

March, 2005

Easter 2005 Reflections

These excerpts are from articles on the theme of Easter. Teachers may wish to utilize the readings for class discussions on the meaning of Easter. The material may assist teachers in their own preparations for the celebration of the greatest feast in the Christian calendar.

To Know the Power of His Resurrection

Fr Varghese Parappuram V C

"Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Lk 24:5)

The existential pain of the fear of death

What is man's greatest suffering? Man's fundamental suffering is not financial difficulty, or failure in examinations, or unemployment or inability to get the desired life partner. Man's fundamental suffering is the fear of death. The decay of the tomb creates an existential anguish in man. Man's fundamental anxiety is the dread of death, and the separation, loneliness, helplessness, sorrow and uncertainty that death involves. Being rendered helpless by particular problems is not so severe as this pain which is an indivisible part of the human condition. It can be called existential pain. It is this pain that is the fundamental anxiety of humans and the basic agony of man's consciousness.

Even Jesus suffered this pain thinking of his imminent death: *"I am deeply grieved, even to death"* (Mk 14:34). In the face of this pain Jesus began to be disturbed and sad (cf Mk 14:33). He fell on the ground and prayed that, if possible, this chalice may be removed from him (cf Mk 14:36). When the terrible suffering of his approaching death gripped him, *"In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground"* (Lk 22:44).

The golden light of hope

It is the historical fact of Christ's resurrection that presented the golden light of hope to mankind that stood perplexed before the existential grief generated by inevitable death. Lord Jesus united death to resurrection in an inseparable manner through his death and rising from the dead. Thus death is no more a problem to be feared, rather, it is a door to the glory of the resurrection. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the poisonous teeth of the serpent of death, have been extracted forever. Therefore, St Paul asks, *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death,*

is your sting?" (1 Cor 15:55). He could thus embrace death as joyfully as he embraced life. *"For me, living is Christ and dying is gain"* (Phil 1:21).

The New Testament presents Christ's resurrection not as a symbol or myth but as a real experience of men fully endowed with reason (cf 1 Cor 15:3b-6). The community of disciples were engulfed in a sense of frustration, failure and disappointment after Jesus' death (cf Lk 24:21). It was the experience of Jesus' resurrection that filled them with the zeal of faith. Faith in Jesus, who conquered death and rose from the dead and became the Lord of life and death, gives dependable support and realistic hope to man who stands helpless in the face of death.

True joy

If fear of death and the decay of the grave are the deepest suffering of man, the greatest joy and good that man can attain, are made possible by a participation in the glory of the resurrection. Miraculous healing of sickness, being blessed with children or getting employed through the power of prayer, are happy events. However, there is a joy that exceeds all these joys: *"Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven"* (Lk 10:20). The ultimate effect of faith is the experience of the kingdom of God and of heavenly felicity. It was the keys of heaven that Jesus promised as reward for the firm faith of Peter (cf Mt 16:19) Though all who believe receive blessings in this world also, *"If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied"* (1 Cor 15:19).

Seek the things that are above

St Paul tells the believers what to do to obtain the participation in the resurrection which is the greatest blessing man can receive. If we must become participators in the heavenly joy given by Jesus, who has risen from dead and lives in glory with the Father, we must *"Seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God"* (Col 3:1). *"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth"* (Col 3:2). In order to take part in the resurrection of Jesus, Paul suffered the loss of all things and regarded them as rubbish (cf Phil 3:8). *"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead"* (Phil 3:10).

Hope in suffering



It is hope that bestows the power of endurance to man. Those who have lost this hope stand bewildered in the face of suffering, unable to keep life moving forward. The Christian vision rooted in the resurrection of Jesus, gives to mankind hope in regard to the future, and patience in suffering. The example Jesus gives is very simple and touching: *“When a woman is in labour, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world”* (Jn 16:21). To participate in the glory of the resurrection of Jesus is the greatest blessing that man can receive. That is the only gift which has the same value as eternity.

<http://www.datanumeric.com/vlm/04-99/6.html>

Questions

1. What is our greatest suffering? Why?
2. For the Christian, what is the historical fact that brings the light of hope?
3. How does hope make suffering, if not welcome, at least a bit more bearable and tolerable?
4. What is then the greatest glory awaiting us?

The Resurrection

Reflections: Case for the Resurrection

Presented to “Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury”, By Rebecca Megli, Baptist Press, April 8, 2000

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary students were addressed as the “ladies and gentlemen of the jury” as Michael Whitehead provided evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. Whitehead, interim president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has practiced law in Kansas City, Mo., for 25 years.

Before making his case, Whitehead explained how Harvard law professor Simon Greenleaf came to the realization in the mid-1800s that the resurrection of Jesus is true. Greenleaf, who authored a three-volume treatise on the law of evidence, was one of the foremost lawyers of the century. As an agnostic, he saw no credible evidence that there is a God until he was challenged by students to apply the rules of evidence to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Greenleaf took the dare, and set out to prove the simple premise that “dead men stay dead.”

To demonstrate how Greenleaf came to his conclusion, Whitehead asked his audience to act as the jury and to treat

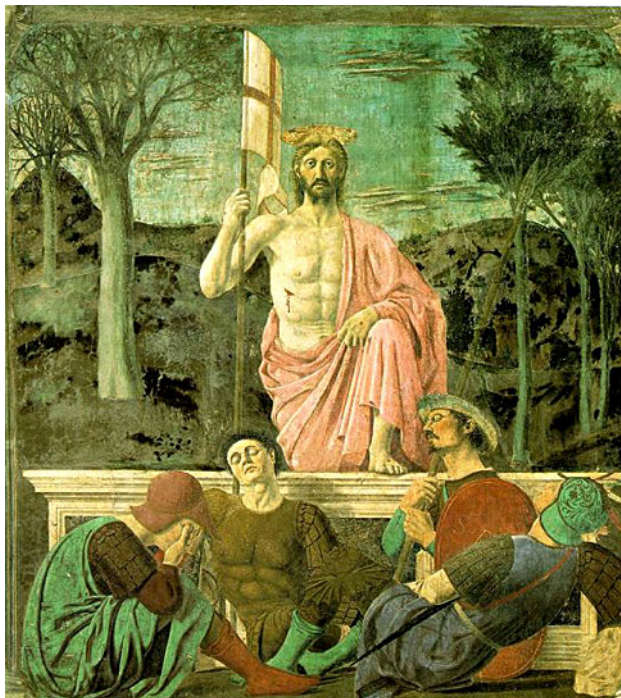
the gospel accounts as eyewitness testimony given by deposition in a courtroom on the legal issue: “What happened to the dead body of Jesus?” Whitehead explained that the rules of evidence allow deposition testimony, even of dead witnesses, as well as “ancient documents more than 20 years old” under exceptions to the hearsay rule.

Calling his “first witness,” referring to John 19:38–42, Whitehead noted the “preparations” of the body of Jesus. The passage outlines the burial custom of the Jews — strips of linen were wrapped around the body interwoven, in this case, with 100 pounds of spices. Basically, Jesus’ body was in a 100-pound body cast, Whitehead said.

The next witness was Matthew, who stated in chapter 27, verse 60, of his deposition that Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb sealed with “a great stone.” Whitehead quoted lawyer-engineer J. Frank Morrison that the rock may have weighed one and a half to two tons. These were the “protections” given to the body of Jesus, Whitehead noted.

Continuing his deposition in verses 62–66, Matthew said highly trained Roman guards guarded the tomb and the seal of Rome was affixed to the stone. The death penalty was certain for any trespasser and for the guard unit if the seal were ever broken.

Yet, in spite of the preparations, the protections and the precautions, the facts in evidence are that the stone was rolled far away from the entrance on the Sunday morning, and the body was gone. So, Whitehead asked, “What happened to the body?”



The first theory ever offered was labeled by Whitehead as “the body snatchers theory,” that the friends of Jesus must have stolen the body. In fact, in Matthew’s “deposition” it was cited that the guards later testified that “while they were asleep” the disciples stole the body. Whitehead called the guards’ story “bought and paid for testimony” because it is “self-impeaching.” The guards said they were asleep, so how could they have known what happened? Also it’s unlikely they would have been asleep, because if that were true it meant they failed at the guard and would die.

A second theory was called the “swoon theory,” made popular by the book, *The Passover Plot*. The theory, as recapped by Whitehead, holds that maybe Jesus didn’t really die but was drugged so He would look dead. He was put in the tomb, where the cool air revived Him. He then escaped from the tomb and was mistaken for a risen Savior.

But, Whitehead asked, what about the testimony in John 19:33–34 that Jesus was pierced in the side with a spear,

and that blood and water flowed out? Modern physiologists know this is proof of death, Whitehead said, adding that the Roman guards were professional executioners who knew death, and Jesus was dead.

Beyond this, the swoon theory ignores the other facts in evidence regarding the 100-pound body cast left behind on the slab, the two-ton boulder, and the sentries guarding the tomb and the Roman seal with their lives, Whitehead said.

The resurrection theory, based on the disciples' testimonies, is the only one that fits all the facts and evidence, Whitehead said.

The disciples died martyrs' deaths to attest to their testimony that Jesus was alive again on Sunday and was seen for 40 days thereafter, Whitehead said. Jesus said He did it because He is God, dying for man's sin, offering resurrection life eternally for all who will receive Him, Whitehead recounted.

When Greenleaf realized that the evidence proves Jesus is God, he received Christ as his Savior and Lord and it changed his life, Whitehead said. "If Jesus was alive again in 33 A.D.," Whitehead concluded, "He's alive today because He is God. You can receive Him by repentance and faith. That will change your life, and that is the message of Easter."

<http://www.thefamily.org/word/reflections/index2.php?refid=116>

Questions

1. What are some of the popular theories proposed by those who deny the Resurrection of Christ?
2. What is the evidence for believing in the Resurrection?
3. Who are the principal witnesses called on to testify?
4. Is their martyrdom the ultimate "proof" for the resurrection?

The Passion of Jesus shows us up as sinners and heals us

Fr Tommy Lane, Dublin

Who would have thought that the crowd which welcomed Jesus with such enthusiasm during his entry into Jerusalem would turn against him so quickly within days and demand his crucifixion and the release of Barabbas condemned for murder? Their welcome and shouts for Jesus were superficial. Their support for him was only skin deep. It was easy to be part of a crowd that welcomed Jesus and it was easy to be part of a crowd that condemned him to death.... It is easy to be part of the crowd that puts on an impressive display for a funeral or wedding or a baptism. How many of that crowd come to meet Jesus on Sunday? It is easy to be part of the crowd. But in the account of the Passion the crowd was not there for Jesus when he needed them most. The crowd did not go to the cross. The crowd abandoned Jesus. Only a few women and John went to the cross. So much for the crowd!

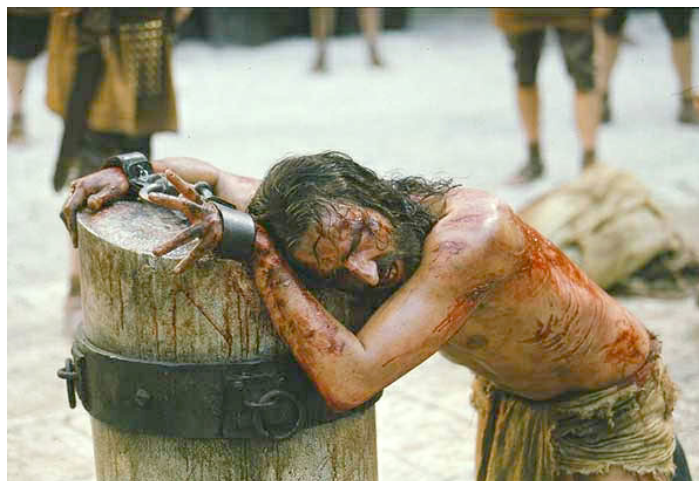
During the Last Supper, in Luke's account, Peter said he would be willing to go to prison with Jesus, even to death

with him. Yet a few hours later that same evening he denied Jesus. How quickly he changed. How quickly he turned when the pressure was on him. He could make fine promises during the Last Supper but when the crunch came he decided to save his skin. We make fine promises to Jesus here and crunch for us comes when temptation comes our way. How do we react? Do we cave in to the pressure like Peter or do we stand by Jesus like the women and John and go right to the cross? Peter heard the cock crowing after he denied Jesus but our world is so addicted to sin that maybe we don't even hear our conscience crowing any more when we sin.

How can we not hear the account of Jesus' Passion and not be moved by it? Recently I heard of someone asking a young person "What would you think of someone who didn't cry while watching Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ*?" The young person responded, "He would be evil." That young person was so moved by watching the movie that he could not understand why anybody could not be moved by watching the film. The Passion of Jesus moves us. It moves us because Jesus suffered.

The Passion of Jesus moves us because it is we who have inflicted this suffering on Jesus. It was not just the chief priests and it was not just the cruel Roman soldiers who brought this suffering on Jesus; it was our sins that inflicted this suffering on Jesus. To show that we are all responsible for the death of Jesus it was Mel Gibson himself who drove the nail into Jesus' hand in the movie to symbolize that we are all responsible, not just a small number of Jewish leaders, not just Roman soldiers, but all of us. ...There is no past, present or future for Jesus, he is outside of time. Remember the Jubilee motto, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb 13:8) and when we sin we crucify Jesus. We nail him again. So then the account of the Passion of Jesus moves us to flee from sin, to leave sin behind....The Passion of Jesus shows us up for what we are, sinners who have crucified Jesus and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation we turn to Jesus again and ask for his mercy. And through the Passion of Jesus we receive forgiveness, "through his wounds we are healed."

http://www.frtommylane.com/homilies/holy_week-easter_sunday/palm_sunday.htm



Questions

1. According to Lane what was the failure of the crowd?
2. How are we like that crowd?
3. What is conscience? How can it be lulled to sleep? What can keep it alert?
4. What did Mel Gibson have to say about The Passion and the truth of suffering?
5. How are we saved through the suffering of Jesus?

Part B

Gay Marriage Debate and its Fallout

Recent happenings in the ongoing debate on the nature and definition of marriage offer the opportunity for continued reflection on the meaning of this issue and what impact it is having on Canadians. Legislation has been introduced in the federal parliament to legalize the court-created definition of marriage as a union of two persons. The Legislature in the province of Ontario passed into law a redefinition of spouse to bring all its statutes in line with the new definition of marriage. The issue has not yet been settled but certain groups behave as if that were already the case. What does it all mean? Is there still freedom of religion in Canada? Is the gay marriage issue the most radical manifestation yet of the total secularization of modern life?

In this edition of *The Interim Plus* we present the written thoughts of people anguishing over the serious prospect that gay marriage will be firmly and permanently passed into law in Canada.

Secularization

In the following excerpt, Doreen Beagan had contrasted President George W. Bush, who is not afraid to speak publicly about how his Christian faith inspires his decision-making, with Prime Minister Paul Martin, who proudly claims to not let his religious beliefs in anyway influence his political responsibilities. The contrast can be seen even in their willingness or reluctance to use the word "God" in their speeches. Beagan went on to write about the spiritual struggle that ordinary people encounter in their daily lives.

Someday, our leaders may use the 'G' word

Doreen Beagan, *The Interim, March 2005*

In a book on spiritual warfare, I read, "A monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades the whole history of man. Man is obliged to wrestle constantly if he is to cling to what is good." And, "This monumental struggle is carried on in each and every person every day of our lives."

We can recognize the works of the powers of darkness in the big evils: wars, atrocities, famines and epidemics. There are less obvious ones. Denton's article adds: "The ignorant philosophers of our time ... (are) in favour of establishing their version of a godless government, big on free sex, porn,

killing unborn babies, adopting adulterous cocaine-addicted celebrities as gods, a culture screaming at our children to enjoy themselves at anything that feels good and ignore their parents and almighty God, who has been removed from their education."

We can also recognize the struggles experienced by those who lose jobs or businesses rather than compromise their values. Those jailed for picketing abortuaries. Those who plead again and again before the courts or legislative bodies. Those who are nurses or doctors or pharmacists for life. Those trying valiantly to forgive injustice and betrayal, or to love a difficult spouse or a wayward child.

But isn't it a bit far-fetched to speak of "monumental struggles" in the daily lives of the rest of us? All we do is ... Avoid dirty jokes, profanity, pornography, and gossip. Take care in our magazine, video, TV and movie choices. Teach our children to dress modestly and live moderately. Listen to the lonely, comfort the troubled, give leadership where needed. Reject the empty promises of Planned Parenthood. Accept unexpected pregnancies. Make layettes and have bakesales for Birthright and Right to Life. Help with marriage preparation and marriage enrichment programs. Visit the sick. Advocate for the elderly or the disabled. Work on crisis lines and in recovery programs. Support church and foodbanks and soup kitchens and a myriad of other charities. Send only Nativity-oriented Christmas cards. Put a creche on the lawn or in the living room. Emphasize more at Easter than candy eggs and chocolate bunnies. Et cetera.

We may not be very conscious of a struggle each time, but all these things do take real effort. In every case, it would be easier to just go with the flow. Perhaps we need to be more aware that these apparently little things that fill our days are really not small at all. That we really are "wrestling daily with the powers of darkness" and building the habits of compassion and self-discipline so important to democracy. The cumulative effect may truly be monumental. It may even give our leaders the courage, someday, to use the "G" word in public.

Questions

1. How does the writer contrast her every day experience to that of the democratic leaders who even lack the courage to use the word "God" in their speeches?
2. What plea does Beagan make on behalf of the common folk?
3. Are such people in the minority in Canada?
4. What is the nature of the "monumental struggles" in the daily lives of ordinary people?
5. How can young people in particular integrate these concerns in their daily routines?
6. Do we expect enough from our political leaders?
7. Do we expect enough from ourselves?
8. What serves to drive mention of God from public discourse? Why do journalists and other media find it difficult or embarrassing to speak about religious convictions?

For a deeper discussion of secularization in the modern world an important essay in First Things is highly recommended. Reviewing a book recently written by Christian Smith, professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina, Richard Neuhaus pointed out that "Secularization Doesn't Just Happen" (First Things, March 2005). Smith challenges the received wisdom that claims that as society became more modern, it became more secular, with less and less room for religion in the public square. There are a number of myths associated with this generalization. Two of particular note are that firstly, secularization was quite inevitable, and secondly, that it just happens. It simply happens naturally or by default. There are no specific individuals or events or decisions to account for its taking hold in a society.

If one were to look at the gay marriage issue, following that logic, is it a case of the inevitability of the progress of law? Or is this radical stand actively promoted by specific people for their own interest, fuelled by a particular ideology, and the pursuit of power? What is there about Canadian institutional and political circumstances that have favoured the success of the homosexual agenda thus far? What material and political resources have the proponents of gay marriage had at their disposal?

Other examples of secular pressure on believers were



Pierre Pettigrew's warning to churchmen to keep religion out of the gay marriage debate since he claims that there is a separation of church and state in Canada (a foolish statement on his part but certainly revelatory of his own preferences and intentions in politics).

Foreign Affairs Minister, Pierre Pettigrew

C a n a d i a n Foreign Affairs Minister Says Churches Must "Not Get Involved" in Same-Sex Marriage Issue

FREDERICTON, New Brunswick January 28, 2005 (LifeSiteNews.com) – Liberal government reaction to the unexpected building tide of opposition to its same-sex 'marriage' bill is becoming increasingly extreme. Comments yesterday by Foreign Affairs Minister, Pierre Pettigrew, have revealed a disturbing, almost totalitarian attitude of the government towards Canadians opposing its social engineering plans.

The National Post reports today that Liberal Foreign Affairs Minister, Pierre Pettigrew declared that because Canada has "Separation of Church and State," the Church is obliged to

remain silent on the issue of same-sex unions. "I find that the separation of the Church and the state is one of the most beautiful inventions of modern times," Pettigrew said. *The National Post* reported he said that government and churches 'should not get involved in each other's affairs.' The Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops (OCCB) today issued an uncharacteristically stern response to Pettigrew's comments. The bishops' conference has demanded a retraction and called Pettigrew's comments "extremely irresponsible," and a violation of freedom and freedom of religion. The statement said, "The separation of church and state is a tool that advocates use when they find religious views to be inconvenient to their political views." The statement reads, "They would require people to leave their religious beliefs at the door when they enter public debate. This, of course, contradicts both freedom of religion and freedom of speech. All Canadians have the democratic right to participate in social debate. That is a hallmark of our democratic society."

The bishops' statement warns that once the principles of representative democracy and freedom of speech are abandoned in the Liberals' rush to re-construct Canadian society, no group is safe from silencing. "If religious people are being told today that they cannot participate in the public debate on certain issues, then who will be told the same tomorrow? Will environmentalists be told that there are issues on which they ought not to comment? Will trade unionists be told that they must remain silent on other issues?"

<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2005/jan/05012806.html>

Questions

1. What is meant by secularization?
2. Is the separation of church and state an established doctrine in Canada? In the United States?
3. Why do governments not object to Bishops' statements on international justice, international peace and development, on their objections to unjust wars, on their public support for AIDS funding? But why do they object to church officials making statements on issues pertaining to marriage, family, abortion, stem cell research, etc?
4. What is freedom of religion? How are attempts being made to suppress it?
5. Should people care about this freedom of religion?

Gwen Landolt of REAL Women Says pro-abortionists, activist judges, and the UN, are part of the final attempt "to demolish Christianity". According to Landolt, the militant secular humanists are now using homosexuals and homosexuality "to demolish Christianity once and for all".

<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2003/feb/030207a.html>

PART C

In this next excerpt a clergyman expresses his grave concern with the general passivity of Canadians even when confronted with what he foresees as a veritable

sea-change in the cultural and spiritual make-up of Canada. It is this very lack of “outrage” that bodes ill for the future.

A time for outrage

Rev. Royal Hamel, *The Interim*, March 2005

A question keeps gnawing away in the back of my mind, “Where is the moral outrage”? Prime Minister Martin, the minister of justice and a handful of judges are hell-bent on imposing state-sanctioned sodomy on all of Canada. They keep saying, “It’s only about civil marriage.” “It’s not going to affect your marriage.” “It’s not going to affect religious freedom.” “It’s not going to affect children placed in these homes.”

This is pure poppycock! Canadians are being led down the garden path. Government officials are naïve at best, or lying about the implications. But, Canadians are just too nice to get angry. Tolerance, the national virtue, insists that I must grant approval even to that which I consider harmful. This attitude is epidemic in the population at large. Tragically, it is all too common among the religious leadership as well. Christians have heard such unbalanced teaching on love, that to express indignation at sin and folly is regarded as extremism. ...

There should be outrage that Irwin Cotler and other government leaders will not admit same-sex “marriage” will lead to polygamy. Simple logic dictates that if the gender of spouses becomes irrelevant, then very soon the quantity of spouses will also be irrelevant..... There should be outrage for the sake of children. For countless youngsters will be deliberately denied either a mom or a dad. They will grow up defrauded and cheated. ...

I am outraged by the lack of leadership among the majority of churches. Catholics, by and large, have seen the danger and have risen to the challenge. But where are the rest of Canada’s Christians? Do they fear being perceived as “not loving”? Do they fear losing their charitable tax status or are they merely mired in the sin of indifference? I don’t know. ...

Ecclesiastes reminds us, “To everything there is a season.” There is a time for righteous anger. Outrage is the soul’s inner response to the perverting of truth and morality. It will kindle motivation; it will drive righteous action.

Outrage is not the full answer. But little will be done without it. Its absence is a chilling indictment of Christian leadership. Not to abhor the evil of those who destroy the foundations means that we care neither for truth, nor for our fellow Canadians.

Questions

1. What has caused Hamel’s sense of outrage, the government’s action or the apathy of the populace? Which does he lament more?
2. Why should there be an expression of moral outrage according to Hamel?
3. What would be the good of such outrage?

4. Is he correct in his analysis of the Canadian public’s attitude to important socio-cultural issues with moral dimensions?
5. Are people afraid to voice their true opinions? What makes them afraid?
6. What is true tolerance? Are Canadians “too nice”?
7. Are churches afraid to take a clear stand? What may they be afraid of? What about the fallout of divided flocks? (see the articles that follow)

PART D

The gay marriage debate is bringing about the coalescing of established groups and the entry of new groups into the political equation in Canada. The evidence for this may be seen in the four articles that follow, each providing a different perspective on how the issue is drawing intense reactions from diverse quarters.

(1)

Don’t trust these politicians

Commentary by Kate McMillan, *The Interim*, March 2005

The B.C. Human Rights Tribunal heard a case recently in which two women claimed the Knights of Columbus, a Roman Catholic men’s society, discriminated against them by refusing to permit the renting of a hall for a same-sex wedding reception. And so it begins – or, shall I say, continues.

I hold no particular religious beliefs. My support for preserving the traditional definition of marriage is rooted in basic anthropology and is solidified by a suspicion that same-sex “marriage” has more to do with forwarding the agenda of the extreme left than it does with concerns about minority rights. If minority rights were truly the issue at stake, there would be full-out legislative war between the federal government and province of Quebec over minority language rights.

The secular left advancing same-sex “marriage” legislation in Canada purports to have a deep commitment to protecting religious freedom from erosion by homosexual rights advocacy. In reality, that commitment amounts to little more than a winking promise to allow people to “believe in something that doesn’t exist.”

So, when push comes to shove, the “truth” of state-defined equality rights will always trump the “false” God-defined morality. For those who are merely unconvinced of the existence of God, it’s a conclusion based on logic. For the left, however, the question of religion is much more problematic, for it strikes at the heart of their own belief system. Freedom of religion acknowledges the possible existence of an authority higher than that of the state, and as far as the left is concerned, that’s a notion contrary to their own interests.

When one views religious freedom as nothing more significant than “tolerance of those who believe in something that doesn’t exist,” it goes a long way in explaining why the secular left sees no contradiction in public policy makers

who claim to be devout followers of their faith, and in the next breath declare it is possible – even preferable – to “set aside their personal religious convictions” to enact legislation that is in flat contradiction to the teachings of their church.

To a person who holds strong moral principles – be they based upon divine teachings or on a profound sense that certain principles are fundamental to a stable and just society – such a contradiction is not possible. One does not compromise on one’s core moral values. You either adhere to them or you didn’t have them in the first place.

When an individual’s principles come into opposition with the demands of public office, one of two options are available. The honourable one is to fight to uphold them in the debate over public policy, and if the two prove to be incompatible – to step aside. The dishonourable and far more common solution is to declare that core principles are subject to a public policy time clock – that they can be punched out at the door and punched back in when you leave, that devotion to one’s religion can be toggled like the on/off switch of a church organ.

It is not by accident that we have in public office a preponderance of individuals of the latter variety, whose principles are conditional – conditional on the party whip, conditional on the latest polls and focus group findings, conditional to the pressure of lobby groups and party fundraisers.

Just some advice from this ambivalent atheist – it is folly to trust such people with your religious freedoms. If they’ll set aside their own fundamental beliefs for political gain – they’ll set aside yours.

(Kate McMillan lives in Saskatchewan and keeps a weblog at smalldeadanimals.com, where a version of this article originally appeared.)

Questions

1. What is the writer’s non-religious reason for supporting the traditional definition of marriage?
2. How is the issue to her one of “forwarding the agenda of the extreme left”?
3. According to McMillan why does the “left” not really believe in freedom of religion?
4. Why does the secular left see no contradiction in public policy makers who claim to be devout followers of their faith, but are quite willing to “set aside their personal religious convictions” to enact legislation that is directly in conflict with the teachings of their church?
5. According to “ambivalent atheist” McMillan why should believers in religious freedoms not trust these politicians?

(2)
Support for marriage strong in Calgary
Albertans from all denominations attend Battle for Marriage Rally to hear Bishop Henry and David Mainse
Janet L. Jackson, *The Interim*, March 2005

Close to 1,200 Albertans came from near and far to attend a Battle for Marriage Rally in the heart of downtown Calgary at the Calgary Full Gospel Church, organized by the Calgary Coalition for Traditional Marriage.

David Krayden, the rally’s primary organizer, commented on how faiths of all persuasions came together. “I never imagined that I would be the organizer of what turned out to be a perfectly designed *ecumenical event*, but that’s what the times are producing.”

With 66 per cent of Canadians wanting to maintain marriage between one man and one woman, and 67 per cent wanting a referendum according to a recent Compas poll, “Evangelicals and conservative Catholics are uniting on this issue at this important juncture in history,” said Krayden.



“Marriage is a line in the sand that cannot be crossed without severe, profound and far-reaching consequences for the church, the family and children.

Explaining the importance of marriage, Henry pointed out, “The social institution that has always symbolized our society’s commitment to the future, to our children, will be transformed into an institution that ... will focus on the needs and the desires of adults only.” Henry took the opportunity to once again call on Paul Martin to remain true to his Catholic faith and the dictates of the Catholic religion.

Mainse, who has been spending the last year studying the breakdown of the family overseas, challenged Klein and the Alberta provincial government to send academics to Europe to study the effects of both same-sex marriage and civil unions on the European family unit. He pointed out Canada was heading into “dangerous and un-charted waters.”

Questions

1. Is the issue creating new coalitions among religious groups? Drawing Christians closer together through a sense of indignation?
2. How was the rally an ecumenical event?
3. According to Bishop Henry how is the proposed redefinition anti-future?

4. Mainse has been studying the issue's impact on the European family unit. What do such studies show? Should the studies' findings be part of the debate in Canada before the country embarks on such "dangerous and uncharted waters"?

(3)

Chinese Christians spring into action in marriage fight
Peter Stock, *The Interim*, March 2005

A few years ago, Toronto pastor Dominic Tse was an apolitical member of his Chinese-Canadian community. Today, he is one of the leading voices in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious coalition attempting to halt the progress of Bill C-38, the federal Liberals' legislation redefining marriage. In mid-February, he found himself in Parliament, speaking in defence of marriage at a news conference hosted by the defendMARRIAGE Coalition (www.defendMARRIAGE.ca).

He was there on behalf of a swelling number of Chinese-Canadians who can no longer stomach the extreme social agenda of Paul Martin's Liberal party. His transformation from quiet Canadian to political activist began just two years ago. "In the spring of 2003, there were a succession of court cases that declared the definition of marriage unconstitutional. Gay marriage was declared legal. Those decisions started a change in our community," he told *The Interim*.

Members of his congregation, and those of other ethnically Chinese evangelical churches in the Toronto area, felt they had no option but to engage their politicians. "We participated in rallies and wrote letters. It was our first political activity," said Pastor Tse.

Political action is highly unusual for his culture, the pastor said. "In general, Chinese people are very conservative and non-political. The older generation came from war-torn China and communism. They have an abhorrence of anything political, and many don't even vote," he said.

As he pointed out, "Chinese people separate religion and the world and they don't usually venture into the public sphere. Instead, we focus on spreading the Gospel among Chinese people." The only time there has been any political discussion at all among Chinese-Canadians was in the early 1990s, at the time of the Tiananmen Square demonstration and massacre, "and that was really a China issue, not a Canadian political issue," he said.

In fact, Pastor Tse pointed out, the reason his community immigrated to Canada was "to raise our kids, give them a better future and have a peaceful life. But, this movement to redefine marriage strikes at the heart of the family and the very reason we came to Canada. If we don't stop it, our children will be bombarded with pro-gay literature in the public schools. We are very concerned about our families."

And, once stirred to action, Pastor Tse and his community have been very visible. A Toronto demonstration in August 2003, on the heels of the first Ontario court ruling attacking heterosexual marriage, saw more than 10,000 gathered to protest the ruling. A subsequent rally in Ottawa the next month attracted over 3,000 Chinese-Canadians, who travelled from Toronto and Montreal and formed about

half the crowd of 6,000.

The most active Chinese-Canadians are drawn from evangelical churches, most notably the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Baptist and Evangelical Free Churches. However, Pastor Tse pointed out, "Even the Chinese Christians in mainline churches are firmly against redefining marriage."

Another change he's witnessed, he said, is that a large number of Chinese-Canadians "have become voters since the rulings. A lot of Chinese typically don't vote." In addition, their voting patterns have changed substantially. "We always used to vote Liberal. There was this idea that Trudeau was our benefactor. The Liberals are the reason we came over here. But, we're realizing we have a higher master. And, our vote can no longer be taken for granted. So, more are now voting for the Conservative party, because of their strong family stand. Our vote is becoming more issues-based," he said.



Pastor Tse had a message for politicians who buck the Chinese community on marriage: "If you continue defying our wishes, we'll have to vote you out next election. And, that day may not be far off."

Questions

1. What event transformed the apolitical Pastor Dan Tse into a more political activist?
2. If this kind of change is occurring in other recent immigrant groups what does it portend for Canadian politics?
3. What factors have made these groups traditionally non-political?
4. How does the gay marriage issue run counter to what inspired these groups to come to Canada in the first place?
5. What new political reality does this Chinese-Canadian activism represent?
6. Is there a weakness in the Liberal multi-cultural quilt patched together over the years?
7. How has the Conservative Party attempted to score political points through an ad campaign in minority language newspapers attacking Paul Martin's support of gay marriage as a charter right?
8. Is there evidence of a political campaign to win the hearts of the people and to help defeat MPs who originally supported traditional marriage and opposed gay marriage? (see the full page ad in the March 5 edition of *The National Post* targeting cabinet minister Joe Volpe of the Eglinton–Lawrence riding)

(4)
Anglican Church “Expels” US and Canadian Anglican Churches over Endorsement of Homosexuality

NEWRY, February 25, 2005 (LifeSiteNews.com) - The meeting at a Northern Ireland country mansion of 35 Anglican primates from around the world, has taken a surprising turn. The heads of the US and Canadian Anglican churches have been told not to attend meetings of the Anglican Communion for three years because of their refusal to recant their endorsement of homosexuality. Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, himself regarded as being in the theologically liberal camp said, “Any lasting solution, I think, will require people to say somewhere along the line, ‘Yes, we were wrong.’”

“In November 2003, the US Episcopal Church (ECUSA) consecrated V. Gene Robinson as bishop of New Hampshire. About the same time, Bishop Michael Ingham of the diocese of New Westminster tried to force parishes to begin ‘blessing’ same-sex couples. The split in the Canadian Anglican church was exacerbated by Ingham’s support of the same-sex ‘marriage’ and homosexual hate crimes bills that most Christians fear are the precursors to open government persecution of traditional Christians.

The primates’ statement said, “We request that the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada voluntarily withdraw their members from the Anglican Consultative Council,” until the next international meeting at Lambeth in 2008. The statement includes provisions to care for those parishes and clergy who refuse to go along with the North American schism. It also calls for a moratorium on same sex blessings and the consecration of any bishops “living in a sexual relationship outside marriage.” The primates of Africa and Asia attended the Ireland meeting knowing they had the upper hand. Their conservative brand of Anglicanism is the only one that is growing and the dioceses of Africa in particular, although not wealthy, have more members than those of the US, Canadian and English churches combined.

Some primates refused to attend the communion services that were part of the meeting, a sign that they feel that liberal, western Anglicanism is no longer in communion with the Christian dispensation. Primate Peter Akinola of Nigeria, which country alone has the world’s second largest population of Anglicans, is steadfastly opposed to legitimizing homosexuality and is supported by the great majority of his 17.9 million-strong flock. Lee Nelson an Anglican seminarian at Nashotah House, the ECUSA seminary in the Anglo-Catholic, or ‘high church’ tradition, said that although the primates’ decision was a positive move, they failed to address the essence of the conflict. He says the problem is not gays in the ministry, but a move away from basic theological proposals of Christianity. “We can’t even maintain the most basic and most essential unity, that being Eucharistic, because of Women’s Ordination.” Nelson, reflecting the views of much of the younger, more conservative members of the church said in the end he is not impressed saying that the essence of Anglicanism is

not religious but political. “So what kind of communion are we fighting for? It’s simple. We’re fighting for the salvation of our collective face ... Saving face rather saving souls.”

Questions

1. How has same-sex marriage and homosexuality created splits within the Anglican Communion?
2. Why are the non-Western churches of the Anglican Communion more conservative on these matters?
3. Why is the drive for gay rights primarily finding success in western countries like the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada and the Scandinavian countries?

PART E

Sometimes the debate over contentious public issues takes an economic expression. There are many people who invest on the basis of the ethical behaviour of the companies and their policies concerning public issues. Many companies have become very sensitive to social and environmental issues. Organized groups in turn have become more adept at getting companies to listen to their concerns. Often the businesses are pressured to desist from policies and practices that many groups find offensive, in bad taste or downright immoral.

Corporate Watch Update

Tony Gosgnach, *The Interim*

... Arkansas Right to Life says that citizens wishing to support a pro-life alternative in prenatal research can support the Michael Fund, a pro-life genetic research foundation that seeks to protect children, adults and unborn children from physical defects. ARTL adds that, in contrast, the **March of Dimes** stated in its 1990 book *Strategies in Genetic Counselling: Reproductive Genetics and New Age Technologies* that, “There is no substitution for a constitutional right to abortion, which protects our fundamental rights.” The Michael Fund can be reached at: 500 A Garden City Drive, Pittsburgh, Pa., U.S.A., 15146

... **Yum! Brands**, the U.S. parent company of Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, KFC and A&W, and Burger King have joined other companies in ending sponsorship of the racy ABC television program *Desperate Housewives*. The companies acknowledge they have been flooded with communications from concerned customers



... An Associated Press story has described the **Curves** fitness chain, owned by pro-life supporter Gary Heavin of Waco, Tx., as a “franchise superpower.” It now

boasts 8,400 franchises in 28 countries, making it by far the world's number one fitness centre in terms of number of clubs

... The U.S. **Chick-Fil-A** restaurant chain has grown from modest beginnings in Georgia almost 60 years ago to one of the largest privately owned restaurant chains in the nation, with more than 1,100 outlets. Its president, Dan Cathy,



attributes its success to three main principles: honour God, listen to the customer and put people before profit. The first principle is demonstrated by the fact that, despite any loss in revenue, all its restaurants are closed on Sundays

... A Catholic school in London, Ont. pulled out of participation in a fundraising campaign for the **Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada**, after it was informed of the society's support for embryonic stem cell research. The funds were diverted to a read-a-thon, which raised funds for the school's library.

For further research on this topic of corporate ethical responsibility, watchdog groups, and related issues, the following articles and sites may be of interest.

Moving Up or Moving Out? Anti-Sweatshop Activists and Labour Market Outcomes

Ann Harrison, Jason Scorse

During the 1990s, human rights and anti-sweatshop activists increased their efforts to improve working conditions and raise wages for workers in developing countries. These campaigns took many different forms: direct pressure to change legislation in developing countries, pressure on firms, newspaper campaigns, and grassroots organizing. This paper analyzes the impact of two different types of interventions on labor market outcomes in Indonesian manufacturing: (1) direct US government pressure, which contributed to a doubling of the minimum wage and (2) anti-sweatshop campaigns. The combined effects of the minimum wage legislation and the anti-sweatshop campaigns led to a 50 percent increase in real wages and a 100 percent increase in nominal wages for unskilled workers at targeted plants.

<http://ideas.repec.org/p/nbr/nberwo/10492.html>

What is Fair Trade Coffee All About?

Fair Trade means an equitable and fair partnership between consumers in North America and producers in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The chief concern of the Fair Trade movement has been to ensure that the vast majority of the world's coffee farmers (who are small land holders) get a fair price for their harvests in

order to achieve a decent living wage. Fair Trade guarantees to poor farmers organized in cooperatives around the world: a living wage (minimum price of \$1.26/pound regardless of the volatile market); much needed credit at fair prices; and long term relationships. These fair



payments are invested in health care, education, environmental stewardship, and economic independence. Fair Trade Certified coffee is the first product being introduced in the United States with an independently monitored system to ensure that it was produced under fair labor conditions; now we need a movement to demand it!!

<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/coffee/background.html>

There are similar groups fighting for peace and development, water rights, environmental protection, end to human trafficking, improved prison conditions, etc.

Questions

1. Are sanctions against public companies a legitimate way to express displeasure or opposition to that company's stance on a public issue? Why or why not?
2. Consider the examples provided in *The Interim* regular feature updating corporate activities in the field of life and family issues. In each example what is the particular issue involved?
3. Do boycotts have a positive effect in changing a company's stand or in encouraging a company to continue as good corporate citizens?
4. How can businesses and corporations be held to high ethical standards?
5. Are businesses obliged to act in a certain way because of political correctness or actual legal constraints?
6. Why do some companies sponsor unpopular causes? Why do they associate with a morally questionable lifestyle? Out of conviction or out of self-interest?
7. How are decisions made by these publicly-traded companies? How can the individual investors take part in the policy-setting processes?
8. Are there other examples being provided of corporate watch guidelines? Sweatshop industries? Environment-friendly companies? Fair-wage practices? Fair trade products? Pro-family companies and organizations?