

THE Newman

THE JOURNAL OF THE NEWMAN ASSOCIATION

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John Duddington
The Free Speech of Christians

The AGM goes digital

Barry Riley

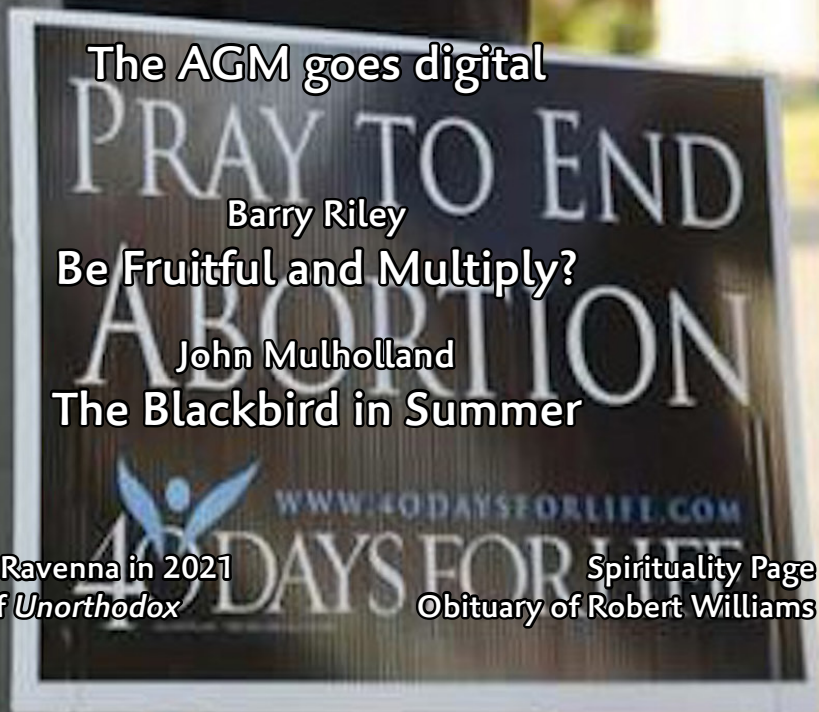
Be Fruitful and Multiply?

John Mulholland

The Blackbird in Summer

Pilgrimage to Ravenna in 2021
Film review of *Unorthodox*

Spirituality Page
Obituary of Robert Williams



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Cover picture: *Campaigning against abortion*

Comment

John Duddington's disturbing analysis in this issue of *The Newman* of the restrictions of freedom of speech being placed on Christians has a fundamental lesson for us: we are facing the consequences of becoming a minority element in the spectrum of public opinion in Britain. The same fate faces Christians in many other Western nations.

Growing up decades ago in a Christian country we could be confident that the fundamental morality laid down by our religion would be respected in our culture and our laws. In Christianity there is doctrine which lays down what is right and wrong: there is virtue and there is sinfulness. Of course, the rules have been badly bent over the centuries in areas such as the slave trade, the concept of "just war" and the imposition of the death penalty. But the underlying moral structure was supported.

Today, as the numbers of practising and believing Christians dwindle rapidly, the continuation of such a framework can no longer be assumed. Different perspectives of morality are intruding. Some Christian theologians denounce this as the advance of "relativism" although not many people know what this means. In fact, relativism is the inverse of absolutism, so that in a loose moral framework many kinds of once deviant forms of behaviour can become regarded as valid. Christian morality based upon natural law can become replaced by priorities dependent on minority desires.

Rise of the minorities

Under the old regime the minorities had to keep out of sight. But often now they will no longer accept such a restriction. They will campaign noisily if necessary. There are "proud to be gay" marches. And a current focus is on people who refuse to accept the gender which they were given at birth and insist that redefining their gender is valid even if this is confusing and disturbing to other people.

In the 1970s a small group in Britain who called themselves the Paedophile Information Exchange were encouraged by the signs of changes in sexual attitudes to the extent that they attempted to campaign for a reduction in the age of sexual consent. The love of children was claimed to be an entirely valid form of sexual relationship. But they got nowhere, as it seemed that the underlying moral consciousness of the British population, what Catholics might call the *sensus fidelium*, allowed no scope for the legalisation of what is regarded as child abuse. Such abuse continues, but largely out of sight.

But in the new circumstances traditional believers may fall foul of the law. Increasingly it is Christians who may need to stay out of sight. To denounce wrongdoing may now be regarded as an exercise in hate. Morality is becoming a private matter and is no longer providing the framework for public discussion and behaviour.

Perhaps there is nothing very new in all this. The long history of religions is full of struggle and violence and war. When religious beliefs become intense they trigger strong emotions and may stimulate concepts such as blasphemy. Satirical cartoons of Mohammed may not just be in bad taste but can trigger violent responses, as we have seen in France. As members of a minority Faith Christians may have to be cautious but must not be silenced.

Barry Riley

"What matters are you discussing as you walk along?"

Do Christians have Free Speech?

by John Duddington

Introduction

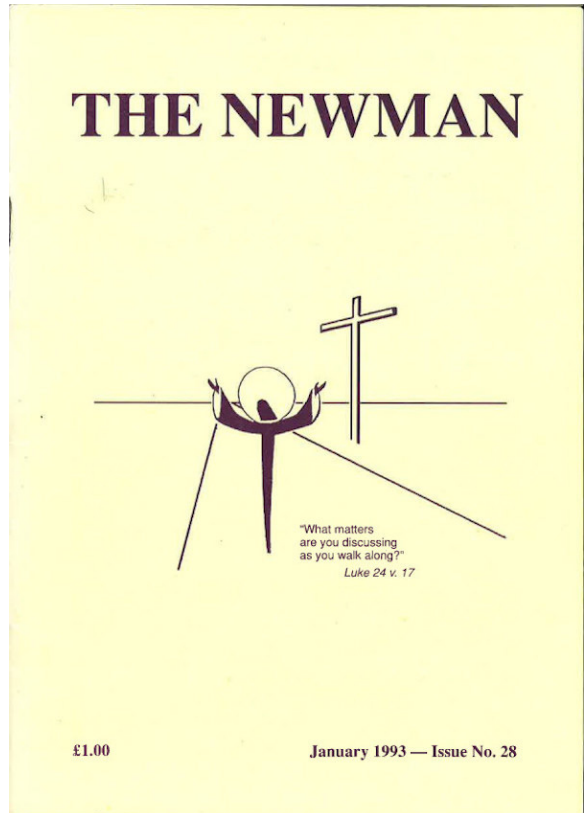
Readers with long memories may recall that the title of this article was once on the front cover of the Newman journal. This was at the inspiration of Robert Williams and it is included here both in tribute to him at his passing and also because it serves as an introduction to what is a topic of pressing importance.

Those who do not wish to linger over this piece can in effect shortcut it as the straightforward answer to the question posed in the title is "no". No-one has absolutely free speech in a democratic society as there must be restrictions imposed by law to prevent the incitement of violence or hatred. However, there is a strong perception that the right to free speech is now unduly curtailed in the interests of, for example, political correctness. In order

to answer this question from the Christian perspective we need, I suggest, to not only look at how free speech is restricted in our society at present but, from the positive angle, to consider how Christians should actually exercise their right to free speech or, to come back to the title, how *should* they discuss matters as they walk along?

What is meant by free speech?

The right to free speech can be looked at in three ways. First, there is the legal right to free speech which is generally thought of in the negative sense as not saying anything unlawful but which today is buttressed by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights which provides that "everyone has the right to freedom of expression". Then, spreading outwards, there are the restrictions imposed by, for instance, guidelines, codes of conduct at work and elsewhere; and then finally there are the restrictions imposed by the conventions of the world in which we live which can, in time, translate into legal norms.



The first meaning: speech must not be unlawful.

The starting point of course is that speech must not be unlawful. Much of this is uncontroversial: if I incite you to commit murder or to riot then I am myself guilty of a crime. What, though, if I use words in public debate or discussion as a Christian which cause a disturbance amongst those who hear them? Here the line is more difficult to draw.

Take the disturbance which occurred at Ephesus which is recorded in Ac 19:23-41. St. Paul had preached that "gods made by human hands are not gods at all". This threatened the lucrative trade of silversmiths who made silver shrines of the goddess Diana of the Ephesians and thus, under the leadership of one Artemis, they began a disturbance shouting "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" with the result that the town became in uproar. In the end the matter was settled by the good sense of the town clerk who pointed out that St. Paul and his companions had done nothing illegal and that if indeed there was any justified cause of complaint then it could be dealt with in legal proceedings. Eventually St. Paul left the city and set out for Macedonia.

The question often boils to what the speaker intended. Was it the objective to cause violence or to stir up hatred? If so then it is right that the law should take a hand. Here St. Paul clearly did not. However, the dividing line here may not be easy to draw. Here are three scenarios based on the possible legalisation of polygamy, which, as it happens is not an issue at the moment but may become one in the future:

- a. I, as a Christian, am strongly opposed to polygamy and I write to a newspaper that "polygamy is sinful and wrong". As a result of this, a group of polygamists smash the windows of my house and gather outside shouting offensive slogans about Christians.
- b. Let's turn the situation round slightly. I now say that polygamy is evil and that those who practice it will burn in Hell. Once again, my windows are smashed and offensive slogans are chanted.
- c. Finally let us suppose that I go further and say that not only is polygamy evil and that those who practice it are destined for Hell but that it is the duty of all Christians to save polygamists from their fate by surrounding their houses and chanting slogans warning them of their final destination. Some Christians then go further and then smash the windows of the houses of polygamists.

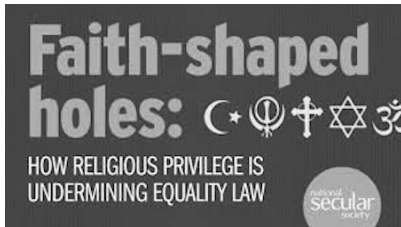
How do we decide which of these situations constitutes a criminal offence?

Traditionally the law has asked two questions:

- a. What type of language was used? Here the yardsticks have been, in a kind of ascending order: irritating, offensive, insulting, abusive or threatening.
- b. What was the intention of the person who uttered these words? Was it simply to express an opinion, albeit in strong language, or was it actually to stir up hatred leading to violence?

Let us go forward from Ephesus in about 50 AD to Bournemouth on Saturday October 13th 2001 and the case of Harry Hammond, who was an Evangelical Christian and had been a preacher for 20 years. He was elderly and mildly autistic. He positioned himself in the town centre and began preaching holding up a sign saying: "Stop Immorality Stop Homosexuality and Stop Lesbianism". It also said, in each of four corners of the

sign, "Jesus is Lord". A group of 30 to 40 people gathered around him arguing and shouting, some threw soil at Mr Hammond and a bucket of water was poured over his head. He was arrested by the police and charged under s.5 of the Public Order Act 1986 which made it a criminal offence to use threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour... within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress by them¹.



A protest by the National Secular Society

The High Court, on appeal from the Magistrates Court, found him guilty and held that it was open to the magistrates to conclude as a matter of fact that the words on the sign were insulting within the meaning of the Act. The words appeared to relate homosexuality and lesbianism to immorality. Although it was accepted that Mr Hammond was, according to his understanding, exercising his right to free

expression of his religious views the court held that the magistrates could conclude that his conduct was not reasonable for various reasons including the pressing need to show tolerance to all sections of society and the fact that his conduct was provoking violence and disorder.

This was widely felt to be a most unfortunate decision. One cause for concern was the way in which the word "insulting" had been interpreted to deny Mr Hammond the right to express perfectly lawful views simply because some in his audience found them unacceptable. Moreover, the reference by the High Court to the need to show tolerance, although by itself laudable, could be seen as an extra restriction on freedom on the speech of Christians at a time when their views are increasingly at variance with some sectors of society.

Following this and other cases there was a campaign supported by, among others, the comedian Rowan Atkinson, the human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell and the National Secular Society to remove the word "insulting" from this Act and this took place in 2013. The result is that today Mr. Hammond would not be found guilty under this Act.

A much more robust statement of the law was by Lord Justice Sedley who observed in another case² that:

Free speech includes not only the inoffensive but the irritating, the contentious, the eccentric, the heretical, the unwelcome and the provocative provided it does not tend to provoke violence. Freedom only to speak inoffensively is not worth having.

He also pointed to what he termed "the critical difference" between where the defendant is responsible for the threat to the peace and where somebody else is.

So, applying these tests to our three situations one might say that in situation (a) I would not have committed any offence as although those who practised polygamy might be irritated by what I say and indeed might be offended by my view that "polygamy is sinful and wrong" I did not have any intention to provoke violence and any crime would have been perpetrated by those who broke my windows³.

The awkward situation is (b). I said that polygamy was evil and that those who practice

it will burn in Hell. These words are certainly offensive and indeed insulting but is it unlawful to say them? I have simply given my opinion and I have not incited violence. My view, and I think that of Lord Justice Sedley would be that no crime is committed by saying them as they do not, in his words, tend to provoke violence. Again, any crime would be committed by those who broke my windows.

If we move next to situation (c) the matter is very different as not only have I used much more inflammatory language which could be categorised at the other end of the scale as being threatening or abusive but I have actually incited people to surround the houses of the polygamists and chant slogans. I have not actually incited them to smash the windows of the polygamists but my words certainly led to this and so I suggest that I am likely to be found guilty of an offence together with those who broke the windows of the polygamists.

A sensible compromise

I would argue that at this point the law had reached a sensible compromise which protected the expression of, in our case, Christian principles robustly and even, in the eyes of some, offensively, but drew the line at words which provoked violence. However, a renewed danger to free speech then appeared with what is called "hate crime".

Hate Crime

What indeed is a hate crime? Take this definition from the website of Humberside Police⁴:

Hate crime is a crime committed against a person because of their gender identity, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or any other perceived difference. Hate crimes don't always include physical violence. Offensive language and/or harassment directed towards someone because of who they are, or who they are perceived to be, is also a crime – whether it takes place in person or online. No-one should have to live with the fear, anxiety and consequences of hate.

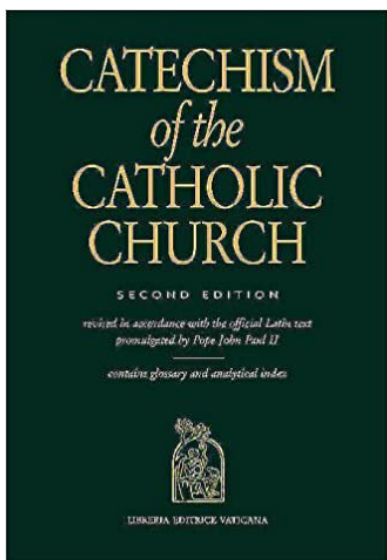
The focus of this definition is on victim perception: Any criminal offence *which is perceived by the victim or any other person*, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by a hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender. In fact, there is no statutory definition of hate crime and the term has come to be used by the police when referring to a variety of criminal offences and sentencing powers and where the common feature is that the hate is motivated by hatred because the person at whom it is directed possesses one or more of what are known as the "protected characteristics".

There are a number of difficulties for Christians and others with the concept of a hate crime and free speech:

- Firstly, the name is misleading as does not just cover words or conduct motivated by hatred, which I think we would all agree should be prohibited, but, as the definition used by Humberside Police shows, words which are no more than offensive.
- Secondly the question is not whether the person who uttered the words intended

them to be offensive but what was perceived by the victim. The matter becomes entirely subjective and I know, from conversations with the police who deal in this area, that there grew up a culture of “the victim is to be believed”. This is however, less prevalent now.

- Thirdly hate crime covers *inter alia* what are known as the “protected characteristics” in the Equality Act 2010 and this includes as we saw above both gender identity and sexual orientation. Given that many Christians, and members of other faiths, hold strong views on both of these matters there is the obvious possibility of words spoken by Christians being considered as a hate crime.
- Fourthly, and this is an issue relevant to all questions of free speech, there is the increasing use of social media to voice opinions and where for instance tweets are used then by their very nature, they consist of short statements, limited to 280 characters which are not buttressed by arguments and may be sent out without much, if any, thought or consideration. This applies especially with re-tweeting.



Let us return to our scenarios and in particular scenario (b) where I say that polygamy is evil and that those who practice it will burn in Hell. Is this a hate crime? The words are certainly offensive and also nasty but is saying these words actually a crime? We do need to be careful lest the natural dislike felt by many for such language carries us into criminalising it.

Take the view of the Catholic Church on homosexual relationships set out in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* at 2357: *Homosexuality.....has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."*

They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

Suppose that I quote verbatim from this: the categorisation of homosexual acts as ones of “grave depravity” may well cause offence to homosexual persons and might be held to be a crime in line with the guidelines of Humberside Police quoted above. Yet here we have surely reached the realms of fantasy where we are starting to prohibit the expression of any but one point of view on certain matters.

I have the feeling, however, that the tide is starting to turn. This is for four reasons:

- a. First, the need to be clear on what is a hate crime has caught the attention of the Law Commission who are in the process of producing a report which may lead to legislation.

b. Second, the reaction to the police "Operation Midland" which saw a number of innocent persons, including Sir Edward Heath and Lord Brammall, falsely accused of sexual abuse, has led to the demise of the "always believe the victim" culture.



Harry Miller outside the High Court

c. Third, a recent case involved Humberside

Police where police officers were held to have unlawfully interfered with a man called Harry Miller's right to freedom of expression by turning up at his place of work to speak to him about allegedly "transphobic" tweets. What was dangerous to free speech was the statement by an officer who told Mr. Miller that he had not committed a crime, but that his tweeting was being recorded as a "hate incident". Here we are in sinister territory: either a statement is a potential crime, in which it is the business of the police, or it is not, in which case it is nothing to do with them. The judge used strong language pointing out that: "In this country we have never had a Cheka, a Gestapo or a Stasi. We have never lived in an Orwellian society" with the implication that we are in danger of becoming one.⁵

d. The Felix Ngole case, considered below.

Restrictions imposed by, for instance, guidelines, codes of conduct at work

Here the threat to free speech can be more insidious as we are not talking about the actions of the police and the courts, where at least there is public scrutiny, but the actions of employers. Unless the employee who feels his or her freedom of speech has been interfered with has the courage to go public then the matter may never come to light.

A case where it did was that of Felix Ngole who was a devout Christian for whom, as the judges put it: "the Bible is the authoritative word of God".⁶ He enrolled as a mature student on the MA Social Work course at Sheffield University, successful completion of which would have led to registration and practice as a qualified social worker. On registration as a student he signed an agreement that he had read the Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) student guidance on standards of conduct and ethics



Felix Ngole

and would strive to conform to the HCPC's expectations as set out there. In particular these stated that conduct outside work may, in very serious circumstances, "affect your ability to complete your programme; gain the final qualification; or register with us".

Mr. Ngole, at the start of his second year, posted a series

of comments on his Facebook account about a prominent news story on the imprisonment of an American registrar for contempt of a court order resulting from her refusal to issue marriage licences to same-sex couples because of her Christian religious beliefs. Amongst other comments Mr. Ngole said that: "Same sex marriage is a sin whether we accept it or not"; "Homosexuality is a sin, no matter how you want to dress it up"; "Homosexuality is a wicked act and God hates the act"; and "God hates sin and not man".

There was an anonymous complaint to the University as a result of which there was a hearing and Mr. Ngole was removed from his course on fitness to practise grounds. It was this decision that he successfully challenged.

On reading the evidence it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the University mishandled the procedure from the outset. As the Court of Appeal said, it considered that "any expression of disapproval of same-sex relations (however mildly expressed) on a public social media or other platform which could be traced back to the person making it, was a breach of the professional guidelines". Nor did it attempt to explore a middle ground such the possibility of a warning being issued with Mr. Ngole remaining on the course.

The vital point, and one of great importance for the future, is that the Court of Appeal held that the University wrongly confused the expression of religious views with the notion of discrimination. It said that "The mere expression of views on theological grounds (e.g. that 'homosexuality is a sin') does not necessarily connote that the person expressing such views will discriminate on such grounds". Moreover, the court found that there was positive evidence to suggest that Felix Ngole had never discriminated on such grounds in the past and was not likely to do so in the future because, as he explained, the Bible prohibited him from discriminating against anybody.

However, there is still the need for vigilance. The Scottish Bishops have issued a warning about the Scottish Government's Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, which is currently being scrutinised by Holyrood's Justice Committee. This contains a new offence of possessing inflammatory material and the Bishops have warned that this could even render "material such as the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church... inflammatory". It is noteworthy that the Scottish Newspaper Society, the Law Society of Scotland, and the National Secular Society have expressed similar concerns. All this may seem far-fetched but a moment's reflection makes one realise how aggressive secularists might argue that the reading of parts of the Bible in public was inflammatory.

A personal reflection and conclusion

Many, perhaps most of us, have been the victims of speech which is not only offensive but can be hateful. I certainly have both as one who all my life has suffered from severe deafness (the deaf are always easy targets) and as the parent of a severely disabled son. At times one must challenge this: it is wrong to be cowardly and always walk away. However, at other times that is exactly what one has to do through force of circumstances, remembering to say for a prayer for the abuser.

The law can, and should, be used in extreme cases but what is needed is to lift public consciousness to a level where this abuse just does not occur. The same applies, of

course, to all Christians when they speak about current matters.

The quotation at the head of this piece “what matters are you discussing as you walk along” is in fact a mistranslation of the original Greek where the word “matters” is in fact *Τίνας οἱ λόγοι* – literally, what words? Readers will at once notice the word *logoi*, or in the singular *logos*, from the opening of St. John’s Gospel: Logos, the word which links to the concept of reason coming from the eternal Word. As Pope Benedict XVI puts it: “God is Logos – meaning, reason and word ... Faith in the God who is Logos is at the same time faith in the creative power of reason”. It is this creative reason that we must have recourse to in our dialogue with the world: not empty or shouty slogans. And if we do this then there ought to be no need for legal sanctions to be invoked against Christians on account of what we say or, if there are, then we have justice on our side, together with many non-Christians, in arguing that the law is wrong. As St. Paul puts it: “Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience – but do all with patience and the intention of teaching”. (2 *Timothy* 4:2). Then we can indeed be sure that “Wisdom is bright and does not grow dim”. (*Wisdom* 6:12).

A.P. Herbert said that a liberty is only as real as the laws which negate or limit it. So Christians – and indeed the whole of society – can never relax their vigilance here. If as Christians we make our case for free speech vigorously but reasonably then, as the reaction to the Harry Hammond case, and others, showed, we will be surprised at how many allies we have.

John Duddington is Editor of Law & Justice, The Christian Law Review, and a member of the Worcester Circle of the Newman Association.

Notes

1. This case is *Hammond v DPP* (2004)
2. *Redmond-Bate v DPP* (2000)
3. <https://www.humberside.police.uk/hate-crime>(accessed 6.10.20)
4. There is an account of this case, *Miller v College of Policing*, at <https://www.judiciary.uk/.../02/miller-v-college-of-police-summary.pdf> · PDF file. This case is going to appeal and it will be worthwhile looking out for it.
5. There is an account of this case, *Ngole v University of Sheffield*, at <https://www.judiciary.uk/.../07/ngole-v-sheffield-university-summary.pdf> · PDF file
6. ‘Auf der Suche nach dem Frieden’, an address given on the sixtieth anniversary of the landings of the Allies in France, June 6th 2004, and published as Chapter 6 ‘Searching for Peace, Tensions and Dangers’ in *Values in a Time of Upheaval* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2006). This whole collection of essays by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) is strongly recommended to anyone interested in the theme of this article.

Membership Report

Notification has been received of the deaths of five members.

They are Mr Brian Whitlock-Blundell, North Merseyside Circle; Dr Frank Hewitt, Wrexham Circle; Mr Keith Stephens, Hertfordshire Circle; Mr John B Thompson, Wrexham Circle; and Mr Robert N Williams, unattached.

There have been no new applications for membership.

Patricia Egerton

Newman Association Pilgrimage

SEPTEMBER 13th to 18th, 2021, (6 days, 5 nights)

IMPORTANT: There is a risk that the dates of this Pilgrimage will have to be changed because of Covid-19 restrictions. Please contact Anthony Coles before booking.

The pilgrimage will be to **Ravenna**, a centre of Byzantine art in Western Europe with eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Ravenna was once the capital city of the Western Roman Empire from 402 until that empire collapsed in 476. Later it served as the capital of the Ostrogothic Kingdom until it was re-conquered in 540 by the Byzantine Empire. Afterwards, the city formed the centre of the Byzantine Exarchate of Ravenna until the invasion of the Lombards in 751, after which it became their headquarters in Italy. Today the city is an important University town (part of the University of Bologna) with plenty of culture, bars and cafes.

The Newman Association's National Chaplain Mgr Patrick Kilgarriff (a priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham and former rector of the Venerable English College in Rome) will be our chaplain for this Pilgrimage.

PROGRAMME

Mon 13th Arrival at Bologna Airport and transfers (75 - 90 minutes) to the **Hotel Centrale Byron**, Via IV Novembre, **Ravenna**. Dinner at a local restaurant.

Tue 14th Morning visits to the **Basilica of San Vitale** ('the most glorious example of Byzantine art in the West' founded by Bishop Ecclesion in 525), the **Galla Placidia's Mausoleum** (although not buried there. Galla Placidia was Empress/Mother of the Western Roman Empire from 421 to 450.). Nearby is the church of Santa Maria Maggiore with the Shrine of Our Lady of the Tumour. Afterwards free time to obtain some lunch in one of the many cafes or restaurants in Ravenna.



A mosaic in the Basilica of San Vitale

Afternoon guided visits to the **Baptistry of the Arians** (built in the late 5th when Arianism was the official court religion), the **Tomb of Dante** (next to the Basilica of San Francesco where his funeral took place in 1321) and the **Basilica di San Francesco** (built in 1336 over 5th, 10th and 15th centuries churches, but still retaining early works from the Bishop Neone's ancient church. (The crypt, subject to flooding, is full of goldfish!). Evening Mass. Dinner at a local restaurant.

Wed 15th Morning excursion along the coastal road of fields and lagoons to visit the Benedictine **Abbey of Pomposa** where Guido d'Arezzo invented modern musical notation. In the 19th century the abbey was acquired by the Italian government. Afterwards return to Ravenna. Afternoon excursion to the Basilica of **San Apollinare**



The flooded crypt of the Basilica of San Francesco

personal sightseeing in Ravenna or to take a local train to the nearby cities of Bologna, Ferrara or Rimini (journey time to all circa 60 minutes). Evening Mass. Dinner at a local restaurant.

Fri 17th Morning visit to the **Basilica of San Apollinare** (built in the late C5th/early C6th as the church of Arian worship dedicated to Christ the Redeemer, but later renamed when the relics of San Appollinare were transferred from Classe) and the **Neonian** or Cathedral **Baptistry** (founded in late 4th/early 5th century and decorated at the behest of Bishop Neone in the mid-5th century). Free afternoon. Evening Mass. Dinner at a local restaurant.

Sat 18th Morning transfer to **Bologna** Airport.

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION

HOTEL CENTRALE BYRON (www.hotelsravenna.it/en-GB/)

This is a family-run, three-star bed & breakfast hotel centrally located in pedestrian zone of the town centre, near Ravenna's many monuments, theatre, restaurants. All rooms are with facilities (toilet and shower) air-conditioning and tv. Dinners will be taken in local restaurants.

Please be advised that it is not possible for coaches to park right outside the hotel. The coaches used on this visit will park by on the edge of the pedestrian zone from where it is a short walk to the hotel. Please be aware that portorage is not provided, however there is a taxi rank at the coach drop-off.

FLIGHTS

From London with *British Airways* and/or *Easyjet* or *Ryanair*; from Birmingham with *Lufthansa*; from Manchester with *Lufthansa*; from Newcastle with *KLM* (similar flights also from Bristol, Birmingham, Cardiff and Leeds); from Durham-Teeside with *KLM*.

DATA PROTECTION

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, we will only use your personal information to administer your booking and to provide the services you have requested from us. We will supply your passport details to airlines for them to meet their requirements in terms of security and border control, and to hotels as required by Italian law.

in Classe (6th century church built in honour first bishop. The port of Classe was built by Caesar Augustus in the 31 AD to provide shelter for the Imperial Fleet. Later the port silted up). Evening Mass. Dinner at a local restaurant.

Thur 16th Free-day for personal sightseeing in Ravenna or to take a local train to the nearby cities of Bologna, Ferrara or Rimini (journey time to all circa 60 minutes). Evening Mass. Dinner at a local restaurant.



The Basilica of San Apollinare in Classe

COST

£ **895** per person (sharing); £ **975** per person (single occupancy)

inclusive of: • 5 nights en-suite accommodation • city tax (currently €2 pppn) • shared airport transfers • continental buffet breakfast • five dinners (choice of menu) • wine and water with dinner • all excursions, entry and guide fees • Mass offerings • tips to coach drivers.

The following items are **not** included: • travel insurance • flights (**Early booking is advisable as flights are expected to rise in price**) • lunches • entry and transport in free time • personal expenditure.

FITNESS

A reasonable level of fitness is required for sightseeing on this pilgrimage as we will be walking and standing around looking up at mosaics whilst sightseeing in Ravenna.

HOW TO BOOK

Please complete (all sections) of the booking form which is inserted into this issue of *The Newman* and send it with your non-refundable deposit (of £100 per person) to **Anthony Coles, 18 Maresfield Gardens, London NW3 5SX** (Tel: 020 7431 3414).

This flight-inclusive holiday/pilgrimage is financially protected by the ATOL (Air Travel Organisers' Licensing) scheme. When you book flights you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate as evidence of this protection.

The balance of the cost will then be due eight weeks before departure; all cheques are to be made payable to: *Anthony R Coles Travel and Conferences*.

Anthony R Coles Travel and Conferences, 18 Maresfield Gardens, London NW3

5SX - Tel: 020 7431 3414 / Fax: 020 7794 7803 / arctc@btinternet.com

Aviaggi Ltd, 141 Leighton Gardens, London NW10 3PS - Tel: 020 8451 9548 - ATOL

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INSURANCE All participants must have adequate travel insurance cover.



The Benedictine Abbey of Pomposa

Finding Space in a Crowded World

by Barry Riley

In the opening paragraph of his latest Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti Pope Francis quotes his namesake St Francis of Assisi as declaring blessed all those who love their brother "as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him". The Pope expresses concern that the world today is becoming more divided. "In some countries a concept of popular and national unity influenced by various ideologies is creating new forms of selfishness and a loss of the social sense under the guise of defending national interests." He adds that the slow and demanding march towards an increasingly united and just world is suffering "a new and dramatic setback". He repeats an observation he made in 2019. "Once more we encounter the temptation to build a culture of walls, walls in the heart, walls on the land, in order to prevent this encounter with other cultures, with other people. And those who raise walls will end up as slaves within the very walls they have built."

The Pope's wise words are not always welcomed, however, by various nations and cultures. Today, more humans are on the move across national borders than at any time since the exceptional circumstances at the close of the Second World War. Imbalances in the world's population have become serious and are likely to become more severe. It is not a problem that religious leaders find it easy to deal with.

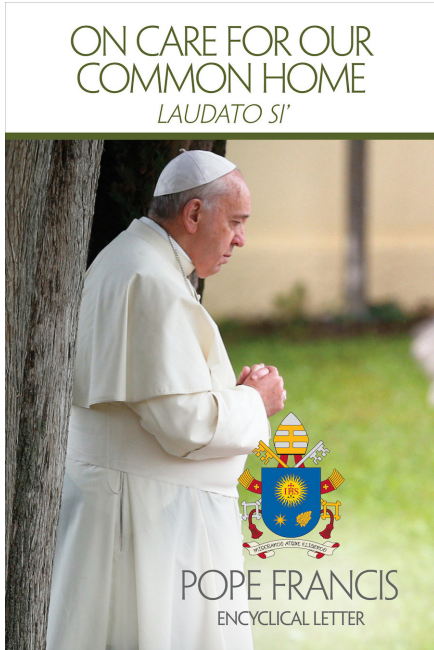
Go Forth and Multiply?

Parents decide, but priests feel unable to stand aside. Rising population levels never used to be a problem. After all, in the Book of Genesis God gave the Earth to mankind, saying: "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the Earth and conquer it." But that was in the context of an empty landscape full of promise and potential and previously populated only by scattered tribes. Nevertheless there could still be painful battles for the best living space although as hunter-gatherer cultures were replaced by settled agricultural practices the land could accommodate many more people. Today, however, the global human population has risen to 7.8 billion. Surely the Earth has already been filled.

In the modern era The Catholic Church first addressed this issue in *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI's Encyclical Letter in 1968. It began: "The transmission of human life is a most serious role in which married people collaborate freely and responsibly with God the Creator". The encyclical went on to say that responsible parenthood should be exercised "with regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions". The encyclical was published at a time when pressures on the world's resources were becoming a serious cause for concern, though the global population was under 4 billion at the time. In the same year 1968 the Club of Rome was founded: it had no very close connections with the Church of Rome but its founders were deeply concerned with the problems of resource depletion, at a time when there were widespread doubts about whether food output could keep pace with the growth of the human population.

As it turned out, in the ensuing decades the world's farmers and agronomists did a wonderful job, if at a significant and increasing cost to the environment. New plant varieties, more fertilisers, much more input of energy and a great deal of hard work

pushed back the threat of mass starvation. But the perceived problem then shifted. By the time Pope Francis produced his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* in 2015 the



greatest concern did not concentrate on the inadequacy of harvests but on environmental damage, part of which related to the very success of agriculture. He explained: "Now, faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person living on this planet."

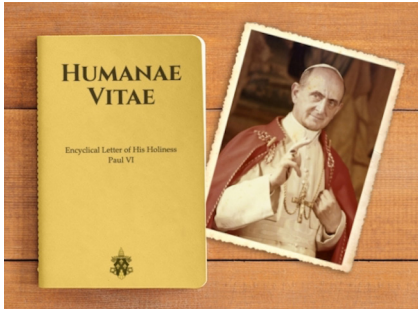
Pope Francis did not, however, focus primarily on the rapid growth of population. He emphasised instead the gap within the global population between the rich and the poor. "To blame population growth, instead of extreme consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues," he wrote. The wealthier members of the world's population, he implied, should reduce their living standards in order to make environmental room for the growth of the population in poorer countries. It was a simple message that the rich should pay for the poor, but a theme that was never going

to be popular in wealthy countries.

Only a very few years later, however, in 2020, the focus of global population concern is shifting again. Rich countries are seeing reductions in their birthrates: the populations of countries including Japan, Russia, Germany and Italy have begun to fall and some academics predict that there will be substantial declines in their numbers of inhabitants during next few decades. At the same time, however, birthrates in many poorer countries across Africa and the Middle East remain high. More and more of these countries are incapable of finding worthwhile economic opportunities and life chances for their many millions of young people, especially the men. One consequence has been political instability in many countries across these regions; during the interminable Syrian civil war it has been tragic to see so many children falling victim to the violence, but they are not simply peripheral victims, they are in a very real sense an important *cause* of the instability.

The fertility rate determines the rate of population growth. If the rate is around 2.1 babies per mother the population will be stable in the long term. According to the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics the global average fertility rate back in 1950 was 4.7, leading to a rapid expansion of the global population. But in many countries the rate has since declined substantially, so the average has fallen to around 2.4 worldwide. In many parts of the world, therefore, populations may even have begun to decline. The problems of the future therefore will not be dominated by pressures on resources but rather on the societal stresses resulting from the changing

balance between the numbers of young and old.



That may be the global picture but it is not a uniform pattern. In North Africa and the Middle East the fertility rate is more like 2.7 while in sub-Saharan Africa it is 4.6. A selection of countries with especially high rates includes the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with 5.0, Chad, with 6.7, Afghanistan with 6.0, Sudan with 4.2 and Iraq with 3.8. These are all countries racked by political instability. On the other hand the fertility rate in Syria has been only 2.2 so a high birth rate

is by no means the only generator of revolution and unrest.

We now, therefore, can discern a new global problem. Too many countries are producing more children than they can accommodate economically, socially and politically. This creates instability and poverty. As a consequence young people are spilling out across frontiers. This is not, of course, an entirely new phenomenon but it is on a very large scale. They migrants may be fleeing from civil wars and revolutions or simply seeking to escape from poverty. In the end, some of them have begun to turn up at Calais and board rubber boats in order to reach Britain, aided by so-called "people traffickers", an unnecessarily abusive name for operators who are no more than travel agents acting for clients who lack all the required legal documentation. Although the tabloid newspapers in Britain are angry at such an invasion it is a small problem so far for this country. But the future may be very different: the real danger is that we are seeing just the very beginning of a war of surplus populations which will involve the movement of people on the scale of tens of millions.

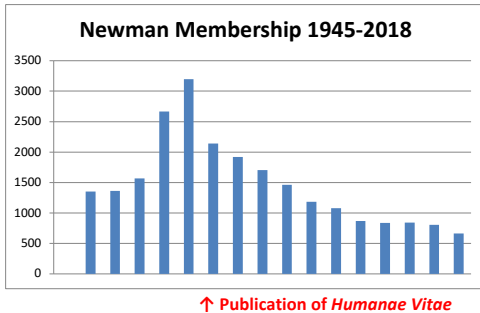
Uneven population growth

There is a topsy-turvy aspect to this potential crisis of differential population growth. It might be thought that wealthy nations would tend to produce more children than the poor nations which cannot easily afford them. But that is not at all how it works. In rich societies children become very expensive, partly because of the costs of educating them and partly because caring for them limits the earning power of the parents, especially the mothers; there is a huge opportunity cost. In poor countries, however, children cost much less to bring up and they may also be put to work very young. Moreover, crucially, a large family also represents the prospect of old age protection for parents living in countries where national systems of social security are inadequate or even do not exist. In countries such as India barrenness is regarded as a personal tragedy.

Should the Roman Catholic Church have something to say on this enormously important subject? We surely need a moral framework to help parents to decide how many children to create. But this issue was ducked by *Humanae Vitae* which recognised, however, that excessive population growth would have the consequence that "many families and developing countries would be faced with greater hardships". The Encyclical said that the transmission of human life was a most serious role in which married people collaborated freely and responsibly with God the Creator.

Instead of pursuing this theme, however, the encyclical became bogged down with obscure arguments about natural law and the differences between natural methods and the use of artificial contraceptives. The Church, it appeared, was trying to create purely technical obstacles to the exercise of parental judgement.

The refusal of the Vatican to leave responsibility in the proper control of married parents infuriated many members of the Newman Association at the time. Indeed membership collapsed and the damage done then has never been adequately repaired. Celibate priests seemed to be extending their Magisterium into areas where they had



no natural mandate. But the Encyclical insisted: "No member of the faithful could possibly deny that the Church is competent in her magisterium to interpret the natural moral law." In fact the encyclical in the course of time undermined the authority of the Church because its edicts have been widely disobeyed, judging by the way that birth rates have subsequently fallen in mostly Catholic populations in

much the same way as amongst non-Catholics, at least in wealthier countries. Nearly fifty years later, in *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis was forced to avoid the question again because the Church had, in effect, torn up its options on population control. He chose to focus instead on the clash between wealth and poverty. The topic of rapid, and potentially destabilising, levels of population growth in developing countries remained unaddressed.

How parents decide their family size is a many-layered question. To begin with, it is a matter of the natural level of fertility which varies from couple to couple. It is also influenced by the age of marriage, which is an important factor in Africa where many brides are still in their teens, but which is a negative factor in many western countries where few brides nowadays marry before they are 20 years old (and in Britain the average age of first marriage for brides is currently 31.5). Financial considerations can also be important, especially in wealthier countries where the costs of bringing up a family can be very high. Lack of easy access to contraceptive methods may also be a factor, with the result being a higher average birth rate in developing countries even though poverty is a critical problem for young families.

One of the most important influences, however, must be the behaviour of the peer group. Big families were very common in Ireland, for instance, until the middle of the twentieth century but they no longer are. Large numbers of children could be welcomed as the product of love and commitment, as a manifestation of God's Will. But this is rarely so today. Too many babies are regarded by the *Daily Mail* as a sign of benefit-scrounging and even prime ministers can face criticism if they father a large number of children.

The two biggest global religions, Christianity and Islam, apparently remain committed to high levels of population growth. The more people there are, the better: and a more worrying subtext is that higher birthrates will increase the dominance of members of

such denominations (always assuming that the youngsters will keep the faith). The Pew Research Centre, a Washington think tank that focuses on many social issues, including religious themes, published a report in 2017 that projected a strong rise in the number of Muslims. It estimated that Muslim women bear an average of 2.9 children, compared with 2.6 for Christian mothers and just 2.2 for the average of all non-Muslims. As a consequence Muslims, who made up an estimated 24 per cent of the world's population in 2015, could account for 31 per cent of the total in 2060, by which stage Islam could have more adherents globally than Christianity.

Such a trend is hard to explain through doctrinal factors. But differences in fertility rates are creating political pressures through population shifts in various countries. In India, for example, the Islamic population is growing faster than the Hindus. In Nigeria a rough balance between Christians and Muslims is shifting towards a Muslim majority. The most explosive consequences of differential birthrates have arisen in Myanmar where the Muslim Rohingya minority were accused of heavily outbreeding the Buddhist majority. Possibly as a result the Rohingya were aggressively persecuted and eventually driven out of Myanmar, although the facts about relative birthrates were obscure.

The Muslim influence seems to be apparent in the high birth rates which are being recorded in large parts of the Middle East and Africa, where Islamic adherence is at a high level. Curiously, though, the hardline Muslim state of Iran has a fertility rate of only 1.7, so national culture and politics seem to matter at least as much as religion.

Africa is now at the centre of global population growth. Perhaps this is nothing very new, since the human race is thought to have first emerged in Africa. About 100,000 years ago humans began to migrate northwards and eastwards to Europe and Asia, reaching Australia perhaps 50,000 years ago, but then taking a very long time to reach the Americas, which began to be colonised only about 15,000 years ago. Today Africa is the home of roughly 1.3 billion people, a sixth of the global total. But with the average mother in Africa bearing 4.7 babies the population could double by 2050, a period in which populations in much of Europe and Asia are likely to fall. Nigeria already has 200 million people and with a fertility rate of 5.1 the population is exploding: by 2050 it could be the third-biggest country in the world by number of people and by 2100 the population could reach 700 million if the trend continues – although, of course, it probably will not.

After 100,000 years people are still migrating northwards out of Africa and the numbers are increasing. For several years now large numbers of migrants have been gathering on North Africa's Mediterranean coastline aiming to reach Europe. Some of them have been travelling further through Europe to the

Channel coast of France. There, the French do not want them and so do not greatly interfere with the plans of many of them to travel on to the English South Coast. The first option for the migrants has been to board trucks heading for the Channel Tunnel



or ferries. The British authorities, by tightening security procedures, have over the past year or so made this more difficult, so the preferred solution for many of the migrants during the summer of 2020 has been to crowd on to flimsy boats in order to cross the Channel whenever the weather has been calm.

Should the Christian Church have anything to say about this imbalance of the European and African populations? The lead in this debate has been seized by atheistic organisations such as



Extinction Rebellion which has developed some

of the concerns raised in *Laudato Si'* about environmental damage and has turned them into an aggressive activist programme. Many more moderate young people are also desperately worried about what will happen to the global climate during their lifetimes. These concerns led to the establishment of a movement called Birthstrike, a voluntary organisation for women and men who feel that they should not have children in the context of the threatened climatic breakdown. These are people who experience moral imperatives even though they have no very clear religious beliefs.

Of course, there is no indication that African mothers and fathers are focused on similar ethical issues. Why are Africans producing so many children? Probably they are responding to immediate cultural pressures and to the favourable economic conditions in many countries. There are climatic problems, as the Sahara desert creeps southwards and other droughts persist in places such as Zimbabwe. But in difficult economic circumstances it may seem natural to bear more children rather than fewer. They are, after all, the greatest form of investment in the future.

When populations shrink

The latest demographic projections in any case present a very different message. In many wealthy countries the birth rate has fallen well below the level of about 2.1 children per mother which promises stability of the total population. This is not an entirely new problem: in France the population fell in the 1930s and the government of the time introduced the *code de la famille* which provided financial incentives for larger child numbers. As in many other Western countries there was a post-Second World War baby boom in France, but today the birth rate there is only 1.8 and in Germany it is just 1.4. If this trend continues for very long into the 21st century then there will be severe societal and economic consequences. Far from resisting the influx of surplus people from Africa these countries in Europe and Asia may soon face an urgent need to encourage immigration despite daunting barriers of culture, prejudice and religion.

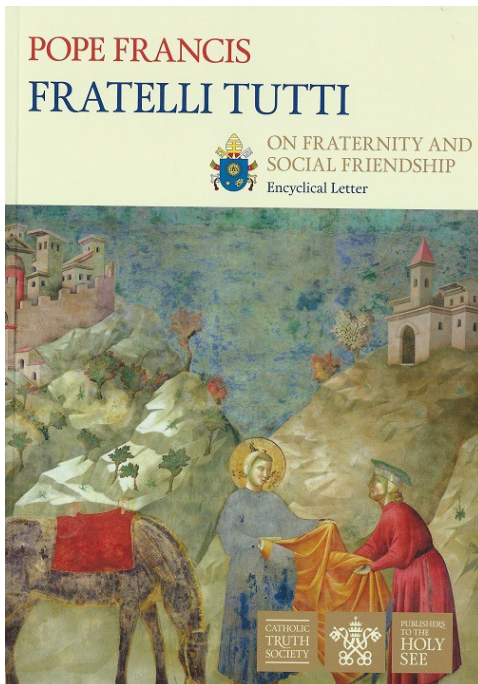
It is a confusing situation and perhaps it is not surprising that BirthStrike, which was founded in 2018, appears to have ended its campaign in September this year. The reasons for its retreat are not entirely clear, but its organisers appear to have feared that the movement's intentions were being misinterpreted. It had blundered into a toxic area of racial hostility. Most of the group's social media outlets have been deleted.

The birth rate is certainly a politically hazardous subject. Do people have a "right" to produce as many children as they wish or do they, perhaps, have a "duty" to moderate their number of births in accordance with economic or social capacities? Or, indeed, a responsibility to produce more children when the fertility rate has fallen below 2.1?

There are potent racial aspects when the largely black population of Africa is spilling over into mostly white Europe. Racial tension is high at present in many countries, not least in the United States. There is also the tension between the rich and the poor, as Pope Francis has highlighted. Should the poor cease having so many children because they cannot really afford them? This can easily turn into an argument for the oppression of the poor. Overriding all this is the ecological imperative as mankind faces global warming and a potential climatic catastrophe.

A threat of extremism

Pope Francis expressed strong views in *Laudato Si'*. But they were nothing compared with the aggressive posture of movements led by Extinction Rebellion, which although not institutionally religious is in some respects turning into a new kind of atheistic doctrine-based entity. There is the deeply worrying prospect that eco-extremism will intensify to the stage that normal ethical standards become abandoned. The end will be seen to justify the means. This is the route travelled far too often in the past by religions which have relied on persecution and oppression in order to eliminate rival beliefs.



The menacing growth of fear and hostility is addressed by Pope Francis in his new Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*. "I realise that some people are hesitant and fearful with regard to migrants," he says there. "I consider this part of our natural instinct of self-defence. Yet it is also true that an individual and a people are only fruitful and productive if they are able to develop a creative openness to others. I ask everyone to move beyond those primal reactions." He adds: "Fear deprives us of the desire and the ability to encounter the other."

These are wise words but they may not be as powerful as the appeals to identity and culture which dominate the campaigns of populist politicians. How can the world cope with disruptive differences in birth rates and the growth of population? Pope Francis may now be too advanced in years to approach these daunting fundamental

issues. We will have to wait for a new Pope to integrate the responsibilities of parents into the awesomely complex framework of ecology, population and global politics. It is at root a question, as *Humanae Vitae* described it, of how married people "collaborate freely and responsibly with God the Creator".

Barry Riley is a member of the Ealing Circle and is Editor of The Newman

The proposed constitution and CIO status

Members will be aware from the inserts into this issue, and from previous communications, that at the forthcoming AGM it is proposed to adopt a new constitution to enable us to seek Charitable Incorporated Organisation status. The objects remain the same and the membership criteria are also unchanged but there are some detailed points of difference between the present Constitution and the new one. If and when the Newman is a CIO in England and Wales then an application will be made for similar status in Scotland and Northern Ireland. For this reason, the second paragraph of Clause 3 states that the objects of the Newman are also charitable in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Details of the changes

These points have already been circulated but in order that members are absolutely clear on what is involved the details of the changes are:

- a. Clause 8 – members are no longer to pay even £1 to the debts in the event of a winding up.
- b. Clause 10(4) gives us power to hold meetings electronically – e.g. by Zoom. It is arguable that we can do this anyway as the Newman is a company and by s.360 A of the Companies Act 2006 companies, of which the Newman is one, have this power. However, it seems best to make the position clear in the constitution and there are also provisions detailing how electronic meetings shall be conducted.
- c. Clause 11 – this is new as there was nothing in the old constitution on Circles. Now there is.
- d. Clause 13 deals with the charity trustees – the officers- and along the way we have clarified the position of the Ecclesiastical Assistant and, with Council's approval, reduced the number of officers so that there is now just one Vice-President. It also clarifies that Associates who are charity trustees can speak and vote at Council meetings. There was in fact some doubt on this under the previous rules. However, clause 15(4) limits the number of Associates who can serve on Council to three and provides that they cannot be elected as President or Vice President.
- e. Clause 14, where the first charity trustees are named, is blank for the moment. These will be the officers and members of council but their names are not included until the constitution has been approved at the AGM at which point they will be inserted.
- f. Clause 15(3) deals with terms of office.

Much of what remains has to be there as we need to follow the model set by the Charity Commission. However, along the way we have tidied things up a bit. For example, under the old Constitution there were by-laws as well. Now all is in one document. By-laws are a bit outdated and formal for an Association like ours. They make us sound like a local authority!

If anyone would like further information then do email me and I'll do my best to explain. My email address is: duddingtonjohn@gmail.com

John Duddington, November 2020

Robert Williams R.I.P



Robert Williams, who died suddenly in September aged 77, made a significant contribution to the Newman Association over many years. He was editor of *The Newman* over two periods for a total of 22 years. His greatest achievement, for which he should always be remembered, was his work in making Christians – and particularly Catholics – aware of the need to respect and cherish our God-given created world.

His family came from Dorset and had farmed the land for generations. This was the life he hoped he would follow but the family financial situation did not allow it.

He went up to Cambridge reading geography, history and economics, then took a teaching qualification and went out to South Africa to teach at an Anglican school in Grahamstown. His first permanent post was at Atlantic College, the sixth form international college in Wales founded by Kurt Hahn in 1962. Later he taught at Malvern College and finally at Aylestone School in Hereford.

He also worked for some years in the Newman bookshop in Oxford and at a school for disadvantaged children. While at Malvern he met George Sayer who was influential in guiding him and his wife Rosemary towards Catholicism. He was baptised into the Church in the late 1970s and soon afterwards joined the Newman Association. He had, and always retained, a great affection for the Anglican Church, its traditions and the beauty of its liturgy. His own Faith was always a matter of exploration, a continual work in progress. He was proud of his ancestor, another Robert Williams, who as a young friend of the future cardinal and saint had alerted Newman to an article by Wiseman on the “Anglican claim” which had caused Newman his first serious doubt as to its legitimacy.

Caring for Creation

Robert, with his agricultural background, had for long been concerned by the pollution of the land through pesticides and by the cruelties and bad practices of intensive farming. His true conversion to green ecology and the movement towards organic food production was when he came to realise that it was a Christian imperative to care for creation in all its forms – the plant and animal kingdom, the oceans, the minerals and all else.

Like most Anglicans he knew his Bible better than most Catholics. He found the biblical basis for care of creation in the work of Robert Murray, the eminent Catholic

theologian, particularly his book *The Cosmic Covenant*. Murray spoke at the first national conference Robert edited for the Association (*Creation, Christians and the Environment*, Birkbeck College, London, 1990). From this time on it is no exaggeration to say that his call to proclaim the need to care for creation became his ruling passion. He met and became friends with leading figures in the movement: Dr Edward Echlin, Sir Ghillean Prance, Professor Sam Berry and others in Christian Ecology Link and the John Ray Initiative. This enabled him to invite distinguished speakers to the next Newman conference on the environment at Bath in 1996 (*The Church and the Earth after Rio; is Creation safe with Christians?*).

In 2002 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales published "*The Call of Creation*" citing biblical and papal teaching to alert the Catholic community that our way of life is abusing God's creation and forcing the poor into greater poverty. Robert, welcoming the Church's response (if tardy), brought together a small committee of Christians to launch the very successful conference (Faith and the Environmental Imperative) at Belmont Abbey in February 2004 (over 180 applied but only 163 could be accommodated). The main speakers were Sir John Houghton, who had just retired from chairing the International panel on Climate Change, Abbot Paul, the Bishop of Hereford and Ellen Teague. The committee comprised an Anglican, a Methodist and two Catholics. Christian Ecology Link also participated fully in the Conference. This is one area of Christian mission where ecumenism is not just desirable but absolutely essential.

The Newman Environmental Group

Robert carried this over in editing *The Newman*, often coaxing articles from authors far from the Catholic tradition. *The Newman* was a newsletter when he took it over in 1984 but he built it up into a respectable journal publishing three issues a year. He also founded the Association's Environmental Group but he struggled to make it grow. He was Editor of *The Newman* over several periods for a total of nine years.

His great interest in the landscape and geology of the Welsh borders stemmed naturally from his fascination with the wonders of the created world. The great Scottish geologist Roderick Murchison had named the Silurian system from his identification in the 19th Century of the ancient rocks in Shropshire, Robert's immediate neighbourhood. This led him to start a local summer school to explore the area. He recently contributed two chapters to a major work "*Herefordshire Landscape, Scenery and Rocks*". Limits of space prevent an account of Robert's contribution to his village Weobley's lively cultural and religious community including his determination to keep alive the local museum which should be recorded.

He was disappointed that the bishops did not follow through with the strong message of *The Call of Creation* and was therefore overjoyed by Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*. He felt the Church was catching up at last! It is not surprising that he admired Thomas Traherne, the Herefordshire mystic who sung the glory of God in the landscape.

Robert was a man of great enthusiasms with the ability to get his friends to share them. He had practical skills and got things done but he was other-worldly in the best sense. Finally, he will be remembered for his remarkable courtesy to everyone he met. It was a privilege to have known him.

Aidan Reynolds



The Blackbird – in summer

Just fifteen weeks ago today
On that Friday known as Good,
Your sumptuous evening song
Inspired my words.

The loveliest song of all the birds
You sang it every day that spring
Until your mate had hatched your brood
Demanding to be fed, and then
Your energy was spent,
From dawn to dusk,
On feeding, not on song.

We strewed seed for you on the lawn
And you came to know and trust us,
Watchfully waiting nearby in a bush.
Then, swift and low you flew,

Coming closer every day until
You left each time with bulging beak
To fill those ever-hungry mouths
Awaiting in your nest.

But today your mate has come alone,
And we, full of foreboding, have watched for you
In vain the whole day long.
For her missing feathers told us
Of some predator's attack
Which she survived, not you,
In defending of your young.

Now she must strive against the odds
To teach your young to fly,
Missing her mate to share the constant load.
Your lovely song is silenced now,
And your feeding days are o'er,
But those memories which you gave
Will stay uniquely in my heart.

Envoi

When some days passed your mate appeared again -
Though this time not alone.
Beside her, on the lawn, another male,
His dark brown feathers evidence of youth,
As was his pestering of his mother
To feed him only, not herself.
Will he return next year
To perch on that high branch where you had sung
And there reprise your glorious song?

John Mulholland
July 24th 2020

(Henry) Keith Stephens 1920-2020, R.I.P.



Keith Stephens died on May 13th 2020, having contracted the Covid-19 virus – he would have been 100 on December 11th, and almost to the end was an active member of the Hertfordshire Circle of the Newman Association. He had been a founder member of the national Association and one of the members of the first Council in 1947. This memoir is composed from material provided by Keith's family and local friends and neighbours, as well as from members of Newman Circles in Coventry and Hertfordshire.

Keith Stephens was born on December 11th 1920 in north London, with three sisters, Anne, May, and Beryl. He was at school at Maidenhead County Grammar School and studied chemistry at

Balliol College, Oxford. During the war, Keith was engaged in scientific research, and then worked in various parts of England, particularly on polymer chemistry, with British Celanese (later Courtaulds) and BP. Later in his career, this included international work in liaising and negotiating with opposite numbers in the OECD and (then) European Common Market.

Keith met Clare, a mathematics teacher, through their Newman Association activities in the late 1940s at Portman Square in London. Keith was apparently thought to be rather brash initially, but he managed to win Clare over and they married in August 1952.

Keith's memories of the early days of the Newman Association were latterly difficult to extract, but Clare and he represented different interests at times. Keith was in charge of the house finances at Portman Square and sought to get people to keep to budgets. He commented how those laying on courses were aghast at this: "Education does not require a budget" was their plea.

A move to Coventry

The Stephens and their young family arrived in Coventry in the early 1960s, when Coventry was booming, attracting young families, and then Vatican II came. Keith and Clare played a great part in building up both the Newman Circle and St Thomas More parish. The Coventry Circle was few years old and very enthusiastic and active. Keith was soon a member of the committee, and there are many happy memories of social evenings held in their home. Changes were expected in the Church and the Circle was the one place locally where discussion was encouraged. Keith could always be relied

upon to give a considered view! He had his practical side too – at the end of Mass one Sunday he was seen to leap up and beat a parishioner about the head – her elaborately lacquered beehive hairdo had caught fire on the votive candles, and Keith must have saved her life.



Keith and Clare and their four children, Peter, Andrew, Mark and Nicky, moved in 1965 from Coventry to St Albans where they made their lasting home. In St Bartholomew's parish both Keith and Clare were active in parish activities, organising fetes and "old people's" parties where the organisers were often older than the guests! While Clare was a stalwart of the CWL, Keith was a reader with considerable skill in proclaiming (sometimes declaiming) scripture, and for many years served funeral Masses for fellow parishioners. Keith was much trusted by all; he was a parish bank signatory and took responsibility as "promoter" for so many parish raffles. He was among the group of those invited to form a parish council, on which he

served for some years. He was also ecumenically active in the earlier days of the St Albans Cathedral Study Centre and was treasurer of the Study Centre for a time. The photograph here shows Keith and Clare at St Bartholomew's in 1989 when they were both presented with Benemerenti medals from Pope John Paul II.

Both Keith and Clare were active members of the Newman's Hertfordshire Circle. Keith was greatly stimulated by the debates between science and religion, and was always happy to discuss intriguing topics such as "what is love" or the faulty understandings of human sexuality in the olden days! He was intellectually lively and could always be relied on to open the questioning of speakers at meetings. He and Clare were great supporters of the circle's social events, and latterly Keith particularly enjoyed coming to monthly pub lunches, interrupted only by the Covid lockdown.

Clare died in May 2013 aged 91. She had resisted earlier family suggestions to move to a bungalow, and after Clare's death Keith wished to stay in the family home. He retained his independence with support from his gardeners and cleaner, and with active help from his children, from neighbours and Newman and parish friends, and latterly from regular carers. With the help of various parish drivers he attended daily Mass until the lockdown and apparently he still wrote 100 cards last Christmas.

Sadly Keith did not achieve his ambition of his 100th birthday, and attendance at his burial in Clare's grave was limited to close family. The family plan a full Mass and celebration after the virus emergency is reduced. We give thanks for Keith's life, full of love, with his gifts used in the service of others. He surely now enjoys his reward, safely reunited with Clare.

Anthony Baker

Film review: "Unorthodox"

Although the film is about extreme Orthodox Judaism Harcourt Concannon wonders whether its theme of escape from rigidity and isolation may have some relevance to the tensions within Roman Catholicism.

This film is a German/American production available on release and on Netflix. It is a loose adaptation of Deborah Feldman's autobiography "*Unorthodox – the scandalous rejection of my Hasidic Roots*," a title which indicates the theme of the story. The production was filmed in New York and Berlin and its dialogue is split between Yiddish spoken in the New York scenes and English used in the Berlin scenes. The story is about Ester ("Esty"), a 19-year-old Hasidic Jewish woman, who, after the breakup of her parents' marriage was brought up by grandparents in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, a strictly observant orthodox community. She has an arranged marriage to Yakov (known as "Yanky").

The first part of the film deals with her daily life in an orthodox and closed Hasidic culture in Williamsburg, where she was something of a misfit, only there because her parents' marriage had broken up. The early part of the film deals particularly with her experience of marriage; indeed, the marriage itself is dealt with in some detail. The prospect of marriage and having a family had become important to her as a way of accommodating her to the ways of the community.

But it turned out to be a disappointment; her marriage was arranged with an awkward and inverted man she had never previously met. She discovers she is pregnant after a process of love making that she finds painful due to a vaginal condition. Although they do eventually have sex because she tells him to go ahead despite the pain. However, her discovery of the pregnancy coincides with Yanky informing her that he (and more particularly his mother) think they should divorce, a decision presented as a de facto conclusion in which she has no say. This is the tipping point: she has had enough and decides to leave New York and go to her estranged mother who lives in Berlin.

A new family for Esty

In Berlin Esty is taken in by a group of musicians, whom she happens to meet in a café, and in effect they become a new family for her. She sneaks into their rehearsal, is captivated by their music and hopes to get a scholarship to study in their academy. For this she will have to present a piece of music to a panel of examiners, for which she plans to play a piano piece. Meanwhile her family in New York became concerned at her disappearance and on their Rabbi's advice, her husband Yanky, a somewhat gentle and sad soul totally mystified by Esty's disappearance and her apparent rejection of her family and heritage, is sent to Berlin to find her and bring her back to New York. He is, however, accompanied by his cousin Moishe, who although a member of the community in Williamsburg is an altogether more forceful and worldly creature,

In Berlin one of Esty's first actions is to go with her new musician friends to a lake beach in Wannsee. There, in a remarkable scene, having hesitated on the shore while her friends had immediately stripped off and rushed into the water, she then wades almost fully clothed into the lake waist high, takes off her sheitel and leaves it to float away on the water. Her sheitel was the wig she had used from her marriage. It covered

her own shorn hair, and in her former Williamsburg community was a sign that she conformed to their interpretation of the religious obligation for a married woman to cover her hair. Her action is thus symbolic of her rejection of her past.

She is shown as being set on making a new life in Berlin without reservation, soaking up the secular street culture, enjoying the freedoms of the City's parks and open spaces, despite having to overcome serious obstacles such as the lack of accommodation after she discovered her mother had a lesbian relationship. She therefore takes to illicitly bedding down in the Academy storeroom, although this does lead to her meeting the Academy principal and being told about the scholarship. Meanwhile poor Yanky makes it to Berlin and desperately searches for her.

His cousin Moishe makes a more determined and successful search, particularly because he enjoys going to bars and night clubs and does find her in a club with her new friends, dancing indeed to vibrant modern music that she appears to enjoy. She leaves the club with Robert, one of the musicians, and they make love in the flat he shares with others in the group. Moishe continues to look for her and finds her again, engineering a "kidnap" to confront her with his opinion that she will never be able to escape from her orthodox roots, and cannot slip easily into a quite different secular culture like that of Berlin. He tells her that unless she returns with him to Williamsburg, she will find that not only is she lost to her own family, but secular Berlin will reject her. He tells her that her plan for a new life there is an illusion. Dramatically he leaves a pistol with her, for her to use on herself when she discovers that her plan has failed. She rejects his arguments but knows she is in difficulties about the scholarship.

However, by chance she happens on a church where a choir is rehearsing and she is deeply moved by the singing. She uses that experience to completely adjust her repertoire for the academy examination, abandoning the piano for singing and presenting instead a performance in German of Schubert's *An Die Music*, an ode to music. However, the examiners ask her to sing a second song of a different kind. She sings *Mi Ban Sirach* in Hebrew, a song that would be sung in a Jewish wedding when the bride is taken to the chuppah. She loses herself in the song, throwing her whole body into performing it, embracing it totally as a dramatic acclamation of her newfound freedom. It is, of course, also a rejection of a past in which she had no voice, a point she herself articulates when one of the examiners asks her why she chose it. Where I come from, she explains, women are not allowed to sing in public.

The film finishes without a clear ending. We are left to assume that the mission on which Yanky and his cousin Moishe were sent to Berlin has failed: that Esty will remain in Berlin. But the feel of the end of the film is a note of hopefulness, that although she has taken a gamble that she knows may not succeed (as Moishe warned her), there is an implication that things will in fact work out for her.

The film is interesting from many viewpoints. One is that it presents a fascinating insight into the daily life of a strictly religious Jewish community in New York. The kind of Jewish community that was common in many parts of Europe before modern times. That is itself a picture with two sides, and it is perhaps too easy to focus only on one side of it. For one side does indeed graphically lay bare the perils and human cost of requiring strict observance of the intricate network of social restrictions necessary

to maintain the structure of religious orthodoxy. Indeed, religiously sanctioned norms of behaviour permeate almost the whole of daily life in such a strictly religious community. That it is achieved only by a human cost is illustrated by the life experiences of both Esty and her mother, who both left the community because of they decided they had to break those norms.

Indeed, as the reasons for leaving of both Esty and her mother, who left because of a drunkard husband, are not uncommon, there may well have been other cases of people choosing to vote with their feet and walking out of Williamsburg. That kind of reaction to religious rules no longer found acceptable perhaps presents the most difficult challenge to the system, the challengers do not remain around to articulate their reasons for “walking” and therefore force a debate within the system. The system is thus facilitated to calmly continue as before and indeed does so, because there is no debate or pressure to adapt the traditional rules.

Useful lessons for Catholics

Admittedly the system of a strictly religious Hasidic community is miles away from that of the Catholic Church, but can one nevertheless draw some useful lessons for the Church? For it too faces critics of its traditional rules of behaviour and practice. Moreover, the “walk away” problem is all too large in the Church; those who have difficulties with its “rules” have tried to make their views felt but without success, often eventually conclude they are wasting their time and simply walk away. *Unorthodox* describes how although well-established traditions and conventions may retain a strong continuing tenure, if the institution cannot find a way of listening to criticisms and then responding to them it asks for trouble of the “walk away” kind.

What of the “recall” to the Church of those who have walked away, which is one of the major objectives of the “New Evangelisation”? Perhaps *Unorthodox* has a message on this too. Having left Williamsburg and experienced something of a secular Berlin, Esty rejects the recall, for having “walked away” she is able to see the restrictions and rules of Williamsburg traditional orthodoxy in relation to what she has experienced as the freedoms of her new life. She can now judge Williamsburg as an outsider as well as an insider, and the judgement of the one who has walked away from the old ways and found a new home is often sharper, stronger and more judgemental.

There is, though, a danger of overlooking the other side of the picture of strictly orthodox Judaism in Williamsburg. For the film presents a powerful and very positive demonstration of the intense joy and sense of comfort, security and safety that those faithful to the community's rules obviously feel. And what enables them to be part of it is their acceptance of its rules, that in turn effectively separate them from the world outside.

For as the Church knows well, community is not only a powerful force, the basis on which the Church was built – a structure that provides solidarity against the perils of the world – but there is an inherent sacredness in community and therefore the rules and practices that define it and give it life. The life of the community, Christian or Jewish, has a rhythm of life in the very structure of the regular practices that keep it going and keep its members going.

There is also another dimension to the strength of Williamsburg orthodoxy. How the members of the community behave day to day, how they cope with the day to day

challenges of life, rests on the vitality and security of the orthodox Jewish home, properly accepting and practising the received religious values and precepts. The life of the home is indeed crucial for the well-being of the community, for the home is where most of the important decisions affecting the members of the community are actually made. Importantly the home is also the place in the Williamsburg community where women enter the scene as major players and not spectators. The importance of the home for the future of the Church has of course long been part of the Church's teaching.

But Esty's story raises a crucial contemporary issue for the Church: is a woman's key role in the home the extent of her part in the future of the Church? The cause of "the women's voice" is surely one of the great issues in today's Church, for there are many who say that that this voice is not heard by the Church. Yet the consequences of failing to hear and take account of that voice may be serious. Apart from failing to strengthen the Church with the power of that voice, to deny it may lead those who feel denied to feel they are outsiders in the Church, to feel that they are not really members of the Church. Of course, the issue of the "women's voice" in the Church is different to Esty's situation. In the Church, if the women's voice is not heard it is largely because the institution chooses not to hear it. Albeit, the "silence" in the Church is more nuanced than in Esty's case, because in the Catholic Church women do now perform key public roles such as servers, choristers, readers, welcomers, catechists, musicians and Eucharistic ministers. And, of course, behind the scenes it is usually women who carry out the key service roles behind the scene of the liturgy, without which the liturgy might not happen, as catechists, secretaries, team leaders, flower arrangers and cleaners. The question, though, is whether the limited acceptance of the place of women in the Church does not simply accentuate the overall sense of "not being heard."

Harcourt Concannon, from the Manchester and North Cheshire Circle, is a member of the Council of the Newman Association.



Amit Rahav as Yanky and Shira Haas as Esty

Frank Hewitt R.I.P.



Frank and Hilda in 2018

We have to report that, sadly, Dr Frank Hewitt, a member of the Wrexham Circle, has died, in his early 90s. He will be remembered by all those who participated in the Student and Easter Cross pilgrimages to Walsingham from the 1940s to the 1970s. In fact he was one of the last surviving participants in the original Student Cross in 1948. Ray Boneham, a former leader of Easter Cross many times during the 1960s and 1970s, remembers that Frank Hewitt's role in 1948 was as a cyclist towing a trailer carrying all the walkers' belongings. These Herculean efforts had the unfortunate effect of leading to joint problems all his life.



Student Cross pilgrims

Ray wishes Frank's "extraordinary" contribution over the years to Student and Easter Cross to be celebrated. Winifred Flanagan, President of the Association, adds that Frank and his family were "much loved by those of us who used to go to Easter Cross at Walsingham".

The Newman in the digital age

Since last March the activities of the Newman Association and its member Circles have been almost completely halted by the restrictions imposed by the Government as a response to the Covid-19 epidemic. Because it now seems likely that these problems will continue well into 2021 it has become necessary to consider the use of digital innovations including online conferencing in order to enable at least a partial resumption of our activities.

Indeed, some Circles have already begun to make more use of the internet and Zoom (see a generous invitation from Colin Roberts of the Coventry Circle below). Moreover the Newman Council has decided to abandon the postponed physical Annual General Meeting in Newcastle on January 16th 2021 and to hold an electronic event instead on the same date. Fuller details are given on the back cover of this issue of *The Newman*.



The Newman Council is considering how to offer on-line facilities to Circles. Soon Circle Secretaries will be contacted and asked what services they would find useful. There is the possibility of setting up a national Zoom account which could be accessed by local Circles. Circle programmes might be resumed, but there is also the potential for setting up more widespread connections. More work is to be done.

From Colin Roberts

Our Coventry Circle committee met recently. Communication was one of the items on the agenda. We zoomed our AGM. We are zooming our talks and committee meetings. We also started a reading group on Zoom over the summer. We are matching previous levels of attendance for our activities and are even attracting Circle members who didn't previously attend.

The committee has asked me to communicate this and to say that it would be good if Council were to encourage Circles to use this new technology, if they are not already doing so. Not being able to meet up is a big loss not to mention the impact on circle social activities and spiritual life. But technology does offer some benefits and provides new opportunities. It just takes a few clicks to get started. There are some costs (£120 for a 12 month subscription) but this has to be offset against previous costs of travel and renting a venue.

*If anyone would like to join in our reading group they would be very welcome. We are using passages from **John Henry Newman. Prayers, Poems and Meditations** (ed. A.N. Wilson). It isn't necessary to be a Newman scholar or to buy the book. I would send scanned copies of the pages. If anyone is interested, could they contact me and I will send them the zoom link. I can put them on the mailing list. My email is: cjroberts08@talktalk.net*

Spirituality Page

Corrie Ten Boom and the Vitamin Jar

The story of the jar of meal and the jug of oil, both of which never failed, has been an inspiration to many down the ages and is particularly appropriate at present when there seems no certainty when the Covid pandemic will end. We need to hope that our own jar of meal and jug of oil does not give out. The story is in Kings 17:15.



Betsie (left) and Corrie

Elijah was ordered to go to Zarephthah and was told that a widow would give him food. Elijah found her by the city gates and asked her to bring a little water and also a scrap of bread.

She replied: "I have no baked bread, but only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jug; I am just gathering a stick or two to go and prepare this for myself and my son to eat, and then we shall die". But Elijah said to her: "Do not be afraid, go and do as you have said; but first make a little scone of it for me and bring it to me, and then make some for yourself and for your son. For Yahweh, God of Israel, says this: 'Jar of meal shall not be spent, jug of oil shall not be emptied, before the day when Yahweh sends rain on the face of the earth.'" The woman went and did as Elijah told her and they ate the food, she, himself and her son. The jar of meal was not spent nor the jug of oil emptied, just as Yahweh had foretold through Elijah.

A modern example of the jar never running out is related by Corrie ten Boom in her book *The Hiding Place*. Corrie and her family lived in Haarlem and sheltered Jews from the Nazis. Eventually they were discovered and Corrie and her sister Betsie were imprisoned in Ravensbruck, the notorious concentration camp for women in Northern Germany, sustained always by their strong Christian faith. Betsie became very weak and Corrie gave her drops from a bottle of Davitamon oil which had come in a Red Cross parcel. Then she gave the oil to others and then to others too and as she remarks:

"And still, as I tilted the little bottle, a drop appeared at the tip of the glass stopper. It just couldn't be! I held it up to the light, trying to see how much was left, but the dark brown glass was too thick to see through."

Corrie wondered if the answer was that only a tiny molecule got through the little pinhole in the bottle but her sister Betsie, reminding her of the story of Elijah, had the answer: "Don't try too hard to explain it, Corrie. Just accept it as a present from the Father who loves you".

Then a prisoner who had been assigned to hospital duties brought back some Yeast Compound. "Vitamins" Corrie cried but she then decided to finish the drops from the little bottle first. Of course, it was empty. It had done its work.

Betsie died in Ravensbruck but Corrie's jar never did run out as, when she was released, she spent the rest of her life preaching the message of reconciliation in Jesus as Lord as recounted in her book *Tramp for the Lord*. Their house in Haarlem is now a museum.

Anne and John Duddington

Online Annual General Meeting on January 16th

The postponed General Meeting of the Newman Association will go ahead on Saturday January 16th, 2021, as already indicated in documents sent out with the May 2020 issue of *The Newman*. However, because of Covid-19 restrictions there can no longer be a physical meeting in Newcastle. Alternative arrangements are therefore being made for an online meeting using the Zoom system.

Besides the normal agenda including approval of the annual report and accounts (distributed to you last May) and the election of officers the meeting will also be asked to consider proposals relating to changes to the Association's charitable status. One motion will concern the adoption of the status of Charitable Incorporated Organisation. A second will ask for members' approval of a new constitution, details of which are being sent out as a booklet accompanying this issue of *The Newman*. Voting will be entirely by post and voting forms are also going out with this issue. To be valid all voting forms must reach Brian Hamill, the Hon. Secretary, in Wakefield by Saturday, January 9th.

Many members will now be familiar with Zoom meetings but if not Brian Hamill gives guidance in his Overview inserted into this issue of *The Newman*. You will require a link, and if you contact him at secretary@newman.org.uk by, at the latest, January 9th he will send you by email the necessary link before the AGM. For full access you will need a computer with video and audio facilities or a smartphone.

