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## Abusing NFP

by Kathleen van Schaijik

Janet Smith's recent talk at Ave Maria College, "When is it Moral to Practice NFP?" gave a cogent objectivist argument that Natural Family Planning may be licit in a broader range of circumstances than many Catholics think. But, the sympathies of the crowd seemed to be providentialist.<sup>1</sup> Many who were present clearly regard NFP as morally dangerous. One woman scoffed out loud at the absurdity of newly weds imagining they could have serious enough reasons for postponing children. Another person proposed that since most women are fertile for 20 – 25 years, 8 – 10 would appear to be the "default number" of children per family—at least for couples married in their early 20s with no fertility problems. In other words, the fact that so few Catholic families have that many children is a good indication that NFP is being widely abused.

Though she is certainly not one herself, and though her talk was framed as a refutation of their position, I fear that much of Dr. Smith's talk might have been taken as encouraging to the providentialists.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the concrete examples she gave as potentially legitimate reasons for practicing NFP were mostly rather extreme ones: a serious health problem, joblessness, a retarded or handicapped child who needed an exceptional amount of parental attention for a year or two. She mentioned the instance of a couple she knows who practiced NFP for a year so that the wife could finish law school, but she treated it as a somewhat doubtful case. Perhaps it was legit, perhaps not. She wasn't sure.

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She also spoke of the moral duty of spouses to have children—giving aid and comfort to those who hold that unless there are definite obstacles intervening, each couple ought to be having children at more or less regular intervals from the beginning of marriage for as long as they're fertile. And, when an

astute member of the audience asked whether she perceived any "danger from the right" in this discussion—namely a kind of pharisaism among the providentialists—Dr. Smith gave a humorous, but emphatic No in reply: "Generally couples who make an error on the side of having too many children are too busy to do much damage."

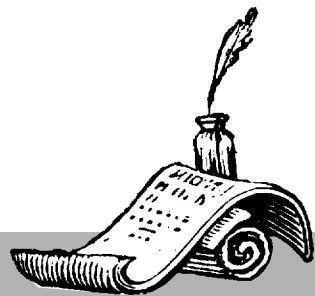
Dr. Smith has spent decades of her time and gallons of her spiritual lifeblood fighting contraception, so it is easy to sympathize with her affection for big families, and her reluctance to say hard things about providentialism. But, still, I wish she had given a more forceful response to this very insightful question. It is bad to leave an impression that the only harm likely to come from providentialism is a few superfluous babies. (If it were, how could we speak of a problem at all? Who can bear with patience the idea of "superfluous babies"?)

No, the real problem with providentialism is something very different; something deep and far-reaching—going, in fact, to the innermost heart of our Faith. In brief, providentialism represents and perpetuates a false view of human sexuality, of marriage and of the Christian moral life—a view that malforms consciences, grievously burdens families, and misrepresents the Church to the world.

Serious charges, I am aware. Please bear with me while I explain.

*See NFP on page 11*

# Editor's Page



## Jump Start

Long-time readers are no doubt wondering what gives. Six years after it began serving FUS a steady diet of bracing and habit-forming discourse, the *Concourse* suddenly vanished without a trace—leaving several fascinating and valuable conversations (plus our readers) hanging in suspense. Now, just as abruptly, we're back.

It's a long story, and not a very interesting one. So let's just sum it up metaphorically by saying that due to an over-draw on the main power supply, a key fuse blew, and before the back-up generators could kick in, the emergency batteries drained completely. We never made an announcement about it, because we could never bring ourselves to declare it defunct. There was always hope of a revamp. Now, finally, all systems are go. We can't promise there won't be some sputters and flickers and fits and starts, but we have good hope that once we work up some momentum, we'll be humming along nicely again.

It's awkward to re-begin right at the end of a school year, but we had the material, and we didn't like to wait until September to get it out there. We hope readers will use the long summer to mull over the articles and issues herein, and prepare rejoinders or kudos or fresh angles or new topics or what have you to grace next semester's pages. Our ability to continue publishing depends on it.

We have one important change to announce. When we began the *Concourse* in 1996, the editors all lived in Steubenville and were closely connected with the day to day life of Franciscan University. These days we are rather spread out, and (at least some of us) less in touch with the dear *alma mater*. Two of the editors are now linked to Ave Maria College. Given this, plus the happy historical and cultural ties between FUS and AMC, it seems good to the editors that the *Concourse* be reoriented to serve both. We also plan to distribute in Gaming, where both AMC and FUS have semester abroad programs, and in Nicaragua, at Ave Maria of the Americas; at St. Mary's of Ave Maria University, and at Ave Maria Law School, where numerous FUS alumni are now studying.

We are in the process of revising our editorial policies and reconstituting our advisory board, to better reflect our nature as an inter-collegiate journal.

There will be some other changes as well. For instance, in the interest of toughening our intellectual skins, and of placing truth more squarely in the center of our attention, we will no longer discourage anonymous contributions. The editors are ever more convinced that an mistaken stress on things like "affirmation" and "being positive" and "not hurting feelings" is doing serious harm to the vigor of the intellectual life of the Church (responsibility for which belongs properly to institutions such as ours.) We have simply *got* to learn to be less *sensitive* and self-preoccupied all the time! Otherwise, how will we cope when we are launched out into a hostile world? "If you cannot race on foot, how will you compete against horses?"

No one should take this to mean that the *Concourse* is weakening its commitment to courtesy in discourse. *Au contraire*. Nastiness we deplore as much as banality and bogosity. Wit we love. Satire we will entertain. We will be biting when called for, but also humane. The great Christian controvertialists of the ages are our models in this as in other things.

Our basic aim of being an open forum for intelligent, lively, faith-filled and truth-centered discussion about ideas that are important to university men and women remains what it was. Please do join in. ■



### Editorial Policy

The *University Concourse* is an independent journal of opinion published at Franciscan University, Ave Maria University and related Catholic institutions of higher learning. These institutions share—besides numerous personal and historical ties—an unqualified commitment to the renewal of Catholic education as called for by our Holy Father, John Paul II in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and *Fides et Ratio*.

We welcome submissions by members and friends of these academic communities on any topic of interest to a general university readership, provided they are courteously expressed and framed with a view to advancing the welfare of Ave Maria and Franciscan Universities, and/or Catholic culture are large.

Articles may be sent to e-mail address [kvanschajik@earthlink.net](mailto:kvanschajik@earthlink.net). We recommend that articles be kept to fewer than 2,500 words. We will be glad to consider publishing opinions anonymously or under pennames, when doing so would seem to serve a worthwhile discussion. (In all cases the editors require the name and phone number of the author.)

The opinions expressed in the *University Concourse* are the authors' own, and not necessarily those of the editors, much less the administration, staff or faculties of FUS or AMU.

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# A new kind of scandal

by Mark Fischer

I am reluctant to open the newspaper these days. Today's headline in the *Washington Post* announced a "Crisis of Trust," culminating another week where every day seemed to bring new charges of sex abuse in the Church. In the diocese where I work, the bishop announced the suspension of three priests due to sex offenses. The Church has endured similar scandals in the past, but unlike in the past, the scandals of 2002 have triggered a media frenzy that shows no sign of going away any time soon.



The secular media and anti-Catholics are not the only ones publicizing the scandals and demanding major reform. *National Review Online* has carried an outstanding series of articles by Rod Dreher. In one, titled "Faith in Our Fathers," posted January 25, Dreher excoriated Cardinal Law and others in the Boston archdiocese for their failure of leadership. According to Dreher, records made public as a result of the Fr. Geoghan litigation exhibit a persistent willingness on the part of the Boston hierarchy to forgive and comfort the offender priest and an almost total absence of expressed compassion for the numerous victims.

Dreher quotes a 1989 letter from Cardinal Law to Fr. Geoghan, who had already been removed from several parishes because of allegations of sex abuse: "It is most heartening to know that things have gone well for you and that you are ready to resume your efforts with a renewed zeal and enthusiasm." Fr. Geoghan was returned to the ministry, and unbelievably assigned to work with youth groups and altar boys by a subsequent pastor. Later, when authorities were preparing to arrest Fr. Geoghan, the Cardinal again wrote to him, saying, "Yours has been an effective life of ministry, sadly impaired by illness...God bless you, Jack." We are left to wonder how serial molesting comports with effective ministry.

Fr. Benedict Groeschel, a trustee of both FUS and AMU, responded to Dreher's writings in an *NRO* guest column. Calling one of Dreher's articles "cleverly written," Fr. Groeschel nonetheless believes Dreher to be mistaken in his ire. Dreher, apparently, has been fooled

with the rest of the media regarding the alleged gross negligence of the bishops. Fr. Groeschel then sets forth the usual defenses: the Church did not know enough about the nature of pedophilia in the past; Church leaders followed bad advice; those leading the attack on the clergy have an agenda that includes changing the Church's position on celibacy, the role of women, abortion, contraception, etc. Fr. Groeschel ends by stating that "I pray that the rest of the country will show a real interest in how its youth are corrupted every day by pornography on television and on the Internet and, in fact, in the whole media, which pours

sexual seduction into the home incessantly."

In the past, I have given similar defenses. One that Fr. Groeschel neglected to mention, and that I have used before myself, is that incidents of molestation are no greater among the clergy of other denominations and religions—the media are simply not as fascinated by non-Catholic sexual abuse. All of a sudden, however, these defenses are not enough. They may or may not be true. But even if true, they are not enough.

With all due respect to Fr. Groeschel, I firmly believe that it is he, not Dreher, who is mistaken. I have read Dreher for some time now. He is an orthodox and committed Catholic. He writes out of love for the Church, not out of a desire to undermine its authority. And he believes that the time for excuses is past.

Dreher's articles raise two specific points of great importance—points upon which the laity must challenge their leaders to act. First, and most obviously, the Church must treat acts of sexual molestation as the hideous crimes that they are. As Dreher wryly states, "Why does it require a colloquium of Ph.D.'s to determine that the way you deal with these monsters is to remove them from the active priesthood immediately? Why do I suspect this is patently obvious to, say, the night manager at a 7-11 in Dorchester, but not to the cardinal archbishop?" Keep in mind, in most of the cases currently in the press, the accused's guilt was not seriously in question. But instead of defrocking the priest or going to the authorities, the Church used "therapy" and eventual reassignment. If the allegations are substantiated, or the priest admits wrongdoing, there is no good reason not to sub-

ject the priest to prosecution. And there is absolutely no justification for returning such a priest to the ministry. It is a scandal of the worst order to be protecting criminal priests at the expense of the Church's children.

Dreher's second point is an interesting one that deserves careful consideration. In most of the media coverage of this issue, the term "pedophile" is used to describe the offending priests. But is the term rightly used? Pedophilia is usually associated with heterosexual men, and involves the molestation of pre-pubescent children. Dreher notes that the large majority of victims in the reported cases involving priests are teenage boys. As Dreher states: "what we're seeing with priests is not pedophilia, which is a deep-seated psychological illness. What we're seeing is gay men who cannot or will not keep their pants up around teenage boys. Not teenage girls. Teenage boys."

Dreher then wonders if the Church has a gay problem, not a pedophile problem. He notes a forthcoming book by Michael S. Rose, entitled *Goodbye! Good Men*, which explores this very issue. Dreher calls the book a "bombshell" which "reveals a seminary underworld in which homosexual promiscuity and sexual harassment is rampant, in which straight men are marginalized and demoralized, and seminarians who support the Church's teaching on sexuality and the priesthood are persecuted, even to the point of being sent off, Soviet-style for psychological evaluations."

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ality no. And this makes sense. Many in the media believe that homosexuality is a valid form of sexual expression and are invested in reinforcing this point to the general public. Linking the abuse problem to homosexuality would undermine their position and would risk the anger of a gay lobby quick to impart the homophobe label. Also, such a story angle takes the sting out of the usual ideological points the media likes to make, as noted by Fr. Groeschel.

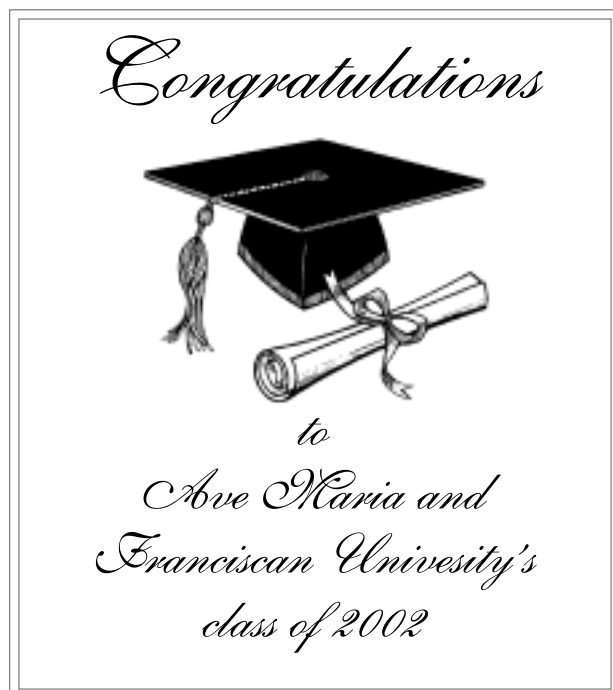
This is all serious stuff. I have heard second-hand stories from American seminaries regarding the homosexual subculture and regarding the abuse suffered by orthodox seminarians. I remember some years ago, after hearing some of these stories, lying awake at night praying in desperation for our Church and for acquaintances of mine in seminary. In recent years, my own busy life has pulled me away from these reflections. But if Dreher is right, this issue might be *the* issue for the Church in America. None of us, then, can afford to assume that someone else will take care of the problem. Our vigilant prayer and our efforts to spur the Church into action will be required.

Yesterday I read a column by Maggie Gallagher, who is both a Catholic and a mother of two sons. She wrote with sadness about a thought that occurred to her as she prayed in church for an increase in vocations: "If one of my sons wanted to dedicate himself to a life of chastity, poverty and obedience, forsaking marriage (and my grandchildren!) for God's sake, would I trust my child to the care of people now running American Catholic seminaries? Should I? Should any mother?"

It should be clear to the Church. A crisis in confidence has been brewing and is reaching a crescendo. It is time to examine root causes. It is time for internal investigations. The Church must ensure the laity that its seminaries are not a breeding ground for aberrant sexual behavior and ideologies. If the American hierarchy will not take the lead on this, the Vatican must. With trepidation, I recall Christ's words to those who cause our youth to sin: "better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." If we cannot act now to confront this crisis, then when? ■

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\*As I write this article, the Boston Globe has published a lengthy article which for the first time addresses this issue. See "Priest abuse cases focus on adolescents," March 17, 2002.



# “The Fellowship of the Ring”: The film is not the book

by Jason Negri

As a die-hard Tolkien fan who has read the trilogy every year for at least the last decade, I anxiously awaited the release of the “Fellowship of the Ring.” Now, having seen it three times, I feel ready to offer a review. (If any reader knows the director, Peter Jackson, please feel free to pass these observations on to him.)

The first time through, I was generally pleased, though inevitably a little let down. Only later did I realize that my attempt to take in the film had been plagued by somewhat unfair mental comparisons with the best fantasy books ever written. The second and third time around I was able to appreciate the movie in itself, and enjoy it all the more.

Still, my opinion remains somewhat dichotomized. To the extent that the movie brought to screen the really cool story of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, I thought it was great. How could it not be? The director started with one of the greatest stories ever written and had all the marvels of modern technology at his fingertips. However, to the extent that the movie neglected what made the books superb, I was disappointed.

Allow me to explain.

Overall, the picture was a great one—definitely qualifying for a slot on my personal Top 10 list. The effects, cinematography and music were outstanding. The battle scenes were excellent, with measured violence and no gratuitous gore. The initial battle, depicting the Last Alliance of Elves and Men against Sauron was overwhelming. I had been worried that any attempt to show Sauron incarnate would flop.

It seemed that his absolute evil and horrifying power could only be fathomed by the imagination. But Jackson surprised me, deftly showing the Dark Lord sweeping a score of warriors 100 yards away with his mace. It was very well done and I think he did the right thing showing Sauron thus and avoiding a similar depiction for the rest of the film.

I was also gratified that Jackson preserved some of the best dialogue from the book. Frodo and Gandalf’s discussion of Gollum, Bilbo and pity has always been a favorite of mine, and I think Sir Ian McKellan (playing

Gandalf) pulled it off with the perfect depth of sincerity and wisdom. Also, I was very impressed with Sean Bean as Boromir and Christopher Lee as Saruman.

Some deviation from the books was necessary—I accepted that from the beginning. The omission of Bombadil infuriated some fans, but it didn’t bother me at all. The increased focus on Saruman’s activities (which you don’t really see much in the first book of the tril-

ogy) was appropriate, since viewers not only need a tangible “bad guy” to hate in the movie, but they also need to see more obviously the activities of Saruman. In the book, such activities were going on behind the scenes during the narration of the main story line. Some of these more obvious departures from “true Tolkien purity” were simply necessary or at least preferable given the realities of making a book into a big screen production. Sometimes a director’s gotta do what a director’s gotta do.

With these accolades in mind, I turn to my gripes, all of which have to do with character development deviating from the books.

1) In the books, Aragorn is what we call a “real man.” He is self-assured, wise, strong, a true leader with bearing, and proud in the best sense of that word. The movie, however, painted him with the unseemly modern gloss of an angst-ridden guy who’s not sure if he’s “good enough” to get the job done. And while this modern view of men is so rampant in the media that I barely notice it any more, it was very disappointing to see a character such as Aragorn, who should exemplify the very best of a man, portrayed in this fashion. Sure he

can fight, but if the modern era has taught us anything about men, it’s that it takes more—much more—to be a man than being able to destroy orcs.

2) Aragorn’s misgivings about himself were exacerbated by the contrast with Arwen’s elevated role. I didn’t mind the “warrior maiden” touch (though I found it unnecessary with the character of Eowyn coming up in the next movie) so much as I minded her smug comment about “catching a ranger off his guard” in the woods. It seemed to be an example of “women are better than men,” and I found it particularly offensive in this work. It made for an uncomfortable transition right after the Fords at Rivendell when she goes from sword-wielding elvish “bad-ass” to weeping, nurturing font of

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elvish grace and compassion in 75 seconds. "Whatever grace is given me, let it pass to him." Huh?

Since we're on the subject of Arwen, she was way too breathy on the bridge scene with her beau. She looked great (of course), but her line about choosing a mortal life could have been much better. Bad acting or bad scripting? Dunno, don't care.

3) Biggest disappointment: Lothlorien and Galadriel. (Peter, what were you thinking?) For a weary fellowship, Lothlorien is supposed to be a heaven-on-Middle-Earth respite from their toils. The questionable reputation of the Lady of the Golden Wood was certainly mentioned in the book, but it was quickly dispelled by the reassurances of Aragorn (whom you could trust implicitly; see #1 above), and then by the Fellowship's own experience there. Lothlorien was peaceful. Lothlorien was healing. Lothlorien was paradise.

What did the movie give us? A dreamlike, almost hallucinogenic foray into a world ruled by a sorceress. Jackson portrayed the whole realm as entirely too sinister, and Galadriel never dispelled her aura of mystery and threat. (A good friend of mine—a fellow FUS alumnus—and I are diametrically opposed on this one. He liked Cate Blanchett's portrayal, with the exception of her temptation scene. I was roundly disappointed by the whole thing, with the exception of the temptation scene, which I thought was appropriate and well-done.) All in all, she was way too menacing. She certainly would not have inspired the trust that motivated Frodo to offer her the Ring. Geez, in the books, Gimli and Sam were practically in love with her!

I realize the film was long and certain things had to go, but Jackson could have spent the same amount of time in Lothlorien and portrayed it better, or spent an additional 5-10 minutes cleaning up the lousy first impression the Fellowship (and the audience) got from the place. Insufficient time was given to shake the ethereal discomfort it gave me. It is my understanding that the DVD version coming out in November will have an additional 30 minutes of footage including more on Lothlorien, so here's hoping it will be enough to show us more of the real Lothlorien.

4) Frodo never grew up. As the book develops, there's a definite sense that all the characters grow up

and mature—particularly the Ring-bearer. A man (or a hobbit) does not bear a desperate burden, face black riders, survive a mortal wound and watch a dear friend die while trying to save the free world—all without gaining some gravitas, strength and self-possession. Frodo remained the same weak, dependent hobbit he was when he left the Shire.

Why on earth would anyone ask for his opinion on anything, especially the decision of whether to risk the mines of Moria? This is not the Frodo who will have the strength of will to tame Smeagol, or to deal with Faramir as an equal. Heck, this isn't even the Frodo who could or would tell Sam what to do—which fits with Jackson's decision to make Frodo and Sam friends rather than master and servant. I know we will see Frodo mature in the next movie. It just would have been nice (and appropriate) to see it starting in this one.

I was not simply seeking to be entertained by this movie—I was desperately hoping the film would reflect what I have found special and unique in the trilogy. Tolkien had a profound insight into the human condition: our weaknesses and strengths, our very nature. The books explored so many facets of this nature and highlighted what was exemplary: duty, courage, beauty, truth, sacrifice, comradeship, honor. These are qualities revered in Western culture and sorely needed today in a modern age of depravity, individualism, relativism and selfishness. Their presence throughout Tolkien's opus made these books the sort of stories in which you could remove yourself from real life, and come back to it a better person than when you went in.

Knowing of Tolkien's distaste for allegory, I think he would agree with my assessment that the books aren't *life-changing* so much as they are *virtue-enforcing*: they don't hit you over the head with a moral message that forces you to re-examine yourself, but they do illustrate that with all our modern enlightenment, these virtues matter, and we ignore them at the risk of losing our humanity.

In sum, I enjoyed the movie very much, though it failed to capture the range and depth of the human condition probed by the books. Obviously my expectations were too high. But it occurs to me that true Tolkien fans—those who have read the books every year—will agree. *The Lord of the Rings* is not just a creative, entertaining story, and you can't read the books repeatedly without gaining some appreciation for the deeper truths that pervade it. If Jackson can bring out a bit more of this in the next two movies, he will have accomplished a grand feat indeed. ■

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# Time travel: Is it the future or is it fantasy?

by Ben Brown

Because of the great advances that science has made in recent centuries many people have come to think there is nothing it can't do. Time after time, what had been thought impossible or unknowable has been accomplished or discovered by science: speeds faster than sound, the nature and behavior of the few fundamental building blocks of matter, men on the moon, etc.

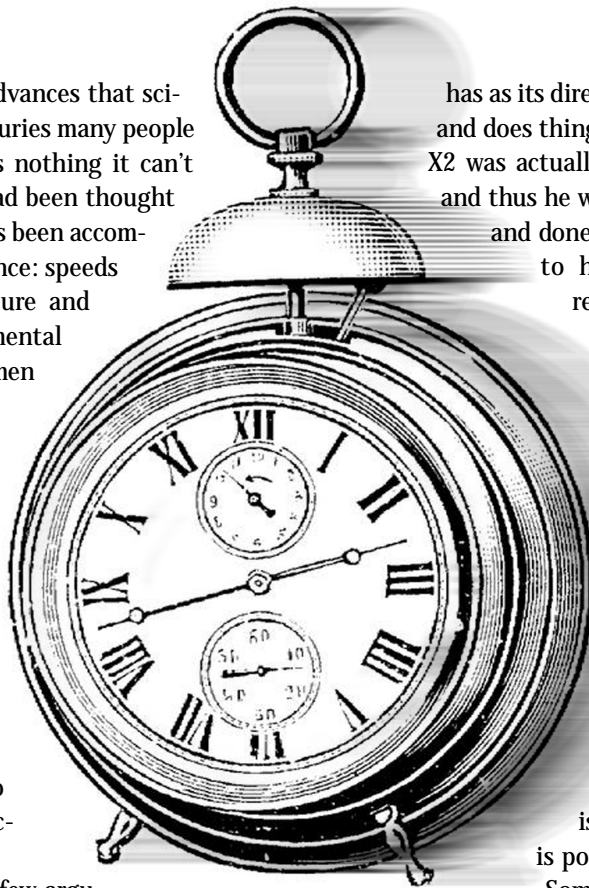
We have naturally become hesitant to say that anything currently unattainable is absolutely so. After all, millions of people once thought that it was impossible for men to travel into outer space. Some seem to think this way even about time travel. "It's impossible now, but who knows what science will accomplish in 30 years?"

I would like to offer a few arguments here as to why I think that it is just plain impossible for anyone or anything to travel either back or forward in time.

I begin by noting the distinction between that which is conditionally impossible and that which is absolutely impossible. Something that is conditionally impossible is impossible by virtue of circumstances, whereas an absolute impossibility is so in itself, regardless of circumstances. For instance, it is impossible for me to kick down my apartment door. I am not strong enough. My lack of strength is a non-necessary circumstance, which theoretically could change, making it possible for me to do what I can't do today. It is also impossible for me to be strong enough to kick down the door and at the same time not strong enough to do so. But that is an absolute impossibility. No imaginable change in circumstances could remove such an impossibility.

My position is that there is something absolutely impossible about time travel.

Most of my work in demonstrating this has actually already been accomplished for me. We have all probably seen a movie or TV show in which the famous chicken-or-the-egg time "paradox" is explained or depicted. A person does thing X1 at time T1, which



has as its direct result that he travels back in time and does thing X2 in time T2; but it turns out that X2 was actually the direct cause of his doing X1, and thus he would never have traveled to time T2 and done X2. In other words, X1 requires X2 to happen first temporally, but X2 requires X1 to happen first temporally.

Now, a person cannot brush his teeth before combing his hair and also comb his hair before brushing his teeth. To say that one both brushed first and combed first is a contradiction, because both cannot simultaneously be true. The same holds for X1 and X2. X1 must happen before X2 (or it could not be the cause of X2) and X2 must happen before X1 (or it could not be the cause of X1), and so to posit that time travel is possible is to posit that a direct contradiction is possible, which is impossible.

Some people like to call this a paradox, but I find nothing paradoxical in it. It is simply an outright impossibility, a direct contradiction. It is only a paradox if you actually assume that time travel is possible. But if you use simple reason, the solution is simple: if assuming something to be true leads to a logical contradiction, then your assumption must be false. There is no other alternative.

A second argument goes as follows: To consider time travel possible is to consider time as a sort of continuum, like a line that goes on in both directions, each point "simultaneously" existing. We normally travel through time, along the line, at some certain rate, time travelers suppose. But as we leave one instant and enter the next (as if there are actual individual instants), the last instant does not cease to exist. Rather we (or our past selves) are still reliving it over and over again, unceasingly. If this were not the case, then what would there be to travel back to? I can therefore travel back and meet my past self. On the one hand, he is obviously not me despite the fact that we have the same DNA.

But on the other hand if my "past self" isn't me, the real, honest-to-goodness, material and spiritual, unrepeatable, incommunicable me, then it's not really and truly my life that he's living, but rather his own, and it's not really me who decided to do such and such

past action. This, of course, is ridiculous. Even more ridiculous are some of the consequences that seem to follow from it, such as the result that no one can really be held morally responsible for their past action, since not they, but their past selves performed those actions.

Consider also that such a theory of time travel would imply that there are a really real infinite number of human persons, all simultaneously existing as we speak. And even more so, there are an infinite number who come into existence during the course of any given millisecond. From a Christian perspective, this is, of course, untenable. Only God can be really infinite. We might also note that thinking along these lines has led seemingly intelligent scientists to actually propose and maintain that there are, or very well may be, an infinite number of universes, each spawned by a different self making a different choice at some moment in his life.

Consider a fourth problem. If one goes back in time and changes something, which in turn changes oneself in some way—even causes his death (in the future, but before he went to the past), then what happens to him? Does he instantly change? If so, I cannot even begin to imagine the mess of consequences and even contradictions that would result. (Think about it sometime, or watch any number of time travel movies or TV shows. Some episodes of *Star Trek* come to mind.) But if not, then it is possible for a person to not be a product of his own past; that is, one could exist without ever having been born. Once again we are led to a contradiction.

Fifthly, consider the nature of time itself. Time, Aristotle explains, is like length. It is the measurement of something else. Length is the measure of distance; time is the measure of change. No distance, no length; no change, no time. (Think about God. We say that He is “outside” time. Why? Precisely because He is immutable, unchanging. Think about what it means to be “frozen in time.” You almost certainly picture everything unmoving, unchanging, completely frozen—like a snapshot.) If you grant this, then you must be able to see that there is no such thing as “going back in time.” To do so would be to change yourself (in at least some way), which is nothing other than to progress in time in the normal fashion. All that could be done would be to rearrange the universe such that every atom is in the same position that it was in at some point in the past. But such a rearrangement would be a change, a “movement” forward in time (not to mention the fact that the universe is more than simply matter, but includes human souls who cannot simply be rearranged like

matter.) Therefore, to go back in time is impossible in the sense in which we usually mean it.

Similarly, we can see that time travel logic itself leads to the conclusion that time cannot be simply the “line” that it is assumed to be. If a person travels back in time and cuts his past self on the arm, does he suddenly acquire a scar? I think that everyone would say no (if one answers yes, then this argument does not work, though I am sure that another whole system of contradictions arises). If one travels to a point in the future after one’s death, is he himself going to die upon arriving there? Again, almost everyone would say no. Based on these two pieces of data, it seems that the time traveler is in a sense “outside time.” In his travels he is indifferent to the events of the normal timeline. And yet, he still grows old, he still maintains his memories from one time to the next, etc. In other words, he still experiences the passage of time in himself in the normal way. The conclusion is that time is change, or the measure of change (depending on the various usages.) This leads to a contradiction, namely that time travel implies two different conceptions of time, one of which excludes the other (as argued in the

above paragraph).

Lastly, let me advance a simple, clear, and logical argument that should put an end to the matter once and for all. Presumably, when one says that time travel is possible one means that a person can go back, for example, to the real, true, genuine 1776. But if you’ve traveled back to the *real* 1776, then what are *you* doing there? You didn’t exist in 1776, so to say that you are in the real 1776 is to say that it’s not the real 1776, which is yet another contradiction.

Consider finally what ramifications time travel has for morality, heaven and hell, God, angels, etc. and I think that you will arrive at the same conclusion I do: to posit time travel as possible is not good science fiction, but rather unreasonable and illogical nonsense. I ended an earlier *Concourse* article (on evolution) with a quote from the movie “Angels in the Outfield,” which also seems particularly appropriate here. With modern science the motto seems to be that given enough time “It could happen.” But we need to use a little logic and realize that not just anything can happen. ■

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# The economic role of the guilds: continuing the distributism discussion

by Thomas Storck

Editor's note: *The following article was written as a response to others in a discussion about distributism and Catholic social teaching that took place in our pages over the course of several issues before we suspended publication. Related articles may be found at our website [www.theUniversityConcourse.com](http://www.theUniversityConcourse.com)*

The editors and contributors to *the University Concourse* deserve credit for continuing the discussion on the important topic of Catholic social teaching, especially on distributism, the economic system promoted by G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, and other Catholic writers of the first part of the twentieth century. In Vol. VI, issue 3 there were two responses to my last article (Vol. VI, issue 2), one by Mr. David Schmiesing and one by Mr. Philip Harold, and I appreciate the opportunity to reply to these now.

Mr. Schmiesing first takes issue with my statement that “the Catholic approach to state power in the economy cannot be reduced to [the] principle of ‘less rather than more state intervention.’” He goes on to say that the Catholic notion of subsidiarity by its very definition leads to “less rather than more state intervention.” Subsidiarity demands that the primary responsibility for the economy remain in smaller, more localized institutions (including the family), and the state should intervene only at the point where the small institutions cannot deal effectively with a particular issue or task.

To this I would say, yes and no. Subsidiarity places responsibility for actions at their lowest and smallest practically effective level, thus the modern centralizing state is wrong to try to regulate everything directly. But it should be noted that for some things the state is the proper locus of regulation. It would be a violation of subsidiarity, for example, to make each family responsible for prosecution of anyone who had murdered a family member, as was done in some places in antiquity and the Middle Ages. This is properly a governmental responsibility. And one need only glance through the social encyclicals to see that the popes place many economic responsibilities in the hands of the state, some of which I have quoted in my prior articles, and which

**Even Mr. Schmiesing calls our culture “materialistic.” Does he think that our economic system has had nothing to do with making our culture materialistic?**

I will not repeat here. When faced with a concrete choice concerning a question of economic regulation, the proper Catholic response is not to repeat either the slogan “less state power” or the slogan “more state power,” but rather to distinguish where is the correct locus of regulation in this particular case. Most often it will be some lower body, but not always. But again I refer my readers to the encyclicals themselves, where they will see that state intervention in the economy is taken for granted. What we must guard against is the appetite of the state for more and more power, so that it comes to think of itself as the only regulator or the primary regulator. But “less rather than more state intervention” is not a sufficient principle for a Catholic approach to regulation of the economy, for there are cases where state regulation is justified, and where this is so, it would equally be a violation of subsidiarity to delegate it to some lower body. We want the right amount and kind of state power, neither less nor more.

It is curious, moreover, that our discussion has become fixed on this question of government regulation. For in a distributist economy there would be little need for state regulation of the economy since that would be largely accomplished by the lower and smaller bodies sometimes known as guilds.

The real question here is not government versus private, but unregulated markets versus markets that are responsibly regulated and oriented toward the common good. Americans are usually comfortable discussing state regulation, whether they favor or oppose it, but not too comfortable discussing regulation by the “smaller, more localized institutions” that the principle of subsidiarity speaks of. But if these “lesser and subordinate bodies” (to quote Pius XI) are to have a real function, what function is it and what bodies are we talking about? But to ask this question naturally leads into the next topic, that of the “guilds.”

Mr. Schmiesing criticizes my discussion of guilds and says that “it is very reasonable to interpret papal praise for the guilds...not as a call for the recreation of guilds themselves, but rather as a call for the creation and development of non-governmental institutions...that serve the same purposes the guilds once did.” But of course, if they are to “serve the same purposes” what we call them is rather unimportant. As Shakespeare wrote, “That which we call a rose/ By any other name

would smell as sweet.” So Mr. Schmiesing is correct that the name guild is not important and in some ways I admit may be misleading. If I may be permitted to quote from myself, in my recent book, *Christendom and the West*, I wrote the following (p. 134) about the Catholic social movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the medieval guild was taken from its historical place, reduced to its essential economic and social role, and presented to the modern world as the Occupational Group. Now it became a means for helping to solve the grave economic problems of the 1930s, and, more generally, by embodying the principle of economic self-government of both employer and employee, to overcome the disorganized state of economic life created by decades of capitalistic competition, yet without requiring central economic planning by the state.

I only called such institutions “guilds” in previous articles because the correct term, “occupational groups” means nothing to most readers. But if these institutions are to “serve the same purposes the guilds once did,” then they must have the same economic nexus and authority as the guilds had. Otherwise they are not serving the same purpose. Therefore Mr. Schmiesing’s suggestion that the Knights of Columbus can fulfill some of the tasks performed by the medieval guilds is true only of their subsidiary purposes—their religious and social roles, for example. But the Knights are hardly in a position to fulfill the guilds’ central role, which was economic.

Mr. Schmiesing also makes two points against what I said about the difficulty of many families in our capitalist economy living on the income of the father alone, thus forcing mothers to leave the home to work. He is certainly correct in stating that greed for “bigger homes, fancier cars, Disneyland vacations, fashionable clothing, and restaurant meals” is a factor in the desire for two incomes. But why is there this widespread desire for such things? Even Mr. Schmiesing calls our culture “materialistic.” Does he think that our economic system has had nothing to do with making our culture materialistic? Does he think that constant advertising of the newer, the bigger and the flashier is not the result of capitalism’s relentless search for ever greater profits? Does he think that, given fallen man’s propensity for greed, materialism can be paraded in front of him every day without effect? Surely Mr. Schmiesing would not say the same thing about constant sexual temptation in our culture, but Catholic defenders of the free market are curiously silent about socially-sanctioned appeals to the other great appetite in man—an appetite which Holy Scripture calls “the root of all evils.” In fact, since under capitalism, whenever there is a slowdown in consumer spending, we are threatened with a recession,

this would seem to say something about the intimate connection between materialism and capitalist prosperity.\*

Mr. Schmiesing also argues that there is nothing wrong with a mother contributing to her family’s economic health by working at home. And with this I agree. In fact, every mother who has time to nurse her own children, make homemade food for her family, craft Christmas and birthday gifts with her children, is contributing to her family’s economic well-being by saving them money, even if her efforts are not sanctioned by the capitalist economy’s only standard of value, the almighty dollar. Mr. Schmiesing is right that the papal encyclicals “offer challenges...to the faithful: do not succumb to materialism, recognize the universal destination of all created goods, and understand the dignity of work,” and that “their general principles are to [be embodied] in social structures.” But they also suggest specific institutions and practices that are necessary if we are to embody these principles “in social structures.” Medieval Christendom, the encyclicals themselves, and Catholic writers such as Chesterton offer us many concrete examples that allow us to reduce these general principles to specifics.

I also wish to say a few words in response Mr. Harold’s article. I appreciate the basic agreement he has previously expressed with much of what I have written, and I only want to make two objections, or rather, one objection and one clarification. My objection is to his statement that liberal capitalist economists are not so much wrong as limited, and that we simply need to place what they say “in the totality of personal existence.” Even though economics is a subsidiary discipline, this does not mean that it can operate without correct first principles. Every subsidiary discipline must draw its first principles from a higher discipline. In the case of economics, it ought to draw its principles from philosophy, that is, from the philosophical principles of social order taught by Aristotle and St. Thomas. Economics, as that subject is commonly understood today, has wrong starting points and thus reaches wrong conclusions. The tradition of economic thought that stems from Adam Smith drew its first principles from the deistic and individualistic social philosophy of the eighteenth century. This has vitiated the entire enterprise. I do not mean by that that modern economic thinkers have never discovered any truths or hit upon any correct principles. I only mean that for Christians a new kind of economics must eventually be formulated, one that draws upon different starting points and is pointed in a different direction.

Then one clarification. Mr. Harold says that we should refocus our discussion beyond the “distribution of property.” This is an understandable concern and one that I share. That is, I agree that any discussion of

economics by Catholics must begin with questions about the fundamental purpose of economic activity, questions which, by the way, the current discipline of economics ignores. Thus if we ask ourselves why human beings have the capacity and need to produce and consume external goods, we will surely come to see that the production and consumption of external goods is for the sake of our family life, our intellectual life, our spiritual life, and thus must be judged by how well they serve those purposes. If our economy is continually diverting our gaze from these things and immersing us in more and more mounds of material goods, we should ask, to what purpose is this being done? If capitalism's chief claim on our acceptance is that it produces goods, we have to ask, "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world but suffer the loss of his soul?"

I do not deny that we need external goods; but we need to subordinate the production and distribution of such goods to mankind's ultimate end. Distributism deals with more than the distribution of property. Rather it attempts to place the entire economic apparatus at the true service of man. Mr. Harold's suggestion that we should "discover the true nature, the assumptions and value-complexes, of capitalism and liberal economic theory," is surely on target, for if we do we will see that liberal capitalist theory presupposes a world lacking in final causes (in Aristotle's sense), a world in which each individual economic actor must supply his own purpose to his activity, and that, from the standpoint of this kind of economics, any one purpose is equal to any other.

But such a notion is pure empiricism, utterly repugnant to the Catholic philosophical and theological tradition. By all means, let us "discover the true nature, the assumptions and value-complexes, of capitalism and liberal economic theory." If we do we will discover that they are lacking and, if our search is honest, we will end up within the tradition of Catholic social thought, the only proper place for a Catholic to be. ■

*Mr. Storck writes from Greenbelt, Maryland.*

\* In the *Washington Post* of December 31, 2000 (p. H1) there is an article with the headline, "Consumers Have the Power to Avert a Recession," which details how, if consumers continue buying, we may be able to avoid a recession. The article says, "It is clear that consumer spending, after rising strongly for several years, recently reached a plateau overall, as was evident in retailers' lackluster holiday season. Consumer spending has even dropped sharply in some areas, such as in purchases of new cars and trucks." But apparently it is not that consumer spending as such has declined, but merely that its rate of increase has declined. For the article goes on to say, "Consumer spending in the last quarter of 2000 appears to have risen at less than a 2.5 percent annual rate, well below the pace of earlier this year."

So it appears that, under capitalism, the desire for "bigger homes, fancier cars, Disneyland vacations, fashionable clothing, and restaurant meals" is not just a virtue, but a necessity, if we are to avoid economic hard times. How much different a true Christian economy would be, one that produced according to man's reasonable needs and was not dependent on ever greater consumer spending on luxuries.

## NFP

*Continued from page 1*

First, let me repeat a key distinction, helpfully enunciated by Dr. Smith in the course of her talk. There are two critically different kinds of providentialists, which in shorthand we may call personal providentialists and theoretical providentialists. The problem I am speaking of is only with the latter. It has *nothing at all* to do with those spouses who, taking into prayerful account the unique inward and outward circumstances of their married life, freely and generously open themselves to as many children as come to them.<sup>3</sup> In fact, I'll even grant gladly that the Church has a "preferential love" for such families, just as she has for the poor. (What Catholic heart can resist them?) The problem is not with these, but with those who "add to God's law" *by seeking to impose an obligation on all married couples that is not to be found in the teachings of the Church*, viz., that unless prevented by nature or emergencies, all married couples ought to have large

families; and, correlatively, no couple should make use of NFP, except in very rare cases, and then only with sincere regret and extreme caution.<sup>4</sup> (NB: This kind of providentialist can be found among priests, teachers and single lay Catholics, as well as married couples. It is not unknown among college students.)

### What does the Church really say?

The teaching of the Church with respect to family planning is straightforward, clear and easily summarized.

1) Spouses must be willing to accept children lovingly.

2) Spouses may not practice contraception.

3) Taking into consideration a whole range and variety of factors, including physical, economic, psychological and sociological factors, spouses may do well to practice Natural Family Planning to space children and/or limit family size, provided that they do so with due moral seriousness—with a generous, responsible and prayerful sense of what they owe to God, to one

another, to their children and to society.

That's all.

The theoretical providentialists wish there were more to it than that. They wish they could find quotations in *Humanae Vitae* to support their view of the matter, as, for instance:

- “NFP, while distinguishable from contraception in not being absolutely immoral, is seldom licit and always regrettable.”

- “Most married couples (especially in the wealthy West) are perfectly capable of having large families, and most reasons cited for not having large families are bogus.”

- “Couples who choose to have large families are making the religiously and morally superior choice.”

- “Since selfishness is such a near and present danger, no one should practice NFP without first consulting a priest.”

- “The following do not constitute valid reasons for using NFP: wanting to finish your education; wanting to save up for children's future education; being tired; being stressed; being burdened by debt; having to move; having a small, crowded house; being depressed; feeling overwhelmed, etc.”

Theoretical providentialists would like to find such statements in Church documents, but they can't. They are not there, because the Church does not want them there. They are not there because “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.” The Church lays on each married couple the solemn responsibility to discern well for themselves, and on all of us the solemn injunction against presuming to know what is right for others. She resists going further on purpose—*not* because there are so few people willing to hack the rigors of real Christianity, but because real Christianity *is*, precisely, freedom.

### **The chronic temptation of pharisaism**

Salvation history can practically be summarized as God's tireless endeavor to liberate His people from captivity, in the face of our persistent, self-destructive hankering after slavishness.

In the Old Testament this hankering manifested itself in various ways, including, among others, a tendency to adhere to the letter of the law while offending against the spirit of the law; or in confusing external conformity to the law with inward righteousness; or in imagining that “piling on” the dictates of the law should be counted as “going the extra mile” religiously and morally.

In the New Testament the preference for being

“under the law” can be seen in the Pharisees' rejection of the good news. Exemplary adherence to the law of Moses was the core of the Pharisees' personal identity, as well as the basis for their social stature. When this law was super-ceded by Jesus' proclamation of mercy for all, it meant that the Pharisees were no longer exceptional. They were, in truth, no better than “those others”—the tax collectors and prostitutes, and everyone else whose righteousness depended utterly on God. It was intolerable. They preferred the law that established their superiority.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the spread of the gospel among the gentiles, the same tendency reasserted itself in new forms. Very early on in the life of the Church, some Jewish Christians insisted that gentile converts be circumcised, while others held that circumcision was no longer necessary. The controversy grew so intense and divisive that it prompted the convening of a kind of pre-Vatican Vatican council, and the dissemination of the first “proto encyclical” of ecclesial history. Here is what it said:

“We have heard that some of our number without any instructions from us have upset you with their discussions and disturbed your peace of mind....It is the decision of the Holy Spirit, and ours too, *not to lay on you any burden beyond that which is strictly necessary*, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from illicit sexual union.” (Acts 15: 24-29, my emphasis)

Thus, from the beginning we see the Church using her authority *to minimize rules*, maximize freedom, and reprimand those who burden and confuse the consciences of the faithful with teachings that “add to the law.” (Paul's letter to the Galatians is an elaboration of this theme.)

Generalizing for brevity's sake, we can say that the majority of the heresies condemned by the Church (Donatism, Pelagianism, and Jansenism, to name a few) have been rooted in a similar principle. They follow a pattern: A portion of the faithful get carried beyond what is required in the practical application of their religious zeal; they resent and condemn the perceived laxity of the wider Church; they are reprimanded by authorities for their unwarranted severity; and they are so appalled and indignant to find the Church on the side of their opponents that they condemn the pope as

**Thus, from the beginning we see the Church using her authority to *minimize rules*, maximize freedom, and reprimand those who burden and confuse the consciences of the faithful with teachings that “add to the law.”**

apostate, and declare themselves the remnant of the true faithful.

Nor is this base tendency confined to the extreme instances of outright heresy. It is a perennial spiritual plague within the Church, as well as in the private dramas of our own souls. In every age, and in various ways, we are tempted to reject the freedom given to us in the Holy Spirit, and place ourselves under laws of our own making. We resist authentic freedom for two reasons:

1) Because it is so costly. We do not like to bear what C.S. Lewis calls “the weight of glory”—the overwhelming demands of our vocation to live as sons and daughters of the Most High God. (It is much easier to adhere to a law than to become holy.)

2) Because a law gives us an objective, external measure of our superiority over others. (This is an extremely pleasant thing to have.)

I will not hesitate to say that I think theoretical providentialism is a modern manifestation of this age-old evil. Rather than “rejoicing with joy” in the freedom that has been granted to married couples in our age—a freedom divinely calculated to meet the peculiar challenges of family life in today’s world, and a freedom not enjoyed by couples past, whose only licit means of limiting child birth was total abstinence—they want to clamp down, impose restrictions, and dramatically narrow the range of married liberty. Unconsciously, they are allying themselves with the Pharisees.

### The face of pharisaism

The alliance between the Pharisees and providentialism becomes clearer when we note that classical pharisaism is characterized by especially two features: externalism and judgmentalism—both of which are prominent in theoretical providentialism.

The externalism can be seen in several ways:

- In the talk of “default numbers” of children (as if we were not given the Holy Spirit, and called to discern God’s perfect will for us as unique individuals.)

- In the idea that a couple’s generosity can be measured by the size of their family, as opposed to the depth and completeness of their inward gift-of-self (something God alone knows.) In truth, it is perfectly possible that a given mother of two is more generous than a given mother of 12, just as the offering of “the widow’s mite” in the Gospel was worth more than the lavish offerings of the wealthy man.

- In the reduction of “serious reasons” to the objectively measurable categories of financial or health crises (as if “subjective reasons” such as stress and depression are nothing but smokescreens for selfishness.)

- In the very notion that *anyone* standing outside the intimate, sacramental bond of a marital union is in

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a position to determine whether or not NFP is justified in their case. *Only* the spouses have that capacity, that privilege and that responsibility. Not even a priest is capable of determining what’s right for them. He may advise; he may help them overcome perplexity; he may undeceive them of an error in their thinking. But in the end, the judgment about how they should exercise the rights and duties of their vocation is exclusively their own.

The judgmentalism shows up in the tendency theoretical providentialists have to heap scorn on married couples who practice NFP, accusing them of being sensualists and materialists who are rejecting the cross and compromising with the world. I have known providentialists (even unmarried ones) who do not shrink from interrogating married couples about their intimate lives and their reasons for using NFP—as if it were their place to “admonish the sinners.” I understand that they mean well; they think they are “speaking the truth.” But it is nevertheless inexcusably impertinent.

To those who may find themselves speaking or thinking this way: “I see that couple over there. They were married at 23; they are now 40, and yet they have only four children. They have a large home, two nice cars, blooming health. Quite obviously they had no serious reasons for practicing NFP. What faithless Catholics! What compromisers!” I beg you to note how perilously like the “righteous man” excoriated in the Gospels you sound. “O Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast not made me like that couple over there; I thank thee that I am one of the few who serve you truly by having (or planning to have, once I am married) even *more* than the default number of children!”

Thinking this way is bad enough, teaching others to think this way is worse. It burdens and disheartens exactly where the Church is working most to bless and encourage: marriages and families.

### So, if not law or “Providence” what should guide our “family planning”?

To the question: “When is it good to practice NFP?” There is only one perfectly true answer. It is this: “When love calls for it.”

Love is the meaning of life; the meaning of marriage; the meaning of human sexuality. It is (or should be), both explicitly and implicitly, the source and reference point for all our acts and judgments within marriage.

If a man notices that his wife is exhausted and overwhelmed, it is *love* in him to suppress his desire to embrace her sexually. (To insist on his “conjugal rights” at such a time would be an act of *unlove*.) Or, if a woman sees that her husband is being crushed by a too-heavy weight of responsibility, then it is love in her to put aside her longing to have another baby, and wait patiently for a better time. Or, if devoted parents notice that their children are suffering from too little attention, then they may, out of love, discipline their desires in order to be better able to attend to their education. Or, if a husband recognizes in his wife an extraordinary vocation—to teach, say, or to law—then he may, *out of love*, urge her to complete her studies before the duties of motherhood become consuming, so that when the call comes to use those gifts, she will be ready.

Or, on the other hand, if an NFP-practicing husband and wife have been apart for a long time, then they may, for love of each other, decide that their reunion at this moment is more important than their reasons for postponing a new birth. Or, though a couple may be suffering serious financial and other difficulties, their love of life, their joy in their children, and their confidence in God’s providence may be such as to make all obstacles seem like nothing in comparison with the gift of another child.

This is the way marriage is supposed to be—a fully free, fully conscious and responsible participation in the self-forgetting, self-donating love of the Holy Trinity. At times, and according to the unique and unrepeatable “illative sense”<sup>5</sup> of each married couple, this love will call for the conjugal embrace. At other times it will call for sexual abstinence. For some couples it may mean that NFP never enters the picture. For others it may mean that NFP becomes a normal part of married life.

In sum, the Church’s teaching is divinely designed to help us realize and increase our potential to live in the Image and Likeness of God.

### Conclusion

To those who are bewildered by the mass of conflicting arguments and testimonies on this issue, I can only urge you, read *Humanae Vitae*; read *Love and Responsibility*; read *Marriage: the Mystery of Faithful Love*.

You will see how unlike the providentialists the Church is!<sup>6</sup> She is not severe and condemnatory. She is, like her Lord, full of tenderness and mercy. She is not frowning on married couples the world over. She does not load us down with crushing demands, but carefully restricts her laws to the minimum necessary for our holiness, and then “stands back” and delights in the revelation of the fathomless diversity of the faithful response to the sacramental grace of marriage. ■

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<sup>1</sup> Providentialists, for our purposes, are those who believe that married couples should “let God decide” how many children they will have, i.e., refrain from making use of NFP, except in very rare cases.

<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere Dr. Smith has been more forceful in her critique of providentialism. See her website: [www.udallas.edu/phildept/smith/publications.htm](http://www.udallas.edu/phildept/smith/publications.htm)

<sup>3</sup> It is important to stress that not all couples who avoid NFP qualify for this category. For some families, not using NFP has more to do with irresponsibility than generosity. *NFP avoidance is only admirable when it springs from true generosity*—a conscious, loving, and free response to God’s grace.

<sup>4</sup> Although this is a sharp distinction “on paper,” it should be noted that in concrete individuals these two types of providentialists tend to blend into each other in varying ways and degrees. For instance, a given “personal providentialist” couple may avoid thoroughgoing theoretical providentialism by conscientiously refraining from judging others, while at the same time their own bearing of many children is characterized more by a sense of obligation than of free choice. Or, a couple who begin marriage as rigid theoretical providentialists may—as they have children and live life—gradually come to a more sympathetic and generous appreciation of the different circumstances and vocations of Christian families.

My hope in writing this article is not so much to persuade the die-hard theoretical providentialists that they are wrong (a virtually impossible task, I fear), as to expose a false principle, so that all of us may be on better guard against it in our own thinking and acting.

<sup>5</sup> See Newman’s *Grammar of Assent*, chapter 9 for more on the illative sense

<sup>6</sup> For instance, listen to how *Humanae Vitae* praises “the honest practice of regulation of birth” for the good it can do for family life: “Yet this discipline which is proper to the purity of married couples, far from harming conjugal love, rather confers on it a higher human value...Such discipline bestows upon family life fruits of serenity and peace, and facilitates the solution of other problems; it favors attention for one’s partner, helps both parties to drive out selfishness, the enemy of true love; and deepens their sense of responsibility. By its means, parents acquire the capacity of having a deeper and more efficacious influence in the education of their offspring...” (¶ 21)

## A plea for the Tridentine Rite

Holy Week this year found me and several of my friends making several long trips from Steubenville to Pittsburgh, to attend the Holy Week and Easter liturgies celebrated in the Tridentine Rite. As usual, many of our friends and acquaintances probably perceived us as opposed to Vatican II and all that the Holy Spirit has done in the Church since then, especially at Steubenville. However, I speak at least for myself when I say that my attendance at the Tridentine Mass (codified by St. Pius V in 1570) is not born of an opposition to authentic renewal in the Church, nor of a hopeless nostalgia for a time I don't even remember, nor of a simple reaction to some of the liturgical irregularities which many students complain of in campus Masses. I attend the Tridentine Mass because I believe it to be an inestimably valuable part of our Catholic heritage, which is still capable of allowing the faithful to enter deeply into the Heavenly mysteries. And I am furthermore of the opinion of those, like Cardinal Ratzinger and Fr. Aidan Nichols, who feel that the liturgical reforms made after the Council have at times not achieved their desired effects, and that a "reform of the Reform" will not occur without a rediscovery of the richness of the Tridentine Mass. John Paul II implied as much in a statement to the Congregation of Divine Worship last September: "The people of God need to see in the priests and deacons a behavior full of reverence and dignity, capable of helping them penetrate the invisible things, even without many words and explanations. In the Roman Missal of St. Pius V, as in many Eastern Liturgies, there are very beautiful prayers with which the priests express the most profound sense of humility and reverence before the Holy Mysteries, the prayers revealing the "Substance Itself of each Liturgy." The same Holy Father asked in his well known letter "Ecclesia Dei" for "a wide and generous application" of the norms permitting the use of the Old Missal. For various reasons that I hope to delve into in a forthcoming article, it seems to me that the promotion of the Tridentine Rite is something which will indeed facilitate the new springtime of evangelization, and of which its supporters should not be ashamed.

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## The mystery of the difference between the sexes

Is it really wise to think that there is no fundamental difference between men and women? Isn't society enriched by the special qualities men and women each possess?

Is there nothing beautiful, uniquely special, about a mother nursing her baby? Isn't it a grace of womanhood, to be the one to whom your little ones run for tender consolation when they are hurt, to be the one on whose lap is for them the safest, most loving place in the world? Isn't it tremendous, as a woman, to be the earthly reflection and reminder to the world of Jesus' spouse; this spouse who is so treasured in His eyes, for love of whom He gave His life, whose mysterious depths could be the object of such great love?

Isn't it incredible, as a man, to be capable of noticing in a masculine way, the awesome depths of this secret and beautiful treasure that lies in the heart of woman? Isn't it wonderful to ponder, as a man, that we are resonating in a particular way with that manhood deep in the chest of our Lord and Savior when we experience the breathtaking inner pull toward the most beautiful and splendid creature on earth—woman—and that this draw to be with her, to protect her, to sacrifice courageously for her, to be looked to by her for security, to understand that she wants to see us as brave for her—is to share deeply in the very core of who Christ is in the loving eyes of His bride?

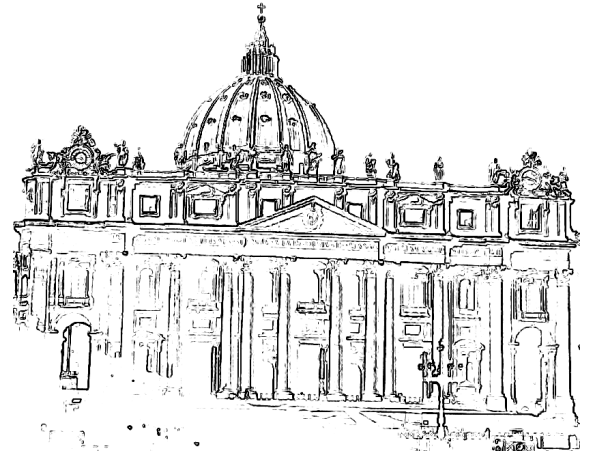
Would it not be a good thing if priests, as men, understood themselves to be in a spousal relationship, reflecting and making real on earth the eternally fruitful heavenly marriage of Christ with the Church? And to aspire to emulate always, the husbandly gifts of Jesus to His Church of protecting, guiding, providing and caring warmly for her and her children, and of sacrificing courageously for her?

Wouldn't it be good if all fathers prayed for the grace to model and to impart to their sons the gifts of authentic manhood, and a great desire to live them fully? And likewise, women in regard to their daughters?

Or, is all this sharing and participating in the eternal dance of the marital union of God and man while even yet in this life, just another result of fanciful thinking, produced by arbitrary gender identities, mere

accoutrements, slapped onto us by human society for convenience? I wonder, if the latter is true, which gender 'identity' among the presently talked about GLBT options (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) for convenience sake, could ever be thought as best characterizing the eternal relationship between God and man? That is, God as known through this actual world, His creation—the God of the Bible.

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## It's not the Vatican, it's the laity

Mark Fischer is right when he says (in his page 3 article) that the scandal unfolding in the Church these days is different from scandals past. There is an altogether new kind of consciousness among the faithful. We are appalled not only by the discovery that so many priests have committed such unspeakable crimes, but even more that the hierarchy is implicated in a massive and unpardonable cover-up. Adding to our dismay is the lameness of clerical response to the revelations, even among cherished conservative stalwarts.

Lay Catholics across the board seem united in their conviction that something dramatic needs to be done. In her March 22, 2002 column for *The Wall Street Journal*, Peggy Noonan (like Mark Fischer) calls on the Vatican to act:

"For the first time in my lifetime ardent Catholics, or perhaps I should say orthodox Catholics, no longer trust their cardinals and bishops to do what's right. They have pinned their hopes on the Vatican, and on the old warrior saint, JP II. They want him to hold up his silver crozier with the crucified Christ on the top and demand that priests who seduce teenage boys—or who sexually abuse, molest or seduce anyone—be thrown from the church, and that their protectors, excusers and enablers be thrown from it too."

But may I venture a doubt that even our beloved pope can do much this time?

Does anyone imagine that this problem isn't every bit as bad and widespread in the European hierarchy as it is in ours? Is it not rather all too likely that there are powerful Vatican officials who are guilty of similar sins and cover-ups? And if this has been going on not just for years, but for decades and centuries, then we should realize that the pope cannot crack down without risking a destabilization of the institutional structure of the Church and a disastrous undermining of her interests in the world. (Goodbye moral authority at UN conferences, to name just one relatively miniscule item.)

Then, too, just think what a horrible position faithful priests, bishops and cardinals must be in these days.

Though they may be innocent of crimes, I don't suppose there are many among them who are innocent of knowledge of such things. Remember the seal of confession. Consider the innumerable personal obligations and debts of friendship they must have with one another, making it virtually impossible for them to speak out. Think how acutely conscious every holy pastor must be of his own sins, and the unsuitability of his being the one to begin casting stones.

For these reasons and others, my own hopes (which are high) are not pinned on the Vatican. They are pinned on the laity. It is the laity who must act in this case. It is we who must insist on reform, and lead the charge in implementing it.

This scandal has uncovered a destructive residual clericalism in the Church (priests and bishops acting like a secret fraternity—protecting and promoting one another at the expense of the welfare and dignity of the laity) that must be decisively overcome if the Church is to realize the vocation laid out for her in the Second Vatican Council.

There are functions that only priests and bishops can fulfill. No layman can say mass or absolve sins or ordain priests. But—this is a real question, not a rhetorical one—is there any reason why we cannot have a more substantial role than we do now in, for example, the selection of candidates for the priesthood, and in the operating of seminaries and diocesan offices? Even a greater presence in seminaries—in teaching or administrative positions—might have a wholesome effect. (Recall that not so long ago lay Catholics were thought to have no place in the running of universities or the teaching of theology.)

One Harvard professor, who is a parishioner in the Boston area, is asking local Catholics to withhold donations to the archdiocese until there has been a much more thorough accounting of the scandal (e.g., where is the \$30,000,000.00 due now to Geoghan's victims going to come from?) This seems to me a good beginning.

Let's put our heads together and see if we can't come up with more.

*Kathleen van Schaijik*