that.

It is also inevitable that we will end up with *procreation without sex* – the growing mentality whereby babies are seen as commercial or technological products to which every couple or even individual, regardless of their marital or gender status, has a right to obtain by whatever means. We are depersonalising human procreation.

#### 1.4 OUR NEED FOR HEALING AND HELP

The core principle of the Church's teaching about contraception - that the unitive and procreative meanings of sex must not be wilfully separated - is not new. It has been affirmed by the whole Catholic Christian tradition with the authority of Christ through the ages.

There has of course always been a need, given fallen human nature, for education, healing and help from God, in order to live it perfectly. But what changed in the late twentieth century was the arrival of new contraceptives like the pill.

In 1968 the Pope was asked to look at the whole situation in the modern world. He reaffirmed the constant teaching of the Church, but at the same time he asked doctors to give couples better information which would help them to increase their knowledge and control of their fertility within the meanings of nature and the law of God.

Many people could not, and still cannot see what is so wrong with contraception. Women were encouraged to see contraception as liberating them from the burdens of constant pregnancy, freeing them to pursue careers alongside men. Couples were sold contraception as the easiest way to limit family size when health and economic factors demanded.

These are all perfectly good and reasonable things to aim for. But the unspoken message at the heart of the

contraceptive way to achieve these goals was that you could still have sex any time you wanted. Sex now was increasingly seen as having no meaning other than mutual desire and satisfaction, although ideally this should be given the context of a "deep" and "special" love. But there were no more built-in consequences to sexual activity with eternal responsibilities, no sacramental dimension to erotic love. So now there was little need to discern a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate sexual desires; little need to ask for help or healing from God or anyone else; no encouragement to foster healthy yearnings and to heal selfish and addictive ones.

The fact is that there was and is another way; a way of restraint and self-control; a way of self-denial in the name of love. It is not a cold and negative way. It is a way of profound mutual respect, of accepting the whole fertile sexuality of your spouse and living in harmony with its truths and patterns. It is a way of greater unity in one integrated sexual life and love lived for the glory of God, rather than two independent desires just seeking passing pleasure in each other's arms.

Catholic teaching on this point can seem to go against some very deep seated needs and desires. Yet our faith also tells us that we are deeply wounded. Since the sin of our first parents, we can no longer trust that which seems to come naturally to us. We need healing and re-orientation in our deepest selves to discover what loving and living really mean. Generations of sin and particularly our own generation of media enhanced eroticism has not helped.

Even within marriage we can carry with us the confusions and addictions of a false formation. We need to listen to Jesus and his Church in order to discover alternative truths about human nature—truths that will actually set us free and enhance our lives in the end. Certainly the modern world is hardly awash with happiness, faithfulness, purity and charity.

#### 1.5 CONCLUSION TO PART ONE

Whilst it is understandably very difficult for our own hedonistic culture - a world which has been brought up to believe that love and sex are virtually the same thing—to understand this, it is actually very important for the Church and the modern world that we rediscover the true Christian meaning of sex. If someone who has not understood and not lived these things before resolves to follow it, even in part, and perhaps with difficulty and hesitation, it will undoubtedly open for them abundant channels for the transforming grace of God to flow through. As Pope John Paul II exhorted us on entering the third millennium: "Do not be afraid. Put out into the deep!"



## PART TWO

### GOING AGAINST OUR CULTURE: IS IT REALISTIC?

We need to address some of the specific attitudes and questions which seem to lie at the heart of the widespread consternation at Catholic teaching on contraception within much of western culture. We want to suggest some corrections to some common emphasises concerning the human need for love.

#### 2.1 THE 'ANTI-LIFE CULTURE'

The heart of the issue is that if a couple actively exclude the creative potential of sex from their love-making, then they turn it into a very different sort of act. They are no longer a husband and wife giving themselves to one other and to God, body and soul, for the building up of the family of the Church. They are engaging in an act of erotic intimacy whose meaning lies only in their mutual feelings of the moment.

It was inevitable that a culture that embraced this contraceptive mentality about sex would quickly abandon any notion that sexual activity belongs within life-long marriage or even that it belongs to heterosexual union at all. Sooner or later it will be seen to be part of any 'loving' relationship whatsoever.

It was also inevitable that a contraceptive culture would also accept abortion as an integral part of the practice of excluding new life from its sexual revolution. Some people presume that contraception is the antidote to abortion, but the hard truth (recognised by the UN) is that abortion and contraception go hand in hand. In fact wherever contraception is promoted, abortion rates always go *up*, not down. Not that everyone who uses artificial contraception is open to abortion, but as a social fact abortion quickly becomes a social policy, driven by the contraceptive choice to maximise sexual pleasure and yet minimise the creation of new life. Children and young people in our society are given the clear message that almost anything goes as long as you are 'responsible', by which is meant, don't get pregnant! But even then, something can be done about it.

However, we are well aware that many people, even inside the Church, have become convinced that artificial contraception is the 'obvious' solution to some of the pressures and challenges that married couples face in the modern world. The Church is portrayed as cruel, harsh or just out of touch and unrealistic when she teaches us that contraception is wrong.

Of course, the pressures and burdens on marriage and family are quite real. There are legitimate and reasonable grounds for spacing a family or even, at times, a need to have no more children at all. But the big question is what

we do to achieve that, how we approach the sexual life of a marriage in the face of those needs.

The problems and the burdens of marriage do not come from the Church's teaching, rather they come from the fallen world that we live in, from our own fallen nature, and from the overwhelming truth that sex makes babies! The world offers us a way which tries to deny this truth and to suppress and distort nature. The Church offers us a way which involves changing our behaviour and that also involves changing our minds and our hearts.

#### 2.2 CHRIST WILL HAVE THE KEY

It follows from the nature of love and of our fallen state that there must needs be calls to love which seem from the human point of view to be very difficult. The presence of such apparent 'hard cases' is multiplied somewhat by the fact that often little coherent explanation about these matters has got through to the man on the street or in the pew. Jesus agreed when the Apostles complained that his standards of morality were "impossible to man", but he added "for God all is possible... My burden is light and my yoke is easy".

The teaching of Christ will not of itself be a heavy burden or a cause of social problems. It may be a challenge but it will also be an aspect of the key to true personal and social harmony.

The Church teaches that sex outside marriage and artificial contraception in marriage are intrinsically wrong acts. If this is of Christ then an invitation to go against it, however enticing or seemingly reasonable, will never be from the good Spirit. Going against the natural moral law will take us deeper into the morass. It will unwaveringly make things worse. There will be always be another way, a way forward out of difficult situations, though it may involve the cross.

#### 2.3 THE DIFFERENCE WITH NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

It is well known that the Church promotes Natural Family Planning (NFP) as a moral alternative to artificial contraception. We have all heard the jokes. But despite popular impressions, there are many couples who live happily and successfully this way, not all of them Catholics by any means.

Sometimes it is objected that there is no essential difference between NFP and artificial contraception. But if that were so, why would there be such deeply held prejudice against NFP? In point of fact, according to the *British Medical Association* it can be just as successful a way of spacing a family as using the pill and there are many natural and health reasons for choosing NFP rather than the pill. The reason why some people react

so strongly against NFP is that they sense, rightly, that it involves a completely different mentality about love and sex. The positive action that is undertaken to reduce the chance of a pregnancy in NFP is that of abstaining from sex sometimes. This is completely different from the action involved in using some form of artificial contraception which involves actively impeding the sexual act with another imposed dynamic and orientation. Some people point out that the intention not to have children for the moment is the same for contraception and NFP.

Yes, of course, but the actions are quite different as is the accompanying attitude to sex and fertility. For if a couple using NFP did conceive, they have already orientated themselves through their truly loving marital act to make the sacrifices that married love demands. Contraception already actively shuts down the wellsprings of married love, either through selfishness or, more frequently through fear. So Natural Family Planning is not a Catholic version of contraception. It involves embarking on quite a different spiritual journey.

Of course NFP can be used with a deeply conflicted and imperfect frame of mind. Young couples especially might use NFP in an immature and spiritually imperfect way, with some reluctance and inner struggles, and perhaps a quasi-contraceptive outlook. But the very nature of NFP is educating them into a *shared* sexual responsibility and a rhythm of respectful control with regard to each other's sexuality. And above all the sexual act itself remains integral and undistorted in its creative and unitive powers. Over time, therefore, the spiritual and psychological fruits of such relationships are very different from contraceptive marriages. Further information concerning the very latest and very successful methods for naturally improving fertility, treating relevant medical problems and spacing children contact *FertilityCare*, 020.7437.0892.

#### 2.4 THE PLACE OF ABSTINENCE IN THE NAME OF LOVE

Times of abstinence from sex are part of any truly healthy married relationship. Contrary to the adolescent fantasies of much of our media, getting married is not just a way of saying 'brakes off' to our erotic desires. For purely natural reasons, there will be 'on' and 'off' times for sexual intimacy. For the simple reason that two persons are involved, there must be negotiation, sensitivity and responsibility built into married sexuality, which means that there will be times of personal restraint and sacrifice precisely in the name of married love.

Sex is, of course, the foundational aspect of the committed relationship of a love which is called to form a family, but there are clearly other aspects and moments in the affective journey of marriage. We learn to love in a million ways outside the bedroom – in mutual consideration,

respect and support. The Church speaks of marriage as a school of love and it is this spiritual intimacy and trust that makes the sexual act into a truly loving union between man and wife, not the other way around.

An ability to sacrifice sexual desire to some extent for the sake of the marriage is important for the serenity and security of a faithful marriage. For instance spouses may necessarily need to be apart through travel or sickness. So the habit of occasional abstinence can only serve to strengthen married love. We will take this reflection a little further when we look at some apparent 'hard cases' next week.

#### 2.5 TAKING UP OUR CROSS

Our world is desperately in need of people who *try* to live Christian love to the full. People in short who allow the pattern and power of Christ's death and resurrection to flow through them more and more. The journey into holiness and integrity is always a journey into freedom, fulfilment and inner peace, but for all of us it also a way of the cross, a way of sacrificing some desires for love.

Sadly living and loving is sometimes, seemingly unavoidably, painful. The Christian insight is that this is because of human sin; "the wages of sin is death." It was not God's will. He gave us freedom in order that we might love. Because human freedom has tragically been used for self rather than love humanity is wounded.

The first sin of Adam was like a Hiroshima of the human spirit, with awful fallout across the generations. The multiplication of sins down the generations has further 'polluted' the human environment and poisoned the mental and social atmosphere in which we live and learn and grow up. Authentic loving no longer always comes naturally to us. Sometimes selfishness, fear, greed, addiction and moral compromise seem to come more easily.

This means giving oneself to another person becomes more of a risk and requires more courage. Letting go of pride and possessiveness is now a painful journey. To avoid doing this because of the pain can be understandable but it is always folly. It means closing in on oneself because the cost of opening up seems too much. That is false.

The lie at the heart of the dynamic of sin is that selfishness is safer or more fun than the risk of offering oneself for the purposes of selfless love. It was the lie that the devil told to Eve concerning the fact that the fruit of the tree of good and evil would "open their eyes" and that it was "good to eat." It was the lie told to Christ that he could just turn stones to bread to assuage his penitential hunger, or that his "cup of suffering might pass him by".

Jesus tells us the truth about love post-sin when he invites us to take up the Cross, with courage, every single day. For the Good News is that through our sharing in the painful Cross of Christ our wounds can be healed and we can come with him to the fullness of Risen life.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION TO PART TWO

The Church's teaching on sex seems like an intolerable burden to many. It seems to involve an unnecessary, even to some an intolerable degree of suffering. But if it is of Christ and if it springs from what it means to be a human being then any suffering it involves will be that which can purify, that which is necessary to grow in love, that which Christ will enable you to endure, that which can be a share in his suffering upon the Cross for the good of the world and the glory of God. To attempt to refuse to carry such a Cross would not just be folly, but a tragic lost opportunity for our parish family and for the family of man.

## PART THREE

### DIFFICULT CASES

We've just made the bold claim: "The teaching of Christ will not, of itself, be a burden or a cause of social problems. It may be a challenge, but it will also be an aspect of the key to true personal and social harmony." We now test this against some difficult cases that are often presented as obvious examples which show that the Church's teaching is wrong. Let us remember that they often describe rare situations, rather than the more general reasons why most people in our culture who use artificial contraception do so, which we attempted to describe in the previous section.

### 3.1 ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Physical and mental violence are all too common problems in relationships across the world. Often one partner, usually the woman, is the victim. When this is linked with sexual dominance and bullying, the thought of conceiving a baby may be particularly frightening. The heart problem here is the abuse. The truth is that the victim (and indeed the perpetrator) needs help. Separation may be a sensible option, but to make a woman more available to her abusive husband through contraception is risky and not a real solution. However, where this is a means of (very partial) self-defence by an *unconsenting* partner against an aggressive husband, it can be a legitimate last resort<sup>1</sup>. Such abusive sex in marriage is closer to rape than to the integral marriage act.

### 3.2 THE MARITAL ACT AS POTENTIALLY FATAL

In rare cases sexual union might even be life-threatening. To risk killing your spouse in this way would be seriously wrong. The only way assuredly to prevent pregnancy whilst continuing to be sexually active is by extreme

forms of surgical sterilization. But this is to change the meaning of the marital act into something contradictory, as we described last week. Such violence against our own bodies cannot be what God is calling for.

Abstinence is then the only sure and truly loving way of protecting one's partner from such risks. The only safe sex is no sex. If there is a serious risk that sexual union will kill then husband and wife are called, by God's help, to abstain and to develop their mutual affection in non-erotic ways. No one pretends that this would be easy, but everything becomes easier when it is done for love. By taking up their Cross in this way they will do a great work for God and grow greatly in mutual respect and spiritual intimacy. All this is not to deny that when a fatal result is threatened through the selfish insistence of one spouse, artificial contraception can validly be used to reduce the risk (see note 1).

### 3.3 PREGNANCY AND LESSER HEALTH RISKS

In less dramatic, but more frequent situations, there can be a reasonable fear of having another child. There could be a risk of post-natal depression or severe economic hardship or some other significant anxiety. Again we must recognise that God may be calling a couple to hold back from the sexual expression of their marriage for a time, precisely in the name of love and unity. If this seems too difficult or stressful, they can resort to short, carefully timed periods of abstinence through knowledge of their shared natural fertility. With a little bit of training it is now possible to gain extremely accurate knowledge concerning the days on which it is impossible to conceive, even where a woman's cycles are very irregular. (cf. FertilityCare, 020.7437.0892).

### 3.4 HEALTH RISKS OUTSIDE MARRIAGE E.G. THE SPREAD OF AIDS IN AFRICA

The crisis over AIDS in Africa has been portrayed in the press, particularly since Pope Benedict's election, as if Catholic teaching on sex and love is its main cause. The main engine for spreading AIDS is actually promiscuous lifestyle, which is in direct contravention of Catholic teaching.

The relevant Catholic teaching concerning our approach to the AIDS pandemic is not the 'ban' on contraception within marriage but on sex outside it. It has become all too evident that promiscuity is a lifestyle which undermines human dignity and human society. The Church cannot directly cooperate with such personally and socially destructive behaviour. No one should.

Should we give out boxing gloves to bullies in the playground to make their punches less destructive?! That would be to become party to the bullying and the social

breakdown that contributes to it. We should note that the only place in Africa which has had any success in reducing AIDS (Uganda) is where they have promoted abstinence and sexual faithfulness. Actually they've done better than secular Britain where 28,000 new AIDS sufferers were diagnosed in 2004. As we highlighted last week, the British "sex education" approach has had awful consequences<sup>2</sup>. Even if condom distribution could eradicate AIDS, the cost in increased promiscuity, selfishness and anti-life mentality would create more problems than it solved.

### 3.5 THE "POPULATION EXPLOSION"

England is more densely populated than China. All the families of the world could be given a house and a back garden in the state of Texas. Most European countries have birth rates below replacement levels so that all sorts of social and economic problems are predicted for a generation or two's time. These are the real facts. We have the resources and the technology to sort out our food distribution problems. The real answers to the humanity's miseries lie in social, economic and spiritual development. So human beings should be seen as an essential resource for the future of the world, not a problem and a disaster. The fundamental problem is our selfishness, particularly in the greedy and materialistic 'first world'.

## PART FOUR

### THE PRACTICALITY OF CONVERSION

We do not underestimate the humility and courage needed for someone to acknowledge that an important aspect of their behaviour in the past has been wrong, however much it can be excused by previous misunderstandings and misinformation.

We are well aware that in the recent past many people have been ignorant and confused, even misled about the truth of the Church's teaching, and this can certainly mitigate personal responsibility. But we must still answer the Lord's call to conversion when it comes. Yes, it will mean dying with Christ, but that is the heart of the Christian life. All of us must do this, either in this life or the next. Those who die to themselves in this way will bear fruit in deeper love, community and happiness in their families, in our parish family and actually across the whole world. For this is what is at stake wherever truth is concerned.

### 4.1 THE WAY FORWARD

Most couples in this country, thanks be to God, do not face the tragic difficulties we discussed above. Usually it simply comes down to making the moral choice within our personal circumstances. As we explained in section two above, whatever the challenges and upheavals that make us hesitate to change our lives in the short term,

there will always be a fruitful and life-giving way forward for those who want to leave behind behaviour that the Church tells us is "intrinsically disordered".

To walk the Way of the Cross joyfully we must have trust in Jesus. There are risks and uncertainties on the journey, there are in the whole of life, but if we put ourselves in his hands, he will not let us fall and be broken. It is important for instance that we are prepared to some extent to leave our future material circumstances to Divine Providence. God does not ask us to bear burdens which are beyond us. We are called to be generous in our love for him who will not be outdone in his generosity towards us. We must tell him that we truly want to know the truth and to follow it in the concrete circumstances of our life. Talk to him! Pray! Ask the Holy Spirit for the light to see and the courage to act.

For those using artificial contraception, the obvious first step is to *try sincerely* to stop using it. Do not dismiss this appeal out of hand. Come and seek grace and counsel in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Actively seek out those who can advise you about Natural Family Planning and inform your conscience about the whole truth.

Of course, the great challenge, as well as the great blessing of marriage is that it involves two hearts and two minds. This is an issue that will involve sincere discussion and soul searching together, revisiting issues you may have thought long decided on. It involves change and growth, ideally together, hand in hand.

Nonetheless the step of conversion on this issue can be made even in the delicate situation where your spouse does not agree with the Church's teaching. *This would not mean that you have to abstain from the marital act.* It is not your duty to convince your spouse at all costs or to judge their conscience if they cannot see the truth. If your spouse uses barrier methods of artificial contraception it does not follow that you are actively co-operating in a contraceptive act.

We used the words "try sincerely" above because in the Christian life we all fail. In which case we should go to Confession where the mercy of God is freely available – here after every Mission Mass and every Saturday at 11:00 am and 5:30 p.m.

### 4.2 LAST RESORTS

Finally we must talk about what you do if you do not feel able to move ahead at this stage; if you cannot bring yourself even to *try* to follow this teaching of Christ, but still want to follow him. The simple step of remaining in the bench at Holy Communion during Mass can actually be a courageous step forward, an act of honesty and

integrity about the situation as it stands. If someone feels that they cannot make a resolution to conform their lifestyle with some basic aspect of Christian life and loving, they should place themselves before God and humbly ask to see a way forward and for the power to live it.

They would not be alone in doing this. Not everyone can receive Holy Communion at Mass. This is because the moment of Holy Communion is the central public manifestation on earth of the unity of the Church. This manifestation of unity is contradicted if someone attempts to share in it whose public belief and/or practice is not in communion with Catholicism<sup>3</sup>, or who have knowingly done something seriously wrong without having confessed it.

This is not a punishment. Nor is it saying that you are not a Catholic or completely out of communion with the Church. Holding back from Holy Communion is a way of someone being honest before God concerning their damaged communion with the Mystical Body of Christ. The alternative is to sweep a significant disharmony under the carpet, as well as possibly causing scandal.

No one is ever excluded from being present at Mass. On the contrary all are encouraged to take part in our community celebration. But those in the above categories remain seated at the moment of communion or come up to receive a blessing<sup>4</sup>. The venerable tradition of making a 'spiritual communion' is a worthy option. This means expressing to God a hunger for communion with Christ without actually receiving Holy Communion. A good Confession and purpose of amendment opens such a person to receiving Communion. This is strongly

encouraged even if someone is aware that they may well not be successful in such amendment.

God can work through anyone, he just needs a little bit of cooperation - just a flicker of the will for him to do great things, amazing things. Just think of the "remember me" of the good thief on the cross beside Jesus, or the "only say the word" of the pagan Roman centurion, or St Peter's "leave me Master I am a sinful man". These were small acts of trust in God by weak and confused people, all of which bore great fruit.

#### 4.3 CONCLUSION TO PART FOUR

Our society is more and more submerged under a morass of hedonism. The need for courageous couples, who will gradually try to move toward integral marital love is very great. The struggle to be faithful opens great channels for the grace of God. The fact that you have read this far is a sign that this is happening in your heart already to one degree or another. At least you are listening. Christ is calling to his people to act on his words: "If you love me, keep my commandments". If you open your life to him in this way we will all gain by your witness and your holiness.

- 1 This point does not apply to a woman's use of the diaphragm or the Pill, both of which have abortive functionalities. The former aims to prevent implantation of a human embryo. All Pills can also inherently have this effect under certain biological conditions if their primary purposes of preventing conception fail.
- 2 From 1995-2003 amongst teenagers Chlamydia trebled, Gonorrhoea doubled, Syphilis up 11-fold etc. etc. More than 1,000 under-14 yr old girls had abortions last year. For thoroughly sourced information on this. cf. "Thought You Ought To Know" newsletter, 07939.242335/gordonkane1@ntlworld.com
- 3 For example, non-Catholics or couples who find themselves in second marriages when their first marriage is recognised as valid by the Church and their first partner is still alive; or Catholic politicians who publicly espouse something clearly against Catholic faith or morality.
- 4 Along with those who have not received their First Holy Communion, or are not practising Roman Catholics, or who have eaten something within an hour of Communion.

### IS THIS HOW THEY WILL ALWAYS BE?

Growing suddenly from love, all at once they grow up,  
Wandering hand in hand through the crowd,  
Hearts like captured birds,  
Pale profiles in the dusk;  
In their hearts pulses the whole of humanity

Sitting hand in hand in silence on the river bank;  
A tree trunk; a burning triangle of stars;  
The earth murmuring in the moonlight,  
The mist hangs heavy still;  
The hearts of the children soar high above the river.

from *Profiles of A Cyrenean*  
by Karol Wojtila  
Part 2 #6

Is this how they will always be, even after they get up and go? Or else...  
A glassful of light beaming through the foliage reveals unknown depths in each one.  
Will you know how to keep intact that which has begun in you?  
Will you always distinguish what is good from what is evil?





## letters to the editor

The Editor, St. Mary Magdalen's  
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### AN ORDERED COSMOS?

Dear Fr Editor,

Much of the intelligent design discussion is valuable in letting people know that "science" is not a monolithic source of secure knowledge. There are mysteries within the world and they find their reflection in science. Theories proliferate before the rational conundrums of human thought: is the universe limited or unlimited in space and time? Are space and time continuous or discontinuous? What are the smallest building blocks of reality? Are electrons and photons waves (continuous) or particles (discontinuous)? How can probabilities be known except in relation to a certitude? How can anything be measured without an absolute standard? Yet the absolute standard, precisely because it is absolute, transcends the realities to be measured. (If the speed of light is Einstein's absolute, serving as the measure for all other velocities, how can it be measured? But if it cannot be measured, how can it serve as a standard of measurement for others?)

Then there is the mystery of human knowing, as Fr. Polkinghorne pointed out: how can the human mind know reality when reality is outside of and different from my mind? How can a part be known aside from the whole which influences it. Regarding life Wordsworth wrote and Whitehead frequently quoted, "We murder to dissect." Our analyses fail to grasp the living whole. Materiality and life (soul) are as much mysteries for modern science as they were for ancient Greek philosophy.

Let us remember that human intelligence works with abstractions and that all our human laws are abstract. If we cannot fully understand ourselves - and we allegedly "know" ourselves from within - how can we expect to comprehend the universe and encapsulate it in a Unified Field Theory or anything similar? Our theories are conformed to law since we cannot think haphazardly. Law implies determinism: there are no exceptions. How then is our freedom compatible with an all-encompassing law? How can we speak of God's law except very analogously? His intelligence far surpasses ours. The Infinite cannot be grasped by the finite. It is a wonder that our thought reaches reality at all. Yet it does. It somehow approximates the reality which only the infinite God can comprehend. He alone can join in a "law" both the regularities of the universe and the "randomness" of our freedom.

Yet there is an analogy between our knowing and God's because an all-good God made the universe and revealed the mystery of His love through it. We know that for sure not through the multifarious scientific theories, often contradictory in their premises even when called "complementary," but through the Incarnation of God's only Son. He is the analogy that assures us that the Infinite is not opposed to the finite but supports it and makes Himself intelligible through it. We need non-determining intelligibility in order to respond freely to the demands of His love. "He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: Praise Him!"

Yours faithfully

John M. McDermott, S.J.  
Pontifical College Josephinum,  
Columbus, Ohio, USA

Dear Fr Editor,

Among first class scientific and mathematical minds, it is not just

Louis de Broglie who points out that it is wrong to invoke Quantum Physics and the Uncertainty Principle as evidence of absolute randomness and chance at work in the foundations universe. In his recently updated *A Briefer History of Time*, Stephen Hawkins writes the following:

*"The uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics implies that certain pairs of quantities, such as the position and velocity of a particle, cannot be predicted with complete accuracy. Quantum mechanics deals with this situation via a class of quantum theories in which particles don't have well-defined positions and velocities but are represented as a wave. These quantum theories are deterministic in the sense that they give laws for the evolution of the wave with time. Thus if we know the wave at one time, we can calculate it at any other time. The unpredictable, random element comes in only when we try to interpret the wave in terms of the positions and velocities of particles. But maybe that is our mistake: maybe there are no particle positions and velocities, but only waves. It is just that we try to fit the waves to our preconceived ideas of positions and velocities. The resulting mismatch is the cause of the apparent unpredictability." (p. 140)*

A little later, he goes on to mourn the recent historical estrangement between science, philosophy and (by implication) theology. Yet he foresees an eventual reconciliation as science develops a more truly unified understanding of the cosmos and philosophers rediscover their heritage as lovers of wisdom and interpreters of reality.

*"Up to now, most scientists have been too occupied with the development of new theories that describe what the universe is to ask why. On the other hand, the people whose business it is to ask why, the philosophers, have not been able to keep up with the advance of scientific theories... Philosophers reduced the scope of their inquiries*

so much that Wittgenstein, the most famous philosopher of the twentieth century, said, 'The sole remaining task for philosophy is the analysis of language.' What a comedown from the great tradition from Aristotle to Kant! If we do discover a complete theory, it should in time be understandable in broad principle by everyone, not just a few scientists. Then we shall all, philosophers, scientists, and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of the question of why it is that we and the universe exist." (p.142)

His famous final payoff, that by understanding the science of the universe we shall eventually come to "know the mind of God", is hyperbolic and does overreach the scope of human reason. To truly know the mind of God we need God to freely reveal himself to us, and if this did happen, we are then in the realms of theology proper. But surely it is true that the principles of law and reason (*logos*) which we discover embedded in the framework of the universe do securely *point to* eternal Mind as its creative foundation. Far from contemporary science creating uncertainty, about this age-old instinct, it confirms it even more powerfully and convincingly.

Yours faithfully,

Calum Darcy  
Hartington Road  
Chiswick

Dear Fr Editor,

It hadn't occurred to me until recently reading *Faith* what a scam the multiverse cop-out is. It turns any and every legitimate empirical theory about this universe into an unverifiable *ad hoc* one about this and all the other, unobservable, supposed universes. That this question-begging device has had to be invoked to avoid the anthropic and religious consequences of the uniqueness of the world's physical

structure is a measure of the threat that this evidence poses to materialism. The fundamental shape of the Universe is completely wrong for a random origin of life theory. If there were a broad set of initial conditions consistent with the development of complex structures and a thin scattering of islands of life here and there, then yes, this would be a scenario in which life could be regarded as a random outcome. But we live in the opposite: initial conditions are incredibly narrowly specified and it is increasingly clear that there is life all over the place.

Athanasius puts it succinctly in section two of *On the Incarnation* "In regard to the making of the universe and the creation of all things there have been various opinions and each person has propounded the theory that suited his own taste. For instance, some say that all things are self-originated and, so to speak, haphazard. The Epicureans are among these; they deny that there is any Mind behind the universe at all. This view is contrary to all the facts of experience, their own existence included"

Yours faithfully,

Giles Rowe  
Fernside Road  
London

## FUTURE OF BRITISH CATHOLICISM

Dear Father Editor,

Father Kullu's article was a stunning critique of where we are and what we should be about. God Bless him and you for its publications. It invites a response.

I spent decades as a Personnel Manager in large organisations and the public service. Many organisations failed because although they had appropriate policies and objectives they did not adhere to them. "Key result areas" were identified but

disregarded. A culture evolved of Orwellian doublespeak and spin. A plethora of initiatives, debate and learned articles created a "fog". Objectives and the realities of life were obscured.

According to the Second Vatican Council, the Eucharist is the Church's "entire spiritual wealth". Reducing Masses, closing parishes, etc, is the 'Eucharistic deprivation' of God's people and a grave wound to the Mystical Body of Christ. We all know "small" parishes where closure has meant that significant numbers of the faithful have stopped going to Mass. "Key result area" analysis should produce a very different approach from these policies of despair.

Churches should remain open. Smaller presbyteries might be shut. Priests could be housed in larger presbyteries and service a deanery or large cluster of parishes. Priests would play to their strengths, primacy being given to the Mass. Mass does not depend for its efficacy on a large or even a "vibrant" community.

Liam Jenkinson  
East Bawtry Rd  
Rotherham, Yorkshire

## DEFENDING FATHERHOOD IN AN ANTI-LIFE CULTURE

Dear Father Editor,

Fr David Meconi's unusual article (July/Aug 05) on what he sees as a "femininity of holiness" taught by Pope John Paul II develops, in part, a theme that magnifies the role of Eve in the spiritual development of Adam. Most would agree that is not, perhaps, the most immediately obvious perspective on the first woman who, as Scripture tells us, gave in to temptation and then, having sinned, led the first man astray so that both were cast out of Eden, he to labour by the sweat of his brow and she to be under the dominion of the man and to suffer the pangs of birth. It cannot

be denied that the influence of Eve over her husband was not always of the highest in the realm of matters spiritual and one might think that did not perhaps fit her to be a model for others.

Interesting and intelligent though the article of Fr Meconi is, I wondered at the point of it. I can see that it might be useful to show to others that, despite the mendacity of media pundits who accused the late Pope of devaluing women, he, on the contrary, valued them highly in his writings and theology. But how useful is it, in an age when every other teacher, law-maker, commentator, political figure, scholar, writer, artist and street orator prates to the world about the oppression of women and of their superior qualities (despite a supposed ban upon sex discrimination), to try and develop a theology that seeks to give a religious verisimilitude to the obvious canard that one sex is, in some inherent way, superior to the other.

What a curious reversal of previous and equal errors that taught that the man was inevitably superior. In our present age we really do not, I suggest, need yet another paean of praise for the wonders of femininity in contrast to the manly, the extolling of the feminine over the masculine and yet another perspective that tells us all that womanly virtues are somehow superior to the manly virtues and that we should look more to the feminine in all we do, even in our prayer and spiritual lives.

Perhaps Fr Meconi thinks that God is telling us men to "get in touch with our feminine side" as the fashionable dictum has it. Haven't we had enough of this without the clergy now having to get in on the act? Spare a thought for the modern male, from time to time, my dear Fathers, if you can allow yourselves for a few minutes not to be vanquished by the spirit of the age. What has happened to the paternal

and fatherly in all of this? Where is the recognition that one of the greatest problems of our age is not the devaluing of the feminine but rather the de-valuing of the paternal and masculine?

Indeed, one of the great attractions of Pope John Paul II for many was his very manliness and fatherliness. These were and are qualities that are sorely needed in our present age so dominated as it is by Feminism, women's issues, women's politics, women's sociology and now women's theology. Men and manliness, not to mention the paternal and fatherly, has probably never been so belittled as it is in our age.

For anyone with any experience, for example, of the family courts in many Western countries the simple reality is that these courts are, to use the modern neologism, "institutionally sexist" - not against women but rather against men. The problem is that most people, unless they are actually being, or have been, divorced, do not have any experience of the family courts. They do not realise that a man who has brought his property, assets and hard work to a marriage, who is a good and faithful, caring and loving husband and father who gives himself body and soul to the beloved wife he has chosen and to the children he has fathered and for whom he would literally give his life, can have his gift thrown in his teeth by a vindictive wife supported by a cruel and biased system and so have his life utterly ruined and devastated?

Very few even know that this is happening, day in, day out, in the family court system. If his wife decides to ditch him, take a lover and divorce him and keep the children with her, this man will find himself thrown out of his own home, which he may have brought 100% to the marriage, the lover take his place, literally, in the matrimonial couch, hearth and home, his children

become estranged from him if the wife so chooses (courts rarely imprison mothers for contempt of court) and he find that he is forbidden to return to the home he bought and owned and for which he may be obliged to continue to pay the mortgage, and parted peremptorily from the children he loves more than himself. Most do not know that this is happening and many, if told, would not believe it. And yet it is happening. I have seen it more times than I can remember.

Now these facts are not, perhaps, seen to be of great theological moment at first blush but there is, I believe, a false philosophy and even a false theology underpinning them. They are the product of an error that, among other things, gravely devalues fatherhood and so harms and damages children by depriving them of something which is essential for their emotional well-being and development: a father. And that means a real father who exercises a fully paternal role - not just a bloke they see once a fortnight at the local McDonalds. In the paternal, when properly and fully present, children gain an understanding of, and indeed a relationship with, God the eternal Father. Fathers instinctively know this but the family courts do not. They, and many others, see the father who wishes to see more of his children as a selfish man seeking to frustrate the freedom of his ex-wife to make her own choices. The reverse is true: this is a loving father who knows in his soul that his children need a father and will suffer without one. It is not a "me first" desire to steal the children away from the mother but a deep realisation that the children will suffer without the presence of the paternal. Our blinkered family court system cannot see this. To it, as to many other commentators, the freedom of mothers to do as they please is the paramount concern. And yet the Children Act 1989 tells

us that the welfare of the children must be paramount. This is so much honoured in the breach that it has become but an empty slogan. The whole court system tends to consider men who want to see their children more than mother will allow as trouble-makers who must be punished. Fatherhood is thus sharply devalued.

For, let us not forget, God is a Father. Devalue Fatherhood and you devalue God. There is something slightly silly in teaching such things as "women are more perspicacious... than men generally prove". Fr Meconi claims that this is what John Paul II taught but he nowhere says any such thing in his Apostolic letter on the dignity of women - not at paragraph 18 and not at any paragraph. Fr Meconi does the late Pope a disservice in claiming that he has said what he has not said in his Apostolic letter.

The Pope uses our Lady as his model where Fr Meconi seems more interested in the first Eve, the first of our race to sin, let us not forget. Personally, I prefer the choice of the late Pope. To get a proper perspective on Feminism we need to remind ourselves occasionally that one of its most bitter fruits has been the advent of widespread and liberally available abortion, worldwide, on the entirely spurious basis that it is a "woman's right to choose" to terminate the life growing within her womb. Without in any way wishing to underestimate the grave difficulties than can face a poor unfortunate girl who finds herself with child and alone, it cannot, equally, be denied that the philosophy of Feminism that demands liberal abortion is one which does not present the woman as more attentive to others, more perspicacious and more willing to serve others but rather the opposite. The woman's wishes and desires are given a greater paramountcy than even the life of an innocent child. On the altar of this callous

philosophy of Feminism have been sacrificed literally millions of defenceless, harmless and innocent unborn children. In this slaughter many men, it is true, have been complicit and active agents but can anyone really deny that the mothers themselves were not, to a greater or lesser extent, also complicit and active agents?

The reality is that both men and women sin and both men and women do good. Men and women are both capable of the heights of holiness, virtue, love and sanctity and yet also the very depths of depravity, hatred, cruelty and sin. Each sex has its own particular genius and reflects something of God in a special and unique way but it is simply folly to pretend that one sex is somehow more inherently virtuous or better, or even just more "perspicacious", than the other. Indeed, it might even read as a sop to the very philosophy of Feminism that has brought about the conditions that allow the snuffing out of the millions of unborn lives - a new holocaust that has been occurring under our very noses, a sacrificing to Moloch whose bitter consequences are yet fully to be felt by the nations which have allowed it to happen.

Conversely, the community of mankind is most perfectly represented in the co-images of God that are male and female and that join together to make up that perfect community, the family. In this unity and community both man and woman are equally the partakers and co-creators. We so much take it for granted that we often miss the splendour of God's plan in so creating us male and female to make together this perfect community. The highest title any man can hold is "father" and the highest title any woman can hold is "mother". This is because each reflects a community that is perfect and a relationship which is divine: the relationship between the three persons of the

Trinity, all male images, and between each of them and the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Lady, the daughter, spouse and mother of God Himself.

It is this sacred relationship that should be extolled and not merely the virtues of one sex over the other. Indeed to introduce such odious comparisons is to divide, not join, the sexes. And to ascribe such a one-sided view to the late pontiff is to misrepresent the true insights that he taught us in his letter on the dignity of women.

John Paul II was a great father figure, a manly and strong pontiff who inspired others with his paternal love and strength. This is a virtue much needed in an age that scoffs so much at the virtue of fatherhood that it rejects even the greatest father of all - God the eternal Father Himself.

*Yours faithfully*

*James Bogle  
Middle Temple, London*

### **SCOTUS AND THE PRIMACY OF CHRIST**

*Dear Fr Editor,*

I have just received my first copy of your magazine and I cannot tell you how happy I am with its contents and the tone of its articles. After trolling many others, I think I've found the one that suits me best. The two articles on the Primacy of Christ are excellent, but I am bound to say so after being a life long devotee of John Duns Scotus, a key idea in his thought.

*Yours faithfully*

*Christopher Bull  
Reed Ave  
Canterbury, Kent*

**EDITORIAL COMMENT:** *We hope to publish an interesting article on Scotus in an upcoming issue.*



## THE FINALITIES OF MARRIAGE IN THE THOUGHT OF BERNARD LONERGAN

**Timothy Russ**  
Canon theologian to the  
diocese of Nottingham

**F**r. Bernard Lonergan regards “being in love” as at the heart of married life. “Love gave rise to the marriage. Love gave rise to the offspring. Love keeps the family an ongoing, joyful affair.” These words were written by him in 1976 out of his Christian and Catholic Tradition. Our contemporary situation where one half of our children are born out of wedlock do not make Lonergan’s words untrue, but perhaps they seem like words from another planet. It has long been realised that there is some sort of problem about staying in love, even though Shakespeare’s love “alters not when it alteration finds.” Some think that the demands of practicality come to dominate the scenario.

Lonergan wrote an essay on marriage in the 1940’s. In it he saw the attraction of the couple for each other as basic. I don’t think he saw this attraction as simply concerned with sex but rather delight in the other’s company, a delight which through marriage and sex led to offspring.

**L**onergan, a systematic thinker, called this “horizontal finality”. By finality he means bringing about a goal, and the goal is procreation. He is not talking about “intentionality” and so he does not mean that the couple are aiming to have sex for the sake of children any more than the mayfly one fine spring evening is thinking of next year’s hatch. The attraction is not a matter of reason, it is not something worked out, it is just a basic matter of fact, rather as the sun rises and the grass is green.

But as well as the horizontal finality leading in marriage to offspring, Lonergan posed what he called a ‘vertical finality’ in which he envisages the partners in friendship and collaboration, and through this ‘being together’ educating the children as they grow up in the household. At this level the couple are of course intending things and bringing them about. The friendship is so deep that it, as it were, touches God, and brings the friendship to a state of willingness and even sacrifice to make the family “an ongoing joyful affair.” In the Catholic world this depth in marriage is thematised in terms of “the sacrament of matrimony”.

The couple, in helping each other at the level of faith, bring up their children to be children of God. So everything leads to Heaven as its final goal. In Lonergan “marriage” is something greater than the intentionality of the spouses. Like a plant, it achieves ends without intending them. It is God’s wisdom incarnate.

**T**he essential problem in marriage is therefore whether the spouses think everything is a matter of their rational collaboration, or whether they recognise that they are dealing with God’s plan, with something bigger than they at first understand. In our present time, where a genuine marriage is a rare thing, it bears witness to the love of God at work, up and down every street in the land. Sacramental marriage this way is apostolic.

Following the Church’s teaching, Lonergan’s essay in the 1940’s gives to marriage three objective ends: offspring, the education of offspring and Heaven, both for the parents and the children. The primary level, the level of mutual attraction gives rise to children, but Lonergan argues that the vertical finality is “more noble” and so the friendship and co-operation of the couple and children is a fuller and finer thing.

**F**ollowing thinkers such as Von Hildebrand, the Church in the Second Vatican Council defined marriage as a ‘Covenant of Life and Love’. One could take Life as referring to the basic level and Love as referring to the divine level, but I think it is more likely that the Church is referring to the friendship and co-operation that belong to Lonergan’s second level. Phenomenologically observed a couple in love are not marrying just for sex or children nor out of piety and the desire to gain Heaven. Instead, whether they have offspring, indeed whether sex becomes impossible, and whether or not they will make Heaven, they are finding a path of happiness together which it would be folly to resist.

Phenomenology is descriptive. It does not speak of purposes except as they are experienced and become a discernible part of subjectivity. So phenomenology could lead to an orgiastic understanding of the sacrament of marriage which would be incapable of dealing with difficulties. Today phenomenological wisdom has degenerated into a false dogmatism, so there are not a few in the household of the faith who declare that the Church’s teaching on contraception is obviously wrong. You get the idea that if enough illustrious people say this then God will change the order he has created!

In 1967, *Humanae Vitae*, while respecting phenomenology, reminded us that we have to develop ourselves so that we can ponder God’s plan and will, and, not without heart searching and emotional wrenching, adjust our wills to the divine will. That is The Cross and the Tree of Life.



## Deus Caritas Est

With this encyclical I would like to show the concept of love in its different dimensions. Today, in the terminology that it is known, “love” often seems something very remote from what a Christian thinks when he speaks of charity. I would like to show that it is one movement with different dimensions.

The “eros,” the gift of love between man and woman, comes from the same source of the Creator’s goodness, as well as the possibility of a love that denies itself in favour of the other. The “eros” is transformed in “agape” in the measure in which the two really love one another and one no longer seeks oneself, one’s enjoyment, one’s happiness, but seeks above all the good of the other. In this way, the “eros” is transformed in charity, in a path of purification, of deepening. From one’s family one opens wide to the larger family of society, to the family of the Church, to the family of the world.

I also try to show that the totally personal act that comes to us from God is a unique act of love. It must also be expressed as an ecclesial, organizational act. If it is really true that the Church is the expression of God’s love, of that love that God has for his human creature, it must also be true that the fundamental act of faith, which creates and unites the Church and gives us the hope of eternal life and of the presence of God in the world, engenders an ecclesial act. In other words, the Church, including as Church, as community, must love in an institutional manner.

And this “Caritas” is not a mere organization, as other philanthropic organizations, but a necessary expression of the profound act of personal love with the God who has created us, awakening in our hearts the thrust to love, reflection of God-Love, that his image makes us.

*Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience,  
Vatican City, 18 January 2006*

## *The Catholic Women of the Year Luncheon*

Chairman: Mrs Janette Woodford 22 Milton Road WARE SG12 0PZ

**NOMINATIONS  
SOUGHT**

Every year the Catholic Women of the Year Luncheon honours Catholic women from all walks of life who serve the Church and the community in a range of different ways. We invite nominations for the 2006 Catholic Women of the Year. We are looking in particular for the “unsung heroines”, who take on responsibilities and carry out service to others in steadfast and perhaps unobtrusive ways. Is there a woman in your Catholic organisation, prayer group, or parish or family who has been caring for some one who is gravely ill over a long period, or is giving time and energy to some local, national or international charity or good cause, or is serving the community in some specific way? We are interested in women who are trying to live and uphold the Church’s message with love and dedication in their homes and families, in public office, or in their business or professional lives. Catholic teachers, Sisters, volunteers in all sorts of projects, people who cook, write, campaign or make music—all are potential Catholic Women of the Year. All we need is a simple letter, briefly setting out the facts, which conveys something of what the nominee is doing and the reasons why she should be honoured as a Catholic Woman of the Year. Nominees can, of course, be any age.

Send your nominations to arrive not later than April 30th:  
Catholic Women of the Year 2006  
22 Milton Road  
WARE SG12 0PZ

*Every nomination will be carefully read and four Catholic Women of the Year will be selected by ballot.  
The Luncheon will be held on October 5th in London.*

# comment

## ON THE c o m m e n t s



by William Oddie

### DEUS CARITAS EST

A very long time ago, in a previous life, I found myself chairing an evening conference on sexual ethics organised by the then principal of Pusey House, Oxford, the eccentric Father Cheslyn Jones. Pusey, of course, was and is an Anglo-Catholic institution and I was a member of its staff at the time, one of the few married clergymen it had ever employed, since it more or less embraced celibacy just as it more or less embraced many other Catholic practices. I had not been warned that I was to be chairman, simply told that I would be on the platform with the other clergy; to my considerable discomfiture, I heard Father Cheslyn opening the proceedings with the following words: "this evening is devoted to the topic of sexual ethics. I am unmarried and know nothing about sex. Father Oddie is married. He is therefore our expert on sex, and will chair the proceedings. Father Oddie". On that he turned to me, bowed slightly, and sat down with an enigmatic smile. I am still not sure whether this was one among many examples of his famously weird sense of humour; was he offering an oblique parody of the prevailing Anglican (and secular) view of the Catholic attitude to sexual questions: that the Catholic Church, being run by ignorant celibate clergymen, is intrinsically hostile to all sexual activity, indeed to all sexual feelings of any kind?

Something of the sort, indeed, has been characteristic, for several generations, of the attitude not only of most Anglicans but of many within the Catholic Church itself, to the Church's teachings on sexual ethics. Thus, when in January the Pope published his first encyclical, *Deus*

*Caritas Est*, with its poetic encomia of erotic as well as other kinds of love, it came as a total surprise to some Catholics (despite the fact that it had been extensively trailed for some months previously). *The Guardian's* report, indeed, was headed "Pope surprises Catholics with warm words on power of love". It was written by Stephen Bates, the *Guardian's* religious Affairs correspondent, who is himself a Catholic, and its tone of gratified amazement reflected the general reaction among Catholics hostile to the overall direction of the last pontificate, and particularly to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and its supposedly cold-hearted former prefect. "Pope Benedict XVI thawed his previously chilly image yesterday" wrote Bates, "by producing as his first message to his world-wide flock a notably warm rumination on the nature of love. Deus Caritas Est ... was greeted last night with some astonishment and relief among senior Catholics". The encyclical's message, opined Bates, "was far from the finger-wagging 'thou shalt not' tone that characterised some of his predecessor's pronouncements and contrasted with Benedict's stern reputation...".

True enough: the tone of the encyclical did indeed belie the Pope's "stern reputation": but where, it has to be asked, did *that* come from? The answer is that the cold-hearted "Panzer-Cardinal" Ratzinger of former times was from beginning to end a media construct. But what the press constructs, the press can deconstruct: and we now appear to be in the middle of a media makeover unequalled since Dickens published the final instalment of *The Christmas Carol*, and mean old Ebenezer Scrooge, transformed by the Spirit of Christmas, astonished and slightly terrified the Cratchit family by turning up on Christmas day with a huge turkey (the encyclical was, of course, signed on Christmas Day). "There never was such a turkey"; wrote Dickens: "there never was such an

encyclical" Ruth Gledhill very nearly wrote, in *The Times* (which gave *Deus Caritas Est* a double page spread). The tender-hearted Ms Gledhill had been expecting another chilling dose of "Bah! Humbug!":

"I started reading *Deus Caritas Est* expecting to be disappointed, chastised and generally laid low. An encyclical on love from a right-wing pope could only contain more damning condemnations of our materialistic, westernised society, more evocations of the "intrinsic evil" of contraception, married priests, homosexuality. It would surely continue the Church's grand tradition of contempt for the erotic, a tradition that ensures a guilty hangover in any Roman Catholic who dares to indulge in love-making for any reason other than the primary one of reproduction. How wonderful it is to be proven wrong.

"This encyclical", enthused Ms Gledhill, "is not the work of an inquisitor. It is the work of a lover — a true lover of God". Catherine Pepinster, editor of *The Tablet* told *The Guardian* that she was "delighted: it is very direct, idealistic and warm-hearted" and that "we are struggling not to be too gushing in this week's editorial". But she cannot have struggled very hard: "Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical", her leader began, "confirms him as a man of humour, warmth, humility and compassion, eager to share the love that God "lavishes" on humanity and display it as the answer to the world's deepest needs. This is a remarkable, enjoyable and even endearing product of Pope Benedict's first few months. If first encyclicals set the tone for a new papacy, then this one has begun quite brilliantly."

Like the Anglican Ruth Gledhill *The Tablet*, too had expected a Scrooge-like "hammering of heretics and a war on secularist relativism". Instead, the journal pronounced "he has produced a profound, lucid, poignant and at times witty discussion of the relationship between sexual love and the love of God, the fruit no

doubt of a lifetime's meditation". So, what do the secular papers, what does *The Tablet* think has happened? Remember the extraordinary media hostility to this pope's election. *The Tablet's* reaction, for a time, was almost hysterical. Has there been a transformation? Is this a different Joseph Ratzinger? Or is the real Joseph Ratzinger now at last able to shake off the constraints of a role imposed on him by his predecessor? Is he, in fact, now communicating something different, yes instead of no, a life affirming rather than a life-denying message to the world?

That is what the liberals hope, and not only theological but secular liberals. They long to see the Catholic Church return to the spirit of the sixties, to be more 'open' to the values of the modern world (and thus less uncomfortably critical of them). A few days after the encyclical was published, the *Observer* hailed the news of Pope Benedict's call for the speedier resolution of petitions for the annulment of marriages as a 'dramatic break with the past'. 'It was the second time this week', enthused the paper, 'that the newly elected Pope has displayed strong liberal leanings, confounding his critics and the world's Catholics and showing another side to his previously stern image...'. He was, of course, doing nothing of the sort: this was not a call for easier annulments or anything remotely like it: simply a recognition that as a matter of common decency such petitions ought not to take years to resolve, and that the gross inefficiency of the Roman Rota is a scandal that has to be addressed.

Inside the Church, at a fairly senior level— at least in some countries — there is a sigh of relief at Pope Benedict's new media profile, coupled with what looks very like a barely suppressed hope that it reflects a real break with the rigours of the previous pontificate. Monsignor Andrew Faley, assistant general secretary of the Bishops' conference of England and Wales, said that

*Deus Caritas Est* was a 'wonderful document', which was 'much more reflective and conversational in tone and less prescriptive than some past encyclicals... We are seeing the substance of the man as a pastor and shepherd of the flock. A cuddly Benedict? Well, well'. But the pope was being just as pastoral as prefect of the CDF when he said 'no' to some new heresy, and so was his great predecessor as pope when he confronted the godlessness of the communist world and of the capitalist West. As for being 'less prescriptive', *Deus Caritas Est* is just as prescriptive as anything the former Panzer-Cardinal ever published, prescriptive exactly as Our Lord was prescriptive when he gave us his 'new commandment, to love one another as I have loved you'.

This is still no soft-centred 'cuddly Benedict'; the Pope still has a spine. This is exactly the same Joseph Ratzinger as he always was. There is no contradiction: as he wrote in 1993, "Christianity is at its heart a radical 'yes,' and when it presents itself as a 'no,' it does so only in defence of that 'yes'." But the secular world does not want a radical Christian "yes"; it wants a "yes" not to the love of God but to our own "personal choices"; and so, it has to be said does the secularising fifth column within the Catholic Church. It has welcomed, naturally enough, the warmth and the poetry of *Deus est Caritas*; but it is now hoping that the Pope's first encyclical signals that there will be no more uncomfortable demands for the renunciation of relativist moral values, indeed, that the Pope will now bask in his new popularity and become a mellow and liberal guru to the modern world, that his life story will be rather like that of Pius IX but in reverse.


There is, however, a limit to the Pope's new cuddliness. His first encyclical does not signal any real change of direction, as that old curmudgeon Hans Küng correctly diagnosed. Thus, having praised

the encyclical's "solid theological substance on the subjects of eros and agape, love and charity and not drawing false contradictions between them", he also told the *Agence France-Presse* news service that the pope had failed to mention the charity the church should show toward loving couples who use contraception, those who divorce and remarry, and, somewhat curiously, toward Protestant and Anglican clerics (was this, perhaps, a swipe at *Dominus Iesus*?). Poor old Küng, he just doesn't get it; you can tell him that Christianity is a radical "yes" to God that has to be defended by a radical "no" to anything that obstructs it until you are blue in the face, it will make no difference to him, he knows what he believes and will stick to it through thick and thin. But so does the Pope; and so, the Lord be praised, will he.



# sunday

b y s u n d a y



## 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT: B 05.03.06, Mk 1, 12-15

- Mark condenses Matthew's account of the temptation of Jesus in the desert, but still manages to make his narrative evocative and intriguing. No other evangelist talks of the 'wild beasts' or 'the angels' looking after him (Mk 1,13), and we are left with a sense of the danger and isolation Jesus suffered in his hour of trial. The loneliness of Christ is a key theme for Mark, who shows a Messiah whom only the demons recognize in mock derision (cf. Mk 5, 7). Even his miracles cannot penetrate the fog of misunderstanding that envelops the disciples (cf. Mk 4,41).
- Jesus' determination to be about the work of his Father shines through in this gospel. John's arrest (Mk 1, 14) would understandably have shaken the resolve of any human agency planning to start a new movement following on from one the authorities had just silenced. But Jesus is divine as well as human – he through whom the universe was created and is sustained determines the hour of action solely on his own authority. Time is now claimed for Jesus. As the Baptist grows less, the Christ grows greater, and salvation goes out to the ends of the earth.
- Lent is a time when we seek to imitate Jesus more closely in his fight against temptation, so that we too might receive the same Spirit to preach the Good News. Sometimes that struggle means joining him in his own loneliness, as we seek through his grace to give up the sin in our lives that clings so easily. Leaving dead ways behind can leave

us feeling isolated and fearful, but always bears fruit for the kingdom. Jesus never deserts us, but we need to trust him and his truth to win through. Perseverance in this trust converts us.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT: B 12.03.06, Mk 9, 2-10

- Eastern Christian spirituality marks the Transfiguration as a key meditation in the spiritual life. Monks pray the Jesus Prayer continually in their work and recreation, saying quietly, 'Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner'. The Holy Name of Jesus constantly on their lips mellows the spirit and purifies the soul until, through God's grace, they perceive the uncreated light of Tabor. The transfiguring of the sacred humanity of Jesus lives on in the souls of the holy, who perceive what the apostles perceived on the Holy Mountain and are shaken to the core by the Divine Presence.
- Tabor remains a place of particular sanctity to this day. Perhaps because so much brutality goes on between Jew and Arab, the heights distil a peace and quiet joy that attracts all, no matter what race or religion. For the Jew, mountains were the place of divinity and thus many come. For the Arab taxi drivers, it is one of the few opportunities they have to make money, but this is never at the expense of the special atmosphere. They can be loud and drive enthusiastically round hair-pin bends, but they do not disturb the divine reverence of Tabor.
- We all need some of that peace. Lent is about the heart so much more than it is about the head. Eastern Christian spirituality leads from the heart and never draws its focus away from heaven. It never subverts the transcendent nature of God or empties out the divinity of Christ, unlike so many over-rationalized and corrupt spiritualities of the West. Icons are revered as windows on heaven in Eastern liturgies and are

incensed because of this. Perhaps we might like to meditate on an icon of the Transfiguration this Lent. We might well be in for a surprise.

## 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT: B 19.03.06, Jn 2, 13-25

- "It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary" (Jn 2, 20). The irony of the apparent impregnability of the Temple would not have been lost on the members of the early Christian community, for whom St John wrote his gospel account. The Roman Emperor Titus destroyed their handiwork in a matter of days in 70AD. By heating the massive stones of the sanctuary and then pouring cold water on them, the Romans reduced the whole place to rubble, thus punishing the Jews for rebelling against Roman authority. Those who put their trust in bricks and mortar are confounded.
- Jesus always thirsts for a response of faith, belief and trust in him. His reply to the Jews, "Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2, 19), is highly enigmatic and was not even understood by his disciples until later (cf. Jn 2, 22). Jesus says this deliberately in order to draw his audience to himself and to his teaching, to provoke further discussion and break down the self-satisfaction of the Temple authorities. In this he failed, because even those who believed in him in Jerusalem would not let their hearts be remade (Jn 2, 24-25).
- Would Jesus entrust himself to us? So often we pay him lip service whilst our hearts remain far away. We reserve the right to do things our way, as if we know better than our God. This is a sin against obedience, which consists in not just hearing the Word of God but allowing it to change us utterly through a joy-filled submission to the divine will in all things and at all times. This is hard, but we cannot enter heaven by any other route. We may think we know the way, but we don't. Let grace triumph.

4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT: B  
26.03.06, Jn 3, 14-21

- Some commentators give Nicodemus a hard time, accusing him of only half loving Our Lord, because he would only see him by night for fear of his colleagues in the Sanhedrin. But at least he listens to Jesus, and is the occasion of some of the Saviour's most sublime teaching (including Jn 3, 16, which is the gospel in a verse). Nicodemus does exactly what Jesus wants and what his colleagues refuse to do. By entering into dialogue, he allows himself to be taught by the Master whom every other religious authority is determined to silence. Nicodemus is brave.

- Jesus is well aware of Nicodemus' predicament. Irony is ever present in the writings of St John, and Our Lord's words, though part of divine revelation to all, nevertheless gently point out the fault of the one who will only see Jesus by night: "men have shown they prefer darkness to the light" (Jn 3, 19) and "the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light" (Jn 3, 21). Nicodemus will be present at the crucifixion (Jn 19, 39), and there can be little doubt that the words of Jesus proved a vehicle for his conversion.

- Are we bold in coming to Jesus? Do we ever allow him to speak to us, or are we afraid of what he might say? He might show us our faults, as he did with Nicodemus, and then we would feel awkward, just like Nicodemus. Proud and humiliated, will we go away, nursing our grievances? Or will we see the gentleness behind the call to conversion and respond? We need to pray for an end to smallness of heart and enter into the dark confessional, just as Nicodemus stole at night into the garden where Jesus waited for him.

5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT: B  
02.04.06, Jn 12, 20-33

- "Now my soul is troubled" (Jn 12, 27). St Teresa of Avila was fond

of telling her sisters that it was the humanity of Jesus that saves us. Here we see the human will of Christ rebelling against the appalling affliction of the cross. Who among us would not balk at such a terrible prospect, especially if we were innocent? It is absolutely vital that we understand that Jesus struggles here as any man would. He does not experience some privileged humanity unlike ours, but rather enters into the natural revolt of human nature against the destruction of death.

- In his weariness and desolation of spirit, the human will of Jesus cries out to be saved from this hour (Jn 12, 27). But in a supreme act of totally unmerited generosity, Our Lord conforms his human to his divine will: "Father, glorify your name" (Jn 12, 28). Jesus will accept the cup of suffering the Father proffers him, on our behalf. This decision is taken freely as a human being in utter loneliness of spirit. Outside Jesus there are curious crowds, but inside him there is only the looming shadow of the cross. The Father acknowledges such generosity (Jn 12, 28).

- "Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be overthrown" (Jn 12, 31). So many 'nows' indicate that the hour of Jesus has arrived. This is the hour of the cross, when Jesus' generosity in freely accepting all that sin and death could do to humanity turns a gruesome execution into the triumphal procession of the Lamb. Since the hour of the cross has arrived and Jesus has accepted it totally and in complete freedom of spirit, then the reign of sin and death over humanity instigated by the malice of the Devil is doomed.

PALM SUNDAY: B  
09.04.06, Mk 11, 1-10

- Whilst tradition in England has people carrying Palm branches in imitation of Christ's triumphal procession into Jerusalem, in Italy they usually carry olive branches and

strew their churches with bay leaves, so that the Palm Sunday Procession leaves the most delightful smell, as those walking by crush the leaves as they go. Catholic piety has always rejoiced in the physical as a way of communicating the divine, and those bay leaves lend a pungent edge that emphasizes the importance of the beginning of Holy Week. Nature too begins to rejoice at the salvation about to come upon the world.

- "Blessings on the coming kingdom of our father David" (Mk 11, 10). Jerusalem was the city of the king, captured by David some 1000 years before Christ, at a time when it was thought to be an impregnable fortress. Here it is assailed by the King of Kings, not with soldiers and siege engines, but riding humbly on a donkey. Christ proclaims a very different kingship from that of his illustrious forebear. It is the kingship of the cross, and the irony is that those who proclaim his Messiahship here will be paying for his blood by Friday.

- Jerusalem was also the city of God. From the time of David, the theology of Holy Zion had established that location as the abode of the divinity: "Have compassion on the holy city, Jerusalem, the place of your rest. Let Zion ring with your praises, let your temple be filled with you glory" (Sir 36, 16). No sense of vainglory clouds the vision of the Messiah, but merely a humble and reverent fulfilling of all righteousness. Jesus enters Jerusalem because he is the heir, the one so long expected. The glory of God enters his own on a donkey.

EASTER SUNDAY: B  
16.04.06, Mk 16, 1-8

- "The women came out and ran away from the tomb because they were frightened out of their wits; and they said nothing to a soul, for they were afraid" (Mk 16, 8). This is not a good way to start a religion. There is no clever build up or big launch,



no networking with influential people and no advance publicity with slick marketing. No-one says anything to anybody, least of all to the disciples. The silence is deafening, broken only by the scramble of the women to move as far away from the Empty Tomb as quickly as possible.

- These eight verses of resurrection narrative in Mark's gospel so disturbed the Early Church that twelve more verses of appearances of the risen Christ were added on to the original formula. To say that the resurrection in Mark is understated is itself an understatement. The constant theme of people misunderstanding the person and teaching of Christ continues into the resurrection account (cf Mk 4, 41). For Mark the key moment of the gospel are the words of recognition of the pagan centurion at the foot of the cross: "In truth this man was a Son of God" (Mk 15, 39). Thus Jesus saves.

- So does Mark discount the resurrection in any sense? Not at all. There is merely a sense of utter confusion at the turn of events. Such a bitter loss becomes the most brilliant of victories as resurrection completes and informs crucifixion. The women cannot take it in, and there is a sense of incompleteness as the tale breaks off with them fleeing. There is also a sense of more to come in the story, once the dust of the shock of the Empty Tomb settles down. Mark's purpose is served by condensing his resurrection account: he never ignores it.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER: B 23.04.06, Jn 20, 19-31

- Signs theology in the gospel of John has a specific intent. This intention is three-fold, and consists in seeing the signs, believing in them and the one who works them, and receiving life through the holy name of Jesus (Jn 20, 30-31). St John is quite specific about being selective in the signs he has chosen – for him they are those most likely to elicit

faith and a participation in the divine life. Signs are miracles, and the seven the evangelist chooses show Our Lord's divinity and his thirst for souls. Only those who see and believe receive life.

- The narrative about doubting Thomas is technically not a sign, for Thomas is only asked to believe the evidence of his eyes (Jn 20, 29). That Jesus is risen from the dead is a fact of nature. It is as true as water is wet or the sun hot. Thus the indicative founds the imperative: "Doubt no longer but believe" (Jn 20, 27). Thomas has only to believe what is before him, but in doing so becomes the source of hope and faith for millions of believers not privileged enough to be in the Upper Room on that occasion.

- Resurrection faith founds Christianity. Without it Jesus is a fraud and a failure, his disciples deluded and our faith in vain. Thus, Christ rising is the most attacked doctrine in the entire deposit of faith of the Catholic Church. It is nevertheless the most important historical fact in the universe. It shows us a radically transformed human nature, no longer defined by the twin evils of sin and death. It shows us a future lived with God in heaven not just in our spirit but in our bodies too. Human nature is thus revitalized, and paradise made truly personal.

## 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER: B 30.04.06, Lk 24, 35-48

- "He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures" (Lk 24, 45). Thus was authority over the scriptures bequeathed to the Church by the Master himself. Jesus fulfils all prophecy, is the righteousness of the Law in person, and distils within his Sacred Heart all the wisdom of the ancients. As he founds the community of the New Covenant on the faith of the apostles, so he confers on them that authority over Holy Writ that comes from God himself as gift to the heirs of the

believing community of Israel. Truth in scripture comes only from Truth himself.

- But surely those in the Upper Room in Luke's account are more than just the apostles? All who believe the truth, who is Christ crucified and risen alone, are inheritors of the promises of Christ and enjoy a living sense of the Faith as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Only the apostles, and Peter supremely, bear the charism to define what is and what is not of Christ in the Faith, but all who listen to the voice of truth in the Church open themselves up to the riches of understanding that only God's Holy Spirit can give.

- Repentance for the forgiveness of sins is the first fruit of understanding the scriptures (Lk 24, 47). This is the supreme gift the Church has to offer in the name and power of Christ. No-one can forgive sins but God himself, and, through the ministry of his priests, that is exactly what Christ does for those who come to him in sorrow and repentance. Many find approaching the priest challenging. But it is really Christ to whom we address ourselves. Pray that this Easter Season for us will be a renewed commitment to so life giving a sacrament.



# book

## reviews

BAD, MAD OR GOD: PROVING  
THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST FROM ST  
JOHN'S GOSPEL  
by John Redford, *St Paul's*, 383pp,  
£17.99

The methodology of a defence lawyer in a criminal investigation is substantially different from that of the scientist in the laboratory determining the facts of a crime scene investigation. With the former, there is a professional bias in favour of the accused; with the latter, there is a cold indifference to any original intentions or extenuating circumstances. But does the bias of a lawyer in a courtroom drama (be it positive or negative) make the legal process any less objective than that of the scientist in the laboratory?

John Redford thinks not. He uses this analogy of the courtroom in order to highlight a fundamental problem in modern biblical criticism, namely, the entrenched scepticism of the academic establishment when it comes to judging the historicity of the Gospel of St John. The problem with the critical tradition, from Reimarus to Bultmann and beyond, has been the interpretation of historical events within the methodology of the laboratory – as if the historical veracity of John's Gospel can be analysed while dogmatically refusing to accept the possibility of Jesus' miracles and divine self-knowledge.

Like a defence lawyer in the courtroom analogy, Redford begins the third and final section of his book with a positive bias, or "conditional faith", in the substantial historicity of John's account. Coupled with some of the tools of biblical criticism (such as the criteria of Embarrassment, Double Discontinuity and Multiple Attestation), he seeks to demonstrate

the case for the origin of the Johannine tradition in the words and actions of the historical Jesus, as passed on by eyewitness accounts and possibly by John the son of Zebedee himself.

Yet, he insists, this is far from a fundamentalist defence of the absolute historicity of the text (cf. p.192). While section three takes up the majority of the book, Redford's positive bias in favour of the historicity of John's account is preceded in section one by a devastating critique of the philosophical scepticism behind modern criticism, and by a building up of the substantial historicity of the synoptic tradition with a "critical minimum" in section two in the light of the findings of N.T. Wright and others.

These first two sections, in which Redford not only demonstrates his historical grasp of the situation but his own scholarly expertise, are particularly coherent and engaging. Responding to the critical tradition's *Quest for the historical Jesus* (where the Jesus of history is thought to lie behind the layers of theological gloss of the Christian community), Redford shows how the real crux of the problem is the post-Cartesian scepticism of all things supernatural, above all the Incarnation. The inability of the critical tradition to accept the historicity of high Christological statements, miracles, Jesus' divine self knowledge and such like, owes itself more to their "epistemological positivism" (p.92) than to the lack of authenticity of the texts. Hence the circular arguments so prevalent in the critical tradition with their abundance of contradicting source theories, hypothetical communities and secessionist splinter groups.

The third and most important section is also the most complex. Confronting a variety of questions brought to the fore by modern criticism of John's Gospel (such as miracles, Jesus' claim to divinity, the "I AM" sayings, John's supposed anti-Semitism and the Resurrection), Redford consistently argues for the

probable historical authenticity of John's account but always with the same tools of historical criticism.

In effect, he beats the critical tradition at their own game, defending the authenticity of the miracle accounts, counteracting the unfounded claims of anti-Semitism and demonstrating the early tradition of high Christology in the primitive Church. Contrary to the innumerable and often bizarre theories on the origin and formation of John's Gospel, Redford leaves us with a Gospel whose message has a simplicity and clarity which "is often lost in the maze of discussion concerning possible redaction and theories of multiple editions and stages" (p.182). In continuity with the prologue of John, the whole Gospel is an *apologia* for the belief in Jesus as the Son of God, just as he claimed to be and demonstrated by his signs.

Unfortunately, the same clarity is not always so evident in this section of Redford's book. As he admits himself, "it would be better to describe our argumentation as spiralling rather than linear" (p.348). Indeed, of one chapter he concedes that he had no idea how crucial it would be in the process of building up his argument when he started writing the book (cf. p.258). Nevertheless, any weakness here is usually counteracted by helpful summaries at the beginning and end of each chapter.

In sum, this is an excellent book and ought to be recommended reading material for all students of the New Testament, especially for seminarians. The first two sections in themselves offer a useful historical overview of the developments in biblical criticism and the third section offers numerous insights into the theology of St John and the life of the primitive Church while the whole work together could help usher in some long-awaited common sense in New Testament studies.

Fr Michael John Galbraith  
Edinburgh

ST GIANNA MOLLA  
by Pietro Molla / Elio Guerriero,  
Ignatius Press, 125pp, £7.95

Many of us came to know of St Gianna Molla two years ago after she was canonised by the late Holy Father John Paul II on 16<sup>th</sup> May in St Peter's Square. St Gianna is perhaps best known for the extreme sacrifice she made in giving her own life so that her fourth child, Gianna Emanuela, might live.

In this beautiful yet simple book we come to know Gianna in a personal way, largely through the testimony of her husband Pietro Molla. The book is not a straightforward biography but is comprised of three parts. To begin there is a short presentation of the two families of origin of St Gianna Beretta Molla: the Berettas from Milan and the Mollas from Mesero. In these pages we come to understand the Catholic cultures that Gianna and her husband grew up in; the strong family examples and influences that inspired so much in their own lives and in their life together as husband and wife.

The second part is an interview conducted by Elio Guerriero, the author of this book and long time journalist and writer. The direct questions lead us to understand and appreciate St Gianna as she is known by Pietro. During the interview he explains how they met, their falling in love, their joyful engagement and their time together as a family. Pietro speaks in a simple and open way about his wife and their life as a couple and family; the way Gianna's passion for life and for God brought such joy to the many aspects of family living. The interview also explores other areas of Gianna's life: her involvement with the Church, her professional life as a physician, and the dreadful circumstances that lead up to the birth of Gianna Emanuela – a birth that demanded the greatest sacrifice. The conversation then moves to the beatification and

canonization process, which began in 1970, highlighting the pressures that the family endured as the Church sought to examine Gianna's life in greater detail.

Part three is a precious reflection written by Pietro. He uses a beautiful style whereby he directs his words directly to Gianna, speaking to her in a familiar way about her virtues as he observed them in their life together. This section is written in a deeply heartfelt way; it is honest and real.

The book contains a number of black and white photographs of their life together. These show us a family occupied with the normal activities of life. They present a family that we can identify with. There are also many excerpts from Gianna's writings: letters written to Pietro and other members of the family, conferences prepared for the young women in her Catholic Action group, and prayers written for different situations.

It is clear that although Gianna will be remembered predominantly for the way in which she put the life of her unborn child before her own life, this is only one of many ways in which she witnesses to the Gospel. Pietro reveals to us a woman who has a great love of nature and life: she enjoyed skiing, tennis, mountain climbing, dancing, concerts and the theatre. She lived a deep spiritual life that included daily Mass, daily rosary, meditation before the Blessed Sacrament, involvement with S.V.P. and Catholic Action groups. In her professional life she sought to recognise and serve Christ in her neighbour, dealing with her many patients with great tenderness, and deep faith.

St Gianna comes across in a way that is at once inspirational and ordinary. Here in this relationship is a truly sacramental appreciation of marriage. Shortly before their marriage day she wrote to Pietro, "I would like our new family to be a cenacle gathered around Jesus". Their mature and down to earth faith came

to recognise God's divine providence, to trust in his love and care in daily life and even when faced with suffering and death. Pietro manages to communicate the real struggle and suffering that marked the last months of their life together. There is nothing superficial in his description, yet his deeply moving reflections remain simple: "Pain remains a mystery even in the light of our faith, and I have experienced in myself that the only way to accept it is that of Jesus crucified".

Pietro recalls a passage from Gianna's notes, "Love and sacrifice are as intimately connected as sun and light. We cannot love without suffering or suffer without loving. Look how many sacrifices are made by mothers who truly love their children. They are ready for everything, even to give their own blood. Did not Jesus die on the Cross for us, out of love for us? Love is affirmed and confirmed with the blood of sacrifice".

The Church holds St Gianna up not only as an example to inspire all parents, but also as a reminder of the many hidden parents whose daily lives are a heroic witness to the Gospel. In a culture that can often leave us feeling despondent about married life, this biography is refreshing; a reminder of how God's grace can transform lives when we place our trust in Him and open our hearts to His love.

Fr Michael Dolman  
*Our Lady of Mount Carmel*  
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YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE.  
A PRACTICAL & ILLUMINATING  
GUIDE TO EACH BOOK OF THE  
BIBLE

by Peter Kreeft, Ignatius Press  
available from Family Publications,  
328pp, £11.50

If you're anything like me you probably don't have any friends. No wait. That

either came out wrong or it was a desperate plea for attention. What I meant was that if you're anything like me you probably don't have any friends who are actively investigating the Catholic faith. It's a rare occasion then, when a friend or colleague tells you they want to know more about the Church and about Christ and, invariably, that they have tried reading the Bible and found it, well, a bit hard. When such an occasion arises I invariably reach for a book. A friend from another Christian denomination might well be handed Mark Shea's *By What Authority* while a friend who has never set foot in a Church in their life is more likely to find themselves with a copy of C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*.

Books are good, they remember facts a lot better than I do and don't start incessantly repeating the same point after a couple of drinks. The people who write books have time to think things through and put forward their points well. They had better, because a lot of responsibility rests on the book I hand my friend – in my friend's mind that book represents me. It represents the Church. He may be wrong, but if my friend finds he has proven the book false he may well feel he has proven me false, or worse, he might feel he has proven Christ false. In short, any book designed for those just beginning to study the Bible is a tool, and it had better be a good one, because if it fails, it not only fails me, it fails my friend.

So... where was I? Oh yes. *You can understand the Bible*. Peter Kreeft gets off to a good start. Quoting G.K. Chesterton in the introduction is a very good way to garner my affections. Unfortunately, my pleasure is short lived. Kreeft follows up with something that places a furrow firmly upon my brow. The Introduction begins with a top ten list for reading the Bible profitably. At number one? "...forget commentaries and books that try to tell you what the Bible means. Read the Bible itself...". Now

forgive me if I'm splitting hairs here, but is an advice against books about the Bible the best way to start a book about the Bible?

The roller coaster ride begins. Over the next few hundred pages Peter Kreeft swings from the sublime to the unforgivable and back again. It's diamonds and mud mixed together. Beautiful summations of Christian truth can be found but, unfortunately, so can horrific mistakes.

Take the following, p20. "When God changes Abram's name to Abraham and Jacob's name to Israel, He does something only God can do, because for the Hebrews your name means not your social label but your divinely ordained nature, character and destiny. That's why Jesus was implicitly claiming divinity when He changed Simon's name to Peter". That may or may not be true, I know not, but I do know the following; twenty-two pages later Peter Kreeft writes "Joshua. Moses gave him this name changing his original name, Hosea". Now I'm no mathematician, but something doesn't add up here. Did Kreeft's editor not pick up on this one? Unfortunately there's more. We read of Esther that "God's name is not mentioned even once" and then of Song of Songs that "it is the only book of the Bible that never once mentions the name of God". Which one is it Peter?

The above, combined with the occasional use of the "we Americans" means this is a book I can never place in the hand of a friend. A bad workman may blame his tools but a good workman knows when a tool is no good for the job. It might be a useful tool for you though, if you're a tinkerer, if you can take it apart and extract the good. If you seek ideas for a Bible study course or if you can read past the blunders and dig out the gold maybe this is a book for you after all.

Sadly, for me, the blurb on the back of the book comes true "This book belongs on the shelf of every

Bible Teacher and Student" and on my shelf it will remain.

James Preece  
Hull





notes from across the

Atlantic

by Richard John Neuhaus

**PROTECTING KIDS FROM SEX-ED**

Under intense pressure from the fevered media, hungry lawyers and nervous insurance companies, the U.S. bishops at their Dallas meeting in 2002 hurriedly put together a number of measures aimed at definitively consigning the sex-abuse scandal to the past. Among these was the establishment of an Office of Child and Youth Protection and the adoption of a "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People". The latter was slightly revised and reissued this past June, but it still includes Article 12, which requires dioceses to "maintain 'safe environment' programmes . . . to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators and community organizations". While these programmes are supposed to "be in accord with Catholic moral principles", many thoughtful Catholics think they are sex-ed by another name. In a pastoral letter, Bishop Robert Vasa of Baker, Oregon, asks probing questions about the implementation of Article 12 and concludes that he cannot "expose the children of the diocese to harm under the guise of trying to protect them from harm". He is by no means alone, although he may not be joined by many bishops. The head of a distinguished Catholic school speaks convincingly of his enormous respect for his bishop. "But," he says, "if the bishop insists upon Article 12, the parents will be in rebellion, and they'll be right. No way is the school going to expose third-graders to the details of 'inappropriate touching' and 'sexual boundaries'." Catholic principles, one might be inclined to think, include protecting childhood innocence, discouraging early sexual expression and affirming the primary

responsibility of parents for teaching the facts of life. I expect more bishops will be hearing from parents and schools who believe that young children should be protected from protection programmes that plant in young minds the seeds of sexual fear and suspicion. For information on how one diocese, in compliance with Article 12, is trying to protect children without harming them, write to: Nancy Walla, of the Archdiocese of Denver, at [nancy.walla@archden.org](mailto:nancy.walla@archden.org).

**POLITICAL MANIPULATION?**

"Goodbye, Catholics" is an article in *Commonweal* by Mark Stricherz explaining how the 1972 McGovern Commission wrested control of the Democratic Party from Catholic and other leaders who were attuned to the working class and the values of most Americans. Stricherz is writing a book on the alienation of Catholics from the Democratic ranks and, to judge by this article, it should be interesting. In the same November 4 issue is Daniel Finn's "Hello, Catholics: Republicans & the Targeting of Religious Voters". Finn teaches economics and theology at St. John's University in Collegeville. Finn alleges, if you can believe it, that Republicans are engaged in a deliberate strategy to get voters who identify themselves as religious to vote Republican. Furthermore—brace yourself for this—they are using opposition to abortion to advance their nefarious purposes. Republicans have, says Finn, hoodwinked "perfectionists" who actually want to end the unlimited abortion license. He writes: "Moral perfectionists take the position that if abortion is the most fundamental moral issue today, then striving for political change on abortion should outweigh pressing for change on all other issues. So powerful and pervasive is this mistaken belief that I would not be surprised if at least some of these moral perfectionists misunderstand

this essay and claim that it indirectly advocates abortion simply because it questions the political judgments the church has made in opposing abortion." Of course Daniel Finn does not advocate abortion, directly or indirectly. He simply thinks there are many things as important, or more important, than abortion, and he is unhappy that Christians have been made "attractive targets for strategic manipulation by politicians bent on reaping political gain from their constituents' moral convictions". He ends with this: "Caveat credens. Let the believer beware." Watch out for politicians who are responsive to the moral convictions of the people. I am sure that Professor Finn does not intend to encourage cynicism, but he is compelled to tell the truth: politicians want to get elected! Say it ain't so, Joe.

**THE "BOON" OF TOLERANCE**

"The delusional is no longer marginal, and we err on the side of folly if we continue to grant the boon of tolerance to people who mean to do us harm in the conviction that they receive from Genesis the command 'to take dominion over the earth', to build the Kingdom of God, to create the Christian Nation. The proposition is as murderous as it is absurd." That is editor Lewis Lapham in an issue of *Harper's* devoted to the threat of conservative Christians in the public square. The issue contains two long slash-and-burn articles by reporters who visited the aliens living in Colorado Springs, a centre of evangelical megachurches and parachurch organizations. Not surprisingly, they found and enthusiastically highlight some loopy "Dominionists" and "Reconstructionists" who think our constitutional order should be replaced by a society based on "Bible law". Lapham's politics of paranoia notwithstanding, such people are in fact very marginal and in no way representative of the evangelical insurgency in public life. It is not

without interest, however, that an old liberal standby such as Harper's declares it folly to "grant the boon of tolerance" to fellow-citizens with whom it disagrees. "Boon", be it noted, denotes a benefit or a favour. One has to wonder what has happened to liberalism's devotion to rights. But perhaps one should not make too much of this. Mr. Lapham has a very long paper trail testifying to his excitability. On the other hand, many might view Harper's as a venerable institution of the American establishment. Established in 1850, it has a circulation of over 200,000, and has published worthies such as Henry James, Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Woodrow Wilson and Winston Churchill. In its publicity, however, it boasts only one writer of note in the last half century, Seymour Hersch writing on the My Lai massacre. That was a very long time ago. Some while back, Harper's was going belly up and was rescued by the far-left MacArthur Foundation, which now owns the magazine. Nonetheless, it should not go unremarked that a publication that has a reserved perch on "the commanding heights of culture" (Marx) declares that tolerance is a boon that liberalism should no longer grant to conservative Christians. I would not be surprised if, by searching diligently, one could find a Dominionist nut in Colorado Springs who favours banning Harper's. Lewis Lapham is in very strange company.

### NO CONTRADICTION

Forget his use of the ugly and misleading phrase "organized religion". You know what he means. Stephen Prothero of Boston University is reviewing *Restless Souls* by Leigh Eric Schmidt, professor of religion at Princeton. Schmidt takes the side of the many "seekers" who are into "spirituality" and can't give the time of day to "religion". Prothero writes: "One of the grand conceits of the Spiritual Left is that each of us can (and should) invent our own

spirituality, which to be authentic must also be unborrowed. But the meditation techniques and yoga postures so loved among spirituality's champions did not spring forth fully formed from the genius of any American. They were cultivated over millennia by Hindus and Buddhists in India and Tibet and Japan, who were themselves sustained in those practices by institutions and clerics and everything else that [Ralph Waldo] Emerson loved to hate. Mr. Schmidt knows this, of course. And at a few points he seems to sense the irony of foisting an intellectual genealogy on folks who, like Charlie Brown and his friends, fancy themselves parentless. In the end, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that there is in contemporary American spirituality more than a modicum of the feckless teenager who imagines that his foolish parents have bequeathed him nothing except perhaps a new car. The problem with this conceit is not simply that it is historically inaccurate or that it fails to give credit where credit is due. The problem—and this should matter more to spirituality's friends than to its enemies—is that spirituality depends very much on organized religion, since each of its key characteristics (even its disdain for religion itself) was created and sustained by religious believers operating inside religious institutions and for religion's sake. What is missing from this otherwise intelligent book is a hardheaded engagement with the broader question of spirituality's provenance, specifically its symbiotic relationship with organized religion itself. Spirituality is not so much an alternative to religion as a part of it. Should the prophesy of the Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier ever come to pass—that 'altar, church, priest and ritual will pass away'—spirituality would go with them."

### BABY BOOM IN MANHATTAN

Brace yourself for some good news. I had been noticing it for the last

several years, and others said they, too, thought it to be the case. There are more babies in Manhattan. Infants in strollers, toddlers in stores, obviously pregnant women are all over the place. The impression turns out to be true. In the last four years, the number of children under five in Manhattan has increased by 26 percent. That compares with an 8 percent increase in all five boroughs. The increase is not among Mexicans, Dominicans and various immigrant groups. Their birth rates have declined slightly. The dramatic increase is among affluent professionals who are deciding to have babies. Manhattan is an expensive place to live. Preschools charge \$23,000 per year. An outfit called Private School Advisors charges parents \$6,000 to coach parents on how to get their child admitted to preschool. "Manhattan has always been a great place for raising your children," says Lori Robinson who heads up the New Mommies Network. "It's easier to be in the city with a baby. It's less isolation. You feel you are part of society." She doesn't go quite so far as to say so, but it's almost as though having children is, well, natural. Who says Manhattan is not part of the real world?



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## cutting/edge

A special feature keeping us up to date with issues of science and religion

### SCHÖNBORN REFINED

The important debate over the nature of the Church's acceptance of the theory of evolution has been refined over the last couple of months, allowing a clarification of the key issues. Cardinal Schönborn has continued to be active in this, contributing a number of lengthy articles to the discussion, for example in a series of monthly catechetical lectures in the Stephansdom, his cathedral church in Vienna. At the time of writing, his website has the first four lectures available [www.stephenscom.at/evolution](http://www.stephenscom.at/evolution), three already in English translation. His first lecture set the scene, discussing the background to the relationship of faith and science, a history of co-operation and conflict, especially with reference to evolution. His second lecture treated the idea of the beginning of space and time, and its relation to cosmology's 'Big Bang.' The third, extends into a discussion of the growing multiplicity of forms in creation, through evolution, and specifically the question of causation by God as creator, and secondary, natural causes within the created order. He brings out explicitly the distinct nature of man, at the pinnacle of creation, and that creation has a real and discernible direction, and a goal, intended by God, for man.

In another setting, there has been much progress too. The July 2005 article by Cardinal Schönborn spawned countless responses and one particularly intelligent series of articles and letters has appeared in the journal *First Things*, published by the Institute on Religion and Public Life in New York. In that journal in October, Stephen Barr (author of *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith*, reviewed in 'Cutting Edge' in November/December 2003) wrote an article entitled 'The Design of

Evolution.' In the January 2006 edition, Cardinal Schönborn replied at length to Barr's criticisms. Both of these articles are available in full at [www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com) The February issue, unavailable at the time of writing, includes a further article by Stephen Barr, entitled 'The Miracle of Evolution.' The outcome of these articles, and the accompanying correspondence, is a focusing of the discussion onto key points.

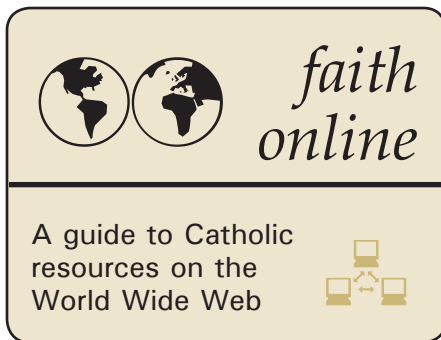
The first of these is the nature of what has been meant by 'random,' as this column has highlighted in preceding issues of *Faith* magazine. Barr argues that in science the term 'random' — statistical randomness — does not mean what the Cardinal had intimated. In Barr's sense, the randomness present in quantum physics, or in genetic mutation, is a feature of the natural world as we encounter it, and as science describes it. He says that "the word 'random' as used in science does not mean uncaused, unplanned, or inexplicable; it means uncorrelated." And later, he adds that "to employ arguments in science based on statistical randomness and probability is not necessarily to 'oppose' the idea of chance to the existence of God the Creator." The Jesuit, Joseph Fessio, in a relevant letter to the journal in January, clarifies this point: " 'random genetic variations' are 'foreseen' from God's point of view and have determinate causes." And Barr, in a subsequent letter, affirms: "The whole point of my article was precisely to demonstrate that the narrow concept of randomness that is used throughout all branches of science is compatible with a divine Providence that governs and directs every event in the universe."

A second point is that certain neo-Darwinian evolutionary biologists deliberately choose to apply indiscriminately the terms of science to the realms of theology. Cardinal Schönborn criticized the broader thrust of "neo-Darwinian dogma", and in his first catechetical lecture has

given examples of the misapplying of scientific ideas to make atheistic philosophical inferences. Barr takes the Cardinal to task for the wholesale criticism of 'neo-Darwinism', arguing that in fact neo-Darwinism is a scientific theory about evolution, and not a philosophical world-view. Fessio, brings some clarity: "The confusion arises when scientists and non-scientists alike speak of 'random' or 'chance' mutation. In the minds of many of them this *does* equal 'uncaused' and therefore 'unplanned' — and therefore opposed to the existence of God the Creator. Barr rightly maintains that this is not science. And so does Cardinal Schönborn, which is why he calls it 'ideology, not science.' But many scientists do make this equation. And many say so publicly, some quite stridently — Richard Dawkins and James Watson being notable examples. It is to these that Cardinal Schönborn's criticism is directed, [which] is not an intrusion of theology or philosophy into science; it is a higher order of knowledge showing where science has gone beyond the limits of its own method."

A third point is that of avoiding an ontological separation of scientific 'material' and 'efficient' causes in nature from the higher 'formal' and 'final' causes. Modern science does not point to a reductive approach to nature, limited to material and efficient causes, but to a more holistic picture, in which *science itself* is seamlessly connected with the purpose of the universe, its plan and direction. Neither excluding *a priori* with positivists anything more than the material and efficient causes, nor making philosophy, as the 'science of common experience,' superior to science, as Schönborn would have it, is a valid description of the world. The intelligible principles of finality — traces of the Mind of the Creator — discerned through a holistic analysis of the scientific data are just as much a part of the substantial reality of the cosmos as the matter itself.





*The links to all the websites mentioned in Faith Online are included in the Faith Website at [www.faith.org.uk](http://www.faith.org.uk)*

### COMMUNION AND LIBERATION

Like so many of the new movements, this one grew simply from an individual's inspired vision. Don Luigi Giusani built up a Christian presence in a high school in Milan around the understanding that 'the Christian event, lived in Communion, is the foundation of the authentic liberation of man'. The charism of the movement today is to educate young people to Christian maturity and to bring them to collaborate in the Church's mission. Now present in around 70 countries, there is no formal membership, but people meet each week for 'school of community' catechesis. The website provides a list of Giusani's books and access to the international monthly *Traces*. Giusani died shortly before Pope John Paul II and you can read the funeral messages sent both by John Paul and his successor in recognition of this perceptive and dynamic priest.

[www.lifeuk.org](http://www.lifeuk.org)  
[www.clonline.org](http://www.clonline.org)

### THE GOOD COUNSEL NETWORK

Here is a pro-life organisation that does not hide its faith. Our Lady of Good Counsel and St Jude, the two patrons, feature boldly on the homepage. The Network seeks to 'mediate the mission of motherhood, through and with Mary, in order to save as many babies as possible from abortion'. This is brought about using 'the most effective morally acceptable means' by befriending women, counselling them and offering practical help. The centres and their staff in London, Birmingham and Cardiff are backed by several hundred priestly and lay supporters who pray the rosary, make eucharistic adoration or offer Masses each week. The newsletter states that at least 134 mothers decided to keep their babies last year through the support of the Network. The site provides some inspiring stories, a newsletter and forms for those who wish to give their support.

[www.goodcounselnetwork.co.uk](http://www.goodcounselnetwork.co.uk)

### WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

Papal teaching has recently affirmed the role of the family not only as the basis of Society, but as a medium for spreading the Gospel. WMF is a sort of World Youth Day for families; every three years the pope calls families from all over the world to meet, pray, talk and learn. The meetings are organised by the Pontifical Society for the Family, the next one being in Valencia in July. This website gives practical details for the meeting; a registration form, recent papal documents and a series of 8 short preparatory catecheses that could be used in prayer groups.

[www.wmf2006.org/en](http://www.wmf2006.org/en)

### THE RIGHT SORT OF STEM CELLS

**DoNoHarm**, the group behind this site, has three objectives: to advance treatments that do not destroy human embryos; to promote knowledge of ethically acceptable stem cell research and to support legislation (in the States) prohibiting funding of anti-life research. There's a great wealth of apologetic resources here, from fascinating media stories to fact sheets. All confirm the fruitfulness of adult stem cells, and the uselessness, even inherent danger, of embryonic stem cell lines.

[www.stemcellresearch.org](http://www.stemcellresearch.org)

### PRIESTLY FRATERNITY OF ST CHARLES BORROMEO

Recognised by Pope John Paul II in 1999, members live in houses in nearly 20 countries from Chile to Taiwan, following the charism of Communion and Liberation. There seems to be no shortage of seminarians.

[www.fscb.org](http://www.fscb.org)

### CATHOLIC PRAYERS

What it says on the tin: litanies, novenas, chaplets. The 'philosophical paradoxes' section isn't particularly helpful, but there are some fine Holy Communion prayers from the Early Fathers.

[www.roman-catholic-prayers.com](http://www.roman-catholic-prayers.com)