

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

Mary, grace and hope

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To understand Mary is to understand the Christian faith. The consideration of the ARCIC report *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* at next month's session of General Synod is, therefore, of real importance. For a representative body more used to debating structural and political issues, it will not be easy to move into the careful reading of Scripture, and come up with a response appropriate to a church that is both Catholic and Apostolic.

What is required of us all is that we study the scriptural passages about Mary with something of the same grace, gentleness and obedience that she herself shows in those same texts. The references may be both few (albeit rather more than many Anglicans suppose) and brief, but they are extraordinarily rich in meaning and teaching.

There is, rightly, an element of theological struggle in seeking to grasp the nature of faith and grace as expounded to us by the Apostle Paul. But all is very different when we study the word concerning the mother of our Saviour.

We have to listen quietly, ponder these sayings in our heart, and receive the message of the Lord in gracious obedience. We have to lay aside the divisions of history, and read what Scripture says in all its fullness – to be content not with a supposedly adequate portion, but only with the whole wealth of that glorious Word.

To know Mary is not a doctrinal matter, it is (rather obviously) personal. And to know her is to know her Son, and to know the Lord Jesus is the Christian faith. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to mission that General Synod is not led into some political cul de sac.

It is true that there are seemingly political elements to *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* with regard to an Anglican acceptance of papal definitions, but these issues, acknowledged still to be resolved, must not be allowed to obscure the central role of Mary as the Mother of our Lord, nor the affirmation that he is 'God and Man' and as Man, 'of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world.'

There is no understanding of the Incarnation of Our Lord without an acceptance of Mary's role. If the press, ever eager to misrepresent the Church of England, were to interpret anything less than full support for this report as a rejection of Mary herself (and do not tell us this is inconceivable), it would be disastrous for the mission of the Church.

The Incarnation is a great mystery, which needs prayer and reflection to be properly understood in an age so unfriendly to serious theological thought. It is absolutely central to

the life and mission of the Church. Pray therefore for all the members of General Synod that they may, this month, study the report and reflect upon it, and, next month, affirm the Catholic faith.



'Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford.' The words conjure up an image of staid scholarship, conservative, erudite, measured.

Not so the present (and first female) incumbent, Marilyn McCord Adams. Professor Adams is a radical of a new and exhorting kind. A case in point is her recent paper, 'Shaking the Foundations: LGBT Bishops and Blessings in the Fullness of Time', delivered at the Chicago Consultation, Seabury-Western Seminary, 5 December 2007. In it Adams not only makes the case for Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgendered bishops, but also the case for a complete and radical re-imagining of sexual relationships among Christians:

'The Church has inherited an institution of marriage that involved buying and selling women – like reproductive livestock – from domination by one male into subservience to another (remember, 'love, honor, and obey'?). Despite a couple of decades of dialoguing, the Church still joins society in treating marriage as a 'sacred cow' that cannot be touched (witness the dogmatic insistence that homosexual marriage is a category mistake), when the whole idea of godly partnership needs radical revision.

'Modern heterosexual couples involving 'liberated' women are left to their own devices to transmogrify the institution from the inside. My suspicion is that uncloseting same-sex partnerships will help us to distinguish dimensions of intimacy – for example, to explore the relationship between friendship and sexual activity. They might also furnish models of equality and illustrate different divisions of labor. Honest reflection on varieties of 'transgression' – heterosexual and homosexual – would not only move us towards marriage reform but also lead us to fresh conceptions of godly unions that might help the wider society as it evolves new norms.'

Bishop Peter Selby, a soft cuddly radical by Adams standards, whilst condemning his fellow bishops for a negative attitude to Civil Partnerships, is on record as telling the *Church Times* that 'nobody has ever been prepared to tell me that their own marriage was threatened by the public recognition of gay relationships.' Perhaps he should have consulted the Regius Professor before revealing his naiveté. **ND**



Mary, grace and hope

In February, General Synod will discuss the ARCIC statement on Mary
Thomas Seville takes a closer look at the contents of this document
and finds it to be a positive and important step towards Christian unity

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The search for the unity of Christians has been one of the most remarkable events of the last century. This has been especially remarkable in relations between Anglicans and Roman Catholics; having regarded each other with suspicion or fear (and often worse), they have made steps to work with each other and to agree on many crucial issues.

The effects of walking apart, however, have been more harmful than perhaps was realized in the early days of the search for unity. And things which have happened in the time of being apart have a tendency to rear up with rude sharpness.

This is nowhere more apparent than in the matters of the authority of the bishop of Rome and of the two teachings concerning the Mother of Jesus. These have been the subject of authoritative teachings by the church of Rome. These remain areas of continued discussion and exploration between Roman Catholics and their ecumenical partners of just about every shape and colour.

At the February Synod, there will be time to assess how far the two communions have got. There is *Growing Together in Unity and Mission*, a report from IARCCUM (the International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission) on forty years of ecumenical endeavour between the two communions. This body was formed after a meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in Mississauga, Canada, in May 2000.

Work has been interrupted as a result of the troubles in the Anglican communion. It notes agreements and areas where there are differences, and proposes a variety of areas where cooperation in mission could and should be realized. This was its aim: 'to identify a sufficient degree of agreement in faith to enable the development of a deepened common life and mission together'. Put more casually, some of these things are happening already; but if ecumenism is a real part of the Church's calling, then surely it needs flesh on the bones of shared teaching and common statements [paras. 100–25].

Also to be presented for discussion at the same Synod is *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, the document of ARCIC II, the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission on Mary. It has been asked, why a document on Mary which treats so much of Roman Catholic teachings? There is a simple answer: this was the work given to the Commission and these were issues which were identified as being problem areas for Anglicans. This was put succinctly more than a quarter of a century ago [*Authority in the Church II*, 30]:

'The dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption raise a special problem for those Anglicans who do not consider that the precise definitions given by these dogmas are sufficiently supported by Scripture. For many Anglicans the teaching author-

ity of the bishop of Rome, independent of a council, is not recommended by the fact that through it these Marian doctrines were proclaimed as dogmas binding on all the faithful. Anglicans would also ask whether, in any future union between our two Churches, they would be required to subscribe to such dogmatic statements.'

The new ARCIC document attempts to look at both of these issues, the so-called dogmas, and the question of authority. It does not represent agreement on all areas, but is intended as a first step and an important one. It is important to note that, although the churches of Canterbury and Rome parted on a matter concerned with the authority of the bishop of Rome, teaching about that authority was not as yet formulated by that bishop. This teaching, concerning his role in the Church as a whole, was not defined by Rome until 1871. As far as teachings about Mary are concerned, it was not these which divided churches at that stage. Luther and the Pope did not break over the Mother of the Lord. There is something here which should cause any Christian to pause: the very idea of dividing over the one who gave birth to Jesus Christ.

The Commission takes up areas of belief common to the two communions and noted in the previous ARCIC document. There is but one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ; no role for Mary is to be held which gets in the way of this statement. Mary is linked with teachings about Christ and the Church. Mary is called to be Mother of God Incarnate [*Theotokos*] and festivals in her honour are kept in the Church and she is in the communion of saints. She is prepared by grace to be the Mother of Jesus, by whom she is redeemed and taken to her destiny. She is a model for Christians, of obedience and of faith.

There are four sections: 'Mary according to the Scriptures'; 'Mary in the Christian tradition'; 'Mary within the pattern of grace and hope'; and 'Mary in the life of the Church'.

Scriptures are the norm for our understanding of Mary [para. 6] and teachings which are at variance with Scripture are to be rejected [para. 79]. There is a conservative exposition of the Scriptures; the virginal conception of Jesus is defended [para. 18, with an excellent footnote]. It has to be said that the method used for interpreting Scripture does vary; in defence of this, it may be argued that the report would have been several times longer if this had been otherwise, and a paragraph is devoted to the way Scripture is read [para. 7].

In the second section, there is found to be agreement on Mary as 'God-bearer', *Theotokos*, a title which has been variously translated, often as 'Mother of God' (this does not mean that Mary is mother of the Trinity!). The title is intimately related to the fact that the one born of her is the one Jesus Christ, human and divine, man and God. Both communions stand

in a tradition which sees Mary as the new Eve, a type of the Church; that we pray and praise with Mary; and that Mary and the saints pray for the whole Church. There is a helpful footnote on the 'brothers of Jesus' in relation to 'Mary ever virgin' (there is curiously little on the teaching that Mary is 'ever virgin').

Many will see the third section as the most important part of the statement. Following the idea that Scripture allows us to trace trajectories which illuminate the present state of the believer, it argues that the Spirit already gives us a sharing in the end of our hope in Christ, God's glory. Romans 8.30 is pivotal: 'those whom God predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified'. 'Now' is seen in terms of what will be. Putting summarily what is expressed with some subtlety, this may be fittingly applied to the person of Mary, forwards with respect to the end and backwards with respect to her beginning.

Finally, the theme of the role of Mary in the communion of saints is taken up. This is divided into four. Firstly, Mary is an example of the life of grace, the fullest. We are 'to join with her as one indeed not dead, but truly alive in Christ'. Secondly, Mary has a role in the Church's life of praise and prayer. The role of the Magnificat in the prayer of both Anglicans and Roman Catholics as well as the Eucharistic Prayer is an example, and her place as *Theotokos* makes her distinctive. Thirdly, Mary, with other saints, prays for the Church, and there is a section on why some ask her to pray for us [para. 70] and why it must not be allowed to obscure the direct access we have to the Father through Christ. Fourthly, she has a motherly role for the Church and also for the world, a role which points the faithful and the rest to Christ [para. 72].

It is important to note the wide area of agreement about the Mother of Jesus. The emphasis on Christ, the incarnation, the virginal conception and the authority of Scripture will be especially welcome to orthodox Anglicans. Mary is one of the redeemed, a creature like us. The section on Mary in the communion of saints repays careful reading [paras. 64–70]; the view of Mary in both of our communions has been partial. 'Mary points people to Christ, commending them to him and helping them to share his life' [para. 65].

The report goes on to conclude that the two Marian dogmas do not present something which Anglicans need reject as unbiblical. It is possible to see the two Marian dogmas against the background of hope and grace in Christ, that destiny of which I spoke above, and as consonant with Scripture. These teachings need not be regarded as church-dividing, but as legitimate expressions of the faith. Nothing must obscure the unique mediatorship of Christ, and Scripture is the ultimate norm of teaching.

This raises the question of the authority by which Rome has claimed to define these teachings. Although there has been progress in treating these more sympathetically than Anglicans have done in the past, a consensus has not emerged, a fact noted by the IARCCUM statement. On the other hand, there has been the remarkable act of Pope John Paul II [in *Ut unum sint*] in asking for help in understanding the role and status of the Pope, to which the House of Bishops made a weighty (and well received) response. What does emerge from the report is that if the treatment of

the two teachings about Mary can be welcomed, then the question of authority is placed in a 'new ecumenical context' [para. 78].

The report takes seriously the fact that the Roman dogmas were defined when the churches were apart [paras. 62–3]. Anglicans ask whether in a re-united church assent to these teachings would be required. Roman Catholics find it hard to think of teachings held to be revealed that would bind some, but not others.

What can be drawn from this?

First, that a group of Anglican (with good Evangelical representation) and Roman Catholic theologians can compose such a report on the person of the Mother of Jesus is in itself significant. Second, the agreement on the unique mediatorship of Christ and the normativity of the Scriptures, the virginal conception and the truth that the term *Theotokos* is about Christ first are superb.


There will be continuing appraisal of how successful the report is in locating the controversial issues in the context of those areas, but I think all orthodox Anglicans have cause for thanksgiving that this is the map which has been laid out.

Some of the paths, however, do look a little threatening. One of the reasons for unease is that for centuries most Anglicans have given little thought to the Mother of Jesus. Paths have been closed or have become overgrown. Happily, there have been some fine works written by Evangelicals on Mary in recent years (for example, *The Real Mary: Why Evangelical Christians Can Embrace the Mother of Jesus*, by Scott McKnight).

There is also the sadness that putting up defences to the very mention of the Mother of Jesus has often been a characteristic of non-Roman Catholics in the West. Such reactions go deep, but that is no reason to shy away from another look.

It will have become apparent that I think *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* is a courageous report and one which orthodox Anglicans should welcome. Anglicans are not being required to start asking Mary to pray for them or to go on pilgrimage to Lourdes; some already do, of course. Some will welcome more in the report than others. It is a good step and one which is worth treating seriously. It is, after all, a scandal that there are Christians not in communion with one another and it is a particular scandal that we divide over the Mother of Jesus.

For this reason alone, one needs to be careful of one's 'deep' reactions. The wounds of the past have not healed. There is a need for *conversion*, a readiness to go to Christ in the one who is different (to some the Roman Catholic, to others the Anglican) and to learn. This is something which the report does not really touch on.

One of the ways to seek conversion is to read the Scriptures and to do so together. This is one of the suggestions made by the IARCCUM statement [paras. 104–7]. It will assist our way forward if this can be made real with respect to the Mother of Jesus. This may sound a strange thing, utopian indeed, but if we can agree on the things I have indicated above, then it may not be simply something we *can* do with our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters. It will be something we *must* do. 

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The leader leads

*The beginning of **John Richardson's** comments on the Archbishop of Canterbury's letter [p. 19]*

If thirty-plus years in ordained ministry in the Church of England has taught me anything, it is that everyone wants a lead from the bishops, until they actually give one. Something like this may now be happening with regard to Rowan Williams, and specifically his Advent Letter to the Primates of the Anglican Communion.

It is the Archbishop's definitive statement of where he thinks the Communion is today, and where it ought to be going, up to and including the 2008 Lambeth Conference.

Compared with some of his earlier pronouncements, this is different. It indicates a clear resolve, and an expectation that others should both accept his authority and, to a certain extent, conform to his vision. All may not like it. There are things about it I do not like. But to be a leader is to lead, and it is surely better for an organization to be led imperfectly

than not to be led at all.

Dr Williams' letter begins with a definition of the unity of the Anglican Communion which depends not on a canon law that can be enforced but on the ability of each part of the family to recognize that other local churches have received the same faith from the apostles and are faithfully holding to it in loyalty to the One Lord incarnate, who speaks in Scripture and bestows his grace in the sacraments.

There are three key elements to this mutual recognition, the first of which is the priority of Scripture. To this, he adds that we need to read the Bible *together*. Thus, 'Radical change in the way we read cannot be determined by one group or tradition alone.' The important word here is *change*: it is The Episcopal Church and its supporters who, Williams recognizes, are seeking to change the way the Bible is read on a fundamental issue.

The other two elements which allow mutual recognition are 'The common acknowledgement of an authentic ministry of Word and Sacrament,' and 'The common acknowledgement that the first and great priority of each local Christian community is to communicate the Good News.'

It is the first of these which undergirds Dr Williams' opposition to cross-border interventions: 'The principle that one local church should not intervene in the life of another is simply a way of expressing this trust that the form of ministry is something we share and that God provides what is needed for each local community.'

He is also clearly unhappy at the tendency to polarize the Church between 'those who are for' and those who are 'against' the welcoming of homosexual people.' But he acknowledges the current crisis is about being 'recognizably faithful to Scripture and the moral tradition of the wider Church' concluding that, 'Insofar as there is currently any consensus in the Communion about this, it is not in favour of change in our discipline or our interpretation of the Bible.'

*The rest of the excellent commentary is at <http://ugleyvicar.blogspot.com> > **ND***

This month sees the week of prayer for Christian unity. This is marked by both local and national gatherings for prayer and shared liturgical worship. This corporate expression of prayer for unity is not a substitute for personal commitment. Of all the possible concerns for personal intercession and private study, Christian unity must be a priority for every individual Christian.

One of the recurring problems in spiritual direction is the director's focus on self. This is all well and good and it is a natural consequence of the pursuit of a living and growing personal relationship with God. But it is not an alternative or substitute for involvement in the corporate life of the Church. Our spiritual identity as a child of God, given to us in baptism, also grafts us into the body of Christ as a living member. There is no spiritual life without Church life.

Through my work as a retreat house warden, I realize that there is a small minority who just do not find a place to 'fit in'. There are, of course, those called to solitary life – but that is always a vocation recognized by the wider Church in one way or another. These exceptions allowed, all Christian living is community living. We do not say 'My

Ghostly Counsel

Christian unity

***Andy Hawes** is Warden of Edenham Regional Retreat House*

Father', we say 'Our Father'; and despite the seventy-three hymns in Mission Praise that begin with 'I', our worship is marked by the pronoun 'we'.

To press the point a little further, it could be demonstrated that even the most personal experiences of contemplative prayer, of being in the presence of the uncreated light, are corporate. These are experiences of being one with the communion of saints in light. It is not a coincidence that great mystics have also been energetic in apostolic ministry, church politics and administration. Think of St Theresa of Avila, St Francis, St Catherine of Siena and St Bernard of Clairvaux, to name but four.

This brings me back to Church unity.

Every individual member of Christ's Body is diminished and harmed by the wound of disunity. Our soul's health and the salvation of souls depend upon the recovery of real and visible unity. 'A hopeless task,' I hear you say; for men definitely, but not for God. That is why Christian unity will be achieved as much by personal prayer as by corporate action. The one must give life to the other. If prayer for unity is placed at the centre of our spiritual life, we will be changed and challenged by it. We will experience a vocation to live ecumenically – that is, to live sharing as much as possible with other Christians of all traditions and resisting creating more division by our own actions.

For many readers of this magazine, that will mean re-examining our attitude to members of our own church community and those in the parish next door. It is little short of blasphemous to pray for unity in Christ and then not to seek peace and pursue it with the person next door. Why not join in the prayer movement for an agreed date for the celebration of Easter by all the Historic Churches? That is simple, practical and, in God, possible – what a difference that could make to every one of us!

Bitter church rivals

Simon Heans shares a blow by blow account of the setting up of a church plant in his own parish and wonders what it presages for cooperation between Catholic and Evangelical Anglicans

Your enemy's enemy isn't necessarily your friend.' That old adage was quoted to me by a Roman Catholic priest from Sussex with whom I was running a discussion group at Taizé some years ago. He was led to make the comment by my attempt to explain to him the alliance between Catholic and Evangelical Anglicans on the issues of gender and sexuality. I have recently been reminded of those words by the experience of having a church plant in my parish.

Christ Church, Bromley

The story begins some time before Easter 2005 when a priest from another Forward in Faith church in the Beckenham Deanery (there are three) was having a ministerial review with the archdeacon. In the course of it, Archdeacon Paul told Fr Leon that he had heard at Senior Staff Meeting that the Vicar of Christ Church Bromley had approached Bishop Michael of Rochester to tell him of his plans to start a new congregation in the Beckenham Deanery.

A venue in my parish was mentioned as a possible meeting place for this group. Naturally Fr Leon took no time at all to tell me and the news soon spread among the clergy of the Deanery. Suddenly my parish of St Barnabas, hitherto not much regarded by them, became the subject of considerable interest among my predominantly evangelical brethren. A number of them phoned me to ask what I intended to do.

I wasn't able to say because I had no idea myself, although I do remember telling them that if the scheme had episcopal approval it would go ahead anyway. The Archdeacon was not prepared to give a straight answer to that question but Bishop Michael told me that nothing could happen without my approval as incumbent. So I phoned the Vicar of Christ Church, Bromley to arrange a meeting with him.

Iain Broomfield is a middle-aged Oxford graduate who had once served a curacy at the big evangelical church in Beckenham, also called Christ Church. He had been employed by the Bible Society and been a school evangelist. This I gleaned from our informal conversation before getting down to business and I was

struck then by how different our experiences of the Church of England were – this despite superficial similarities for I am exactly Iain's age and like him went to an ancient university and followed that with work as a schoolmaster.

Iain told me that his church building was not big enough to hold the congregation, and that the people who came to him from my parish and surrounding area had approached him with the proposal to start a new church. He also said that the plan was to meet on a day other than Sunday. I was puzzled because I could not see how that would solve his accommodation problem.

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When I met Nick Hiscocks, the curate of Christ Church, Bromley, things became clearer. Like his boss, Nick is an Oxford graduate, where he read Theology. Nick has just turned 30 and has been at Christ Church six years. He told me that he would move on unless the church plant idea came to fruition. It also quickly emerged that the church plant would be meeting on Sunday mornings.

Costa Coffee

The branch in Beckenham High Street was the place where three of us had our chats over the next six months. I was never quite sure what purpose they served but was assured by Iain and Nick that they found them very helpful. Because I enjoy religious controversy (why else would I write for NEW DIRECTIONS!) I didn't mind going along. We talked about the Reformation and eucharistic theology. 'Just what do you think you're doing?' asked Iain when I told him about the daily celebration of Mass at St Barnabas. He was not satisfied by my answer. But I persevered and gave them copies of NEW DIRECTIONS drawing their attention to the masthead: *Serving Evangelicals*...

I also tried out C.S. Lewis' *Mere Chris-*

tianity on them and told them about the Alpha Course I was then running. Yes, I did hope we might be able to cooperate, but if I am honest I have to admit that I thought that given access to Iain's people I would be able to show them that the 'historic faith' is so much richer than the narrow biblicism he and Nick seemed to espouse.

Just before Christmas 2006, at what proved to be our last coffee session together, I was told that 'theological differences' precluded any possibility of working together and that the church plant would begin meeting after Easter.

Archdeacon's meeting

This happened in the summer, i.e., *after* the church plant was up and running. The Archdeacon had clearly thought long and hard about the seating arrangements. Two sofas were placed opposite one another and Iain and Nick were put in one while I was sat on the other. Then he interposed himself. Perhaps he thought we might come to blows.

He was obviously nervous as he asked us to say the Collect for Purity, but relaxed a bit after we proved able to recite it together. He even moved to sit next to the Rural Dean. And then the group therapy began. We were each invited to say how we 'felt'.

I told them that the plant was taking place against the express wish of St Barnabas and quoted the PCC resolution as proof. Then I said I really didn't care what Iain and Nick were up to because they'd made it plain that they were going to do their own thing and indeed were already doing it. Somewhat to my surprise both the Archdeacon and the Area Dean complimented me for being 'gracious'.

I leave my readers to draw their own conclusions about what this little tale means for the prospects of catholic-evangelical cooperation in a new province. My own conclusion is summed up in the quotation with which I began. However St Barnabas' answer to the mission question set by the Rural Dean at the last Beckenham Deanery Synod is now clear. There is only one thing my church needs to do to double its congregation by next Christmas: get the people of the church plant to come to Mass here. **ND**

The pure in heart

In his continued examination of the Beatitudes, Hugh Bates discusses the meaning of purity and the nature of its reward

How can a heart be pure? How can anybody see God and live? Nevertheless, the Psalmist could write, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord and that alone I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord...to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to seek his will in his temple'; and again, 'My heart tells of your word, 'Seek my face'; Your face, Lord, will I seek.'

Similarly, Hezekiah laments that he may never again 'see the Lord' in the land of the living. Isaiah tells how he 'saw the Lord high and lifted up'. 'Seeing God', or 'appearing before the presence, the face, of God', are circumlocutions for worship. It is in worship that God is both known and seen.

Orthodoxy, we need to remember, is not holding the correct opinions, but the right worship. 'God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth'.

Ascending the hill of the Lord

'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?' asks the Psalmist, 'or who can rise up in his holy place?' 'Those with clean hands and a pure heart,' is the answer. 'Such is the company of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob. They shall receive a blessing from the Lord.' Put the other way round, 'Blessed are the pure in heart. They shall see God!'

Unfortunately, purity sometimes carries negative and forbidding overtones. Hear no evil, see no evil, think no evil. Alternatively, it may be largely limited to those topics that are covered by the obscenity laws.

How many have felt themselves disqualified from worship because they have failed to reach the required standard of purity! Worse, the authorities may sometimes use purity taboos to refuse or restrict access to those who are 'seeking God's face'. King David cursed the blind and the lame: 'the blind and the lame may not enter the temple.'

The Son of David lifted this curse on blind Bartimaeus, who

was thus enabled to follow him along the rest of the journey to the Holy City.

Purity of heart would seem to be more about the fixed and steady determination of the will rather than the achievement of a clinically sterile soul.

Keeping the heart pure


Being the kind of people that we are and living in the kind of world that we do, we cannot help but see, hear and think things that, in our better moments, we would rather not. This is distressing and infuriating, but not a reason to despair. Never having had to wash is nothing to be proud of!

There will always be distractions and temptations, worldly cares, not to mention the old familiar sins and failings that so easily beset us.

A constant struggle

They will not go away, but they are not to be allowed to interfere with the primary object of the exercise, which is 'to behold the fair beauty of the Lord and to seek his will'. The purity of heart that sees God is no blessed static condition, but rather the constant struggle never to lose sight of him. Now you see him, now you don't. If practice may not exactly make perfect, it will take us a very long way.

We will never be able to claim that we have arrived, nor may we hope to dine out on what we believe to be our past achievements. But, in the end, there will be more than the continual uphill effort.

This is best shown in the well-known story of the old countryman whose delight and joy was to spend some time each day sitting in church before the Blessed Sacrament: 'I looks at him, and he looks at me'. 'Blessed are the pure in heart. They shall see God.' 

The mission-blockers

Can we counter those who disrupt the progress of a church's mission agenda? Julian Mann explains a possible course of action and a change in church rules

I do not usually remember my dreams, but this one was vivid. The toddlers were about to come into the church for their Monday afternoon service and there I was setting up for them.

But as I stood at the church door, I noticed that all the stone steps had been dug up and large, broken paving stones had been piled up in front of the door. The entrance had been drastically narrowed, and I thought to myself, 'How on earth are they going to get in, and how on earth am I going to get out?'

The person behind this frightening spectacle was a member of the PCC who

used to be somewhat of an ally but in recent times had started hooking up with the 'mission-blockers', those who previously held sway in the congregation but whose authority is now being challenged by the mission agenda.

Nightmare and reality

Choirs, as many clergy have discovered to their cost, are of course a classic power-base for the mission-blockers.

It was a great relief to find that when I did go to set up for the tots, the entrance was intact. The dream owed more to anxiety than to reality.

Nonetheless, mission-blocking in small parish churches is a reality and unless mission is unblocked, these churches will forever stay small.

Special measures

To counter mission-blocking, the Church Representation Rules need to be changed so that churches that pay less than £25,000 per annum in parish share, and/or have a congregation of fewer than sixty adults on a normal Sunday, are made subject to special measures.

These special measures would be clearly explained to all the members of the PCC

Time's greater unity

Peter Lyon offers an elegiac exhortation for the forthcoming Week of Christian Unity

Some years ago we attended a glorious Evensong in Durham Cathedral. In the choir pews where we sat were notices telling us to remember that people had been taking part in evening worship since the first century of our era, and would go on doing so to the end of time. In the tremendous atmosphere of that great building, we thought of St Cuthbert, of all the choirs who had sung their hearts out over the centuries, and of those who would follow on until the place itself was a ruin.

As Shakespeare puts it: 'When Time is old, and hath forgot itself, When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy, And blind oblivion swallowed cities up, And mighty states characterless are grated To dusty nothing...' there must remain love and truth. Cressida was a false lady, but those lines of hers were abundantly true: the chorus of praise must go on, whether sustained by vast crowds, or by the half dozen left who still remember and remain faithful.

The tiny remnant

The Church of England is figuratively the half dozen, who still commemorate the great set of events two thousand years ago, and look forward, in however puzzled a way, to a second great set of events before humanity and the world finally go to bed.

In that sort of service at Durham we become conscious of immense companionship, from even before the Christian era, when the Jews asked themselves about the acceptable year of the Lord, a time when everything would come right, when the bereaved would be comforted, those unjustly imprisoned released, and the weak strengthened; when in fact everything that works against God would get its come-uppance.

Isaiah said he had come to proclaim that acceptable year, and Jesus used Isaiah's words in his first recorded sermon. The first coming of Christ was in the future for those Jews, and is in the past for us, but we are together with them, as with many others,

as we wait for the second coming.

We think of this in our earthly stance, as the final triumph of that love we are on earth to proclaim, shown directly by our Lord to us in accepting our miserable efforts and by ourselves to each other in ways that have always been obstructed by our weaknesses. This sounds like preacher's talk, abstract and mouth-filling, but it translates in less exalted terms into a time when everyone's arthritis will be cured, when the dead will rise up, and the world will cease to be dominated by newspaper campaigns and nasty television programmes.

The acceptable year

It was in that material way that Paul, the greatest of theologians, saw the coming of Christ and the world's end as coinciding, as in a sense they must; but they will probably coincide only in a sense, for the world may well come to an end in a nasty sticky way, even while we are all feeling the immense relief for which we and Paul hope.

In heavenly terms, in fact, the acceptable year of the Lord is once and for all, past and to come. The trumpet that will sound is no earthly trumpet and sounds at no earthly time. It sounds through the centuries as that Evensong at Durham sounded, and those who listen are the Prophets and the Apostles, Bede, Francis, Theresa, the Russians, the Mexicans, the Ugandans, and the blessed angels themselves, in a dimension we can only dimly know about, until we see it face to face. It is so important that we should express through our Englishness the sense of an entire Christendom.

In those transforming moments we surely realize once and for all that the Church of England is a small part of a whole, yet able to be as great a part as any other, so only that it accepts those others and fights its way, not away from them, but towards them, who are the people of God. **ND**

during the interregnum and their acceptance by a two-thirds majority would be the condition of any future appointment.

These special measures would mean:

(1) The incumbent can apply to the archdeacon for the removal of 'mission-blockers' from the PCC. The assumption is that the application would under normal circumstances be accepted. This would apply to PCC members who have voted against or abstained on a proposal for change to existing practices brought by the incumbent on three occasions.

Under the measures, the voting record of individual PCC members would be logged. Provided the incumbent has allowed at least two meetings for the changes to be fully debated with a sup-

porting paper, the provision would apply.

In practice, it would be rare for this provision to have to be resorted to. The point of it is to create a change of culture and attitude on PCCs. Such a measure is, and this is worth pointing out to those who might be surprised by it, completely consistent with the 1956 PCC legislation under which the first function of the PCC is to cooperate with the incumbent.

Service times

(2) The incumbent would be given clear permission to alter non-standard service times in a parish church without a formal vote by the PCC. So, take an incumbent who comes to a church that has developed a monthly pattern of three Sung Eucharists at 10 a.m., with a family service at 11

a.m. on the fourth Sunday with a 9 a.m. BCP Communion. He can immediately introduce a standard service time of 10.30 a.m. on every Sunday.

Non-standard service times are a deliberate barrier to growth. The in-crowd may well understand them, but they are confusing to the outsiders that the church needs to be reaching.

(3) Under the special measures, it would be clearly set out that the incumbent's canonical duty is to implement growth-allowing change. An expectation is thus created that change is on the agenda for the sake of Christ's mission.

Of course, none of these changes by themselves will stop front-line clergy from having anxiety dreams, but they would help prevent the nightmares from becoming reality.

You shall be free

*Even today, the relationship between Church and State continues to change and not necessarily for the better. In the last of this series, **George Austin** compares the current situation to that envisaged in the Magna Carta*

At Runnymede in 1215, King John signed the Magna Carta in the presence of barons and bishops, including the archbishops of Canterbury and Dublin and the bishops of London, Winchester, Bath and Glastonbury, Lincoln, Worcester, Coventry and Rochester.

In an examination of Church/State relations, it is worth looking at its first clause: 'That we have granted to God, and by this present charter have confirmed for us and our heirs in perpetuity that the Church of England shall be free and shall have its rights undiminished and its liberties unimpaired. That we wish this so to be observed appears from the fact that, of our own free will and before the outbreak of the present dispute between us and our barons, we granted and confirmed by charter the freedom of the Church's elections – a right reckoned to be of the greatest necessity and importance to it – and caused this to be confirmed by Pope Innocent III. This freedom we shall observe ourselves, and desire to be observed in good faith by our heirs in perpetuity.'

This was confirmed more succinctly in 1297, in the charter's endorsement by Edward I: 'First, we have granted to God and by this our present Charter have confirmed, for us and for our heirs for ever, That the Church of England shall be free, and shall have her whole rights and liberties inviolable.'

A positive step?

More than nine centuries later, perhaps it is time for the Church of England to demand that this agreement be acknowledged. Of course the Church has needed the strength and power of the State – usually in the person of the monarch – for its very existence, especially in pre-conquest days. And part of the meaning of the clause in the Magna Carta was in relation to the English Church's right to be free from papal interference.

Henry VIII ended that forever, but only to replace it with his own headship over the Church so that it was certainly not free, nor were 'her rights and liberties inviolable'. With the development of parliamentary democracy, the monarch's power over the Church has been exercised through the two Houses of Parliament.

It is extraordinary that only in 2007 did a dour Scottish Presbyterian Prime Minister declare that the Church should be allowed to choose its own bishops, with the two names no longer being filtered and purified in the back rooms of 10 Downing Street before presentation to the Queen. Could this mean that 'the freedom of the Church's elections' has at

can it be right in a secular age that a secular parliament should have any power over the Church

last been put into effect?

We should not be too euphoric at this. Appointment to the bench of bishops in the Eighties demanded the 'right' background – public school, Oxbridge, with theological training at Westcott House or Cuddesdon – and the next decade brought the rejection, as far as possible, of those whose theological understanding would not allow them to ordain women. When choice is entirely in the hands of the Church, the power of the dominant group will be all the greater – and the dominant group will be unforgiving liberal fundamentalists.

Parliamentary power

But the reason for seeking disestablishment for the Church must not be because it is expedient, but because it is morally right. And can it be right that a diocesan bishop on appointment must promise before the monarch that he (and soon she) will hand over to a secular ruler – however strong the faith of that ruler – not only the temporalities of the see but also the 'spiritualities'?

When Salomé danced before King Herod, as thanks he offered to reward her with anything 'up to the half of my kingdom', and she demanded the head of John the Baptist. When asked how Herod ought to have dealt with that, a wise child replied that he should have said: 'The head of John the Baptist is from that part of my kingdom which is not mine to give away.' But would a new bishop be prepared to sacrifice himself at the last fence?

In a television interview, I once asked a disestablishmentarian suffragan bishop whether any bishop had ever refused to recite the oath. He replied, 'No', but added that he thought some of them did so 'with their fingers crossed.' The phrase 'We have no King but Caesar' comes to mind.

In 1927, a revision of the Book of Common Prayer was overwhelmingly accepted by the Convocations and the Church Assembly. Archbishop Randall Davidson introduced it to the House of Lords and after a three-day debate it was passed by 204 to 88, but rejected by the Commons. A few changes were made, but in 1928, Parliament rejected it by an even greater majority. The bishops met and reluctantly agreed to allow the 1928 Prayer Book to be used.

Today, Parliament still has the right to reject decisions of the General Synod which are presented to its Ecclesiastical Committee, but has no power to alter them. But again, can it be right in an increasingly secular age in which many attacks are being made on faith bodies, especially the Christian churches, that a secular parliament should have any power whatsoever over the Church?

Help or hindrance

In the Middle Ages, bishops were landowners with similar rights and duties to those of other landowners. This brought with it not only the palaces and castles they still enjoy, but also, for some, the privilege of membership of England's most exclusive club, the House of Lords, even though they are now described as 'lords spiritual'. There is an argument for allocating a number of peerages to faith leaders, but in an age of television, it is at least open to question whether the House of Lords is the most effective place for a Christian contribution to be made on the issues of the day.

In earlier days, the Church needed the State's support for its very survival. But have we now reached a time when that 'support' has become a hindrance rather than a prop? The only buttress the Church needs is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and its only submission should be to the King of Kings. Faithfulness to that is the strength which Catholics and Evangelicals can offer to the continuing mission of the Church. **ND**

devotional

Prayer of the heart

Fr Gregory CSWG

We all know we have a physical heart, and how important it is that this heart should be working properly; but not everyone, even among people who pray, knows that we have a spiritual heart, and that this heart too needs to be in good condition. For the spiritual heart is the centre of our whole being – body, soul and spirit – where the Holy Spirit would dwell to keep our life open to God. When the heart is working properly, we are given to know that the person we truly are is in and from God our Creator; that we are loved and cared for by him, and that it is necessary to take our life from him.

This realization of ourselves as a son or daughter of God, being formed in the heart, makes an immense difference to how we pray. Instead of telling God what our head thinks would be good for ourselves and other people, our concern becomes one of listening to him, beginning with the Word of God in Scripture, so as to learn from him what is his purpose for humanity as a whole and for ourselves in particular. This basic knowledge and understanding is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and it is formed first of all in the heart.

Role of the mind

What part then does our mind take in this? Nothing much until the mind has agreed that it is not the ruling and directive centre of our life, and that it must hand this role over to God. Then the

mind can learn the humility of repentance, and can be shown by the Spirit of truth how all our sins of thought, word and deed are in fact by-products of holding an upside down view of life, a fantasy of ourselves as the boss. When the mind has learnt this basic lesson in humility, it can descend into the heart, and do its thinking and praying from there, being enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

Surrender of the self

The next stage of this lesson from the Holy Spirit in the heart is how to become free from the distractions that disturb the prayer of the heart and confuse its new understanding of the will of God. Basically the will of God is that we should surrender ourselves in all circumstances to the Father in union with the holy Sacrifice of Christ. By our persevering in this way, the Father can send upon us through the increase of the Holy Spirit, to sanctify our whole self and to transform us into a new creation in Christ. Indeed this is why he became incarnate for us; and this is how we can reach the maturity of the sons and daughters of God, and can enter into the unity of his kingdom.

This complete surrender of our whole self in Christ must come to include all that we find difficult in life and in prayer: forgiving those who sin against us, surrendering the disappointments and frustrations of life, and the sufferings of illness. To accomplish this total oblation to the Father, our own heart needs to be united to the Sacred Heart of Christ. The goal of this adventure is for our heart to become an altar united with the Altar of the Eucharist. God will be glorified both in worship and throughout our whole life; heaven will have come down to earth. **ND**



'It's a pity we can't recycle mince pies as hot cross buns. They'd never notice.'

Fr Green

A Latin proverb says 'we perish by permitted things.' The sins which spoil our progress are not actually *forbidden*. On the contrary, it is those things which are inherently *virtuous* but get out of control that are our undoing. The shortcomings of St Grizelda's aren't *forbidden* but *permitted* things; and the fact that they are admired by many makes them all the more difficult to discover and correct.

Fr Green is a young bachelor, St Grizelda's is his first curacy, and he's even more ebullient than Canon Browning was when first ordained. Young people love him; the older ladies wish they were his mother; and some of the Young Wives can't do too much for him.

Fr Green simply *cannot* understand why Canon Browning doesn't always warm to his ideas. Privately, he suspects that it is because he is under the thumb of Mrs Browning. Thus, when Fr Green occasionally fails to consult him about some bright idea, but simply puts it straight into practice, he is taken aback when, even if it is successful, Canon Browning appears less appreciative than Fr Green thinks he deserves.

Fr Green has many virtues. God knows, the Church of England could do with more ebullient, imaginative, enthusiastic priests like him who get on well with everyone, not least the ladies who make up most of our congregations. Even a little impatience, tempered with charity, works wonders when all else fails.

But extroverts like Fr Green often fail to understand that their virtues – energy, imagination and charm – by coming into contact with Canon Browning's greater age and experience, and catalysed by the latter's unresolved disappointments, form an unstable compound, easily detonated by a trivial spark.

And what he doesn't (and couldn't) realize is that the Brownings have been struggling for years with her recurrent bouts of depression which at times have threatened their very marriage.

So Fr Green's admirable sparkling nature may yet end up dividing the parish into the Green and Browning camps without either of them intending it – hence becoming 'the sin which is admired by many'.

Francis Gardom

Two wise women

Through his mother and grandmother, Timothy's faith was grounded in a living tradition

Patrick Henry Reardon is a Senior Editor of *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*

Before he ever met the Apostle Paul, the life of young Timothy (feast day: 26 January) was already full of blessings. Indeed, Paul himself, among the last lines he wrote, reminded Timothy of those blessings: 'But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus' [2 Tim. 3.14–15].

Both Paul and Timothy knew who were the latter's first teachers of Holy Scripture. Paul wrote earlier in this same epistle, 'I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also' [1.5].

These two women, Timothy's mother and grandmother, had raised him not only in the faith but also in the study of the Sacred Writings, *ta hiera grammata* – Sacred Grammar. It was this early study that grounded the soul of young Timothy and prepared him to become an Apostle of the Church and the Bishop of Ephesus. The whole Church owes to these two women an immense debt of gratitude.

When, as a child, Timothy was taught the grammar of Holy Scripture, what did he learn? Many things, to be sure, but let us consider three benefits to be ascribed to that early instruction.

First, Timothy learned to take possession of his heart. Placing his young soul under the authoritative guidance of Sacred Grammar, Timothy learned who he was, his place in this world, what God expected of him, and what he could expect, both during his life and at the end of it.

The stories of the Bible, assimilated in the context of his family, gave shape to Timothy's moral imagination, conferring on his conscience a narrative moral sense. These biblical stories gave imaginative organization to his mind. He was enabled to inform his personal life from the stories of the Bible. From these stories, learned especially in the setting of his home, Timothy was edu-

cated in the habits of the heart.

Timothy learned, from inside, the Bible's perspective on the world. Slowly he became versed in the narratives, poetry and maxims that would give structure to his soul, and imaginative, rational formation to his conscience. All of this is to say that Timothy was the blessed recipient of a biblical culture.

Second, the study of the Bible, for Timothy, was not a private thing. Thanks to the two older generations that instructed him, Timothy was enabled to read Scripture through the eyes of the living Sacred Tradition, in which alone the Bible is properly understood. After all, there is no such thing as a private culture. All culture is traditional culture. It is not a commodity that can be purchased. By definition, a culture can only be inherited. All culture is necessarily trans-generational.

This is true of biblical culture as well. It is social. Timothy's study was a great socializing agent in the formation of his character. By it, he became one with his own history, including his family's history, and he assimilated the organizing influences of a biblical world-view.

In Timothy's case, the transmission of this biblical culture was a difficult task. Timothy's father was apparently not a believer [Acts 16.1], so the young man did not enjoy the benefit of what the behavioural sciences today call a 'male role model'. Timothy learned his faith and Sacred Grammar from the women in the household, and the experience seems not to have hurt him at all.

Third, from Eunice and Lois, Timothy learned to take his place in the *continuance* of biblical history. After all, the Bible not only records history, it also creates history. The Bible, as written down, read, and proclaimed in the ongoing community of faith, influences and directs the course of history. The Bible *changes* history by changing the lives of those who come under its transforming power – both Timothy and ourselves.

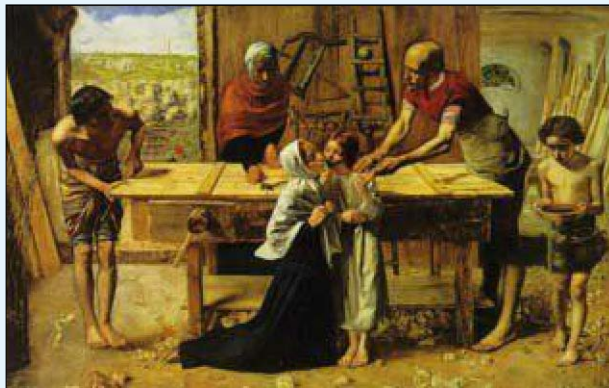
Thanks to two wise women, a godly mother and a devout grandmother, this was also Timothy's history. **ND**

Sacred vision

Although at first an apparently mundane domestic scene, this painting, on display as part of the *Millais* exhibition at Tate Britain until 13 January, is rich in Christian symbolism. The child Jesus is being comforted by the Virgin Mary, having just cut his finger on a nail in his father's workshop.

The blood from the wound drips onto his feet, prefiguring the crucifixion, while the young John the Baptist brings a bowl of water to bathe the wound in anticipation of Christ's baptism. Through the open door a flock of sheep is peering over the fence and the tools on the back wall represent the triangle of the Holy Trinity.

It is easy to see how the modern viewer might agree with the hostile criticism the painting received in 1850 for showing the Holy Family as 'too ordinary'.



Millais: Christ in the House of His Parents

Every detail of the scene is revealed by Millais' intense lighting and the painting today continues to provoke reactions of intense dislike or even revulsion. But even if the quasi-photographic realism favoured by the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood seems overdone, the family's 'ordinariness' is in fact part of the symbolism of the painting as a whole.

Jesus cries like any other child while his parents console him; the scene could easily show any child or any parents. The Holy Family is meant to be 'ordinary', but at the same time is elevated through the overt symbolic content. Of course Jesus suffers like an ordinary child, but his pain is to end in something entirely more significant; in fact, it ends in something wholly extraordinary.

Rosie Razzall

Reasoning into faith

Paul Griffin revisits the question of whether it is possible to reason ourselves into belief in God, and highlights the ongoing importance of reason with regard to issues such as gender and mission

There is a limit to the time one spends on theological abstractions, but I was driven back to them when I heard a man say, 'I'm as God made me.' He was a man unlikely to darken a church pew, except in a tourist group, one of the many who say they are agnostics. What he said was absolutely true, but why from him, of all people? Lazy thought or speech, perhaps. But what if he meant it? What if England, while not a Christian country, is it at least a theist country?

If many profess theism, they have presumably thought themselves into it. When they say that God made them, they may envisage a special act, like Professor's Hoyle's 'continuous creation'; but more likely they refer to currently accepted theories. I mean the Big Bang, worlds rocketing around, cooling, and acquiring Primeval Slime, out of which comes Life: an impressive and undeniably odd way of producing Bill Snooks in the twenty-first century.

So I asked myself the old question: how far can we reason ourselves into Christ? – to which the traditional answer, if I remember rightly, is: only with the help of grace and the human will. Not, to the multitude, a very helpful answer.

Only one solution?

I suspect most reasoning theists have used what is called the 'argument from design'. If you consider your local High Street on a summer day, and take a sort of Attenborough-like look at every detail of the scene, from the last petal on the last flower in the florist's to the last gasp of exhaust gas from the passing motorcycle, you will generally end up believing in a Designer. The odd thing is that, by reason, you have achieved a solution that baffles reason.

So far so good; but between this position and Christianity lie fences over which the majority of the population do not manage to jump. If we need more reason to hoist us over these fences, what should it address?

Anyone who looks at the evidence may see the proposition that God came to earth in the person of his Son, was born of a pure virgin, and so on; he sees the material fact of the gospels. The task of reason is to examine and accept or reject

these accounts. Reject the gospels, and that is that: the fence looks insurmountable. Before deciding, it is important to realize that already one has used logic to prove a miracle. Can it not be that just as one looked at the High Street, and came to the conclusion that the apparently impossible solution was the only possible one, so if one takes the gospels in sufficient detail and follows their statements far enough, another apparently incredible conclusion becomes the only possible one?

the task of reason is to examine and accept or reject the accounts in the gospels

That, I suppose, is the best way to face the fence: to assume you have leapt it, at which it will become clear that there is no other course but really to leap it. Here the word faith comes into mind, as well as will and grace.

Further hurdles

There are difficulties. One inevitably asks why God revealed himself in *our* patch of time. How will things be in a million years? Or will there not be another million years, but the long-awaited Second Coming? There indeed would be a New Direction! But we have first to concern ourselves with the old direction, in and after the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberius; because once over the fence, we still need the blessed gift of reason.

For example, we meet the difficulty of the Scandal of Particularity: that God came as a man, with brown, grey, blue, or green eyes and blond, brown, or black hair. Somehow one imagines it would be brown eyes and dark brown hair, but who knows? The fact that God used particular features while representing a general humanity leads some to say that his maleness also was just the result of the toss of a coin, or, in modern terms, the shuffle of genes. Others believe that there is a great difference between details like hair and eyes and orientations like sexuality, and

that God, not being one for tossing coins, meant to signify a truth in his earthly maleness.

In this way the manhood of Jesus, and the womanhood of his Blessed Mother give us examples of life on earth to follow, while in his godhead he is the Great Exemplar of that other life, where gender is not an issue. That way, there is an acknowledgement of the special gifts of each sex in this life, one which, partly because of injustices in the past, our society is busy trying to hide or ignore. This is a reminder that even on our side of the fence we have to keep our reason bright and shiny, and never cease to deal with further problems.

Missionary challenge

These current problems are concerned largely with gender. Male and female he created us, with glorious and complementary gifts, but not entirely interchangeable. Many of us cannot feel he is happy at the fashion of placing militarily recruited ladies in the firing line of battle, though we may be glad that more opportunities of other sorts are available for the mothers of our children. We are also asking ourselves how God views exceptions like those who possess the physique of one sex and the psyche of another. At a guess, could it be that he regards such as uniquely gifted creatures, with much to offer us all, under certain conditions? What those conditions are is the problem we face, for which we continue desperately to need reason; but, thank God, we are over the main fences and arguing as friends.

Preachers in their pulpits on a Sunday morning know that they have to persuade the doubtful over the fence of faith. Most of the doubtful are not there. How to present a process of reasoning to the theistic multitude who are elsewhere is the enormous missionary problem. Even if we occasionally find an audience of theists, we still have to show them that reason can lead them towards something else scientifically inconceivable.

Perhaps above all, we must stress that when we speak of miracles, we are only extending our restricted human power into the divine Reason, the immortal Word. In fact, that there are not two Reasons, but one. **ND**

Different in the North West

30DAYS is grateful to Ruth Gledhill of *The Times* for some gems from an analysis of bishops' expenses during 2006. Our good friend the Bishop of Burnley apparently spent no less than £10 on 'quiet days and retreats'.

Well done, Bishop Goddard! (Although some might think he's rather let the side down – the Bishop of Southwark came in with a much more episcopal £4,054!) We know things are *different in the North* (because people are always telling us), but evidently they're even more different in t' North West.

Following right behind the Bishop of Burnley is the Bishop of Stockport, who managed to get through a whole £25 on garden and household equipment – compared with the Bishop of Dover, who needed 141 times as much – £3,527.

The Bishop of London's very creditable £427 on 'public transport and economy air travel' is really rather undone by the £25,000+ cost of his full-time chauffeur, particularly when compared with the chauffeur-less Bishop of Manchester (back to the North West!), whose 'public transport and economy air travel' costs amounted to a very green £6,436.

Naturally enough, the Archbishop of Canterbury's hospitality bill was the highest at £62,652, double the £30,751 spent by the Archbishop of York, and more than 1,000 times the £62 reportedly spent by the Bishop of Lancaster (which, for the geographically challenged, is somewhere in the, er, North West).



Something borrowed, something blue

The ego of New Hampshire bishop Gene Robinson knows no bounds. 'I always wanted to be a June bride,' he said, speaking in November at Nova Southeastern University, Florida. 'It may take many years for religious institutions to add their blessing for same-sex marriages and no church, mosque or synagogue should be forced to do so. But that should not slow down progress for the full civil right to marry,' Robinson said. 'Because New Hampshire will have legal unions beginning in January, my partner of 20 years and I will enter into such a legal union next June.'

Just in time for the Lambeth Con-

ference, this would really spice up the spouses' programme – except, of course, the Archbishop of Canterbury seems unaccountably to have left our Gene off the invitation list!



AffCaths come of age

Ever wondered what *Affirming Catholicism* is all about? Help is at hand. Go to <www.affirmingcatholicism.org.uk> and click on the link headed 'What we think' and back will come the message 'This page is currently under construction and will be available shortly.' Well, given that they've been around only 18 years, it's probably a bit soon to expect them to have decided anything as complicated as what they think. Still, we live in hope.



Fringe event

According to the newsletter of fringe group GRAS, it appears that the body so memorably launched at the House of Lords, at an event hosted by Baroness Rendell of Babergh (that's whodunit author Ruth Rendell to most of us) back in 2000, is even more on the fringe than anyone had realized: 'Over 20 members of GRAS gathered in St Anne's Church in Soho for our annual meeting and conference.'

A 30DAYS reader wonders whether we think that we should get them listed as an endangered species and enquires as to the implications for terminal care of such a minority group. We suggest he consults his diocesan bishop for advice without delay.



@%\$!

It's comforting to know that, despite all the disagreements raging on in The Episcopal Church, reasoned debate is still to be found. Our good friend the Bishop of Fort Worth recently received an email from an Episcopalian priest by the name of Robert Semes:

'Dear Mr. Iker: I hope that Presiding Bishop Jefferts-Schori takes you out behind the woodpile and beats the sh*t out of you...you pompous a**hole. Your arrogance is beyond the pale and a disgrace to

what's left of the Christian Church. Why don't you give the Episcopal Church a gift this holiday season and get the f*** out of it – A pissed off and disgusted gay Episcopal priest...who you can't touch because I don't live in your fascist diocese.'

30DAYS readers wishing to send Mr Semes new year greetings (he lives in Oregon) can apparently contact him at <rsemes@direcway.com>. A second email address he is reputed to have <highchurchatheist@gmail.com> (which says it all!) appears to have been taken over by somebody calling himself Clayton Barlow.



The Satanic She

One of our readers recently attended a Roman Catholic baptism service and was surprised to read on the service sheet that the godparents would be asked if they renounced Satan and 'all his/her works'. Was this something members of WATCH would now be advocating?

After the service he asked the parish priest if this was a new addition to their liturgy, but he apologised profusely. When he had typed out the service he realized that he had only described the baby as 'he' and quickly went through changing all the masculine pronouns to 'he/she' and 'his/her'. Pity; it would have been good to know whether our feminist sisters would be enthusiastic or appalled.



Many a true word...

Many thanks to the eagle-eyed priest in the diocese of Southwark, who spotted this gem in a flyer for this year's CMEAC (Council for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns) Vocations Conference.

The opening two lines run:

Q. Thinking about serving God?

A. It's as easy as ABC!



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

Challenge to the news

In an excerpt from one of the FiF Working Party reports, Philip North calls for Anglo-Catholic renewal through focusing on evangelization rather than internal arguments

The post-modern culture which we are called to evangelize in twenty-first century Britain is profoundly challenging. The relativist mindset turns truth into a matter of opinion, resists commitment and mistrusts institutions. In a world fat with the riches of consumerism, faith is simply not a serious option for most people. It is not that people hate the Church (it would be rather easier if they did). In fact, many rather like the fact that it is around to educate their children and remind them of their heritage. Beyond this, it simply has no relevance for them. They are largely bored by it.

Moreover, the paranoia following the terrorist attacks in New York and London has raised a new suspicion in people's minds about faith and its consequences, and popular writers such as Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins have been able to cash in on this by portraying religion as an enemy of human life. The astonishing sales of books such as *The God Delusion* point to the considerable challenges of those seeking to proclaim the Gospel in such a context.

It is frustrating beyond words that, at a time of such virulent secularism, the Church appears to offer little more than internal arguments and seems able to do little to re-engage imaginations with the truth of the Christian revelation. For Anglo-Catholics, the most pressing internal issue is the consecration of women to the episcopate.

'Freed' for mission?

The most coherent proposal for a structure which would contain the fallout from women's consecration is provided by the draft legislation in *Consecrated Women*. There seems to be a fairly widespread assumption amongst Anglo-Catholics that the creation of such a structure will somehow 'free' Catholics up for mission. The theory is that, liberated from diocesan structures that don't understand us and in control of a province whose theology and priorities we can agree for ourselves, we will be able to focus wholly on the work of evangelization, energies will be released, ideas will be formed, synergies will emerge and growth will come. However, it does not take a great deal of analysis to see that this is highly unlikely to be the case.

The passing of such legislation would

throw many parishes into years of internal turmoil about what position to take. It would remove the financial structures that subsidize the ministry of a large majority of Catholic parishes. It would be a massive distraction from the work of the Gospel. Furthermore, we must not fall into the temptation of thinking that 'freedom' will somehow of itself enable evangelization. New disciples are not automatically made because the church has got its structures right. While it is God's work, we need to cooperate in his mission to the world. We need to plan and execute growth strategies and commit resources.

we must not think that 'freedom' will somehow of itself enable evangelization

Culture of negativity

Should such a province be established, there will be enormous issues of viability and perception. A new structure is likely to be made up of fewer parishes than there are in many dioceses, most of them small, most of them with elderly congregations, many of them in areas of acute social deprivation, most of them dependent on subsidy to meet the cost of their ministry. In some areas of the country, we are fairly strong. In great swathes of middle England, we barely exist. And what will our message be to the world? Who will we be to secular twenty-first-century Britain?

The problem here is that we will have formed ourselves on the basis of opposition to something, and it is notoriously hard to turn that round to the extent that we are seen to be a group of people with positive things to say. The formation of a free province might make perfect sense to us, but what is our *raison d'être* for those who don't have quite our grasp of ecclesiology? Many Anglo-Catholics who are heavily engaged with the ministry of evangelization point out that those whom they are nurturing in the faith have very little concern for or interest in denominational divides, let alone internal wrangling.

The issue of the need to manage perceptions is heightened by a prevailing culture of negativity within many strands of the

Anglo-Catholic movement. While there are some examples of good practice within Catholic parishes, there are far too many where priests are content to manage genteel decline or simply coast towards retirement. There is little youth or children's work, and in many parishes the most basic strategies for growth are lacking.

More sinister is the widespread tendency for Catholics to run down or rubbish enthusiasm or new initiatives. Where Evangelicals praise, celebrate and seek to emulate new evangelistic methods or strategies, Catholics seem immediately hostile and suspicious. This hostility is a major factor in the lack of church plants or new evangelistic initiatives of any kind within most Catholic parishes.

Amongst some priests (often, perhaps, younger ones), there may be appearing a worrying tendency to retreat into a mythic past, a world 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. It is unclear whether they believe that this constitutes an evangelistic approach that will engage a new generation with the Gospel or whether it is simply a desire to retreat into a place of safety from a frightening world and a complex evangelistic problem.

Mission-shaped church

The other aspect of the context that this report cannot ignore is the Church of England's strategy for evangelization. *Mission-Shaped Church* was published in 2004, calling for radical new approaches to be taken to evangelizing a fast-changing and disparate culture, and the ideas within the report have been developed by the agency *Fresh Expressions*. Anglo-Catholics have been quick to condemn the report, pointing out its lack of a coherent ecclesiology, its failure to understand Catholic or Eucharistic evangelization, its over-simplified sociological analyses and its tendency to dismiss the effectiveness of the traditional parish as a vehicle of growth and change. Very few Anglo-Catholic parishes have set up 'fresh expressions' of church or appear on the agency's website.

While much of this criticism is undoubtedly valid, Anglo-Catholics have failed to put in place positive strategies of their own. The debate around *Mission-*