

newdirections



February 2008
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serving Evangelicals and Catholics seeking to renew the Church in the historic faith

Stormy seas

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Two recent events focus attention on the status of religion in modern British society. The first is the conversion to Roman Catholicism of former Prime Minister, Tony Blair. The second is the condemnation by homosexual groups of the appointment of the leader of the *Evangelical Alliance*, Joel Edwards, as a member of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

In a television programme chronicling his years in office, Blair referred to his religious beliefs and the difficulty of expressing them in the current political system. 'It's difficult if you talk about religious faith in our political system,' he said. 'If you are in the American political system or others, then you can talk about religious faith and people say 'yes, that's fair enough' and it is something they respond to quite naturally. You talk about it in our system and, frankly, people do think you're a nutter.'

Other recent Catholic converts have publicly regretted that Blair's omissions in office were not merely sins of speech or silence: in the case of his support for abortion legislation they were actions of serious import. Despite his emerging Catholic faith, did Blair believe that the rights of women to terminate a pregnancy are now so embedded in our society that a serious politician cannot afford to flout or oppose them? Probably. Did those who prepared Blair for admission to the Church share that view? It is not unlikely.

The position of Dr Edwards could not be more different. Edwards has taken a consistently hostile line to changes in legislation relating to sexual orientation. He has done so from a traditional biblical standpoint. 'The erosion of Christian values increasingly reflected in our legislation,' he said in a letter to other *Evangelical Alliance* leaders, 'is an indication that Britain has lost its Christian soul.'

This and other similar statements have been cited in a dossier gathered by the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement deploring Dr Edwards' appointment.

No one doubts that Edwards, as a black evangelical Christian with a commitment to human rights, represents a large community from whom the Equalities and Human Rights Commission needs to hear. The contention of the *Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement* is clearly that his Christian conviction, that homosexual relations are not on a par with heterosexual, is an impediment to his membership: that in modern civil society he is, to use Blair's terms, something of a 'nutter'. And a dangerous 'nutter' at that.

In both these cases, the underlying assumption seems to be that there is now a secular

moral consensus by which Christianity is to be judged and found wanting: that sincerely held views, grounded in Bible and tradition, are so eccentric as to be merely risible.

Dr Edwards (and Trevor Philips) are standing their ground. It is important that they do so. The remarkable thing is not that *LGCM* has protested the appointment – they would do that, wouldn't they? – but that it was made in the first place. We need people in our public institutions who witness against the encroaching liberal consensus. Religion must be seen to be more than a retirement hobby for politicians who can now afford to be off-message.



What is the problem with women bishops? In an age so guided by a liberal secular agenda (see above), it is extraordinary that something as banal and politically correct as a woman bishop is so hard to find. Proponents may happily blame us, the traditionalist minority, who unfortunately for them are at one with the great majority of the Christian Church.

But if this is the case, where are the crusaders for justice? Nowhere to be found. As rumours and news items circulate that the House of Bishops, at their meeting in January, failed (again!) to come to any agreement as to how to pursue the motion they themselves initiated in Synod, do we hear any response from those who claim to be campaigning for women bishops? None at all.

Watch is a one-issue group campaigning for women bishops in the Church of England. Have they issued a press release, made any comment, posted anything on their website? No. Instead we read from an item posted two years ago that there are now 14 provinces of the Anglican Communion (over a third of the total) that 'accept women bishops'. So again we ask, 'Where are they?'

As we all know, they minister in Canada and the United States. And nowhere else, New Zealand having lost interest in its experiment. In other words, a majority of those provinces that 'accept' women bishops (12 out of 14) would rather not have them, leaving only the two provinces whose connection with the rest of the Communion is the most tenuous. Meanwhile little interest is shown in this country.

Justice for women is a moral demand, commanding our undeniable support; but this issue is not about justice. Perhaps, dare we say, the tradition is true. And, secretly, they know it. **ND**



Terms of service

*The draft legislation on clergy Terms of Service will return to General Synod in February. Below is part of a talk given by **Paul Benfield**, a member of Synod, in which he outlined his concerns that not enough has been thought through*

Time off sounds relatively straightforward. It is stated that an office holder shall be entitled to an uninterrupted rest period of not less than 24 hours every seven days.

This is where it seems to me that the regulations become potentially unworkable. How am I to ensure that my day off is not interrupted. What if a parishioner calls me to a sick relative on my day off? Of course, as a priest called to serve I go and pray with them, anoint them or whatever is required. But that notion of service does not fit happily with employment rights.

The fact is that once my day off has been interrupted that to which I am entitled – my 24-hour uninterrupted rest period – has not been granted. Although I can arrange things if I choose so that I do not take any services, nor any funerals or the like on my day off, I cannot stop the phone ringing or the doorbell going.

The Bishop of Dover, the chairman of the steering group which is trying to get this through Synod, says he expects there to continue to be goodwill and common sense. But goodwill and common sense need not operate once you have laid down *in law* something as prescriptive as a 24-hour uninterrupted rest period.

Let us imagine that my weekly rest period is constantly interrupted and I become run down and eventually I go off with stress-related illness. There is then the potential for me to claim that the illness has been brought on by the failure to receive my uninterrupted rest period and a claim for compensation or constructive dismissal. Is the church ready for such claims?

Let us continue with time for public duties. The draft regulations allow an office holder to take time off for public duties. These include work for any public authority such as a council or work for any charity. But most priests would not say that they are taking time off if they choose to become elected to serve on the local council or if they become a trustee of a charity. They would say that it is all part of their priesthood, serving the local community as appropriate.

Many clergy are school governors, both of church schools and non-church schools. Many clergy serve on diocesan synods and committees, and would regard that as part of their work as a priest. But under the regulations, all this can be controlled by the bishop. A priest must only spend an amount of time which is reasonable in the circumstances and in the event of a dispute the bishop will decide – with no right of appeal.

So if I am a Christian socialist and spend time as a socialist councillor in order to try and bring in the kingdom in that way, my Tory bishop can tell me that my time spent is unreasonable and he is the final arbiter with no right of appeal. I may be opposed to abortion and devote time to SPUC, but my liberal bishop can say that I am spending too much time on such

work. The power and control passes to the bishop.

You may say that there should be some control over my time – but there already is. If I am not doing what is required under canon law (taking services, visiting schools, visiting the sick and so on), the bishop can take action. But this attempt to separate out parts of the priest's life into time spent on the duties of his office and time off for public duties is misconceived. For a parish priest is there to *be* as much as to *do*.

And what of bishops spending time on public duties? The former Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, spent many hours in the House of Lords in debates on ethical matters such as war and bioethics, and he brought a legal action against the Church Commissioners over their investments policies. Was that time off for public duties? Was it time off at all? I would say no, it was part of his fulfilment of his episcopacy. Yet under the new regulations it would be possible for someone to complain to the Archbishop of Canterbury that he was spending too much time on such matters and the Archbishop would have to rule on it.

You can see that such a ruling could be open to abuse by an establishment archbishop trying to deal with a radical fellow bishop. Power in the hand of one man is always open to abuse, and goes against the polity of the Church of England, which has always had checks and balances on such abuse.

But it all comes back to the impossibility of trying to set out what is and what is not a priest's or a bishop's work. A priest and a bishop are ordained to be as much as to do.

Continuing education. Each office-holder shall be required to participate in arrangements made by the bishop for his Continuing Ministerial Education (CME). This may be sensible in some cases. It is certainly a good thing that a bishop can require clergy to attend a training course on, say, child protection. But if he says everyone must go on a course on gender awareness or liturgical dance, then they will have an obligation to do so.

It is known that in some dioceses the courses offered on CME are poor. We are likely to end up with clergy attending courses in which they have no interest, just to tick the box. Experience from the secular world will show that this is what happens when training courses, seen by the participants to be irrelevant, are made compulsory.

Capability procedures. The new rules will allow a priest or bishop to be removed from office on the grounds of lack of capability. Of course there must be procedures to remove a priest or bishop when he or she is physically or mentally incapable of performing the duties of his or her office. However, such procedures already exist and there is no evidence that the current system do not work properly.

If a priest or bishop is removed from office on the grounds of lack of capability, he will have the right to

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or not the
applicant
before them
was capable
of exercising
that office

apply to an employment tribunal and claim that he has been unfairly dismissed – that he was not in fact incapable of carrying out the duties of his office. So we will have members of a Church, a Christian body, submitting themselves to a secular body, the employment tribunal, to determine what is effectively an internal dispute between members. St Paul has something to say about Christians submitting themselves to secular courts to settle disputes in 1 Corinthians 6.1–7.

Would it not be possible to set up some internal Church tribunal to rule on capability rather than submitting to the secular employment tribunal? The church has recently set up Clergy Discipline Tribunals so why not capability tribunals? Employment tribunals consist of a legally qualified chairman and two other members, generally consisting of one person with an employer's perspective, as it were, and one with an employee's perspective. But there will be no guarantee that any of the members will be Christian. There is no guarantee that any members will have the slightest idea about the office and work of a priest.

There is no guarantee that any member of the tribunal will be a priest – indeed that is most unlikely. Yet they will be deciding whether or not the applicant before them was capable of exercising that office of a priest and whether or not he has been unfairly dismissed from it. Sometimes the area of dispute may verge on the doctrinal, and the secular courts have frequently expressed themselves unwilling to determine disputes about Christian doctrine. I foresee great difficulties here.

Of course, we are assured that only a very few cases are expected to go to employment tribunals and even fewer are expected to be claims for unfair dismissal. But how do they know? Surely that is just wishful thinking.

Ministerial review. In the case of a dismissal for lack of capability arising from physical or mental incapacity, the issues may be relatively straightforward. But the current proposals envisage the possibility of capability procedures sometimes arising after and linked to ministerial review. For the first time, it will become a legal requirement for priests to undertake ministerial review. You might have thought that, if it was going to be a legal requirement, then there would be a national standard for ministerial review, but each diocese is going to be free to set up its own system. This, of course, will create problems when people move from one diocese to another. The reason that each diocese is to have its own system is that the bishops want it that way. They refused to agree to a national system.

So every priest and bishop will be subject to compulsory ministerial development review. This review will involve the setting of targets and objectives. I tried to get the revision committee to specify exactly what sort of targets could be set. But they would not go down that line because the Bishop of Dover did not want to separate out one area of a priest's life and work from another. So the target can be anything. The target could be to get the parish share in. The target could be to get people into church. This means that the priest, far from being faithful to his or her ordination vows, could become a mere fundraiser or entertainer. He must show that he is getting the numbers up to prove that he is doing a good job. You may think

that I am sounding an unwarranted alarmist tone. But how can we know, unless what is involved in ministerial review is spelt out more clearly?

The draft Measure simply says that the Archbishops' Council may make regulations to assess the performance of office holders. The draft regulations simply say that it shall be the duty of each office holder to cooperate in any ministerial development review. But nowhere are we told what this review shall consist of and who will undertake it. Yet the bishop must make a written record of that unspecified ministerial review and the office holder must sign it. Presumably if he refuses to sign the record then he has not cooperated with the ministerial development review.

He is then in breach of his duty to cooperate with the review, and can be disciplined for failing to do something which he is required to do under the laws ecclesiastical. It is not that there is necessarily anything wrong with ministerial review. Indeed, if it is done well, it should help the priest develop his or her ministry, but still, surely, it is only fair that we are told what it will involve.

A ministerial review can lead to the setting of targets which, if not met, could lead to capability procedures and removal from office. The draft regulations require the bishop to make the arrangements for the ministerial review of his clergy. He is the final arbiter of what they shall be. He must take note of any guidance on the matter issued by the Archbishops' Council, but he decides. It seems to me that this is too much power for one man (or, in the future, one woman).

What if the priest happens to express views with which the bishop disagrees? One view was clearly stated in a speech in General Synod in February 2007 by Mrs April Alexander from Southwark Diocese, and a member of the steering group which is pushing this through. She said that as a layperson she was shocked at how clergy flout the wishes of their bishop. This type of thing, she said, is totally unknown in the secular world, if one hopes to continue in one's current employment.

So there we have it. In the new order of common tenure, clergy must not disagree with their bishop. We are to follow the secular model and the clergy must only express views in accordance with those of their bishop – as though he were their manager or company chairman. Never mind that the oath of canonical obedience only requires them to obey the bishop in all things lawful and honest. In the new order, you must not disagree with your bishop if you wish to remain in office.

Now of course in a diocese where there is a nice cuddly lovable bishop who would not abuse his position and power, there may not be anything to worry about. But what about the future when that nice cuddly lovable bishop retires and he is replaced by a ruthless or incompetent bishop? Those who disagree with the views of their bishop may find themselves subject to procedures to bring them into line or remove them.

So I repeat: it is not that I am against ministerial review. It is just that we must know what it will involve so that we are reassured that it cannot be abused. It must not be left as some unspecified process which each bishop can decide. The draft legislation is deficient in this regard at the moment, and attempts to change it have so far failed. **ND**

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Stop the progress

Digby Anderson urges an emphatic rejection of the reforming theology of the Seventies and a return to far older values if we are truly to re-evangelize the nation

In the NEW DIRECTIONS of January 2008, Fr Philip North wrote of the problems afflicting Anglican Catholics and the need for them to renew and evangelize rather than 'focusing on internal arguments'. Set aside, for another article another day, his understanding of evangelization; what was intriguing, and I think, almost totally wrong is its depiction of the cultures (his term) within and outside the church.

Embattled Catholics

He sees Anglican Catholics as a tiny group set in a hostile or indifferent culture of 'virulent secularism'. Instead of engaging with this culture and imaginatively bringing to it the truth of Christian revelation, we 'offer little more than internal arguments.' This is not, I think, how the battlefield lies.

The surrounding culture is certainly hostile but it is not predominately secularist. We are not confronted so much by atheism as by paganism and idolatry. A few of the many various false gods are self-affirmation, therapy, distributive justice and scientism, and the last, while it would like to think itself scientific and secular, is held and advanced with all the worst features of Protestant religious enthusiasm.

Even more important, the hostile culture, while certainly surrounding the church, has already penetrated it and is a powerful force within it. Hence what are dismissed as 'internal' arguments are no such thing. Forget the relativists outside the Church; it is the ones sitting on episcopal thrones that must be defeated. When Benedict XVI muses about the need for a smaller, purer church, it is this countering of alien forces within the Church that he has in mind.

A tired progressivism

What are the signs of these alien, hostile ideologies? Clearly some are to do with the paganisms mentioned above, Christians' spousal of extreme and anti-humanist environmentalism or feeling-good-about-ourselves counselling or egalitarian Liberationism. They can be spotted by Christians' use of alien vocabularies. Thus the Clinical Theology movement saw theological terms being ousted by psychotherapeutic terms and Liberation Theology imported Marxian language. But there are other less virulent but

still alien tendencies in the church. They too can be spotted by vocabulary.

Thus Fr North wants us to be positive and to manage perceptions. There is not enough good practice in our parishes. Worse, some parishes lack 'the most basic strategies for growth'. We need 'new (*sic*) initiatives'. We must 'plan and execute growth strategies and commit resources.' Only the word 'targets' is missing to show the ideological provenance of this vocab-

the Pope has re-awakened an understanding and appreciation of the past

ulary. Instead of committing resources, meeting challenges and the rest, what are some of us Anglo-Catholics doing? We are undermining our evangelistic opportunities by our 'prevailing culture of negativity'. Even more worrying is a 'tendency to retreat into a mythic past of curé hats and eastward-facing High Masses where recreating the world of Fortescue and O'Connell seems to be more important than true inculturation.'

'Managing perceptions' and the rest are the banner words of a tired progressivism in which moving forward and embracing new challenges are a given good and being stuck in the past, or, even worse, retreating into the past, are obvious bads. It is a shame to see the language that has destroyed our schools, trivialized business management and corrupted everything from politics to personal relationships used about the church. This progressivism is now much older hat than anything worn by the parish priest of Ars. No one was less likely to set up the nineteenth-century version of 'new initiatives' than Jean Marie Vianney. Yet he was a not unsuccessful evangelist. The concepts of progressivism have enjoyed full reign in the CofE for half a century and, unlike the Curé, they have emptied the pews.

Today, in his Roman Catholic Church it is the curé hats of *The Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest* and the faithful followers of Fortescue and O'Connell in *The Priestly Fraternity of St Peter* who are attracting vocations and making converts. It is the profoundly conservative *Opus Dei*

that is so successful in evangelism. And the Pope himself has explained why he favours eastward altars and indeed vestments from the 'mythic past'. That same Sovereign Pontiff is clearly aware that we must embrace and preserve the past. He has made it quite clear that elements of modern liturgical practice represent a decline and one not unconnected with evangelistic failure, the decline of the Church in Europe.

Authority of the past

Unfortunately the progressive vocabulary and the culture to which it belongs are widely embedded in the Church. The great Anglo-Catholic churches and the great Anglo-Catholic Societies all have their contingents of identikit 1970s Romanist fashion. They are the ageing tendencies of the Church who, some of them forty years on, still imagine they are part of a new, ground-breaking movement.

The desire to conform to Roman innovation has become a blind adherence to post-Conciliar novelties, many of which were not demanded by the Council and several of which are being criticized by Rome itself. Not least are many of these people wedded to an infantile liturgical language or mistranslation of the *Missale Romanum*, similarly childish and secular music and a cult of ugliness in church ornaments and vestments which, as so often with language, may betoken less than adult and occasionally ugly thoughts.

What Benedict has done in his writing and above all in sanctioning, and promoting, two versions of the *same* rite, one ordinary, one extraordinary, goes beyond liturgy. He has nailed the Whig progressive heresy. Too many within the Church have flirted with the Enlightenment religion of linear progress.

The Pope has re-awakened an understanding and appreciation of the past, our past, in which there is no place for progressivism or for syncretism with alien ideologies. Those of us Anglicans who desire to follow Rome will have to do something even more demanding than relearning our declensions and Fortescue and O'Connell. We shall have to learn how to make a reverent bow of apology (*profonde inclinatus*) to the authority of the past and turn our backs on the cult of the future. **ND**

Reading Scripture

God reveals himself in modern experience – true or false?

Peter Toon investigates the real foundation of the view that same-sex affection can be a form of holiness

Today, within the old-line Protestant churches, and not least within The Episcopal Church, any traditional church member, if he/she is paying attention, hears often, in a clear or veiled way, a novel view of both divine revelation and human religious experience.

In the submission of The Episcopal Church to the Anglican Consultative Council in Nottingham in June 2005 (entitled *To Set our Hope on Christ: Response to the Windsor Report*), this novel view was presented in a way that sought to hide its radical nature and make it to be sound, widely-held, biblical interpretation.

I responded to this TEC essay in a large booklet entitled *Same-Sex Affection, Holiness & Ordination* (available from <www.anglicanmarketplace.com>), seeking not to deal with sexuality as such but to make clear the presence and foundational nature of this innovatory doctrine of Scripture in the response of TEC to the Anglican Communion.

The innovatory doctrine

A few weeks ago, I listened to Bishop Gene Robinson on TV stating this same doctrine with clarity and apparent winsomeness in a lecture to students in Florida, as a means of defending his own 'modern' sexual practices.

The TEC doctrine is simple: that in the two Testaments of the canon of Scripture we have the account of the developing experience of God by the Israelites and then by Jesus and the Christians. Both the experience and the account of it naturally reflect the conditions of the times when it was received and described.

So the received revelation from God recorded in the Bible is a developing and maturing – though very much incomplete – revelation. Further, it has always to be distinguished in its essence from the cultural form in which it is received and understood. In this development the high point, but not the final point (for that is yet to be), is Jesus, in what he is, says and does.

God's revelation

Importantly, God does not cease to reveal himself after the time of Jesus, for being the God of not only history but also of nature; that is, the God of space

and time reveals his/her/its mind and will through the varied searching and researching of human beings. And this is obvious, they say, to moderns in the tremendous growth of knowledge by human beings in recent times, of both human beings as complex creatures and of the massive cosmos in which they live. Further, this new revelation both corrects and perfects knowledge gleaned from the religious experience of the Jews and early Christians and recorded in the Bible.

So on the basis that God is alive and well and making himself known to human beings who have eyes to see, the

it was as though the one canon of Scripture was made up of two very different Testaments

Church has to move on in its worship, doctrine, morals and discipline to pay attention to the God of today; that is, to where Deity is in relation to humanity and the cosmos in 2008. And so the new prophetic agenda of the elite of The Episcopal Church is based on reality as they see it, the God in process revealing himself!

They can hold no other position, they say, for they are committed to the God who is, like the cosmos, in evolution and progress! Part of this reality is that same-sex affection is a reflection of the holiness of God.

Conservative response

But what about the conservative Episcopal opposition to this innovatory approach and in particular to its new stance on sexuality?

There does not seem to be one so-called 'orthodox' mindset within the Anglican or Episcopal movement in opposition to that of the Episcopal elite. However, the varied approaches, in opposition to the development and process theory of the progressive liberals, all seem to believe that there are clear and final words of God about sexual relations and other basic matters written not only in the

New but also in the Old Testament. And these they quote and cite. But there are problems.

Most Evangelical clergy seem to come out of a seminary training where they daily saw the Department of Old Testament Studies and the Department of New Testament Studies having little dialogue – as a maximum cooperating, and as a minimum going in parallel lines. It was as though the one canon of Scripture was made up of two very different Testaments, and what really connected them was the binding of the Bible in which they were placed.

A crucial omission

Further, there was in the seminary usually no regular worship (i.e. Morning and Evening Prayer) where the Old Testament and the Psalter are read/prayed daily in the context of their fulfilment in Christ in the New Testament readings and Canticles.

This omission makes it difficult for students to establish a mindset wherein the right relation of the two Testaments is known intellectually and experientially. The theme of 'according to the Scriptures' (i.e. the OT) is critical for early Christian doctrine and devotion and this is caught and imbibed in classic Christian worship.

Two Testaments

From such a background as that of the typical seminary, it is difficult to make a reasoned case against the liberal doctrine of the progressive nature of revelation. And, in the present crisis over sexuality, it is also difficult in a modern context to use successfully the Old Testament texts which declare that homosexual practice is sinful.

The position of the Apostles and early Church leaders with regard to the Bible seems to have been different, and may be instructive. For them the Bible, the inspired, written Word of God, was without doubt the Jewish Bible, which most read in Greek.

Jesus as Saviour

Together with this they had the teaching of, and facts concerning, Jesus as the Saviour and how he fulfilled the Scriptures by his words, works and life, death

and resurrection.

On the basis of the Bible and with the guidance of the Apostolic Testimony and Tradition (which was simultaneously and slowly being put into writing and circulated), they possessed what has been called the 'Rule of Faith', which amounted to a Christ-centred reading and interpretation of the Jewish Bible, as from the God and Father of the same Lord Jesus Christ. Thus they read the Bible in both its common sense mode, and as the text not only approved, but also fulfilled in various ways, by Jesus, the Lord and Saviour.

Therefore they cited the Old Testament, as did Jesus, as the Word of God written, nothing less and nothing more! Then later the 'Rule of Faith' gave way to (a) the collection and acceptance of the books we call the New Testament; and (b) the fixed Creeds for Baptism of which the Apostles and Nicene are the most well known.

One canon

It would do us no harm today to regard the Old Testament as the primary Scriptures of the Lord and the New Testament as the divinely authenticated interpretation of them by the Spirit of the Lord. Hereby we would have a sense of a fixed

order of salvation in Christ from one God and Father, made available for revelation to the Gentiles and for us and for our salvation, in the Spirit.

I would suggest that the modern use of the Bible to support innovatory sexual relations, as is the norm in The Episcopal Church in 2008, cannot be overturned by the typical Evangelical use of the Bible. We need to recover the sense that the

for them the Bible, the inspired, written Word of God, was without doubt the Jewish Bible

Bible is first one canon, and then within the canon there are two Testaments, united in and by Christ. If we begin from the presenting doctrine of the seminary and many text-books, that 'Two Testaments make up one canon', then we are sure to get things wrong.


(My learned friend Professor C. Seitz of Toronto University is working on the relation of the Rule of Faith to the two Testaments and his insights contain

important lessons for Anglicans to learn and utilize in their use of sacred Scripture in worship, doctrine and apologetics.)

The orthodox response

But there is one more thing. Since the scholarly and social elite of The Episcopal Church is advancing a claim for revelation based on the reality of process within both God and cosmos, the orthodox response has to be clear and robust. This will need to hold and expound a sound view of the relation between the Old Testament and the New, within the context of the Rule of Faith, but also with the use and understanding of natural law.

Here much help can be gained especially from modern Catholic writers, who are developing a body of theological work, to show that both homosexual practice and same-sex marriage are 'unnatural' in terms of nature as created by God, the Lord of creation. The support by the modern State for these 'unnatural' relations and practices will be a means of actually undermining the State in the long term.

Further background to this particular debate and the framework for this call to orthodox biblical reading can be found at www.pbsusa.org 

Has Lent caught you on the hop this year? If it has, you are not alone. But what's your excuse?

If you have not done anything by the way of organizing Lent study, fast or worship, there must be a reason. Is it because you are reliant on other people to get you started: a friend, family member or the vicar? Or is it because you have a different attitude to the things of faith than to, say, holidays or the dentist?

It does not surprise me when even mature Christians are so un-businesslike about their spiritual life. Their reasons for this do vary, but there is perhaps something in our social context that is a block to being businesslike about the work and business of prayer.

If there were as many adverts for Holy Week services as there are for beach holidays in Spain, I expect more people might book in advance; as it is, people in general seem to be more 'last minute dot com' than advanced savers when it comes to organizing their spiritual life.

I might be something of a professional in these things, but the first things in my diary each year are a monthly quiet day, my clergy cell meeting dates, my confession date for Lent and my annual

Ghostly Counsel

Planning ahead

Andy Hawes is Warden of Edenham Regional Retreat House

retreat. I know very well that if they do not get down on the pages first, something else 'more important' will fill them instead.

All of this may sound totally 'unspiritual' to those that follow the line that spirituality is all about the wind of the spirit and living in the moment. To be blunt, that is absolute tosh! Any reading of the New Testament reveals that Our Lord was not averse to planning ahead and that the apostles worked hard to 'keep all in good and seemly order' [1 Corinthians 14.40].

Jesus had the disciples organized in an efficient way. They had a common purse, of which Judas Iscariot was the treasurer. He made sure that everything was ready well in advance for the

Passover in Jerusalem – he had already booked a room and had arranged for a man to meet the disciples to show them the way. It was not all made up on the spot. There was forethought and planning.

Prayer needs an ordered day, an ordered week and an ordered year. If some readers feel this is too monastic, there is little I can write in response except to say that certainly in the Anglican Tradition there is a strong emphasis on regular prayer, morning and evening, and on religious observance by feast and fast of the liturgical year. It may go against the spirit of these times, but this not the spirit we are seeking to know and relate to.

For anything to grow, it needs protection and structure, and the same is true of our spiritual life. We may think of the analogy of a person who sets off on a long journey without a map or anything to eat on the way. Only a person of crazy irresponsibility would do that – but that is exactly what many folk do in their spiritual life. To my mind, alarm clocks, diaries, notebooks and a place set apart are essentials for the Christian life. Have you thought about your plans for Holy Week and Easter?

Ardour in the laity

In a second excerpt from the Working Party report, **Philip North** continues his passionate and provocative manifesto of renewal from last month with a plea for a more serious renewal of the laity

There are many ways in which renewal can be encouraged within the local church.

The Worship of Christ in the Eucharist. The Caister Conferences have been one of the most significant signs of hope for Anglo-Catholics in recent years. The heart of the conference is the hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Many parishes who have experienced times of growth speak of the way in which renewal began with the introduction of a Holy Hour, even one that was not all that well attended. Personal renewal can only begin with a profound desire on the part of the individual to seek Christ afresh in the Blessed Sacrament. We would urge all parishes to encourage their people in the silent adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

Pilgrimage. A pilgrimage should be a time of intense personal renewal. The pilgrim is encouraged to turn to Christ afresh, to confess their sins, and to hear anew the Great Commission. The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham has seen considerable growth in recent years and seeks to be a place of evangelization and renewal.

To take full advantage of all that a place like Walsingham can offer, pilgrimage needs to be seen as an activity of the whole church. Pilgrims need to be prepared in advance and to have guidance in taking full advantage of their time in a holy place. When this is done, pilgrimage can play a central role in the renewal of a parish.

Catechesis. Complacency is the great enemy of evangelization. When Christians take their relationship with God for granted and forget the power of the gifts that are theirs, the ardour to evangelize goes. Good catechesis will counter complacency by recalling Christians to the heart of their faith. We have increasingly become a church in which the only instruction most laity receive is the Sunday homily.

Encounter with the Bible has often been limited to the opportunity once every week or so to listen to three badly-read passages. Meanwhile Junior Church has too often been making sunflowers from paper plates and confirmation classes have been thin and/or ill-thought through.

A new Pentecost

Renewal Programmes. Mission events and weekends, while challenging to organize, can be powerful renewal experiences. The *Fan the Flame* programme, developed by Bishop Lindsay Urwin, has as its core purpose the renewal of ardour. It is a five-night teaching week organized by lay people from the participating parish, assisted by two trained members of the Mission Task Force. *Fan the Flame* can be a remarkable vehicle for renewal and growth, but like any programme, you get back from it only what you put into it. Often the problem seems to be that clergy are reluctant to hand over the organization of such a major piece of work to lay people. Or if they are, once the week is over, they want their parish back and those lay people, often motivated and ready for action, are relegated to their former position of subservience.

We are convinced that the Catholic Revival of the nineteenth century was a powerful moving of the Holy Spirit, seen in the

renewal of laity and clergy alike. The worship and the preaching of many of our churches was fervent and emotional. The aim of the Anglo-Catholic Congresses was 'to bring men and women to acknowledge Jesus as Saviour and King'. It is on record that Fr Wainwright at St Peter's London Docks in the 1920s thought that the time of conversion for the men in his Confirmation Group came when they prayed together freely and in their own words.

Anglo-Catholics believe in the Holy Spirit. We teach that the Spirit is truly given in Confirmation and Ordination, and that the same Spirit transforms bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ at the Eucharist.

Charismatic Renewal came to the Church of England first through the influence of American Anglo-Catholics, and there are probably more charismatics in the Roman Catholic Church than in all other denominations put together. Renewal in the

Holy Spirit belongs, not with denominational Pentecostalism, but at the heart of the Catholic Church.

Ardour in prayer and a new confidence in telling of the Good News of Jesus Christ in our lives will come to Anglo-Catholics as we open ourselves and our parishes to the wind and fire of the Holy Spirit. There will be tongues and

tears in prayer for some, and profound and expectant silence for others. But there will be no fear or division over this, for Anglo-Catholics will have discovered a new love of God and each other.

Lay formation

The working party was unanimous that the one single factor most necessary to rebuild an evangelizing Catholic movement is lay development. We are locked into the stranglehold of a suffocating clericalism in the Catholic movement.

For many it is demonstrated at the big celebrations such as the National Pilgrimage to Walsingham or *Stand up for Jesus* when for hours we watch as hordes of clergy parade forward to kiss the altar while laypeople look on in admiration. Many would argue that this represents a profoundly dis-eased model of the Church in which it appears that the role of the baptized is to watch and be impressed. All too often this attitude is replicated in parishes where the people of God are left stunted and unused, their gifts unacknowledged.

Often, even when there have been attempts to develop lay ministry, lay people have been turned into pseudo-clergy, taking on some of the tasks that cannot be achieved by a reduced number of priests. Proper lay ministry means forming a community of the baptized who have an ardour and an understanding of their faith which enables them to live it out and proclaim it. To achieve this, priests need to accept that their key role in the future is to draw gifts out of others, to call people to lay ministries in the church and to resource lay people to live out their faith boldly. Lay people need to see that their responsibilities do not end when they walk through the church door and that their vocation as the baptized involves more than 'helping Father'.

The renewal of the laity lies right at the very heart of effective evangelization and if the working party had been asked to make one single recommendation, this would have been it. **ND**

**we are locked into
the stranglehold of a
suffocating clericalism**

Costly bishops

Despite the ongoing financial problems faced by the CofE, bishops' expenses and housing costs have risen dramatically. George Austin calls for an investigation of this issue

It was a bit of harmless fun at the bishops' expense (or perhaps expenses) when last month 30DAYS noted the amazing contrast between the demands of bishops in the north-west and those of the southern climes. And this month there was the annual tease with the announcement of the Golden Mitre and Wooden Crosier awards for those bishops who have cost the Commissioners the most or least in their working expenses.

In fact it is not really funny at all. Between 2003 and 2004 when the RPI was 3.5%, bishops' working expenses rose by 5.94%, while those of 2005 showed a rise of 5.6% against an RPI of 2.2%. The cost of the maintenance of bishops' houses and gardens rose from £5.5m in 2004 to a shocking £8.6m in 2005. The comparable figures in 2002 and 2003 were £3.5m and £4.1m, thus rising in only three years by almost two-and-a-half times. Fortunately the Commissioners can save over £5m by changes in the pensions of retired clergy.

When I was Archdeacon of York, parishes would every spring send in their accounts and reports for the annual visitation and it was always clear that finances were tight. As my secretary, my wife (who was paid an hourly rate which never increased in the seven years she served!) would open the mail and was often upset by the letters from churchwardens, which would mention the desperate financial difficulties they were facing. They would add words to the effect that 'it is hard, but with the Lord's help we will come through.'

Hard to explain

Why was she upset? Because she knew too that episcopal demands in housing and working expenses were far greater than those expected by the parochial clergy and of course by archdeacons – whose administrative duties are inevitably greater than those at least of suffragan bishops. Now of course parochial clergy do not need the kind of office and working expenses of a bishop, but that is not the point. What is the point is that the clergy sometimes know they cannot be fully reimbursed simply because the parishes cannot afford it and they accept that this is so.

Archdeacons, as members of diocesan boards of finance, are aware that dioceses

have to watch every penny and could not – and would not – begin to meet the standards set by some of the bishops. This still continues: in 2005 the total expenses of the three archdeacons in one diocese were £23,487 and those of the three suffragans £108,955. If this is put into the terms used in the 30DAYS survey, this puts each archdeacon on average expenses of £21.44 a day and the suffragans on £99.50 a day. It is quite simply impossible for this differential to be justified in terms of need.

No wonder when nationally the suffragan bishops are asked to consider letting

the present pattern cannot continue, for it is rapidly becoming a scandal

their expenses be paid by dioceses there is always vehement resistance. And it would make interesting reading if clergy readers could send in details of the 2005 working expenses of their archdeacons to see if this is a national trend.

Closer scrutiny needed

Bishops, of course, must be properly supported in their working needs, but the wide differentials in the demands of bishops for the same job do suggest a need for closer scrutiny. As one bishop – since retired – put it to me, 'You have to realize that some of them ask for what they can get whereas others of us just claim what we need.' I once asked a staff member at the Commissioners why he never said 'no'. 'If I do,' he replied, 'they simply go over my head and I'm overruled.'

Perhaps there should be an examination and comparison of such needs. In the diocese of Southwark, for example, the staff costs for each area bishop are identical at £25,300 – almost certainly the cost of the salary and pension plus other contributions for one secretary each. Should other dioceses do this? And if archdeacons manage easily on a part-time secretary – or no secretary at all – what are the additional needs of a suffragan that full-time help is required?

To take this further, in these days of reducing clergy numbers, should the post

of archdeacon and suffragan bishop be combined? In York, when a suffragan and an archdeacon were coming up to retirement, I suggested that either this should be done or that we reduced to two of each, but it was not thought appropriate. But it might be so in a diocese where the bishop is not also archbishop of the province.

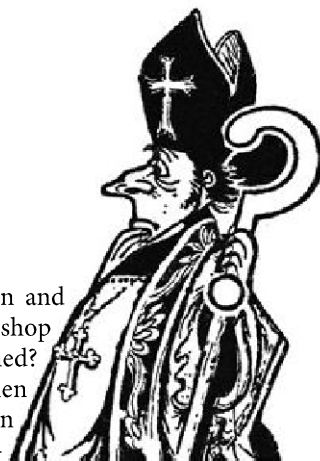
Housing costs

It is when the cost of housing is examined that deeper and perhaps more intractable problems arise, especially when the annual cost of maintaining the houses, office premises and gardens can escalate in three years from £3.5m to £8.6m. There is by the very nature of his work something to be said for a bishop having his office 'in house', and that of course means a larger house than would otherwise be needed. But alternatives ought to be carefully considered.

I have visited bishops at their homes in North and South America, in South Africa and a Lutheran bishop in Sweden where it would be unthinkable for them to occupy houses of the grandeur of English bishops, and usually their offices are at a central diocesan office.

That £8.6m was spent in one year in this field does not of course mean that each of the 44 diocesan bishops had nearly £200,000 of such expenses. It is natural – and reasonable – to expect that the ancient palaces and castles enjoyed by some bishops will require a far greater expenditure to ensure they are kept in reasonable condition. But on the other hand is it reasonable to expect that they be kept at all?

The present pattern cannot continue, either in housing or in expenses, for it is rapidly becoming a scandal, if it is not that already – unacceptable in these days of financial strain. It is surely time for an independent commission to be set up, totally independent, that is, of the Commissioners, the House of Bishops and the Archbishops' Council, whose contribution should be by attendance as required and not by membership. Those in the parishes on whose financial support the Church depends deserve no less. **ND**



devotional

Almsgiving Chris Collins

The root of Christian giving is found in our understanding of God and a reflection of what we see in Jesus' life. The essence of our faith is that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. That is the foundation of all our almsgiving – God's giving of Jesus to us, and there are three strands to this gift.

Firstly, it is gracious; that is, it does not need to be given, and certainly is a gift that we have not earned. This present is given not because we have been good and deserve it – far from it. It is not given because we have negotiated our way into a kind of contract with God. From us, nothing is demanded, though much may be expected.

Secondly, God's gift comes to us out of his pure love. The Creator continues to love his creation; after loving it into being, he loves it despite the mess that we make of it and of ourselves.

Gracious and unconditional

Thirdly, and as a consequence of the other two, this gift is unconditional. There is no trade-off. God risks rejection and still offers us his gift. We can overlook the magnanimous gesture of God if we so desire, but the gift is still there waiting for us to take up his offer. Gracious, loving and unconditional.

This lesson is also surely learnt as we look at the life of Jesus. His presence in

the world is surrounded by an air of graciousness. The healings, the teaching, the itinerant life all show that Jesus matches the Father's model to a fault. And is not Jesus one who offers his friendship unconditionally? He may say 'go and sin no more' but this is not a condition of forgiveness, for he will say the same again and again – even seventy times seven if need be. It was expected of Peter that he would be the rock on which the Church would be built, even though he would go on to deny any knowledge of Jesus.

So, our almsgiving, if it is with a Christ-like determination, offered with graciousness, love and without condition, is an imitation of Christ's own life. But the matter goes even further.

Becoming one with God

Jesus was not imitating the love of God; he was not following orders, as it were. Because we believe that in the Incarnation the gift from God was God himself living and loving in this world, Jesus was living the life of God. God's gift and Jesus' life are all of one.

In God's invitation to us to be almsgivers, he is not asking us to follow his good example, but to join in with his life. That is what our Christian faith is all about, sharing in the nature of the love within the Godhead. That will be our reward, not to see God from a distance, but to be absorbed into his life, and become one with him.

So our almsgiving is not just a discipline that we inflict on ourselves to set Lent apart from the rest of the Christian year. By giving, with graciousness, with love, and without condition, we are entering into the reconciling work of Christ. **ND**



'Don't quote me on that'

Equality

From 1662 for 400 years Anglican congregations were publicly addressed as 'Dearly beloved brethren...' For the first 300 years I doubt if one lady worshipper ('sister'?) felt in the least slighted. Oh, the ignorance of those dark days!

I say for 300 years because I suppose Mary Anne Evans or Elizabeth Garrett Anderson or some such advanced lady in the congregation would in the nineteenth century have found the phrase uneasy. It took until 1928 for the Prayer Book revisers to hit on the non-controversial address 'Beloved...' However, Parliament seemed to feel the innovation was a bit much, and voted the new Prayer Book down.

In our own time the very offices which enshrined the phrase are fading from view, and officiants, who may be of either sex, prefer to advance on their flocks with toothy smiles and say: 'Welcome to our Mothering Sunday service.' We all do it; and only very advanced (or retarded) gentlemen feel the sexist nature of that day demands some egalitarian reference to the other sex.

I joke, tastelessly perhaps; but I do seriously wonder whether political bias has persuaded us to forget how interested in the theology of women the Church was, after poor St Joseph virtually disappeared from the gospels. It is no use my developing that theme and dealing with the cult of Mary, and the talk of Mother Church, and the work of the ladies to whom the supposedly disgraceful St Paul paid tribute, because everybody seems convinced that ladies of ancient times, rather than being a vital and respected part of society, were mere dumb ciphers whose views were less regarded than those of Lurkio the slave.

Ruth, Jezebel, Calpurnia, Portia, Julia and the priestesses of various pagan cults might not have agreed – and they, unlike Mary Magdalene, Eunice, Priscilla, Felicitas, Perpetua and others, were outside the Christian Church, where St Paul's view was clear and typical: 'though woman cannot do without man, neither can man do without woman, in the Lord' [1 Cor. 11.11].

That sort of fairness is lovely, but crude egalitarianism must be the dreariest and most destructive creed ever devised.

Paul Lyon

Cross and Scripture

Philip's teaching of the Ethiopian illustrates the relationship between the Cross and Scripture
Patrick Henry Reardon is a Senior Editor of *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*

Theological reflection on the sufferings of Jesus may well begin with that scene in the Acts of the Apostles where Philip overhears the pilgrim from Ethiopia reading the Book of Isaiah. The passage that the gentleman read was this: 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation his justice was taken away, and who will declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth.'

The reader inquires of Philip, 'I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?' Then, says the sacred text, 'Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.' Perhaps we may say that Philip, in his ministry to this man, was determined to know nothing but Jesus and him crucified. To this powerful man from the royal court of Ethiopia, Philip preached the weakness of God, which is stronger than men. With this cultured, educated visitor from afar, he shared the foolishness of God, which is wiser than men.

Sacrificial atonement

It is further instructive to observe that Philip taught this man about the sufferings of Jesus in reference to the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. There are three points worthy of remark here. First, there is the historical fact that Jesus suffered and died. Second, there is the theological interpretation of that fact – namely, the thesis that Jesus' sufferings and death were 'for our sins', which means that the death of Jesus on the Cross was an act of sacrifice, an act of worship. Already, in this earliest stage of the proclamation of the Gospel, the Lord's crucifixion was perceived as a deed of sacrificial atonement. It had the value of what the Old Testament calls a 'sin offering', a sacrifice to take away sins and restore man to communion with God. Already, prior to the conversion of St Paul, and constituting a formal thesis of Christian preach-

ing to which St Paul appealed, it was affirmed that Jesus not only died on the Cross; he died on the Cross 'for our sins' (*hyper ton hamartion hemon*). St Paul asserted that he received this thesis from the Church and handed it on. This thesis we already find in the preaching of Philip. Third, this theological interpretation of the death of Jesus was based on a specific reading of the Hebrew Bible: 'Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*.' There is a sense in which Philip did for the Ethiopian the complementary opposite of what the risen Jesus did for the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. We recall that these two men, when they met Our Lord, were struggling with the scandal and tragedy of his death. They were not struggling with Scripture; they were struggling with the Cross. In order to enable them correctly to understand the Cross, Jesus took them to the biblical writings; 'beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.' We remark on the direction taken: Jesus went to the Scriptures in order to interpret the Cross.

Key to understanding

Philip accomplishes the same thing by going in the opposite direction. When he meets the Ethiopian, this reader in the chariot is not struggling with the Cross; he is struggling with the Scriptures. Indeed, he is more than slightly perplexed about their meaning. Philip asks him, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And the reader answers, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' Philip then takes the man to the Cross in order to interpret the Bible, the very opposite direction taken by Our Lord, who took his two disciples to the Bible in order to understand the Cross. There is no understanding of what Jesus wrought on the Cross except through the eyes of the Church, which reads the Cross through the lens of Scripture, even as she reads the Scriptures through the lens of the Cross. **ND**

Sacred vision

This full page illustration from the St Alban's Psalter (c.1130) by the Alexis Master was designed for prayerful meditation. With no accompanying words nor explanation, it relies on the knowledge of the viewer; but by its careful arrangement of known and recognized elements it presents a new perspective on a well-known story.

What this teaches is the sacramental quality of almsgiving. In the lower picture, St Martin the soldier encounters the naked beggar on his journey and with his sword cuts his cloak in two, so as to share it with his brother in need. In the picture above, Martin is asleep in bed. In his dream, he sees the Lord Jesus enthroned in heaven wearing the same cloak that he gave to the beggar.



St Martin – the Alexis Master

The painting is strong, and apart from the robust ornamental border free of decorative detail. The characters, with their piercing eyes, interact in a simple and vivid manner. With the possible exception of the two angels, there are no distractions. We have a clear, dramatic and spiritual encounter.

Here is portrayed the sacramental quality of acts of mercy. For someone unable to attend Mass every day (such as the solitary female religious for whom this psalter may have been devised) this illumination offers the assurance that deeds of mercy done 'to one of the least of my brothers' [Matthew 25.40] are done directly to the Lord Jesus himself. Christ is sacramentally present not only in the Mass (this we know) but also to those who minister to him in the simple, direct acts of giving.

Anthony Saville

Congregation growth

Scott Anderson argues that congregational behaviour falls into four distinct categories, and describes the impact that each type of behaviour can have on a church's trend towards growth or decline

The reasons for growth and decline in a congregation can often be complex. What is clear is that some congregations are ready for growth when the opportunity comes, and others are prone to decline, no matter how much is done for them. This is because of the way that the existing congregation works – its dynamic. The attitudes of the people, to God, to their priest, to each other and to the newcomer, are actually much more important than the style of the worship and the state of the finances.

Think for a moment about how different types of people make up your congregation. I don't mean young and middle-aged and old, or black and white and Asian, but rather the way in which groups of people behave. Four types are represented in most congregations.

The four types

'Missioners' are people who have grasped the call of Jesus Christ to his Church. They have a vision for where they want the Church to be, and are personally committed to it. They commend it to other people, and take their own initiative in getting it to work. 'Helpers' are people who understand the mission and want to see things happen. They are loyal and supportive, but they do not have the confidence or the experience to take initiatives of their own, although they will help whenever they are asked to. 'Looked Afters' are people who like coming to church from time to time, and may belong to one of the Church organizations. They see the Church as providing comfort and support for them. 'Resisters' are people who oppose the agreed mission of the Church to which nonetheless they declare that they belong.

Understanding the proportion and influence of each group in your congregation is one of the most important keys to growth or decline. In theory, the priest, wardens and majority of the Church Council will be Missioners, sharing the vision and making it work. The key areas of pastoral care, youth work, worship and home groups will be lead by these Missioners. In many of our parishes, the bulk of the congregation will belong to the Helpers group, and they will be seeking to draw people from the fringe of Looked Afters (next year's confirmation group, perhaps). There may

be a few Resisters, but often the growing commitment and excitement of the majority will soften their hearts; although they may turn against it and leave.

Problem scenarios

It is when this dynamic changes that there is trouble. The priest who is a Helper, not a Missioner, will provide good pastoral care, but new life and growth will be stunted. If he becomes a Resister, perceiving himself under attack from the bishop or the congregation, then there is no hope of change until he moves on.

getting something done has much more to do with commitment than age or time

Churchwardens who are Resisters (often imagining that it is their duty to oppose the clergy and make sure that no one with any new ideas gets on to the PCC) are just as disastrous.

Of course Missioners are in danger of becoming prima donnas: it is the priest's job to integrate, and sometimes sort out, his team of Missioners. Looked Afters may not be on the fringe. They may have been coming every Sunday and sitting in the same seat, following the Mass from the little book (so God help the priest who confuses them by leaving out the Humble Access Prayer) but never moved beyond this stage. The danger lies when others defer to them and allow them to dictate policy simply because they have been coming for such a long time.

The Resister is not the same as the crit-

ical friend. A churchwarden, for example, who is a critical friend, shares the vision of the Church, and is committed to its mission to bring people to faith in the Lord Jesus. But she loves her church enough to be able to ask hard questions, both of clergy and laity. Such a critical friend is an asset to every congregation.

Making excuses

It is fascinating to read advertisements for parish clergy, for they all ask for leadership in mission, encouragement of young families, and growth in faith and numbers. A congregation with a high proportion of Missioners and Helpers agrees with this sort of advertisement, and will work with their new priest to make sure that it happens. Resisters should really sponsor an advert which says, 'This congregation wants no change, no new people who might spoil things, and a priest who will do everything even if it kills him'. Sometimes the excuse is made that people are old and cannot do what they used to, or are working long hours and have not the time to do more. But there is truth in the saying, 'If you want something doing, ask a busy man (or woman)'. Getting something done has much more to do with commitment than age or time. Group A will say, 'There should be a choir', and add in their mind, 'and someone else should lay it on for us.' Group B will say, 'We should have a house group', and add in their mind, 'and next Monday we are going to invite four people to join us to make it happen.'

Interestingly, the first group are usually rather miserable people; the second group, busy as they are, really enjoy their Christian life. They grow in strength and grace all the time, and through them the Church grows too. **ND**

"The symbolism of the Tomb"

What happens after the 14th Station of the Cross

a Forward in Faith Quiet Day to Prepare for Holy Week
to be led by the Chaplain, Fr Tim Bugby SSC

at the English Chapel of Christ the King, Gordon Square WC1
on Saturday 15th March from 10am - 4pm

Places are limited and must be booked in advance

£5.00 booking fee (includes simple lunch and refreshments) should be sent to:
The Chaplain, Forward in Faith, 2A The Cloisters, Gordon Square, London WC1H 0AG



New kid on the block

A warm 30DAYS welcome to *Affirming Liberalism*, a new organization apparently based either in the city of dreaming spires, or in the ether at <www.affirming-liberalism.org.uk>. Apparently, *AffLibs* are folk who 'have identified the need to try and rehabilitate the word liberal in its Christian context, rescuing it from the prefix 'woolly'.

The focus of this network will be on 'on theological and spiritual formation, rather than on what might be called 'religious party politics' – as important as these are'. An inaugural conference will be taking place this month, at which one of the keynote speakers will be either Canon Martyn Percy (if you believe their website) or Dr Mark Chapman (if you believe their advert in the *Church Times*).

Given that the former is the Principal of Ripon College, Cuddesdon and that the latter is his Vice-Principal, the difference probably won't amount to much. Still, it's good to know that Percy (keynote speaker at the launch of GRAS in 2000) or Chapman (keynote speaker at an *Affirming Catholicism* day conference back in 2006) will from now on be steering clear of 'religious party politics'. (Given that the title of Canon Percy's address is supposed to be 'Why Liberal Churches are Growing', it would be all too understandable if he was the one who had cried off.)



PEV of the Year!

Commiserations to Bishop Keith Newton, who came within a hair's breadth of being named **Anglican of the Year** by the *Church of England Newspaper* at the end of 2007. Apparently, the CEN polled no less than 102 members of General Synod; the notoriously publicity-shy Primate of England came first with 29% of the vote, whilst the Primate of All England was the runner-up with 24%.

In third place was Desmond Tutu, and fourth was Michael Nazir-Ali. Archbishop Akinola of Nigeria came fifth and the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Durham and Sir Joe 'Talent and Calling' Pilling tied in sixth position. Ninth equal were Frank Field MP, the Archbishop of Uganda, the Revd Nicky Gumbel (of Alpha Course fame) and –

fanfare! – the Bishop of Richborough! We know it won't go to Bishop Keith's head for, as he was quick to point out to our informant, he only polled 1% of the vote – which, out of a total turnout of 102, amounts to, er, one vote. Still, that's one more vote than a hell of a lot of other bishops!



A Growing Church: the truth

'Bishop Katharine's visit is the most exciting event in our history,' said Fr Stephen Martz of St Nicholas, Elk Grove, Chicago. 'Having the presiding bishop come here is a wonderful affirmation of our determination to become a new kind of church.' Spokesman for the Chicago Diocese, David Skidmore, said St Nicholas was chosen because 'it is a growing church.' *Fact*: St Nicholas' average Sunday attendance 1998: 90. *Fact*: St Nicholas' average Sunday attendance 2006: 50.



Taste of Paradise?

We make no apology for returning to the riveting subject of bishops' expenses this month. Moving away from t' north-west where, you will recall, things are different, we turn now to the overall picture and are delighted at last to be able to announce the 2006 awards for the Most Expensive Bishops. Because of their special circumstances the two archbishops, the Bishop of London, and the Bishop of Gibraltar are not eligible.

Once again it is the Bishop of Exeter who has gained the prestigious Diocesan Golden Mitre with a total of £127,267 or £348 per day – sadly slightly less than last year. It seemed at first that he would be pipped at the post by the Bishop of Birmingham with £138,941, until it was realized that the diocese was vacant for seven months in 2005. Since for five months in office that would be £904 per day, a figure that even a bishop of the Church of England could not be expected to achieve, he was disqualified from consideration.

The Suffragan Golden Mitre award again goes to a London area bishop – not Willesden this year, but Edmonton, at £51,450 or £141 per day. Kensington

was a close runner-up with £50,077. The wooden spoon – the Diocesan Wooden Crozier – goes to the Bishop of Bradford with £65,182 (£179 per day), with another Yorkshire bishop, Ripon and Leeds, a close second at £69,574. Yorkshire is a county known for its careful expenditure, but both bishops will be expected to do better next year. The Suffragan Wooden Crozier goes to the Bishop of Lynn at £8,375, a pathetic £23 per day – less than half that of even the Bishop of Bedford, last year's runner-up, who this year did manage to attain about half the suffragan average with £18,703.



Women and the Church

Do you want to know what Christina and all the girls at *Watch* are talking about? Then all you have to do is go to the *Watch* Message Board at <<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/watchmessages/>> –

'...a place to talk about anything relating to WATCH or the place of women in the Church of England, especially as the debate about women in the episcopate gathers pace.

Vigorous debate is welcome, but let's respect one another, even when we disagree. Insulting or inflammatory posts will be deleted. Anyone can read messages, but to post a message, you need to join – it's a simple process and there is no need to use your own name unless you wish to.'

The quality of debate is astounding. Take the latest post:

'I am a single mom who is outgoing, open-minded, adorable. If you are interested in make friends with young single charming mom, just touch me at <<http://hometown.aol.com/babe5204ever/joyful.htm>> I would like to tell ya anything if I know. I am looking forward to hearing from ya! ~wink~'.

A bishop in waiting if ever there was one!



*Copy for 30 DAYS should reach FiF office by the 10th day of the month:
30days@forwardinfaith.com*

Saved by hope

Fr Peter cswg looks at the contents of Pope Benedict's recent encyclical, *Spe Salvi*, a wide-ranging and inspiring examination of the nature of hope

As with his first encyclical on Love, Pope Benedict has chosen a subject of timely importance and universal human concern, showing himself remarkably in touch with the often unspoken questions in our hearts, and eloquently able to articulate the aspirations behind them. For those of an age to recall encyclicals of earlier Pontificates, the contrast of presentation of the two from Pope Benedict is arresting, yet comes over in a gentle, self-effacing way. There is no 'weight' here – of ecclesiastical authority – of the *ex cathedra* kind, but rather the humble meditations of a (Chief) Pastor leading his flock in the true character of the Shepherd-Philosophers of old, to whom he refers in *Spe Salvi*, in the search for what 'human beings must do to become truly human'. Benedict addresses his encyclical notably to 'Christians'; indeed to everyone, for hope affects everyone. The wide range of sources, ancient and modern, is in evidence throughout, in the references to such contrasting minds as Plato and Immanuel Kant, Augustine and Karl Marx, Justin Martyr and Francis Bacon. The whole is adorned with generous quotations from less-known contemporary saints/martyrs, as well as with his own quotable one-liners that have their own arresting appeal.

The encyclical begins with an exploration into the biblical and patristic basis of hope, and is richly adorned throughout with scriptural quotations and allusions. Having established that the hope he is investigating is one 'trustworthy to face the present' and with a goal 'great enough to merit the journey's effort', the Pope notes how closely the virtue of hope is bound up with faith: 'faith is hope'. His concern is that this hope be *performative*, not simply *informative*: it is 'to make things happen, to be life-changing' so 'the one who hopes lives differently'. The Christian knows 'life does not end in emptiness': 'the future is certain as a positive reality'. This produces a question that penetrates to the heart of things: 'in what does this hope consist which, as hope, is redemption?' He illustrates his answer with the touching story of a Sudanese slave-girl (later canonized), harshly treated by her earthly masters, who found her salvation in 'the Supreme Master who knew her, loved her and created her'.

Hope is likewise confirmed in a true theology of creation. Pope Benedict is mindful of the impersonal character the latest scientific knowledge can give to our world. We are called to find the origins of the Universe in a personal divine Being: 'at the heart of the Universe is a Personal Will, Spirit and Love'. It is not 'the laws of matter that ultimately govern the world and mankind' but a 'Personal God governs the stars.'

A personal God

It is such knowledge of a personal God that sets the believer free. The same freedom is revealed in the later renunciations of the monks, who do not express 'a flight from responsibility' but, in St Bernard's view, 'perform a task for the whole Church, and hence for the whole world.' 'From the hope of these people who have

**without hope, faith
and love remain at
best stunted, at worst
inoperative**

been touched by Christ, hope arises for others.' Hope is not only a real 'possession' now, but overflows to benefit others. Here is a striking image of the service Christian hope gives to the world.

Benedict emphasizes the 'unknowing' character of hope: we 'don't really *know* what it is that we truly want', or 'what true life really is'; yet this 'unknown thing' is 'the true hope that drives our life'. He looks at the meaning of 'eternal life' and our ambivalent attitude to it. Having agreed that eternal life as unvarying repetition would be 'unbearable', he takes Augustine's understanding of it as 'the blessed life', but goes further: 'It is the moment of supreme satisfaction, which totally embraces us and we embrace totally.' Such a moment is life in the full sense, 'like plunging into an ocean of love' where there is 'no before or after', 'where we are simply overwhelmed with joy'. 'It is along these lines we must think', he encourages us, 'if we want to understand the Christian hope our faith leads us to expect' [n. 10–12].

The central part of the encyclical is con-

cerned to answer the claim that Christian hope is individualistic (and so selfish). In rebuffing this accusation, Benedict draws attention to the biblical image of 'the city' (in Hebrews) to underline that salvation is always a 'social reality', 'linked to lived union with a People' [n. 14]. He goes on to ask: 'how has hope in present times become 'individualistic' and salvation understood as 'flight from the world'?'

A social reality

His answer is in fact a penetrating analysis of the modern era, beginning with Francis Bacon, who perceived 'a new correlation between science and praxis', which 're-established man's dominion over creation, but without Christ'. Faith is displaced and becomes 'private and other-worldly', 'irrelevant'. Hope acquires a new form called 'faith in progress', as the 'kingdoms of men' take the place of the Kingdom of God, in 'the political realization of this hope', 'based on the here and now' and 'the possibility of all-encompassing change.' There follows a gentle but penetrating assessment of Karl Marx, demonstrating his 'fundamental error', and 'the trail of appalling destruction it left': Marx forgot that 'man is man', 'he forgot man's freedom' (for evil as well as good).

With the analysis comes a timely call for 'a self-critique of modernity in dialogue with' Christianity and its hope, and for a self-critique of modern Christianity. The Pope underlines the ambiguity of 'progress': technical progress needs to be matched by 'man's ethical formation' – his inner growth – or it is no progress at all. Man's freedom has constantly to be won over to good in every generation. So 'the kingdom of good can never be definitively established in this world', and 'tomorrow's better world cannot be the proper and sufficient content of our hope'. Such has 'limited the horizons of [modern Christianity's] hope'. Man is not redeemed by structures or science, however important. 'Man is redeemed by Love, unconditional Love that is not destroyed by death.' 'Only this Absolute Love redeems.'

So we are bidden to contemplate, beyond 'the lesser and greater hopes of life', 'the great hope that alone sustains life: something infinite, something always more than we can ever attain.' Simply but reassuringly, he points out that only God