newdirections

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



Church in Wales

Fr Alan Rabjohns summarizes the key features and implications of the women bishops legislation

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The recent Transatlantic episcopal exchange of letters
The Bishop of Whitby on next year's Lourdes pilgrimage
The top dozen from the ND Good Beer Guide 2008

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ND comment

The simple picture of a mother with her baby son in her arms should surely be one of the most powerful icons of a modern, liberal culture.

For those pursuing the lesbian/gay agenda through the nation's legislature, could there be a better symbol of their aspirations? And yet, as we know only too well, it was precisely this image that was so fervently rejected by those who sought to change the rules for IVF and to rewrite the birth certificates for babies adopted by lesbian couples.

There is nothing wrong in a particular group within society seeking to increase its own rights and privileges, and nothing wrong in a government seeking to effect that change, but it does matter, to everyone else in that society, on what basis this change is made. We all have an interest in all the legislation passed in our name, for its impact and influence on any other aspect of our common life, whether now or in the future.

There is nothing wrong in seeking to extend the rights and privileges of lesbian couples, but there is a great deal wrong in the manner in which it is at present being effected through the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. Doctoring birth certificates may be relatively silly; the wider attempt to suppress a child's right/expectation/need for a father is far more serious.

Our bishops, in the House of Lords, have responded well to this travesty. They have defended the rights of the defenceless; they have stood up for important social truths; they have proclaimed the broader moral imperatives, on which we all depend. They deserve our prayer and support.

This rejection of so simple an image of human life and society is disturbing. Does the liberal–secularist hatred of the Christian tradition take precedence over the warmth of a mother's love and the nurture of children? Seemingly so.

If 'Christmas is really for the children' then why can our society not cherish the image of a mother's love? The cultural fight between a 'traditional' celebration of the Saviour's Birth against the modern inventions of mid-winter festivals is an amusing squabble: more serious is a society that rejects so emphatically the key images of life, love and compassion which have nurtured us for so many centuries.

The issue is not one of forcing explicit Christian symbols upon unwilling non-Christians, but of valuing and sharing what are commonly referred to as 'core values'. These values did not come from ourselves, our own imagination and best intentions, but from the will and purpose of God.

The simple figure of a mother and her baby son needs no explicit religious colouring, but is given greater meaning in a Christian community, by the sharing of a deeper significance, from a love greater than our own. At this holy season, we are reassured by the overwhelming richness of the Christian heritage, challenged by the need to witness to this truth, and renewed by the presence of the Lord Jesus.



In an inclusive church there have to be rules – rules that ensure the fair treatment of minorities, in particular in matters of appointment and preferment. That is why the Manchester Statement of the House of Bishops, *Bonds of Peace*, and the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod, 1993 are both explicit in demanding even-handedness in such matters. There is, even, an officer – the Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments – who is available to advise on such matters.

Caroline Boddington, currently the Secretary in question, was also a member of the Pilling Group, which recently criticized the failure to appoint to senior posts from the traditional Catholic constituency. But her advice, it seems, is not always taken.

Consider the case of a recent advertisement and job description for the post of Dean of Derby. Derby is a parish church cathedral. Its Dean is an incumbent and the bishop is the patron of the living.

The Rt Revd Dr Alastair Redfern, Bishop of Derby is, needless to say, a forward-looking cleric 'committed to a partnership style of working…[and so] keen to come together with colleagues, fellow Christians and a whole host of people who want to make positive changes in Derbyshire.'

Sad then that, he approved a job description, drafted by the chapter of the cathedral, for the new Dean which explicitly excluded anyone opposed to the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate – in open defiance of the Act of Synod, about which he must have known, and on which advice was in any case available to him from Ms Boddington's office.

Were a traditional Catholic candidate to apply for the post, after such forthright discouragement, the bishop would no doubt be balanced and open-minded in the decision he took. But the questions remain: how many will apply? And why, in the first place, did Dr Redfern not take Caroline Boddington's advice?

She is, after all, his wife. ND



Wales decision time

***Alan Rabjohns** provides an overview of the women bishops debate in the Church in Wales, and its importance as a possible indicator of things to come in other provinces of the Anglican Communion*

There has been much mention in these pages over the past months of the 'phoney war', and how, with the proposed legislation in Wales, this phase of the conflict was coming to an end.

In trying to write about the current situation in the Province, it looks like we have entered our own time of phoney warfare, for on the surface little seems to be happening. So it might be useful to give some details about just what the process is: what has happened, what is happening now and what will happen in the future.

Here is the story so far. The Bench of Bishops of the Church in Wales decided last year that it was time to follow other provinces of the Anglican Communion and look at the prospect of ordaining women to the episcopate. Whether they did this with a full heart may be subject to some doubt: it was evident that, if they had not done so, there would be action in this direction by private members' business in the Governing Body. So, keeping the process in their own hands, a beginning was made.

this was an unusual event: not a debate with no motion and no standing orders, just a discussion in which anyone who wished could speak

The first public action was the publication of a special edition of *Theology Wales*, with articles both for and against the proposition, the latter being provided by Bishop David Thomas and Canon Peter Jones. This was to be the start of the process of consultation – though the precise nature of that consultation was never detailed, unlike the votes in parishes, deaneries and dioceses that preceded the debate on women being ordained to the presbyterate.

The only formal discussion following from this period of consultation was a discussion at the Governing Body in April this year. This was an unusual event: not a debate, with no motion and no standing orders – just a discussion in which anyone who wished could speak. Those against were well represented and anyone listening could be left in no doubt about the strength of feeling and the kind of things that would be needed to make it possible for the Church in Wales to stay together.

Indeed, before this, Bishop David had called together priests who looked to him for pastoral and sacramental care in a synodical meeting in February 2006. This resulted in a clear statement of what was needed, and a working party refined the resolutions flowing from this meeting. This group had a meeting with the Bench of Bishops in March 2007 when, once again, the case was pleaded with cogency and charity.

Following the discussion in April, it was the task of the Bench of Bishops to decide if the Church in Wales should be asked to proceed to the ordination of women to the episcopate and, if so, what form the legislation should take. I suppose there was little doubt as to what the answer to the first question was going to be; the big question, the one we looked to with prayerful anticipation, was the nature of the legislation. That became clear in July when the Bill from the Bench of Bishops was sent to members of the Governing Body and was then in the public domain.

Readers of New Directions will know already the content of that Bill and how far short it falls of anything that traditionalists need. Though not technically a 'one clause measure', it is to all intents and purposes just that. It says the episcopate is open to women as well as men; it says those who 'object' will receive pastoral care and support.

The relevant clauses read:

> **Whereas the Law and Constitution of the Church in Wales has hitherto not permitted women to be ordained as Bishops.**
>
> **And whereas it is now appropriate in the Church in Wales that women may be ordained as Bishops. And whereas the Church in Wales is mindful both of the provisions of the civil law relating to discrimination upon the basis of gender and of the need to provide pastoral care and support for those who in conscience object to the ordination of women as Bishops.**
>
> **Be it hereby enacted as follows:**
>
> **1. Henceforth in the Church in Wales men and women may be ordained as Bishops.**
>
> **2. The Bench of Bishops will provide pastoral care and support for those who in conscience object to the ordination of women as Bishops.**

Members of the Governing Body were then invited to submit amendments to the Bill to a select committee which was established to consider it in detail. Members had until 27 October to submit details of what they would like to be changed in the Bill and a brief explanation of their reasons for proposing the changes. The select committee, which has on it two priests who would be considered to be of our integrity, has the task of looking at amendments and deciding to recommend whether or not they are accepted. They can also propose amendments of their own. When they have completed their work they report to the Standing Committee, who will then decide in what form the Bill will come back to the Governing Body next April. We shall not know the details of that until the papers are sent to members before that meeting.

In many ways it is difficult to work out how to amend the Bill, for it is drafted in such a way that many amendments could be dismissed as wrecking amendments, but much thought has gone into what might be changed.

Attempts have been made to amend the Bill in three areas:

1. to remove the reference to the civil law in the third recital of the Bill as unnecessary and

possibly dangerous;

2. to amend clause 1 so as to provide more detail on the vague reference to pastoral care and support, either by a schedule defining what will be provided, or by a longer clause which puts flesh on the requests made on our behalf to the Bench of Bishops;

3. to amend clause 3 so that it is not just saying that bishops are not obliged to take disciplinary action against those who do not accept women bishops, but that they are not allowed to take such action on these grounds.

We now have to wait and see what will happen to these, and any other amendments which may have been submitted. Hence the apparent stage of 'phoney war' in our Province at this time.

But this does not mean that nothing is happening.

Above all, what is happening, of course, is prayer. The prayer of thousands of faithful members of the Church in Wales goes up to heaven unceasingly for the peace and unity of the Church. Bishop David has urged us all to pray daily this collect:

> **O God,**
> **for as much as without thee**
> **we are not able to please thee,**
> **mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit**
> **may in all things**
> **direct and rule our hearts;**
> **through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

It would be good if all reading this could pray for us in these or in their own words.

The prayer that is offered must be directed especially at opening the hearts and minds of those members of the Governing Body not committed to either 'side' but concerned for justice and fair play. To this end, an open letter has been sent to the church press, signed by over 100 clergy and ordinands, as follows:

> **We, being clerics and ordinands, both male and female, in the Church in Wales, write to express our concern about the Bill to allow women to be ordained as Bishop, which is about to be considered by a Select Committee of the Governing Body of the Church in Wales.**
>
> **When the Bill was published in July we learned with dismay that specific requests to the Bench of Bishops for proper provision to enable those who in conscience cannot accept the ordination of women to the episcopacy to remain as honoured members of the Church in Wales had been denied. Instead, Clause 2 offers only a vague, non-defined indication of pastoral care and support from the same Bench of Bishops, Clause 3 leaves open the possibility of disciplinary action for not accepting the novelty and the abandonment of exemptions under the civil law would lead us open to prosecution.**
>
> **If the Bill were passed in its present form and unamended to provide constitutional provision, it would make it even more difficult for us serving as ordained clergy.**
>
> **We respectfully ask the Select Committee and Governing Body to consider pastorally and seriously amendments placed before them to make the Bill able to promote the unity and peace of the Church in Wales through which we all wish to continue to serve Christ in this land.**

In addition, it is necessary to correct some of the spin that has been put on the proposed legislation. When the Bill was sent to members of the Governing Body, it was accompanied by a letter from the Archbishop. This letter purports to answer the requests put to the Bench in March. Bishop David Thomas has produced an excellent analysis of this letter which will appear in the next edition of *Province*, due out this month, and subsequently on the website <www.credocymru.co.uk>.

Although that kind of detailed analysis is not undertaken here, a couple of things need to be said. Firstly, the letter confuses administration and jurisdiction. Questions about access by archdeacons are not relevant to the issue of the kind of episcopal care that would be needed by objectors if women were ordained bishops.

The second point that needs to be made is that what the group of people who went to the meeting of the Bench asked for – and asked on behalf of well over 100 clergy who had met with Bishop David in Abergavenny in February 2006, and not on behalf of Credo Cymru as claimed in the letter – was a bishop or bishops with 'appropriate powers of jurisdiction'. This is not the same as asking for diocesan structures. The original resolutions of the synodical meeting in 2006 sought a 'pastoral and sacramental ministry' and 'appropriate powers of jurisdiction', including 'final authority in all matters to do with the selection, training, ordination and nomination to parishes…(and) clergy discipline'.

No doubt there will also be much informal lobbying going on during the months that lie ahead, and it is vitally important that everything that can be done is done.

While the war at the moment may seem to be 'phoney', make no mistake – it is a real war. At stake is the true nature of the Church; but not just the Church in Wales. What happens here will certainly have an impact well beyond the boundaries of this Province. The events that occur in a small province of the Anglican Communion, with clergy numbers equal to a large English diocese, will set the pattern for what happens in the Church of England and beyond.

If this Bill passes as it is, if it is not amended to make proper constitutional provision, then the floodgates are opened for our brothers and sisters in England. If it can be done here, it can be done there. So the National Assembly committed Forward in Faith to support in every way. As Fr Kirk said in seconding that motion, we were being asked to commit our treasure. That such commitment was made with such generosity is truly heartening.

In the *Independent* on 16 August this year, the current Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, wrote in an obituary for a previous Archbishop, Alwyn Rice Jones, 'In 1996, not a single cleric left the Church in Wales as a result of the bill, and that in no small measure was due to the way in which he handled opponents.' If this is true, one can only hope he will learn the lesson of history! ND

the events that occur in a small province of the Anglican Communion will set the pattern for what happens in the Church of England and beyond

Ravenna Statement

***Ian Falconer** reports on the recent RC–Orthodox agreement*

'A modest first step'. So Cardinal Walter Kasper, leader of the Roman Catholic delegation, described the *Ravenna Statement*.

In October, the *Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church* addressed 'ecclesial communion, conciliarity and authority'. These issues feature also in the Anglican-Orthodox *Cyprus Statement*, which I surveyed in the September NEW DIRECTIONS.

The largest Orthodox Church was missing from Ravenna. Moscow Patriarchate delegates walked out because of the presence of the Church of Estonia, declared autonomous by Constantinople but not recognized by Moscow. The Bulgarians were also absent. The Orthodox Church in America and The Orthodox Church in Japan weren't invited, not being recognized by Constantinople. *Ravenna* includes wording concerning ecumenical councils that Moscow had previously criticised. The Moscow Patriarchate will comment in due course.

But divisions within Orthodoxy are ethnic, historical and political rather than doctrinal. Anglicans note: RCs and Orthodox agree that no local church can 'modify the Creed' or 'change a fundamental point regarding the form of ministry by a unilateral decision'.

Like *Cyprus*, the *Ravenna Statement* begins with the Trinity, from whom *koinonia* (communion) derives. Conciliarity is an expression of the communion of the whole people of God. But it is normally the bishops, successors of the apostles appointed by Jesus, who exercise responsibility and authority by meeting in council (Latin *concilium*, Greek *synodos*).

Authority derives from the Word of God. The revealed Word in Scripture is interpreted, through the Holy Spirit, by the Church in the apostolic Tradition, alive in the community, with the Eucharist at its heart. Authority is 'a service of love', to be obeyed on the principle that 'for Christians, to rule is to serve'. Its goal is 'the gathering of the whole of humankind into Jesus Christ'.

There are three levels of authority and conciliarity – the local community of bishop, presbyters and laity with their different gifts; regional (province, patriarchate, etc.), where bishops meet in synod, with one first among equals; and universal, where the catholicity of the Church 'embraces not only the diversity of human communities but also their fundamental unity', one bishop again first among equals.

How are authority and conciliarity practised at this level? The Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Church made decisions that 'remain normative'. After the division, some councils in East and West 'contributed to mutual estrangement'.

Both sides agree that from early times Rome was the Church that 'presides in love' (Ignatius of Antioch, c.107). But even in the first millennium differences arose as to the nature of the bishop of Rome as first among the patriarchs. Differences concern the manner of exercising this primacy and its scriptural and theological foundations.

Anglo-Catholics should follow the Commission's next task with interest: 'What is the specific function of the bishop of the 'first see' in an ecclesiology of *koinonia* and in view of what we have said on conciliarity and authority?

The full text appears on several websites, including <www.pontificalorientalinstitute.com> ND

Ghostly Counsel

Childlike Christmas

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

'Christmas is for children' is the chorus we will no doubt hear in the coming weeks. It is definitely true that the presence of children keeps alive the wonder and the mystery of the festival. They also have a lot of fun! Christmas ought to be a time when adults give themselves permission to play in the presence of God. Some liturgical scholars have argued that all our grown-up worship with all its dressing up and props is 'glorious play.' It is certainly the case that we often take it all far too seriously.

There is nothing wrong with faith being a 'fun thing.' We might ponder the saying of Jesus: 'Unless you become like this little child you cannot enter the kingdom of God.' Childlikeness is characterized by openness, trust and vulnerability, and the effect of these traits is excitement in all that is new and a capacity to engage with the moment in joy and expectation.

The more world-weary reader may find all this a bit hard to take; for this I apologize, but it does not diminish the call to each of us to be 'joyful and triumphant.' A good use of the remainder of Advent might be prayerfully to write down a list of 'blessings', causes to be thankful to God; and then take up 'the duty and the joy' to be thankful.

A more difficult task is to look again at the hard rocks and dry ground of your interior landscape and ask the Lord to strike them open that they may be renewed in joyful hope. It was said of Francis of Assisi that he was the 'most penitent and the most joyful of men'; the point of penitence is that we should come to know more deeply the love we receive in Christ. It may be helpful this Advent to think of the preparation and act of confession as the forerunner to a new experience of childlike joy in Christ.

Appropriate passages to read, as an aid in this 'renewal of joy', would be the letter to the Ephesians chapters 1 and 2, and also Philippians chapter 4. But above all, in this season we have the carols. In them there is an unparalleled collusion of words and music that open up the mind and imagination to the truths of love, human and divine. Many of the carols are wonderful prayers and aids to a simple, heartfelt devotion to Jesus.

It may be that some readers would rather forget their childhood, and there may be some who have no experience of children and no desire to gain any! This does not exempt you from a simple fact: you are a child of God who has revealed himself as Father.

There will be very few readers who have no contact whatsoever with children or perhaps godchildren. Make a special point to pray for them, to spend time with them, and to learn from them; particularly any lessons they offer about enjoying the moment and their capacity to receive: remember the Christmas Gospel, 'to those who receive him he gives power to become children of God.'

Catholic solutions

Mark Stevens argues that the Archbishop of Canterbury's reactions to several recent debates are based on an ecclesiology which fails to reflect the true nature of the Anglican Communion

Not entirely unpredictably, Rowan Williams is responding to the increasing dysfunction of the Anglican Communion by attempting to apply to it a catholic ecclesiology. That is, as the cant phrase used to have it, the tradition from which he is coming. But equally unsurprisingly, a catholic ecclesiology does not fit.

Consider first Rowan's response to the Gene Robinson effect, as it played out in the Church of England.

Here the star of the show was Jeffrey John, an out-gay cathedral canon, and personal friend of the Archbishop, who had been selected as Bishop of Reading. (John, incidentally, had been the principal advocate in the Southwark diocese of Williams as bishop – an appointment, it was widely alleged at the time, vetoed by George Carey on the grounds of Rowan's own attitude to homosexuality.)

A catholic argument

As Archbishop himself, Williams went on to veto, somewhat asymmetrically, John's appointment. He did so with an argument that, whilst further enraging the enragé, seemed at first sight incontrovertible. He began by stating that 'it would be anomalous to appoint as a bishop one whose ministry would not be received by many in the diocese or the wider Church'.

He went on later to affirm that 'the concerns of many in the diocese of Oxford are theologically serious, intelligible and by no means based on narrow party allegiance or on prejudice. They must be addressed and considered fully. Confidence in the ability of a new bishop to minister to those in his pastoral care is a centrally important matter, and it is clear that serious questions remain in the diocese' [Archbishop's Letter to the Bishops of the Church of England, 23 June 2003].

But was the argument – catholic with a small 'c' though it undoubtedly is – quite as unexceptionable and useful as it at first seemed? The problem, surely, is that what apparently (and usefully, in the ambient circumstances) ruled out a gay bishop, appeared at the same time to rule out women bishops.

What the Windsor Report had held up as an example of good practice ['The story of the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate provides us with a recent example of mutual discernment and decision-making within the Anglican Communion', The Lambeth Commission on Communion, the Windsor Report, 2004, Section A, para. 12], the Archbishop was implicitly calling into question.

The bishop's role

William's argument, it has to be said, was soundly based not only in a catholic ecclesiology, but also in recent Anglican thinking about the episcopate. The Cameron Report [Report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Episcopate, 1990] was quite clear:

> **Anglican ecclesiology, in the end, comes down to who pays, hires and fires**

'In the local church the bishop focuses and nurtures the unity of his people; in his sharing in the collegiality of bishops the local church is bound together with other local churches; and through the succession of bishops the local community is related to the church throughout the ages. Thus the bishop in his own person in his diocese; and in his collegial relations in the wider Church; and through his place in the succession of bishops in their communities in faithfulness to the gospel, is a sign and focus of the unity of the Church' [p. 160, para. 351].

This vision of the bishop effecting and expressing unity on three different but interrelated 'planes' effectively rules out the selection as a bishop of anyone whose ministry cannot command general acceptance. It is part, though by no means all, of the argument which has led the Holy See to the conclusion that the Church has no authority to ordain women.

But, alas, no such seriousness or rigour seems to apply among Anglicans. Rowan Williams, who in a moment of crisis was prepared to sacrifice a friend, is nevertheless famously sympathetic to gay ordinations and on record as opining that there are no 'theological' (for which also read 'ecclesiological') objections to women bishops or even to a female Archbishop of Canterbury. And where is Sheila Cameron (the chairperson of the eponymous Commission) now?

Answer: on the Manchester Group, in all probability arguing forcefully for women bishops and for minimal provision for those who cannot in conscience (informed in part by the views expressed in her own Report) accept their ministry.

Letter to Howe

Consider next Rowan's now famous letter to the Bishop of Central Florida, John Howe. (The text of Bishop Howe's letter is to be found on p. 20 of this edition of New Directions.) Like a number of other American bishops, Howe is experiencing parochial defections from the diocese. He sought the advice of the ABC. Williams replied in a manner few had expected:

'I would repeat what I've said several times before – that any Diocese compliant with Windsor remains clearly in communion with Canterbury and the mainstream of the Communion, whatever may be the longer-term result for others in The Episcopal Church.

The organ of union with the wider Church is the Bishop and the Diocese rather than the Provincial structure as such. Those who are rushing into separatist solutions are, I think, weakening that basic conviction of Catholic theology and in a sense treating the provincial structure of The Episcopal Church as if it were the most important thing …' (The text of the Archbishop's letter is to be found on p. 20 of this edition of New Directions.)

Again the sentiments are unexceptionably catholic. But again they hardly fit the observable facts. The Anglican Communion is not, after all, a worldwide Church in which all dioceses relate equally to all other dioceses and to its focus of unity, the Archbishop of Canterbury. On the contrary, it is a loose association of separate churches. They have no common doctrine or ethics, no common liturgy and orders which are no longer mutually acceptable. It is simply the case that the Primate of one of those Churches could

not even be accepted as a priest in others, or in some dioceses in her own.

In this federation of separate Churches it makes little or no sense to suppose that each bishop, regardless of the doctrinal, ethical and canonical position of the Province to which he belongs, stands in an individual and direct relationship to Canterbury (much in the way in which dioceses of the Roman Church relate to the Holy See). The Roman Pontiff 'has pre-eminent ordinary power over all particular Churches' [*The Code of Canon Law, in English Translation*, 1982, p. 57, Canon 332]. Canterbury has no power whatever over any of them; and what power he might have been thought to have now seems to have been dispersed among the various other 'instruments of communion'.

A loose association

For example, when the Diocese of Hong Kong – which at the time was an extra-provincial diocese under the Archbishop of Canterbury – sought to ordain women to its priesthood, the bishop approached and received encouragement from the recently created Anglican Consultative Council. (The first meeting of the Council took place at Limaru, 1971.) Michael Ramsay, who might have been thought to have been the relevant authority for that approach, could not, of course, have decided the matter contrary to the canons of his own church without seeming to have pre-empted a debate which had not yet taken place. So there was no point in approaching him! Even Ramsay was not the free agent which Williams wants John Howe to be or to seem be.

The truth is that, quite unlike Rome, where national hierarchies are subordinate to the central authority and bishops have direct access and responsibility to the Holy See, in the Anglican Communion individual churches are sovereign and autonomous. Anglican ecclesiology, in the end, comes down to who pays, hires and fires.

it is probably safe to say that the Conference will never regain the moral authority it once had

Bishops, even Archbishops of Canterbury, are beholden to the canons and discipline of their provinces – as Bob Duncan, Jack Iker and the rest will most certainly discover if they are found to have 'abandoned the Communion' of TEC, and Katharine Schori begins the process of establishing dioceses and bishops in their place, which will claim and hold all real estate and assets. (See the letters of PB Katharine Schori to Bishop Duncan and Bishop Iker, and their replies on p. 21 of this edition of New Directions.) With which dioceses will Rowan be 'in communion'? Will it matter?

There is, in truth, no appetite in the wider Communion (on either side of the divide over human sexuality) for the kind of ecclesiology which Williams is seeking to adopt. Both Michael Peers (former Primate of Canada) and Peter Akinola of Nigeria have been forthright in repudiating any suggestion of a 'special rôle' for Canterbury (which both, in their different ways, have seen, not as an essential of a coherent Communion-wide ecclesiology, but as an undesirable offshoot of colonialism).

Lambeth Conference

Exercise of the prerogative of the Archbishop to invite or dis-invite to the Lambeth Conference whom he will also looks likely to backfire. Provinces have already begun to indicate that they will attend on an all-or-none basis. Even if they back off from that position, the prestige of the Conference will suffer from the selective nature of its participants. It is probably safe to say that it will never regain the moral authority it once had, or was thought to have.

There is tragedy in all this. Of course, Rowan is right: there is, for a worldwide episcopal Church, only one ecclesiology up for grabs, and that is one substantially similar to that outlined in the Canons of the Catholic Church (see especially Canons 368–439). But no power on earth is going to make the vociferous and affluent minority of the Anglican Communion accept the fact; nor the belligerent and aggrieved majority either.

And, alas, the current strategy of inventing a new ecclesial quango for every crisis (the Anglican Consultative Council; an Archbishops' Commission on this or that; the Panel of Reference; the Primates' Meeting; the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting) is destined to run out of time very soon. It must surely be abandoned before it becomes risible. ND

To the point

X Parish appointments

Our parish is currently without a priest, the vicar having retired. The PCC wished to advertise the vacancy, but the diocesan bishop, who is also the patron, refused, and instead presented his own candidate. This person was not suitable and has now been rejected by the PCC representatives.

We still would like the post to be advertised. Are we entitled to insist on this, or must we wait for the bishop to present another candidate (who might be equally unsuitable)?

The law on the appointment of incumbents is to be found in the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. The PCC may request the patron to consider advertising the vacancy but the decision as to whether, and if so how, to advertise is left to the patron.

The patron (whether the bishop or some other person or body) is entitled to put forward his 'own' candidate, but this is subject to the rights of the parish representatives to refuse to approve the appointment. Where the bishop is not the patron, he also may refuse to approve the appointment.

The patron may go on putting forward his own candidates and the parish representatives (or the bishop) may go on rejecting them until nine months after the benefice became vacant. At that point the archbishop of the province acquires the right to appoint. He must consult the parish representatives and the bishop, but they no longer have a right of veto.

It is sometimes the practice for there to be an interview of one or more candidates conducted by a panel that includes the parish representatives. The fact that they sit on the panel does not change their role, and they still have the right to refuse to agree to the appointment even if the rest of the panel (often stacked with diocesan functionaries such as the archdeacon, rural dean and deanery lay chairman) are all in favour.

Many of the provisions of the 1986 Measure do not apply where the patron is the Crown, the Duke of Cornwall or the Lord Chancellor. These exceptions are currently the subject of a consultation exercise by HM Government and the archbishops.

Our lawyers are happy to answer readers' questions about church law - please email tothepoint@forwardinfaith.com

Beginning of the end?

***George Austin** looks at the relationship between Church and State and the role played by the monarch in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the limitations of the Act of Toleration*

From the moment in 597 that Augustine arrived in Kent, Church and State co-existed in a relationship that was always uneasy and often stormy. There were clashes between the English church and the king, between king and Pope, sometimes between church and papacy.

After nearly a thousand years came the final breach with Rome and, in spite of attempts by Queen Mary to restore it, papal power was at an end. But Henry VIII had taken the spiritualities to himself, declaring that he was the Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England, with powers so great as even to include definition of dogma.

The *via media*

Queen Elizabeth's first parliament met in January 1559, quickly passing two acts of major importance in strengthening the dominance of the State over the Church. The first of these was the Act of Supremacy which revived Henry's legislation against Rome. It ensured that there could be no interference from Rome or from any 'foreign prince, person, prelate, state or potentate, spiritual or temporal.'

there was a desire for an end to religious conflict after a hundred and fifty years of discord

Moreover, though it carefully avoided suggesting that the monarch rather than Christ himself could be 'head' of the Church of England, it did impose an oath on all ecclesiastical and lay officials acknowledging Elizabeth not as 'supreme head' but as 'supreme governor' of both Church and State.

Apart from this slight but significant alteration, this for the most part restored the position as it was at end of the reign of Henry VIII, and undid the pro-papal legislation introduced by Mary. It was pressure from Protestant sources that caused Parliament to pass a second bill, the Act of Uniformity, which reintroduced the Book of Common Prayer and set the basis for worship – with severe penalties for disobedience.

It was followed by a set of Royal Injunctions encouraging kneeling in prayer and bowing at the name of Jesus, and enforcing regular preaching and catechizing. Clergy were not allowed to marry until the lady chosen had been approved by the bishop and two justices of the peace. With the Elizabethan Settlement, State control over the Church did produce a kind of unity and helped stabilize a divided and weakened Church, at least for a few decades.

The Act of Uniformity remained part of the law of the land until threatened by the Church and State report of 1970. As a result, the General Synod passed the Worship and Doctrine Measure, whose provisions included the repeal of the Acts of Uniformity of 1548, 1558 and 1662, although the 1662 Book of Common Prayer had to be retained both for use and also as a basis for the doctrine of the Church of England.

Excommunication

The *via media* became the officially accepted pattern for the Church of England, and resisted the pressure both of the Romanists and Calvinists. Bishops loyal to Rome who could not accept it were deprived of their sees and went into exile – in fact only two, Llandaff and Sodor and Man, were prepared to take the oath to fall in with the new regime.

However, Elizabeth was determined not to follow the bloody practices of her sister Mary's reign and allowed dissenting bishops to flee into exile rather than forcing them to face public executions. She had no wish to be otherwise, be it with senior churchmen or with laity with tender consciences, though in the event her hands were forced as a result of the intransigence of Pope Pius IV.

Now in England the Church was supporting the State in the person of the Queen, and doing so against the power of the Pope in Rome, who enacted a papal bull which excommunicated and deposed Elizabeth. As a result, recusants in England, far from being tolerated, were now faced with the choice of compliance or possible death for high treason.

The papal bull of 1570 marks the final separation of England from Rome as well as the setting in concrete of the present Church establishment in its relation to the State; yet even though once again the State had preserved the Church, this time against a 'foreign prelate', the future was to hold many serious problems.

This was particularly so with the accession of a Catholic king in James II, who liked to present himself as the champion of toleration and may have wished to create an alliance between the Church of England and the Romanists. Nevertheless, the concessions he made to Catholics began to erode the support he had from the Established Church and in the end he was forced to flee the country.

Persecution

When he was replaced by William and Mary, it produced a new problem in that bishops of the High Church party saw the king as holding his office by divine right, so that they – the 'Non-jurors' – could not accept that the lawful king was someone other than James II and therefore their allegiance had to remain with him.

But for the Church and the country as a whole, there was a desire for an end to religious conflict after a hundred and fifty years of bitter and often bloody discord. One of the results of this was the passing of the Toleration Act, giving free churchmen (though not Roman Catholics or Unitarians) the right to meet in their own churches.

However, it was a limited toleration too for some Anglicans, as followers of the Oxford Movement were to find in Victorian days. Protestants formed bodies like the Church Association with the purpose of fighting 'ritualism' by means of legal action, and were supported by the decisions of the Privy Council. As a result, priests like Fr Mackonochie of St Alban's, Holborn were suspended for a period and the State passed in 1874 the Public Worship Regulation Act which enabled further pressure to be brought on recalcitrant clergy. Among others, Fr Tooth of Hatcham was imprisoned for one month and Fr Green of Miles Platting for more than a year. It was not persecution of the kind which had in earlier centuries brought faithful clergy to a violent and horrible end, but it was nonetheless persecution of the Church by the State.

It was not the Middle Ages, when State despotism was accepted as the norm. This may have been the moment when the seeds were sown for the unravelling of the Church/State relationship. ND

LOURDES

Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Apparitions of Our Lady to Bernadette



1858-2008

2008 Pilgrimage to Lourdes

22-26 September

Sponsored by

The Society of Mary

The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham



Copyright photo, courtesy Durand

Pilgrimage led by Bishop Robert Ladds

Superior-General of the Society of Mary and other Bishops, Guardians and Administrators of the Walsingham Shrines

Full Pilgrimage programme

Daily Mass, Stations of the Cross, Processions

International Mass

On the Feast of Our Lady of Walsingham
Intention for Christian Unity

Ecumenical Dialogue

Visit to the Ancient Shrine of Our Lady

Bétharram, Mass

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Further details from the Society of Mary, Shrine at Walsingham, or Mancunia Travel Ltd.,184 Walkden Road, Worsley, Manchester M28 7FQ

"Lourdes is the Spring where conscience becomes clear and clear again"
John Paul II

devotional

What is your hope?

Fr Peter CSWG

The fading colours of autumn presage the oncoming season from Advent to Epiphany. The celebration of the coming of Christ into our midst at Christmas brings with it the expectation of his coming in fullness 'when every eye will see him, even those who pierced him'. Traditionally then for the Church, this season raises the question: 'what is your hope?' – a question that strikes our hearts more poignantly in the light of the past year, and notably the summer, in the tragic events the nation has experienced amongst its young people. For 'what is your hope?' is a question that death, and especially that of the young, poses acutely. Death removes at a stroke every human hope for life in this world.

The last enemy

Yet the Christ who came at the first Christmas was also surrounded by death. Historically this was so in the murder of 'the innocents' of Bethlehem. It is present also with the Church's liturgical celebration in the days following Christmas, when we remember the death of the first Christian martyr as well as the Innocents. All of this keeps starkly before our eyes the prime purpose of Christ's coming among us: he came in order to die. More exactly, he came to destroy death, man's 'enemy'– the 'last' one, as St Paul referred to it – by his death. We begin to see why a notable Orthodox author called this season the 'Winter Pascha' (Passover).

In the Christian understanding, 'death' is not the last thing we do in life – our last breath, as it were. It is with us all the time, we 'live in darkness, and the shadow of death', as the Benedictus canticle puts it. This 'death' was not of God's making [Wisdom 1.13] but ours. Our 'fall' – that brought 'death' into our world – was to take life into ourselves and for ourselves, instead of receiving life for God and in God. 'Death' is existence outside that communion with our Creator for which we were all created.

True life

Christ came to us in order to 'own' this death, even in its cruellest form, and overcome it by offering it to the Father. Through that offering, he restored all of humankind to true life, to that communion with the Father, which alone is real life. This is the content of Christian hope then: communion with the Father, restored by his Son when he trampled down our death by his death. We renew, and grow in, this communion each time we participate in Christ's offering, when with Jesus we offer all of our life back to the Father, in prayer and praise and thanksgiving.

At the same time, we discover for ourselves that this is the only authentic life there is. Outside of it is only 'death'. That is why, daily, we feed upon this life, as daily we are grafted into it. It is the life the Father wills for us, to replace the self-sufficient, individual, but mortal lives that we call our 'life'. It is this integrity of life, which his life is, that then becomes our 'hope' for every circumstance of life. It is a hope of witness that we may bear silently, in the presence of the sacrifice of 'the innocents' of this world. It is not any the less hope for being silent, since it is intercession drawing others into the same unconquerable hope that is truly life. ND



'The Presiding Bishop begins her campaign of Pastoral Care and Reconciliation'

Playing safe

For our liberal friends

Please accept with no obligation, implied or implicit, our best wishes for an environmentally-conscious, socially-responsible, low-stress, non-addictive, gender-neutral celebration of the winter solstice holiday, practised within the most enjoyable traditions of the religious persuasion or secular practices of your choice, with respect for the religious/secular persuasion and/or traditions of others, or their choice not to practise religious or secular traditions at all.

We also wish you a fiscally-successful, personally-fulfilling and medically-uncomplicated recognition of the generally accepted calendar year 2008, but not without due respect for the calendars of choice of other cultures whose contributions to society have helped make this country great. Not to imply that either England or Europe are necessarily greater than any other country or culture. And without regard to the race, creed, colour, age, physical ability, religious faith or sexual preference of the wishes.



By accepting these greetings you are accepting these terms. This greeting is subject to clarification or withdrawal. It is freely transferable with no alteration to the original greeting. It implies no promise by the wisher to actually implement any of the wishes for herself or himself or others, and is void where prohibited by law and is revocable at the sole discretion of the wisher.

This wish is warranted to perform as expected within the usual application of good tidings for a period of one year or until the issuance of a subsequent holiday greeting, whichever comes first, and warranty is limited to replacement of this wish or issuance of a new wish at the sole discretion of the wisher.

Infancy narratives

What is the source of Matthew's and Luke's material concerning the birth and early years of Jesus?
***Patrick Henry Reardon** is a Senior Editor of Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*

A special historical problem attends the gospel accounts of our Lord's Nativity: where did Matthew and Luke find the historical material that fills the first two chapters of each of their gospels?

The earliest apostolic preaching was based on a defined narrative structure, which invariably began with the ministry of John the Baptist. It contained nothing pertinent to the Lord's conception, birth and childhood. We discern the structure of that preaching in Acts. Thus, when St Peter began to evangelize Cornelius and his friends at Caesarea, he began with the ministry of John [10.36–7]. He went directly from John to Jesus; nothing was mentioned about Jesus prior to his baptism.

The evangelical narrative

The same is true of Paul's evangelization of Pisidian Antioch. Paul began by linking Jesus directly to the ministry of John. He included not one word of Jesus' life prior to that time [13.23–5]. That is to say, the 'evangelical narrative' embraced the ministry of Jesus, beginning with John the Baptist. It contained no information about Jesus' earlier years.

This is exactly what we should expect from a close inspection of the directive that Peter gave to the assembled Apostles prior to the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When they determined to choose some person to take the place of Judas Iscariot, Peter specified the time period concerning which that chosen person would have to bear witness. He must be selected, said Peter, from among 'these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, *beginning from the baptism by John* to the day that he was taken up from us' [1.21–2]. This time period defined the specified limits of the original apostolic narrative.

Two of the Gospel writers adhere rather strictly to these limits. Thus, Mark's Gospel begins with the ministry of John the Baptist [1.2–3]. Even the evangelist John, before declaring that 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,' proclaims, 'there was a man sent forth from God whose name was John.' He then describes the Baptist's ministry at some length [1.6–40]. He moves directly from John to Jesus. Neither Mark nor John mentions a single detail about Jesus' life from an earlier period.

In short, then, the inherited story structure of the first apostolic witness began the story of Jesus' life at the point of the preaching of John the Baptist. Consequently, Matthew and Luke had available no pertinent material on Jesus' conception, birth and early life from the earliest apostolic preaching. So where did they obtain the narrative material that fills the first two chapters of each of their Gospels?

The personal source

The only reasonable answer, it seems to me, is Jesus' own mother, of whom we are told, 'Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart' [Luke 2.19, 51]. Luke is obviously disclosing his source here. Mary alone was still alive to remember, years later, those details no longer known by anyone else. She is the living witness of the precious stories about herself and Joseph, the conception and birth of John the Baptist, her own virginal conception, the manger in the stable, the angels and the shepherds, the Magi, the Lord's circumcision, the presentation in the Temple, Simeon and Anna, and the dramatic event that occurred when Jesus was twelve years old.

Matthew and Luke differ greatly between themselves with respect to details, and their differing literary and theological interests, but they tell essentially the same story, and it was a story they could have learned from only one source.

Consequently, to read their Christmas stories is to enter into a mother's contemplative heart where those stories were preserved until they were written down in the gospels under the inerrant guidance of the Holy Spirit. Holy Church, in order to proclaim this earlier part of Jesus' life, draws us into the immaculate heart of Mary, to share in her inner faith and contemplative vigilance, to understand Christmas as she understood it. ND

Sacred vision

The gentle father 1535



In the early sixteenth century, with the ever-increasing sophistication of the new printing, now including devotional books of improving quality, the miniaturists seem to have excelled themselves in a final flourish of colour and delicacy, marked by a gentle realism made all the more vivid because the colours have been so well preserved in the closed pages of a book.

This example is from France. The artist has here chosen the flight into Egypt, always a subject less dramatic than its title suggests. It offered the chance to portray the Holy Family in all their simplicity, without the wonders that accompanied the birth. What is delightful about this illustration (it is no longer incorporated into the text) is how it answers the contemporary question, 'What is the role of a father?'

Mary, holding Jesus (who is unusually tiny and helpless) is beautifully poised and self-contained, riding the donkey with exquisite elegance. At first sight, it would be the easiest thing to excise Joseph altogether; and a second glance suggests that he too is entirely self-reliant, fully equipped for the journey, with good shoes, hat, staff, cloak and all their possessions.

Then you see how completely he has turned towards mother and child – so much so that the artist has not quite succeeded technically. In a physical sense, he could leave Mary even more easily than she could do without him. And yet, it is manifestly obvious that this independent man, by the way he points to Jesus and looks with love at his wife, could not be anywhere but at their side to guide and protect.

Anthony Saville

Our journey to unity

***The Rt Revd Robert Ladds**, of the Society of Mary, reflects on the role of pilgrimage in the Society's work to achieve its aims*



The Society of Mary is one of a number of devotional societies formed within the Church of England as a result of the return to Catholic teaching and practice inspired by the Oxford Movement in the nineteenth century. It is the most recent of them to be established in its current form but springs from a union of two societies, the Confraternity of Our Lady, founded in Calcutta in 1880, and the League of Our Lady, which was mainly based in London, dating from 1904.

It has always had a number of friends and associates from the Roman Catholic Church and has officially been an ecumenical society since 1972, for all those who wish to promote the honour due to Mary and in particular 'to spread devotion to her in reparation for past neglect and misunderstanding, and in the cause of Christian Unity.'

Rediscovering pilgrimage

As such, it has always promoted pilgrimages to Our Lady's shrines. As Archbishop Rowan Williams recently said, 'We live generally in a context where pilgrimage has been and is being rediscovered as a fundamental category of Christian thinking and Christian action. Our search for unity is not only in itself a pilgrimage, a journey with Christ into Christ's relation with his Abba, it can also be expressed, quite simply, in the practice of pilgrimage, where the sheer fact of walking together becomes a transforming reality.'

This has certainly been true at Lourdes. Throughout the years, of course, a number of individual Anglicans have gone there on pilgrimage, in small groups or attached to well-established Roman Catholic pilgrimages from England. A number of those have travelled there as volunteers to help with the medical, nursing and brancardier services.

The first official Anglican Pilgrimage took place in 1963, organized by Fr Percy Coleman, then Secretary of the Church Union and subsequently Chaplain General of S.O.M. It was led by Bishop Wilfrid Westall, the Bishop of Crediton, and organized by Inter Church Travel. They were met at the airport by the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes and welcomed with a champagne reception. Facilities were provided for their daily masses and the group was officially welcomed at the International Mass, where the clergy sat in choir. This began a series of annual pilgrimages arranged through the Church Union and taken on by the Society of Mary. Alongside these, smaller parish groups have regularly made the journey, so that thousands have experienced that union in prayer and action which brings us together as children of Mary to receive the strength which she can offer.

'That they may be one'

There was a particularly significant S.O.M. pilgrimage in 1982, led by Bishop Graham Leonard as Superior General with two other diocesan bishops, with 50 priests and about 200 laity. At the beginning of the International Mass, celebrated by Mgr Henri Donze, he said, 'In the course of this celebration, we shall renew in our hearts the desire for one complete communion with these brethren, whom, in this hope, we greet: we shall address with them, through the intercession of Our Lady, a fervent supplication to Our Lord so that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Christians will hasten along the road to unity and make the prayer of Jesus our own: 'That they may be one so that the world may believe it was you who sent me." At a reception at the Palais des Congrès in Lourdes that evening, Mgr Donze, Mgr Jean-Paul Vincent (the Bishop of Bayonne) and the Rectors of the Shrines at Lourdes and Bétharram agreed to become Vice Presidents of S.O.M. As a memento of this pilgrimage, the Society gave the Shrine an image of Our Lady of Walsingham which is now housed in St Joseph's Chapel.

our pilgrimage ... chosen to represent one of the twelve 'Missions' of the year

Plans for 2008

Our pilgrimage in 2008 for the Jubilee Year renews this commitment and fulfils our desire to celebrate this great anniversary together. We are privileged that our pilgrimage has been chosen to represent one of the twelve 'Missions' of the year, that of prayer and work for the Unity of Christians. We have deliberately chosen the dates, 22–26 September, so that they include the Feast of Our Lady of Walsingham on September 24. This is the only feast of Our Lady proper to England but it is also one which so clearly demonstrates that theme. Walsingham, a shrine of Our Lady established in 1061 and a principal place of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, sadly destroyed at the Reformation, is perhaps unique in the world because it houses two parallel shrines, Anglican and Roman Catholic.

A number of the Guardians of the Anglican Shrine will be accompanying our pilgrimage, along with the Director of the National (Roman Catholic) Shrine. We shall take with us an image of Our Lady of Walsingham which will be carried in the torchlight procession on the evening of the 23rd, and brought in at the International Mass the following morning. At the moment, seven bishops are coming with us on this pilgrimage.

There will be an Ecumenical Dialogue on 'Mary, the Source of Unity', with speakers representing both Roman Catholic and Anglican perspectives, and a Reception that evening. This will enable our bishops, priests and laity to meet with the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, the Bishop of Bayonne and the Rectors of the Shrines at Lourdes and Bétharram, and to express our thanks for the amazing hospitality and welcome we have received over the years.

The most powerful experience, as ever in Lourdes, is that of worshipping and doing things together with countless thousands of others who share the same hope and the same faith. This reminds us, most vividly, of the pain and suffering of the divisions which exist within the Church but also renews our confidence that one day the prayer of Christ 'that all may be one' might become a reality. We look forward to our pilgrimage and pray that Our Lady of Lourdes may indeed draw all her children together into unity.

The advertisement on page 10 gives full details of the Pilgrimage ND

Christmas is coming . . .

'Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat . . .' Stuck for a present for that special churchy friend? 30DAYS is happy to come to the rescue with its pick of the very finest gifts available online at a computer near you:

Ancient & Modern



Fed up with the music in *your* church? The answer has been around for ages, of course: simply switch on your iPod and listen to something more uplifting (Charpentier is very suitable at this time of year). The problem is that fellow members of the congregation can tend to give you a hard time! Not any more! Simply slip your iPod into this fetching **Hymn Book Cover** and no one will ever know! Just £15 from www.suck.uk.com if you want to start off with a present for the most important person in *your* life!

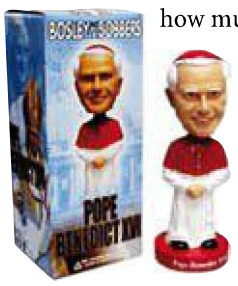
Stuck on you

Brighten up the life of someone you love, to say nothing of their fridge, with one of these tasteful **fridge magnets** from www.fridgedoor.com. At just $13.99 for a set of six, you can tell half a dozen of your nearest and dearest just how much you value them for just $2.33 each!



Panting heart

Now, what about the Papalist in your Parish? Is the Vicar always telling you how much greener the grass is in the panting heart of Rome? Do you have one of those irritating young men in your congregation who bows every time he hears the name *Benedict*? What they need is this classy polyresin **Pope Benedict XVI bobblehead** *(sic)*. According to www.toylounge.com, it will sit on a desk or suchlike and 'exude a placid papal aura'. Well, it would have a fairly placid aura, wouldn't it, seeing as how it's a seven inch high plastic doll! Yours for $12.95.

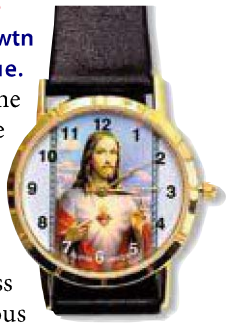


Living Doll



Talking of dolls, why not plump for this exquisite **Immaculate Heart of Mary** from www.ewtnreligiouscatalogue.com? Approximately 18 inches tall, the head and hands are made of a highly flexible urethane rubber that maintains a 'skin like feel' and the cloth body to which they are attached is filled with a soft poly-fill stuffing. She is virtually unbreakable (like to bet?) and, apparently, ideal for children or adults. She comes in at a pricey $98 but, as a 'Certificate of Authenticity' is included, it'll worth every last cent!

Mastering the time



Still at www.ewtnreligiouscatalogue.com, there's the ideal gift for the Prebendary who's always late for that oh so important meeting. Gold-plated with a stainless steel back, this fabulous **Sacred Heart watch** has (wait for it!) a genuine ***leather*** band. A snip at just $40.

Sales flop?

By now, 30 DAYS' evangelical readers may be feeling left out, so how about one of these delightful **soft leather bible cases**? It will 'protect your bible against scuffs and stains and provide convenient storage and transportation of all your worshiping aids' (whatever they may be!) and is available at www.coopersofstortford.co.uk for a very tasteful £14.99 but, if we're honest, we don't see there being much call for the pink number from our friends in *Reform*!



Children's corner

When all is said and done, Christmas is really a time for the children, isn't it? So take the opportunity of increasing their grasp of Trinitarian theology with this **lego Holy Trinity** featuring *'our savior (sic) Jesus, almighty God, and a glow-in-the-dark Holy Ghost'*. (Presumably the reason the Father and the Son look so grumpy is that they *don't glow* in the dark.) A bargain at $30 from www.thebricktestament.com – your kids simply won't know how to thank you enough!



Bah, fudge!

Finally, for all those sweets that you'll need to keep your strength up between meals, go to www.bahhumbugs.com where, as you enjoy the literary allusion, you can fill up with your favourite confections of yesteryear. Ideal last minute presents, of course - 30Days has just ordered a job lot of fudge for all its favourite bishops. And a very happy Christmas to one and all.



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

Losing the past

***John Shepley** is worried by the liberal denial of those who brought us the faith*

'If God, as they say, is homophobic I wouldn't worship that God,' exclaimed Desmond Tutu, in one of those outbursts to which, as a Nobel Laureate, he feels entitled. It is a strange formulation which raises serious problems for the believing Christian.

Christians worship the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He is one God in Three Persons who has revealed himself pre-eminently in the holy Scriptures. The perfect image of the Father is his only-begotten Son, who is the model of obedience to the Father, and who came to fulfil the Law. Though many ritual laws of the Old Testament have been done away in the New Covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ, a distinction has always been made in the Church between the ritual and the moral law.

Attempts have been made, in modern times, to include the Old Testament prohibitions of homosexual genital activity as part of that ritual law. (It has been argued, for example, that the location of such strictures in the Book of Leviticus indicates that they are to be regarded as no more binding on Christians than the probations on the eating of shellfish, and of the same moral seriousness.)

This has never previously been the view of moral theologians, and for the good reason that Paul (pre-eminently at Romans 1.18–32) links the prohibition to the *imago dei* in man, renewed in Christ but marred or defaced by the actions and attitudes which the Apostle lists.

The Sovereign Creator

God is not 'homophobic'; as the Sovereign Creator of all things he can fear nothing. But in Scripture he reveals, in part at least, his divine plan for his creatures. One aspect of that divine plan is his intention with regard to human sexuality, which itself is closely related to the human ability to image and imagine the divine nature.

In the light of all this, what are we to make of the statement 'If God, as they say, is homophobic I wouldn't worship that God'?

It cannot, I think, be that Desmond Tutu is now a polytheist. He is not saying that there are many gods, some of whom are homophobic, and that he can take his pick among them. Surely he is saying that the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ is, and has always been, one who makes no distinction among people according to sexual orientation or practice.

But whence this revelation, which, as we have seen, is contrary to the trajectory of Scripture and the consistent practice of the Christian centuries? True Jesus says not a word about homosexual orientation or practice; but we have his word for it that he did not come to overthrow the Law but to fulfill it.

Worship of a God other than the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ is for Christians a most serious offence. It is idolatry. Desmond Tutu says that he cannot worship a God who is not open and welcoming to homosexual persons. But since such a God is unknown to the whole tradition of Christian moral theology two questions remain: Were all previous Christians idolaters? And if not, where does that leave Desmond? ND

The come-back kid

Julian Mann

Christmas was the come-back kid last year in Booty Bridge. We definitely had more folk at our services than in previous years.

We were boosted by a parish-wide distribution of invitation cards to our Christmas services. The Outreach Team came up with the idea, the children had a competition for the picture on the front, and the church family by God's grace managed to deliver them to every home (around 3000). Not bad for a voluntary organization of thirty-five adults, more than half of whom are over-sixty. God did something marvellous with our five loaves and two fishes.

It would also seem that church attendance at Christmas is being boosted by a cultural reaction. It looks as if the forces of political correctness have overplayed their hand and 'happy winterval', 'happy holidays' or 'seasons greetings' are just not landing with Booty Bridgers and I am sure that other front-line clergy are finding the same in their parishes. At the grass-roots, whatever our status, colour, or indeed creed, we prefer to wish each other a Merry Christmas.

However, we can be equally sure in the current cultural climate that people's affection for Christmas does not spring so much from a clear understanding of its wonderful message as from nostalgia, and/or getting fed up with the politically-correct brigade.



Furthermore, is it not also the case that the Christmas come-back in the media, and amongst opinion formers generally, is the (ironic) result of prescribed cultural pluralism? 'We don't want to lose Christmas to Winterval because it is so much part of our heritage, and we want to keep it in the mix, but in these days of multi-culture we mustn't take the message too far, because that might offend other religions.'

So it seems that if I am to get the most out of the Christmas come-back for the Gospel I have got both to run with it and subvert it. As with so many contemporary issues, Thomas Cranmer comes to our aid as front-line clergy, as we prepare for Christmas, because he was so Gospel-focused. What a wonderful Comfortable Word he included at Holy Communion, showing that the message of the Incarnation is always both relevant and counter-cultural: 'This is a true saying and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' [1 Timothy 1.15].