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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the fourth issue of 2018 where we feature in the THINKING ABOUT TEACHING section a research project completed in the Bachelor of Education (Honours) Degree at St Augustine College. The length of the paper does not allow us to publish the whole project. We include the literature review and the author's email address (with her permission) for those readers who might like access to the whole paper.

One again we remind you again of the article chosen for CPTD points which focuses on the transformative power of books.

Readers will qualify for points by answering and submitting the questions on the article that appear at the end of this magazine.

NOTES

- *It is not necessary to submit your responses to the articles to CIE since this exercise falls under the category of Teacher initiated activities also called Type 1 activities: Activities initiated personally by an educator to address his/her identified needs. For example, enrolling for an ACE programme, writing an article for an educational publication, attending a workshop, material development, participating in professional learning communities, engaging in action research in your own classroom.*
- *We have not yet received official endorsement from SACE but hope that it will be soon forthcoming.*

PAUL FALLER

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REFLECTION

Why I Believe in God



(Ron Rolheiser) Some of my favorite authors are agnostics, men and women who face life honestly and courageously without faith in a personal God.

They're stoics mostly, persons who have made peace with the fact that God may not exist and that perhaps death ends everything for us. I see this, for example, in the late James Hillman, a man whom I greatly admire and who has much to teach believers about what it means to listen to and honor the human soul.

But here's something I don't admire in these agnostic stoics: While they face with courage what it should mean for us if God doesn't exist and death ends our personal existence, they don't with the same courage ask the question of what it should mean for us if God does exist and death does not end our personal existence. What if God does exist and what if the tenets of our faith are true? They need too to face that question.

I believe that God exists, not because I have never had doubts, or because I was raised in the faith by persons whose lives gave deep witness to its truth, or because perennially the vast majority of people on this planet believe in God. I believe that a personal God exists for more reasons than I can name: the goodness of saints; the hook in my own heart that has never let me go; the interface of faith with my own experience, the courage of religious martyrs throughout history; the stunning depth of Jesus' teachings; the deep insights contained in other religions, the mystical experience of countless people; our sense of connection inside the communion of saints with loved ones who have died; the convergence of the anecdotal testimony of hundreds

of individuals who have been clinically dead and resuscitated back to life; the things we sometimes intuitively know beyond all logical reason; the constant recurrence of resurrection in our lives; the essential triumph of truth and goodness throughout history; the fact that hope never dies, the unyielding imperative we feel inside of ourselves to be reconciled with others before we die; the infinite depth of the human heart; and, yes, even the very ability of atheists and agnostics to intuit that somehow it still all makes sense, points to the existence of a living, personal God.

I believe that God exists because faith works; at least to the extent we work it. The existence of God proves itself true to the extent that we take it seriously and live our lives in face of it. Simply put, we're happy and at peace to the exact extent that we risk, explicitly or implicitly, living lives of faith. The happiest people I know are also the most generous, selfless, gracious, and reverent persons I know. That's no accident.

Leon Bloy once asserted that there's only one true sadness in life, that of not being a saint. We see that in the story of the rich young man in Gospels who turns down Jesus' invitation to live his faith more deeply. He goes away sad. Of course being a saint and being sad are never all or nothing, both have degrees. But there's a constant: We're happy or sad in direct proportion to our fidelity or infidelity to what's one, true, good, and beautiful. I know that existentially: I'm happy and at peace to the exact extent that I take my faith seriously and live it out in fidelity; the more faithful I am, the more at peace I am, and vice versa.

Inherent in all of this too is a certain "law of karma", namely, the universe gives back to us morally exactly what we give to it. As Jesus worded it, *the measure you measure out is the measure that will be measured back to you*. What we



breathe out is what we're going to inhale. If I breathe out selfishness, selfishness is what I will inhale; if I breathe out bitterness, that's what I'll meet at every turn; conversely, if I breathe out love, gracious, and forgiveness, these will be given back to me in the exact measure that I give them out. Our lives and our universe have a deep, innate, non-negotiable structure of love and justice written into them, one that can only be underwritten by a living, personal, divine mind and heart of love.

None of this, of course, proves God's existence with the kind of proof we find in science or

mathematics; but God isn't found at the end of an empirical test, a mathematical equation, or a philosophical syllogism. God is found, explicitly or implicitly, in living a good, honest, gracious, selfless, moral life, and this can happen inside of religion or outside of it.

The Belgium Benedictine, Benoit Standaert, submits that *wisdom is three things, and a fourth*. Wisdom is a respect for knowledge; wisdom is a respect for honesty and aesthetics; and wisdom is a respect for mystery. But there's a fourth - wisdom is a respect for Someone.

REFLECTION

Was Martin Luther (substantially) Right?

(Anthony Egan SJ)



Five hundred years ago the Church was a mess. Ordinary Christians – most of them illiterate and poorly catechised – practiced a mix of piety and superstition. The average clergy were unevenly trained; some barely understood the Latin they used for Mass. Many bishops and even popes misused their position for financial gain. Pope Leo X authorised the sale of indulgences to

fundraise the rebuilding of St Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Outraged a zealous German Augustinian monk-academic named Martin Luther produced a series of theological questions for debate on 31 October 1517. According to legend he pinned these Ninety-Five Theses on the door of All Saints Church, Wittenberg. The intellectual dispute over whether salvation was earned (or in the case of indulgences, bought) or a free gift of God escalated into a crisis that became the Reformation.

Luther, like Catholic reformers before and after him, as well as a few contemporaries (including Desiderius Erasmus and Ignatius Loyola, who remained in the fold) simply wanted the Church to clean up its act. But faced with an institution unwilling to change, unwilling it seemed to him to even discuss change, he decided to break from it.

Looking back to Luther, I see aspects of his thought that are repugnant (specifically his virulent antisemitism), some things debateable (i.e.



deserving careful and critical discussion), but much that is worth considering.

No serious Christian can disagree with his emphasis on the centrality of Scripture, its careful interpretation and the need for all of us to be able to read it in our own languages. Similarly, while we can debate his theological interpretation of the Eucharist, few can disagree with his defence of frequent reception of communion – under both kinds. And in his insistence on personal moral conscience we must not only agree, but remember that in this he was reiterating Thomas Aquinas before him and anticipating the Second Vatican Council by 450 years.

Above all, we can only agree with Luther's affirmation, rooted in Scripture and tradition, that we are saved by God's grace alone and out of thankful experience of grace we do our good works. In 1999 the *Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith* of the Catholic Church and Luther-

an World Federation in fact confirmed this. Many Catholic and Lutheran scholars have observed that this single largest stumbling block to reunion between our traditions has been removed.

This month as many celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation we all need to take stock. We need to reflect on the ways in which superstitions still get in the way of faith, on the limitations of theological education for clergy and laity, and of corrupt financial practices within our traditions that exploit Christians today. And we need to recommit ourselves to the process of reunion of the Church.

Let's be honest: in many ways, we are still in a mess. We are always in need of reformation. But now, as then, do we listen to the reformers among us before it's too late?

THINKING ABOUT TEACHING

A Literature Review of Gender Issues in Teaching Sexuality Education

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The Life Orientation – sexuality education curriculum, as taught in South African schools, is identified by the literature as a potentially valuable space in which to work with young people on issues of gender, sexual norms and relations.

"Yet, research has illustrated that such work may not only be failing to impact on more equitable sexual practices between young men and women but may also serve to reproduce the very discourses and practices that the work aims to challenge." (Shefer, Kruger, Macleod, Baxen, Vincent 2015:71)

The authors point out that cultures of violence in youth sexuality, are closely connected to prevailing gender norms and practices, rendering women as passive victims incapable of exercising sexual agency- and men as inherently sexually predatory. "The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and related resolutions have repeatedly called on governments to provide adolescents and young people with comprehensive sexuality education" (CSE) suggesting that it becomes "most effective when it highlights a gender and rights perspective." (Haberland and Rogow, 2015:15-21). The ICPD clarifies that such education should take place both in schools and at community level, be age appropriate, begin as early as possible, and foster mature decision making, with the aim to ameliorate gender inequality" (Haberland and Rogow, 2015: 15-21).



The literature review begins by explaining the feminist theory through which the study is explored and defining terms used in the study. The study focuses on three components of sexuality education that have been identified as requiring attention: gender-based violence and rape, equality in decision-making in sexuality relationships, and the development of positive relationships between genders. Gender constructs within these components are discussed, as well as recommendations for covering these sections in the curriculum. Recent research in South Africa is also reviewed, with regards to what is in fact being taught. This is then used to ascertain criteria for thematic analysis of specifically chosen chapters, dealing with sexuality education, in the *FOCUS Life Orientation Grade 10* textbooks for learners and teachers.

2.1 Feminist Theory

This study was viewed through the lens of African feminist theory, which identifies those forces which maintain the subordination of women to men (Flax 1990). Feminist theory seeks to explain gender, culture, patriarchy, female subordination as well as the oppression of women and girls. Particular forms of masculinity that promote female subordination are justified by both African culture and Western religion (Chilisa and Nteane 2010:620-621; Mannatokho 1999:47; Zondi 2010:19). Culturally, such practices as *lobola* and *ukutwala* (bride abduction) reinforce male dominance, while both Western and African patriarchal beliefs imbue in men the idea that they are superior and have the right to dominate (Uchendu in Ebere 2011:483).

Feminist theory aims to deconstruct these gender constructs and stereotypes. This is done through exploring “ethical and transformative ways” that can allow girls and women to negotiate and resist patriarchal power (Chilisa and Ntseane 2010:617). In this way, LO teachers using the curriculum can be “transformative healers”. Wood (2012:2) states that according to feminist standpoint theory, women’s lives, in general, differ systematically and structurally from men’s lives, in that women and men are expected to engage differently; thus, they are accorded different rights and opportunities. Feminist standpoint theorists claim that, “while it is easier for women than men to achieve a feminist standpoint, it is possible for men to do so if they engage in the intellectual struggle to recognize and reject established relations, including male privilege” (Wood 2012:2).

2.2 Definitions

For the purpose of this study, two definitions are presented.

2.2.1 Definition of Gender Constructs

Gender constructs are defined by O’Sullivan (2014:100) as the “social construction phenomenon of roles and obligations and responsibilities that broadly privilege men over women in various domains”. They consist of beliefs, norms and stereotypes that are often justified by culture and religion (Chilisa and Nteane 2010:620-621). Gender constructs are learnt and instilled in people’s minds (O’ Sullivan 2014). This implies that gender constructs can be changed - thus allowing for the possibility of achieving gender equality. A first step here would be to acknowledge the reality of existing stereotypes and instilled patriarchal norms that cause the gender gap. Gender constructs associated with the three components are discussed below.

2.2.2 Definition of Patriarchy

“The concept “patriarch”, as ‘the father and ruler of the family and tribe’, was first used during Biblical times and refers specifically to the sons of Jacob (as well as Abraham, Isaac and their forefathers) (Coetzee 2001:300). According to Boonzaaier and Sharp (1988:154, in Coetzee 2001:300), the ‘ideology of patriarchy’, as a ‘once positive ideal’, gave rise to the elevation of ‘the idea of the leadership of the fathers to a position of paramount importance in society. This resulted in a hyper-normative status of women



being regarded as inferior to men, causing the development of an uneven power-relationship between men and women throughout society.

2.3 Gender-based Violence and Rape

2.3.1 The Reality of Gender-based Violence in South Africa

Statistically, South Africa has the highest rate of gender violence and rape in the world. (Jewkes and Abrahams 2002:1231). Research shows that persistent sexual violence in a South African context is intimately linked with gender inequality and the upholding of certain versions of masculinity that are enshrined in such power and violence. In support of this reality, interviews conducted by Bhana (2012:352-358), among South African township girls, show enduring experiences of sexual violence both within and outside schools with male teachers.

Women are not only subject to rape- but blamed for it. Kedama (2000 in Morrell 2003:47) reports that in a national survey of male participants in 2000, half of the participants blamed women for rape. Female victims of rape often believe that they are themselves responsible for their misfortune. Women may feel that they provoked the assault by wearing provocative clothing... therefore elect not to talk about their experience (Morrell, 2003:44).

Zondi (2010:22-23) argues that patriarchal norms affirm men's masculinity, even resulting in women suffering rape in marital relationships, while men do not acknowledge marital rape as being a serious offence. In some cases, women who refuse sexual advances are subjected to sexual assault, the most extreme case being gang-rape (Morrell, 2003:47).

The concept 'culture of silence' (Morell 2003) expresses the lack of women reporting violence. When women speak out against rape, they are frequently subjected to being victimised and stigmatised as the weak links in society. The Human Rights Watch reports that "violence against women, including rape and domestic violence, remains widespread and underreported" (Sumaya Hisham, 2016) and women seldom press charges for fear of being victimised (Musaka 1999 in Morrell, 2003:45). Women are further silent about gender-based violence and rape, due to the patriarchal power in the household, by virtue of men being the 'breadwinners' and women dependent on them for their basic material means of existence. "Women cannot resist gender tyranny unless they are willing to accept violence or contemplate expulsion from home." (Molefe, 2002:109) Thus, they silently endure abuse, despite domestic violence legislation to protect victims. Because there is little talk between mothers and girls about sex (UNICEF in Morrell 2003:47), young girls are not even willing to report sexual abuse to their mothers.

2.3.2 Recent Research and Recommendations for The Curriculum on Gender-based Violence

Haberland and Rogow (2014:15) highlight the need for a gender perspective as a core component that empowers both young males and females to report violence. In 1991 the White Ribbon campaign was established to encourage men to speak out against violence perpetrated by men against women (Morrell 2003:44-45). The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that awareness of the immediate and long-term health consequences of sexual violence be taught in schools. It should be taught in the context of the reality that gender equality translates as a key goal around the world, as a matter of human rights, in: combating HIV and AIDS, ending child marriages, reducing unwanted pregnancy and fostering the growth of healthy societies (WHO, 2016).

One way of reducing rape and violence in South Africa, is by addressing the cultural gender constructs that promote it. This can be done through a tailored culturally appropriate curriculum, acknowledging that gender dynamics take different forms within given cultures, as well as between cultures (Haberland and Rogow, 2014:16). Thus, the curriculum must address the cultural constructs around sexual violence and rape, the "culture of silence" and how to report violence.



In 2016 *Times Live* reported that the South African sexuality education curriculum was indeed promoting gender constructs. The article reported on a Facebook post, which attacked the South African sexuality education curriculum for blaming the female rape victim for rape. Gender activist Lisa Vetten, said that the textbook not only laid blame on rape victims and ignored the culpability of perpetrators; it [actually] confused the concept of rape by referring to it as “sexual intercourse”. Vetten commented that it was worrying that no subject teachers had identified the problem. The article emphasised the importance of having knowledgeable people writing and teaching about gender-based violence. An article published in *Read (2016)*, reported on the same incident - “This activity is teaching our kids to justify rape! How can this be allowed, in a country that already has horrifying rape statistics?” (Claymore 2016) The Department of Education agreed that the curriculum in *Focus Life Orientation Grade 10* needed to be amended.

A recent study of primary school teachers, reveals that 73% of male LO teachers were talking extensively in their classroom about the fact that females are silent about sexual abuse, while only 52% of the female teachers said they talked about this (Ngcobo, 2018: 46). The study by Ngcobo (2018:46) shows that although both male and female teachers thought that the question of whether or not females are responsible for rape should be discussed in class, 55% of females were addressing this extensively, while only 30% of males were (Ngcobo, 2018:46). This suggests a need for the curriculum to specify what is being taught.

A gender-based curriculum could thus include an emphasis on the human right that states males and females have the right to live free from violence, including freedom from rape and sexual abuse. Such a curriculum might include lessons on ways to resolve conflicts without violence, lessons that emphasise that sexual abuse cannot be tolerated or excused and that victims should not be blamed. Both male and female learners need to be aware of their responsibility in reducing and reporting such violence. Acceptance that survivors should be supported, can be emphasised, assuring that learners are aware of safe havens for victims (Haberland and Rogow, 2011:41). Some lessons might need to be conducted by initially separating girls and boys during discussions around the sensitive topic of gender roles, which could generate defensiveness or hostility precisely due to many learners already having experienced violence (Haberland and Rogow 2011:41).

“Dominant patterns of masculinity and femininity leading to sexual violence, should be challenged in an attempt to disrupt the gender order leading to violence.” (Glover and Macleod, 2016:3)

2.4. Equality in Decision-making in Sexual Relationships

Closely linked to reducing sexual violence, is sexual decision-making. This is the ability and free choice of a rational human being, to take charge of his or her life regarding decisions concerning relationships. The ideal decision-making in sexual relationships requires both parties involved to be open with full understanding and to be able to communicate and take responsibility for their sexual welfare (Adepoju 2005:14). There are several gender constructs that interfere with this ideal.

2.4.1 Decision-making in Sexual Relationships: The Constructs

Adepoju (2005:40) asserts that this ideal is influenced by gender stereotyping, which happens when a person is expected to behave in a particular way, based on rigid traditions that mostly deprive women and girls of the freedom to choose what they want. “Notions of masculinity... that equate being a man with dominance over women, sexual conquest and risk-taking are associated with less condom use, more partners, including more casual partners, more frequent sex, more abuse of alcohol and more transactional sex.” (Greig, Peacock, Jewkes and Msimang, 2008:35)



Society expects women to obey men and not participate in decision-making about sexual activities (Morrell, 2003:44). Boys grow up believing that they are the decision-makers in relationships, exerting their masculinity and control over others (Greig, Peacock, Jewkes and Msimang, 2012:35).

Zondi (2010:23) explains that it is within the intimacy of the family structure that identities are shaped, and during socialisation, societal norms upholding patriarchal standards lead to the maintenance of the status quo of gender inequality in decision-making. A patriarchal family structure dictates that girls adhere to obedience and submission, and there is little talk between parents and children about sex. Thus, women and young girls may allow males to refuse to use protection, based on their belief that females lack control in decision-making, increasing the risk of HIV and unwanted pregnancies (Hendriksen et al., 2007:1242).

Added to the belief in female obedience, is the strong notion of male entitlement – the belief that men are entitled to women's bodies. This is to some extent connected to the cultural practice of paying *ilobola* (dowry) resulting in the belief that females literally become male property with no choice in sexual decisions (Morrell, 2003:46). The practice of *ukuthwala* (bride abduction) also re-enforces the sense of male entitlement. In this practice, young girls between the ages of 14–17 are forced into becoming the wives of older men (Nkosi 2009:410). This practice is often associated with gender-based violence, including rape.

Fueled by patriarchal norms, a further gender construct results in men believing that they are entitled to more than one sexual partner (Zondi, 2010:22-23). It is considered normal for men to have more than one sexual partner, while women are labelled as 'sluts' if they have more than one partner (O'Sullivan, Harrison, Morrell, Monroe-Wise and Kubeka, 2006:100; Adepoju 2005:6). Both young males and females in a study in a rural area of KwaZulu-Natal showed their support for polygamous marriages, where males are in polygamous relationships but females are expected to remain monogamous (Zondi, 2010:22).

Young boys are further propelled into sexual competition, making them acutely vulnerable to ridicule by both boys and girls, should they fail (Morrell, 2003:46). The LO curriculum is one place where patriarchal norms can be critiqued, although respect for cultural and religious beliefs will also need to be taken into consideration.

2.4.2 Recent Research and Recommendations for the Curriculum on Decision-making

In a context of equality in decision-making in sexual relationships, Haberland and Rogow (2011:64) conclude that both males and females deserve to have basic control over their own bodies. This includes not only being free from violence and sexual abuse- but deciding whether and when to have sex. Such control promotes confidence, safety, health, pleasure and the opportunity to explore one's identity.

Recent research in South Africa, suggests that little emphasis is being placed on equality in sexual decision-making. Instead there is a strong emphasis on the female being responsible for the outcome of poor decisions. In 2015, Shefer *et al.* analysed the talk of Grade 10 learners in nine diverse schools in two South African provinces. Their study shows that LO lessons "foreground cautionary, negative and punitive messages, which reinforce, rather than challenge, normative gender roles, undermining and controlling young women." In this control group study, young women were told that they were responsible for protecting themselves and the wellbeing of their partners, but the authors point out how this discourse of responsibility coexists with contradictory framing of women as passive victims, further depicting them as sexually passive, helpless and powerless in relation to sexual decision-making (Shefer *et al.*, 2015:80). Kehily (in Shefer *et al.*, 2015:78) suggests that within the current LO sexuality education lessons, both males and females are stereotyped through the terms: "strong/weak, active/passive, hard/soft, rational/emotional." In contrast to the message that men should be powerful,



women are positioned as bearing the consequences of sex, taking responsibility for managing sexual encounters and literally left 'holding the baby' with a damaged reputation.

It's All One Curriculum, Chapter 23, offers guidelines for giving meaningful consent in a situation involving sexual decision-making. Among these guidelines, the author points out the importance of emphasising to both males and females that "you have the right to decide for yourself whether you want to participate in a particular sexual activity." Advice should be given to both males and females to "have a sufficient sense of power and control over your life," know how to communicate your decision clearly and know "what the risks are and how to protect yourself and your partner from unwanted pregnancy" (Haberland and Rogow 2011:78). The authors underline the importance of knowing what the law prescribes, in terms of minimum age for giving consent to sexual activity (Haberland and Rogow 2011:70-81).

2.5. Developing Positive Relationships between Genders

The development of positive relationships between genders as part of sexuality education has links to several gender constructs and stereotypes. For this development, there is emphasis placed on both addressing gender biases and the encouragement of males in expressing their emotions.

2.5.1 Some Gender Differences in Relationships

As a social construct, boys and girls view relationships differently. Girls, as nurturers, tend to take relationships with the opposite gender more seriously than boys, who, as a result of patriarchal and cultural influences, tend to be more blasé. Boys, as early as 9-10, present a "joking attitude" about sex, suggesting that sex is entertainment (Halstead and Waite 2003:26).

"Girls value intimacy significantly more and [sexual] pleasure significantly less than boys." (Tolman and McClelland, 2011:248) Boys, on the other hand, "claim to know more about sex and tend to speak freely during discussions about sex but do not acknowledge their emotions in relationships" (Morrell, 2003:44) "while girls are more reserved in their conversations about sex" (DePalma and Francis, 2014:5).

Halstead and Waite (2003:27), in their study of 9-10 year olds, found that both boys and girls placed a high value on love, identifying "trust, openness, honesty and loyalty" as important to relationships. However, the girls placed more emphasis on feelings, than boys. In this study, girls also showed a higher level of self-esteem. However there was a sense in some of the girls that they were not fully in control of their bodies.

2.5.1.1 A Culture of Silence in Males

Morrell's "culture of silence" is not about women alone. It also applies to the inability of men to express emotions. Brod (1987 in Morrell 2003:44) purports that the inability of men to access difficult emotions, has long been identified as a serious problem, and not just for the individuals concerned, but as obstacles in the way of gender equality. Jewkes and Kaufman (in Morrell 2003:48) aptly describe this as 'burying of emotions'- not showing pain, loss or grief. Culturally boys are taught to maintain control at all times, physically expressing masculine strength by clenching fists rather than experience feelings and emotions (Seidler in Morrell 2003:48).

For males, expressing emotions, may promote feelings of acute vulnerability. Morrell (2003:44) suggests that this will require aiding not only males in expressing their emotions- but females in accepting this. Morrell (2003) relates a positive experience about learners exploring their feelings and telling their stories, as a testimony to the willingness of both males and females to get beyond the silence, revealing themselves by engaging with issues openly. During interviews, both males and females reflected surprising levels of introspection and a refusal to submit to oppressive or dangerous behaviours.



“These young people speak out about their dreams and lives; they are developing a vocabulary which allows them to make sense of themselves and to convey this to their friends, males and females alike” (Morrell 2003:56).

However, he heeds caution – “these boys, still believe that men make the decision in the house, that it is a man’s responsibility to earn, that it is important not to be frightened in the face of danger” (Morrell 2003:56).

2.5.1.2 Sexual Pleasure

There also exists a gender construct that suggests that male sexual pleasure is more important than female pleasure and that females exist for male sexual gratification. In Ngcobo’s study (2018:48), a significant difference between males and females was reported. 65% of the 100 male teachers in the survey believed that women exist for male sexual gratification, while over 70% of the females disagreed with this statement. Primary school teachers showed a strong negative reaction to teaching about these gender constructs from both males and females. Only 18% said they were teaching this extensively and 27% of the teachers did not think this should be addressed at all (Ngcobo, 2018:49).

2.5.2 Recommendations for the Curriculum

The research done on adolescents by Shefer *et al.* (2015:76) shows that students are only getting negative input by being told that they should be afraid of sex because it is dangerous, risky and potentially damaging. “Clearly absent from LO classrooms was the emphasis on the complex feelings and experiences typically associated with sex.” (Shefer *et al.*, 2015: 76-77) This resulted in young women being reduced “to a position of victimisation rather than as ‘subjects of sexuality, initiators, as well as negotiators’ (Fine in Shefer *et al.*, 2015:77).

Considering that sexuality is a central part of being human, Tolman and McClelland (2011:243-244) emphasise developmentally appropriate sexuality education throughout an adolescent’s life, in order to ensure that both males and females explore their sexuality as a natural process in achieving sexual maturity. They suggest a more explicit integration of the two dimensions, that incorporates both the positive aspects, as well as risk management- and how they develop in tandem. This would then form part of the process of developing young people who imagine themselves in the future, as having intimate relationships and pleasurable sexual experiences (Tolman and MacClelland, 2011:25-26). It is important to emphasise this for both genders, in a way that addresses gender constructs. Positive aspects, as opposed to shame: desire, fulfilment and warmth, can be emphasised for both males and females. This will then take into consideration that boys traditionally do not show emotions out of fear of failing and being ridiculed by both boys and girls (Jewkes and Kaufman in Morrell, 2003:44). Opportunities to reflect on trust, self-respect, forgiveness, commitment and faithfulness for both genders can be included in a curriculum (Halstead and Waite 2003:28).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has identified criteria that can be used to analyse sexuality education high school textbooks, from a gender perspective. The feminist theory suggests that the subordination of women to men, is maintained through culture, patriarchy and religion. The literature aimed to identify gender constructs and stereotypes within sexuality education. As pointed out by Chilisa and Ntseane (2010), Life Orientation teachers could play a major role as transformative healers in the process of deconstructing gender constructs and stereotypes of women and girls through an appropriate curriculum.

The reality of gender-based violence and rape in South Africa indicates that women are not only blamed and shamed for being raped, but also stigmatised by their very own societies. Morrell (2003) pointed out that the refusal of sexual advances by women, can lead to sexual assault - in some cases it can even lead to the extreme punishment of gang-rape. Often rape is not reported by female victims out



of fear of being banished from their homes. Morrell (2003) coined the phrase -“culture of silence” to emphasise this lack of reporting. Young girls are even too frightened to report rape to their parents.

Decision-making in sexual relations is shown to be male dominated. Females are depicted as victims and powerless in the process of sexual decision-making. The constructs of male belief in entitlement to women’s bodies, male entitlement to more than one partner and practices such as *ukuthwala* ensure that females do not participate in decision-making. Some suggestions are made as to how to develop decision-making skills.

Previous research highlights that negative aspects of sexuality education are being taught and little emphasis is placed on developing the positive aspects for either gender. The literature showed that girls, as nurturers, tend to take relationships more seriously than boys who, as a result of patriarchal and cultural influences, tend to be more blasé.

ARTICLE (CPTD): CLASSROOM PRACTICE

The transformative power of books

(Archbishop Thomas Menampampil SDB, Archbishop Emeritus of Guwahati, India)

Life appears worthwhile to human beings only as long they are able to give a meaning to their life and assign a purpose to their activities. Reading helps them precisely for this: to widen their inner horizon, deepen their reflection, make intelligent choices, and arrive at purposeful conclusions



Reading Offers Meaning and Purpose, Supplies Energies.

Reading seems to be a lost art in this age of smart phones, social media, video games; Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and Skype. It is not my intention to underestimate the wide range of possibilities that these means of communication can offer you. All I want to do is to insist that reading still holds out to you something invaluable.

Life appears worthwhile to human beings only as long they are able to give a *meaning* to their life and assign a *purpose* to their activities. Reading helps them precisely for this: to widen their inner horizon, deepen their reflection, make intelligent choices, and arrive at purposeful conclusions.

The information that reading provides enlightens your mind, and the *motivation* it generates not only keeps you hale and hearty but also supplies you with the energies you require to strive after the goals that you set before yourself. “Reading maketh a full man,” says Francis Bacon.



A recent study has revealed that reading relieves you of tension more than listening to music, going for a walk, or taking coffee. Like the practice of meditation, the habit of reading gives you tranquillity, lowers your heartbeat and pulse.

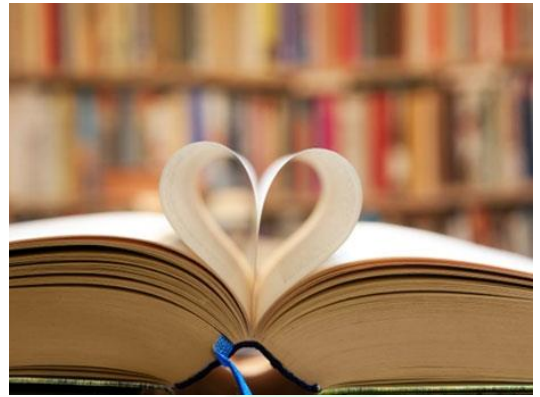


Reading Ensures Exercise, Rest, Adventure.

Reading is for the mind what physical exercise is for the body. John Armstrong in his *The Art of Preserving Health*, claims that reading makes people feel younger. A recent study has revealed that reading relieves you of tension more than listening to music, going for a walk, or taking coffee. Like the practice of meditation, the habit of reading gives you tranquillity, lowers your heartbeat and pulse. Immersed in a book you keep away from worries that bring you stress, anxiety, and depression, and grow relaxed.

Diligent study keeps you alert and inquisitive. Geographically, you move to another part of the world; historically, to another era in the past; psychologically, you enter into another self-induced mood; socially, into another self-chosen company. How thrilling to set sail with Vasco da Gama and breathe the salty air of the Eastern seas, or move westwards with Christopher Columbus and be surprised by a land of immense riches! At no expense at all and no dangers! T.S. Eliot says, "I read much of the night" (*The Waste Land*).

Your reading can take you searching round the universe, exploring the galaxies with Stephen Hawking at one moment, and navigating between subatomic particles with Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg at another. You can direct your exploration to any region of the Universe and feel at home in any period of history. You can walk up the path of human evolution, halting at any stage of your choice to meet with the Cave Man, Plato, or Donald Trump.



Reading Stimulates Creativity, Critical Thinking, Social Skills.

Disciplined reading helps you to focus your mind, achieve a greater level of concentration, and attain an increased measure of neurological activity in the brain. It stimulates mental capacity and sharpens its logical abilities. That is how it prevents Alzheimer's, dementia, and memory loss.

"A man ought to read as his inclination leads him," said Samuel Johnson. At the same time, he/she ought to educate his tastes and channel



If you study the habits of great personalities in history, you come to realize that the world we live in today was shaped by great readers.



Disciplined reading helps you to focus your mind, achieve a greater level of concentration, and attain an increased measure of neurological activity in the brain.



his intellectual resources in the right direction. Relaxed reading induces rest at the first stage but gradually it moves on to arouse curiosity, stimulate creativity, sharpen critical thinking, strengthen problem-solving abilities, widen vocabulary, and improve writing skills.

Planned reading equips you for your professional life, improves your social skills, prepares you for interviews, and qualifies you for promotion. It capacitates you for networking and public speaking. It teaches you most of all how to relate to your emotions and gain mastery of your 'self', of your inner world.

If you study the habits of great personalities in history, you come to realize that the world we live in today was shaped by great readers. This awareness evokes a sense of confidence in you that you too can make a definite contribution to the betterment of the world and you become more discerning and goal-oriented in your reading.



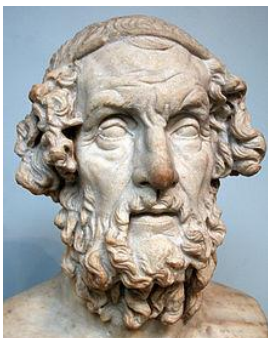
Exposure to Various Types of Literature.

Early tales of humanity, which we call epics, are thrillers. They invite you to be daring but they are full of violence as well. You need to be judicious in deciding what is worth imitating. Classical works introduce you to various styles of writing, diverse types of characters, varied social realities, manifold levels of human thought and interests.

Social readings expose you to different social anxieties, imbalances, challenges, and possibilities, cultural worlds, values, problems, solutions. Religious literature reveals to you your deeper identity, explores your inner world, guides your natural urges, defines your obligations to fellow beings and environment, and points you to your ultimate destinies.

This exposure to a variety of choices persuades you to be more and more purposeful in your reading, seeking guidance when you require it. In any case, one thing is clear: insightful readers redirect the course of history. Writers shape the mind, readers change the world.

Great Readers Shape Human Destinies.



Homer

Alexander the Great read Homer's *Illiad* with keen interest. His life-goal was to re-enact Achilles' heroic deeds, which he did, leading his army as far as India. Homer's influence did not stop there. Julius Caesar, a young Roman officer, was intrigued by the tales of Achilles and the achievements of Alexander. He took the same military ambition to Gaul and expanded the Roman Empire far beyond expectations.

The story does not end with that either. We come across young Napoleon who was a voracious reader. He was intoxicated by the accounts of Achilles, Alexander and Caesar, whom he eagerly wanted to imitate. When he actually did, his performance was truly unbelievable. Reading undoubtedly generates energies.

Possible Negative Consequences.

However, one-sided reading can have negative consequences. You can place before yourself merely the insensitive dimension of your heroes. That is what Adolf Hitler did. He brought to life the accumulated violence of all the four mentioned above. The result was his erratic military ventures and the *Holocaust* that killed six million people.

Thus, looking back, Homer's tales left a mark on 3 000 years of human history. There is no doubt, writers are history-shapers, readers are history-makers.

What the above account makes clear is that one must bring a sense of responsibility to one's reading habits. John Milton says in unmistakable terms, "Who reads incessantly, and to his reading brings not a spirit of judgement equal or superior... uncertain and unsettled he still remains, deep-versed in books and shallow in himself" (*Paradise Regained*).

Reading Introduces You to 'World Conversation'.

Books have made 'continuity in knowledge' possible. Through printed literature, a "Great Conversation" (Robert Hutchins) has been initiated between generations and among contemporaries. Philosophers dialogue with philosophers, scientists with scientists. Galen, for example, learned from Hippoc-



Religious literature reveals to you your deeper identity, explores your inner world, guides your natural urges, defines your obligations to fellow beings and environment, and points you to your ultimate destinies.



rates; Copernicus from Greek scientists. Today's scientists learn from Copernicus himself, and from Galileo, Kepler, Einstein, and others. They can converse among themselves as well.

In the same way, Roman writers imitated the Greeks. Vergil's *Aeneid* closely followed Homer's *Odyssey*; playwrights Plautus and Terence took after Menander; Cicero learned from Demosthenes, Plato and Aristotle; Horace from the odes of Pindar. The Roman historians imitated Herodotus and Thucydides. Julius Caesar studied Xenophon's *Anabasis*. Plutarch, a Greek staying in Rome, set a pattern for Roman biographers such as Sallust, Livy, Tacitus and Suetonius.

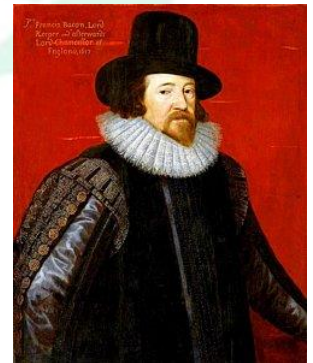
These writers set a standard for the entire western literature, which again influenced writers in other continents. Meantime, the West itself was exposed to the writings of India, China, and Africa. In this way, there began a 'Dialogue of Civilizations', a genuine 'World Conversation'. 'Co-thinking' that Teilhard de Chardin had predicted has been initiated. Fresh ideas are generated in the process.

Christian Emphasis on Intelligent and Responsible Reading.

Even critical historians such as Edward Gibbon admit that the Catholic Church played a big role in the preservation of Greek and Roman classics for later generations and the promotion of education among the masses. Church institutions like monasteries were agents of this inter-generational dialogue.

But, there was a generally accepted Christian norm: be selective in your reading and judicious in drawing lessons from what you read. Francis Bacon expressed it in this manner, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." He becomes even more explicit, "Read not to contradict and confute... but weigh and consider."

Christian worship is closely associated with reading from an authoritative book called 'the Bible'. This reading tradition has very ancient roots. We see at *Ex* 24: 7 that Moses "took the book of the covenant, in which the Lord's commands were written, and *read* it aloud to the people. They said, "We will obey the Lord and do everything that he has commanded." *Dt* 17: 19 shows that *reading* has a life-shaping power. The ruler was "to keep this book near him and *read* from it all his life, so that he will learn to honour the Lord and obey faithfully everything that is commanded in it." The Lord himself encourages reading.



Francis Bacon

Reading in Christian Tradition: Truth-Recognition, Life-Transformation.

In fact, Jesus rebukes the members of his community for not understanding correctly the texts they read. He asks at *Mt* 12: 3: "Have you never *read* what David...?" and at *Mt* 12: 5: "Or have you not *read* in the Law of Moses that..." He is insistent. He asks again at *Mt* 19: 4: "Haven't you *read* the scripture that says...?" and at *Mt* 21: 16: "Haven't you ever *read* this scripture...?"

Jesus remains persistent. He asks at *Mt* 21: 42: "Haven't you ever *read* what the Scriptures say? 'The stone which the builders rejected as worthless turned out to be the most important of all'" and again at *Mt* 22: 31: "Haven't you ever *read* what God has told you? I am the God of Abraham..." There were occasions when Jesus himself took up the book and *read* it aloud at a gathering, e.g. *Lk* 4: 16, in the Nazareth synagogue, inviting a response.

Here again, the practice of collective self-examination before the teaching of the Sacred Book had earlier parallels. While *2 Kgs* 22: 8 speaks about the discovery of the book of the Law in the Temple, *2 Chr* 34: 19 describes how the king tore his garments in grief when he realized during the *reading* that his people



had not been true to the Law. At *Neh 8: 3* we see Ezra *reading* the Law to the crowds from dawn until noon and all listening with rapt attention. They too wept over their failure.

There were situations where the texts *read* needed to be explained. At *Dan 5: 17*, Daniel offers to *read* a text to the king and interpret its significance. The context invites a decision. Again, *Acts 8: 27–38* tells how an Ethiopian officer was *reading* the book of *Isaiah*, and how he welcomed Philip's explanation and accepted to follow the teaching of Jesus. Reading then is a part of Christian heritage.

Reading Opens Out a New Vision.

It is said that Anthony of the Desert changed his life to become the founder of a religious movement in the Egyptian desert only on hearing a challenge from the Gospel read out in a Christian gathering. His vision changed and his life was transformed. He became one of the first pioneers of the radical living of the evangelical message in community in the early Church.



Augustine

Augustine had a stormy early life. He was not unfamiliar with the text of the Bible but on a particular day, he was touched to the heart as he read a passage from Paul. This revolutionized his life. He gave up his evil ways and emerged as an eminent Church leader. His writings in turn have remained inspiring reading material for Christian teachers and social thinkers down the centuries. His *Confessions* is considered a classic.

Ignatius of Loyola was moved, reading of the lives of saints while he lay recovering from an injury. He saw he could be a hero in God's service, and not merely in the battlefield as he had earlier thought. He became the founder of the prestigious religious organization called the Jesuit Order. His followers would pioneer into the world of education, and encourage reading, writing, specialized study, and intelligent thinking. His *Spiritual Exercises* provides inspiration even to business executives today, as Benedict's *Rule* does.

The writings of persons such as Thomas a Kempis, Thomas Aquinas, Alphonsus de Liguori, Francis de Sales and others have remained bestsellers to this day.

Reading Transforms Society.

Nor is this possibility of a renewed vision limited to the religious sphere alone. Entire societies have been transformed under the influence of the writings of diverse social thinkers. Charles Dickens educated the public about the horrible conditions under which industrial labourers lived in England in his times. Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* turned out to be a response, though of a revolutionary nature. Despite the hurt it imposed, the world changed radically with it. Social structures in every continent are different today because of books such as these.

Adam Smith's understanding of the economic processes as presented in his *Wealth of Nations* differed greatly from that of Karl Marx—but their readers kept reflecting, sharing their reflections worldwide, and inviting action. Social orders and relationships changed. Failure of these theories on either side exposed their limitations; exaggerations prompted other alternatives; uncertainties urged compromises, collaboration, and holistic thinking. New social patterns emerged. Today, it is being recognised that all collaborators in the economy are equally important, that weaker communities should be respected and assisted.



Relevant Reflection Makes a Greater Impact.

The timeliness of a publication is key to its success. Never was a book more topical or psychologically better timed than Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, highlighting the evils of slavery. No wonder 3 000 copies were sold on the first day of its publication, and the rest on the second day. The book provided the needed spark for change – and change did come.

The size of the book makes little difference. Voltaire made this curious remark, "It is always the little books, packed with emotions, aflame with passion, that do the business." Books such as Paine's *Common Sense*, Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity*, and Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, were mere pamphlets – but they shook the world, stirred the mind.

It was from Thoreau's writings that Mahatma Gandhi developed the idea of 'Civil disobedience'. He learnt from Emerson as well, and kept quoting also from Tolstoy's, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. Gandhi's message in turn re-crossed the oceans to inspire people as far apart as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Vaclav Havel. Social relations, governance styles, and scientific perceptions were all radically transformed with the publication of similar books.

Reading Transforms Human Understanding of the 'Self' and of Surroundings.



All books seek to contribute to human self-understanding: our origins, identity, immediate surroundings, the wider Universe, social processes, and ultimate destiny.



When I am referring to different books and the influence they had on society, I am not evaluating their merit or demerit in this discussion, but merely pointing the impact they made on human thinking. All books seek to contribute to human self-understanding: our origins, identity, immediate surroundings, the wider Universe, social processes, and ultimate destiny. Thomas Malthus' *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, created a sensation in its time, but the anxiety it created passed with changed perceptions. But Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* and other writings on psychology have left a definitive mark on human self-understanding.

Something similar happened when Rachel Carson published her *Silent Spring*, describing the irresponsible use of insecticides and other pest controls. This was to awaken humanity to the problem of pollution of the air, water, and land. Automobiles today are filling the cities with lethal fumes. Waste is being dumped into rivers and lakes, killing fish and reducing potable water resources. Oil wastes are poured into the sea killing millions of seabirds and ruining beaches. Irresponsible atomic waste disposal threaten the very existence of the human being on earth.

A sense of responsibility must be awakened concerning such problems.

Looking for Answers in a Problem-Ridden World.

A book that can have enormous social consequence is Thomas Piketty's recent study, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Over two and a half million copies were sold in three years. Piketty cautions us against the possible return of the 19th century situation of gross inequality in the 21st. The widening of inequality has been aggravating worldwide. It is a great mission to search for remedies.

Referring to the global phenomenon of violence today, Taj Hashmi argues in his *Global Jihad and America*, that a committed enemy that feels wronged and humiliated is bound to grow stronger and stronger. He is referring to Islamic resistance to external interference in their native lands in the Middle East and North Africa. He feels, in an asymmetrical war, the weak feels justified to strike back in unexpected places and in unexpected ways. We are suffering from the consequences.



In such a situation, these words of Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese General, should stir us to a sense of duty, “Deep knowledge is to be aware of disturbance before disturbance, to be aware of danger before danger, to be aware of destruction before destruction, to be aware of calamity before calamity.”

Reading Can Stir a Sense of Mission.

The problems today are diverse, distressing and defiant. The word ‘anger’ has become the commonest word in today’s political discourse. Vicious cynicism competes with contemptuous derision and violent vocabulary. Things seem to be getting worse daily. The causes for this state of affairs are evident: spiritual exhaustion, moral collapse, neglected social norms, absence of credibility, non-functioning structures of governance, and clashing of ideologies.

Before such gigantic problems, a Sense of Mission arises by itself in the hearts of responsible readers, insightful thinkers. No wonder Tolstoy exclaimed, “The Kingdom of God is within you.” In fact, he was quoting Jesus, who also said, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit, they are life” (Jn 6: 63), they ensure a future. If this is true, reading His words opens up new vistas towards solutions. The book of *Revelation* says, “Happy is the one who reads this book,” and happy are those who obey it (Rev 1: 3). Reading then points to Redemption. Be ye good readers.

All books seek to contribute to human self-understanding: our origins, identity, immediate surroundings, the wider Universe, social processes, and ultimate destiny.

BOOK REVIEW

Life to the Full

(2018. Graham Rossiter. Published by the Agora for Spiritual, Moral and Religious Education, Sydney)



The book is available for free download in pdf file format from the Agora website. See Below.

This book is about 21st century religious education in Australian Catholic schools. It identifies and addresses positively many of the issues in contemporary Catholic school religious education. It sets a new agenda.

While focused on the Australian context, it is relevant to Catholic schooling internationally, and much of its content is also pertinent to religious studies in public education.

While scholarly, and pertinent to the tertiary study of religious education, it will make eminent sense to teachers, especially at secondary level, resonating with their experience and reflecting some of the best thinking and praxis in the field. This is ‘reality-based’ religious education at its best. It should be essential reading for all in Catho-



lic Education leadership.

The author: Graham Rossiter has had a long career in Catholic religious education both as a teacher and university scholar – having worked in Australian



Catholic University for many years and more recently at BBI – The Australian Institute of Theological Education.

What the book is about

Life to the full argues that in addition to educating young people well in their own religious tradition, religious education needs to resource their personal spirituality by helping them to learn how to interpret and appraise the shaping influences of culture. A critical, inquiring, reflective, research-oriented pedagogy has much to offer for young people's study of contemporary spiritual/moral issues, as well as formal religious content.

This volume deals with what a lot of books on religious education tend to avoid, the relatively secular spirituality of most pupils and their low level of interest in religious education. It proposes how a Catholic school religious education can be meaningful and relevant to all its pupils, whether they are religious or not.

It gives special attention to the historical development of secularisation, which is not necessarily 'the enemy'. This helps educators understand secularisation and how they might teach about it. In addition, it looks at how many secular people today are still quite 'religious', but their principal 'religion' is, in effect, a consumerist lifestyle, which is fuelled by what scholars call 'media orchestrated imaginations of what life should be like'. If consumerist lifestyle seems to function psychologically like a 'religion', then it merits a critical study, along with the study of world religions.

The book examines evidence of problems in Catholic religious education that have arisen from excessive use of ecclesiastical language for articulating its purposes. It proposes a more direct approach to explaining what it means to educate today's young people spiritually, morally and religiously.

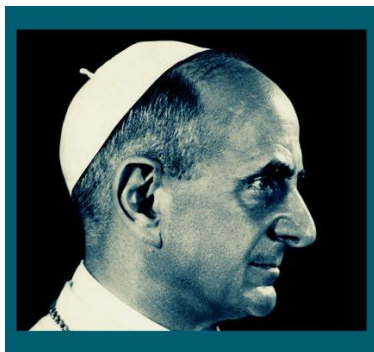
Download the book free at <http://e-learn.acu.edu.au/grrossiter/book/index.html>

For any inquiries contact g.rossiter@bigpond.com

NEWS

50 Years of *Humanae Vitae*

(The Southern Cross July 22, 2018)



50 Years *Humanae Vitae*

“Pope Paul discerned many of the harmful consequences of a sexual revolution that in 1968 was still nascent

- Günther Simmermacher

Much has changed in the half century since the release of Pope Paul VI's controversial encyclical *Humanae Vitae* ("Of Human Life"), and yet a lot of it is more prophetic now than it was in 1968.

While it is tempting to reduce *Humanae Vitae*, released 50 years ago on July 25, to its prohibition of the conjugal use of artificial contraceptives — which remains controversial even now — the encyclical was much more than that.



Indeed, in evaluating the encyclical, it may be useful to distinguish between what concerns the disciplines regarding birth control addressed to individuals, and the sociological impact of the “sexual revolution” which was driven, at least in part, by the availability and normalisation of contraceptives.

Even those who disagree with the prohibition on artificial birth control will find pertinent insights in *Humanae Vitae*, such as its concern about the devaluation and objectification of sex, the alienation of sex from its primary procreative function, the decline of marriage, and the creeping loss of the sense of sanctity of life, especially the unborn.

Pope Paul discerned many of the harmful consequences of a sexual revolution that in 1968 was still nascent.

But we must beware of using 1968 – the sexual revolution and *Humanae Vitae* – as some kind of moral breaking point. For example, the notion (suggested by an essayist in this edition) that the sexual exploitation of women, which found its opposition in the #MeToo campaign, is a result of the sexual revolution, is open to challenge.

Arguably, it is a greater openness towards sexuality which facilitated #MeToo, whereas older standards – including and especially those which preceded 1968 – tended to conceal and even trivialise sexual exploitation and violence.

All the same, sexual violence is still a reality, and it is being fed by a combination of social factors which include the modern objectification of sex – in pornography, on film and on magazine covers – as well as old-fashioned patriarchal dominion.

On the sociology of *Humanae Vitae*, most Catholics can broadly agree. But the 50th anniversary of the encyclical is a good time to bridge the polarisation the encyclical created with its restatement of Catholic tradition which proscribes artificial contraception.

For large numbers of Catholics, this polarisation is unimportant. They either follow the teachings of the Church, or they believe that the ideals

of *Humane Vitae* make unrealisable demands on them, or they choose to simply disregard the Church’s teachings in the belief that the prospect of their salvation is not diminished by the use of artificial contraception.

Before Pope Paul wrote the encyclical, he asked a commission of eminent persons to advise him on the contraception question. The commission in 1967 concluded that artificial birth control was not intrinsically evil and that its use should be at the discretion of married couples. In the event, the pope disregarded his commission’s majority recommendations.

That decision was his papal prerogative, but it cannot be said that there ever existed a consensus on the disciplines taught by *Humanae Vitae*. And experience shows that such a consensus cannot be enforced.

The late theologian Avery Dulles SJ observed in 1993 that by the time *Humanae Vitae* was issued, “many Catholics had made up their minds to follow the less rigorous opinion, which was presented as solidly probable”. The theological dissent following the encyclical “was in itself a manifestation of the popular conviction that contraception was tolerable and sometimes necessary”.

The teachings of *Humanae Vitae* can be modified, but it is unlikely that Pope Francis is inclined to do so. Rather, he may well try to bridge the gap between doctrine and pastoral application, as he has already done in other areas.

It is conceivable (to coin a pun) that Pope Francis may bring the Church in line with the widespread pastoral practice in most parishes, which leaves the use of artificial contraceptives to the informed conscience of the faithful.

At the same time, the Church must continue to point out the ethical, spiritual, social and medical problems with artificial contraceptives, and propose reasonable alternatives for family planning, such as the Billings method.

Fifty years after *Humanae Vitae*, and in the year of his canonisation, that may be a solution Pope Paul VI could accept.



The cave, the monk and spirituality

<https://spotlight.africa/2018/07/27/the-cave-the-monk-and-spirituality/>

We were taken in a whirlwind of emotions when we saw 12 teenage boys, members of a Thai soccer team, and their coach trapped in a cave for two weeks. When out on an excursion, the team explored a cave, which, in a freak turn of events, flooded and left them trapped. Maria Clara Bingemer, a popular Brazilian theologian, reflects on the experience that seems to have kept them alive during the harrowing 10-day ordeal that ensued before they were brought to safety.



For those who find their belief in humanity waning the recent episode of the rescue of twelve Thai teenagers from a flooded cave was beautifully surprising. A wave of solidarity was seen from one end of the planet to the other.

Streams of well-wishes and positive feelings from all corners of the world found their way to the cave where the boys and their coach were trapped. The heroism of so many, who travelled from other countries to assist in the rescue was admirable. In a time as troubled as our present one, this is truly a reencounter of humanity with itself, as the academic Rosiska Darcy de Oliveira said recently.

The twelve boys and their coach remained in the cave where the heavy floods overwhelmed them and kept them there isolated for days with very little food and in extremely precarious conditions. When they were eventually found, the whole world was impressed that they were in good physical condition despite the extreme situation in which they found themselves living.

But, despite this, they drew the attention of the public even more by the calm and balance that they kept throughout the rescue operation, from the time they were found to the time they were removed from the cave

It would be normal to expect fear, panic and agitation from a group of teenagers, comprising a football team, who found themselves confined in a dark cave for several days, not knowing how they would get out to safety. Insecurity, coupled with food scarcity and the limits of dry ground in the flooded cave, would be justification enough to leave the children shaken and vulnerable.

In the meantime, what we saw was a group of calm children, living through the difficulty they were going through, with a smile on their faces and with great serenity. None cried or showed any signs of anguish or distress. And, they remained like this throughout the entire rescue operation – filled with expectations and endless postponements as it was.

What is the secret of this peace and equilibrium? What spirit hovered in this cave that was able to reassure twelve children in danger? I believe that the answer lies in something that accompanies the human being from its origins and that throughout history has taken diverse and fascinating forms and configurations: spirituality. That is, the capacity of the human being to rise beyond the sensory and the rational, and to experience transcendence.

In the case of the “Wild Boars” team, that moved the world, it seems that the immediate source of their admirable coping in such an adverse situation finds its roots in the person of their coach Ekapol Chanthawong. It was he who took them on the excursion that would take them “out” of the cave while they were still trapped in it. But it was also he, who led them in the process of resistance that allowed them to conserve their life



and energies so that they could be saved and returned to their families.

The coach, before occupying himself with soccer teams, had been a Buddhist monk, living in a monastery from the age of twelve. He left the monastery to look after his sick grandmother. But it was there that, for over a decade, he also learned the method and techniques of Buddhist meditation. And when he left, he took with him the spirituality that he had lived in the monastery. The monastery had impressed itself upon him so much so, that to this day he makes a point of keeping contact with the community living there. According to the abbot of the monastery, Chanthawong continues to meditate regularly.

It seems that, when realising the situation of isolation in which he was with the boys, he began to teach them to meditate. The goal was to keep them calm and preserve their energies while they were trapped there. For two weeks, in the end. Each one meditated for an hour each day, and this helped them to resist, for the entire time that they were in the cave until they were found and rescued.

In addition to helping the boys by giving them the best that he had – his spirituality – the coach literally gave them life by taking from his own. He fasted and did not eat during the days of seclusion so that more of the already little

food available to the group would be left for the boys. And he was the last to be released and see the sunlight again. Certainly, his long years of asceticism in the monastery were central to this attitude and practice.

In this moment while we are still living, together with the euphoria of the World Cup, the relief and joy of seeing all those in the cave finally safe and sound, we are led to reflect on the importance of spirituality in our lives.

The rich, admirable and ancient Buddhist tradition aims to lead people towards enlightenment and peace of mind. It could have been another tradition. The important thing, in this case, is to realise the greatness of our human condition. So precarious and fragile that it has to rely on the little strength it has to survive in difficult situations. But, so incredibly beautiful and elevated that it is able to face great difficulties thanks to the spirit that enlivens a finite and mortal corporeality.

The team of the Wild Boars and their coach point us to a greater importance. It is necessary to cultivate the spirit, to invest in the spiritual life, be it in whatever religious tradition it is. It certainly makes life more worthy of its very name. And it can help us tremendously when we find ourselves isolated in some dark, flooded cave without even having a glimpse of a possible exit.

Ten ways the planet could tip into 'Hothouse Earth'

https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-08-06-ten-ways-the-planet-could-tip-into-hothouse-earth/?utm_source=Ince_FirstThing

(Marlowe Hood)

Even if humanity slashes greenhouse gas emissions in line with Paris climate treaty goals, the planet could overwhelm such efforts and irretrievably tip into a hellish 'hothouse' state, top scientists warn.

Under such a scenario, Earth's average temperature would stabilise 4 or 5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, rather than the 1.5 C to 2 C (2.7 or 3.6 Fahrenheit) cap called for in the 196-nation pact.

As it is, the world is struggling to curb the manmade carbon pollution that – with only one degree Celsius of warming so far – amplifies the likelihood and intensity of deadly heatwaves, droughts and superstorms.



Simply put, climate change continues to outpace the transition to a green, clean global economy.

But that challenge will become exponentially more difficult if Earth itself gets into the act, the researchers reported in the US Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

– Tipping points –

No less than ten distinct facets of what scientists call the Earth System could switch from neutral or helpful to harmful, eventually dumping more CO₂ and methane into the atmosphere than all human activity combined.

Most have temperature “tipping points” beyond which the release of these planet-warming gases would be irreversible, at least on a human time scale.

“The feedback process becomes self-perpetuating after a critical threshold is crossed,” the study said.

“The Earth System may be approaching a planetary threshold that could lock in a continuing, rapid pathway towards much hotter conditions — Hothouse Earth.”

– Weakened carbon ‘sinks’ –

Earth’s forests and oceans have together absorbed more than half of carbon pollution over the last several decades, even as those emissions grew.

But forests are shrinking, and oceans are showing signs of CO₂ saturation, according to recent studies.

These carbon sponges or ‘sinks’, in other words, may be weakening.

– (Not so) permafrost –

Methane and CO₂ trapped in the increasingly misnamed permafrost of Russia, Canada and northern Europe is roughly equivalent to 15 years of emissions at today’s levels.

The release of these gases — negligible so far — would speed global warming and, in effect, hasten their own escape, what scientists call positive feedback.

Similarly, rock-like formations in shallow ocean waters called methane hydrates — prime suspects for episodes of rapid global warming millions of years ago — are also vulnerable to global warming, but at what threshold remains unknown.

– Forest ‘dieback’ –

Global warming of 3 C could condemn 40 percent of the Amazon forests to dieback, a process that would reach well into the next century, according to recent research.

Accidental or land-clearing fires — not accounted for in these models — could hasten this destruction.

In Canada, forests that gained CO₂-absorbing biomass for most of the 20th century began to lose it around 1970, due mainly to climate-related insect infestations and fires.

Taken together, these forest die-offs would release billions of tons of carbon into the air.

– Less snow = more heat –

Dramatically shrinking polar sea ice, especially in the Arctic, means the deep blue ocean water that takes its place absorbs as much of the Sun’s radiative force — about 80 percent — as was reflected back into space by snow’s mirror-like surface.



The Arctic's will likely see its first ice-free summer before mid-century, and — in a 2C world — could be that way one-in-four years.

Over the last four decades, minimum sea ice extent has dropped by about 40 percent.

– Ice sheets, sea level –

Experts disagree on how much global warming it will take to condemn the West Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets and how quickly they would melt, but all agree that such a tipping point exists, with estimates ranging from 1 C to 3 C.

The consequences for humankind would be catastrophic: Two-thirds of the world's megacities are less than 10 metres about sea level, and is much of the agricultural land that feeds them.

Together, West Antarctica's and Greenland's frozen reservoirs would lift ocean by 13 metres.

Another 12 metres of potential sea level rise is locked in parts of the East Antarctic Ice Sheet that are far more susceptible to climate change than once thought.

– Cascading dominoes –

All of these processes are interconnected, the authors note, and the collapse of one could trigger another.

"The risk of tipping cascades could be significant at a 2 C temperature rise, and could increase sharply beyond that point."

"This cascade of events may tip the entire Earth system into a new mode of operation," said co-author Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. The "carrying capacity" of a 4 C or 5 C degree world, he has said previously, could drop to a billion people.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Season of Creation

Every year, from September 1st to October 4th, churches are called to participate in the "Season of Creation," also known as "Creation Time." Christian communities are encouraged to organize various activities on the theme of Creation Care: prayer services, intergenerational activities, conferences, activities for children and young people, fund raising, etc.

In 1989, Demetrios I, Patriarch of Constantinople dedicated the first day of the Orthodox liturgical year (September 1) to the protection of the environment. In 2015, Pope Francis named September 1st the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. October 4th is the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology in the Catholic tradition.

The Green Churches Network has created the ["Season of Creation in a Box."](#) More resources can be found at the [Season of Creation website](#). Eco-Congregation Scotland has also developed materials for ["Creation Time 2018."](#)





To qualify for CPTD points, answer the following questions.

The Transformative power of books

TRUE/FALSE (Tick the correct box) According to the author of this article or those quoted

	STATEMENT	TRUE	FALSE
1	Reading still holds out to you something invaluable.		
2	The habit of reading is like the exercise of meditation.		
3	Reading helps prevent neurological disorders.		
4	Writers shape the mind, readers change the world.		
5	Writers are history-shapers, readers are history-makers.		
6	Books have made 'continuity in knowledge' impossible.		
7	The West was never exposed to the writings of India, China, and Africa.		
8	Be selective in your reading and judicious in drawing lessons from what you read.		
9	Mahatma Gandhi developed the idea of 'Civil disobedience' from the writings of Henry Thoreau.		
10	Rachel Carson's <i>Silent Spring</i> described the responsible use of insecticides and other pest controls.		

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CREATING FUTURES



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