

**CSCS NEWS**  
**No 27            Autumn 2005**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**  
**RENEWAL OF SUBSCRIPTIONS**

**CSCS is dependent on its members. We have no other source of finance. Most members pay their subscriptions promptly, and many give donations over and above their subscriptions. We are truly grateful to them. Without their generosity we could not survive.**

**We are aware that many of our members live under great pressure – in some cases financial, in other cases in their personal and/or Church lives. We understand that there are many possible reasons why members may fall into arrears with their subscriptions, and in the past we have not been too vigorous in pursuing them.**

**Unfortunately, a small but significant proportion of our members are in arrears for 2005, and we can no longer afford this. The Committee therefore wishes to state that MEMBERS STILL IN ARREARS BY THE END OF 2005 WILL RECEIVE NO FURTHER MAILINGS.**

**If you have simply overlooked your renewal, please get in touch as soon as possible with the Treasurer, Mrs Daphne Cook, at 61 Newport Drive, Alcester B49 5BJ (e-mail [daphnecook@btinternet.com](mailto:daphnecook@btinternet.com)) so that the matter can be resolved before the end of the year.**

### **Editorial**

By far the most important development since our last issue was put to bed is the death of a Pope and the appointment of his successor. What changes that may betoken in the Roman Catholic Church, and more specifically its attitudes to issues of gender and sexuality, we cannot be sure after just a few months of the new Pontificate. But perhaps, under the surface, tectonic shifts are taking place.

John Paul II was a militant – and in some ways, it must be admitted, magnificent – exponent of a particular kind of theology and spirituality, which magnifies the potential conflicts between our Christian calling and the rich complexities of our sexualities, and concludes that the solution must lie in firm discipline if not repression. That approach has done a massive amount of harm – obviously to AIDS victims, to gay people and to women, but not only to them. David Brown's article, later in this issue, illustrates that harm, though in the case he quotes it appears to be evangelicals who are at fault. But what do we put in its place? An unbounded anything-goes liberalism? Has that never done any harm?

For me, the dilemma was poignantly illustrated by a French film broadcast on BBC2 just a day or so before the Pope's death. It was billed as a comedy, and so, for the most part, it was. But its theme was a serious one: the access of disabled people to sexual fulfilment. And this was given added piquancy by being set in a Roman Catholic care home, most of whose staff needed a lot of

persuading to look at the obvious solution to the dilemma. Inevitably, a “tart with a heart of gold” figured in that solution. The audience were clearly invited to support the idea that disabled people, who for whatever reason do not find normal sexual relationships available to them, should be given access to prostitutes, and that this could be thoroughly life-enhancing. But were they also being invited thereby to condone the web of exploitation which lies behind the sex industry, or the squalid impersonality which characterises most transactions within it? That’s a difficult one. Maybe the divorcee on the care-home staff who ended up bedding the most difficult and needy resident was offering a better solution; but, then again, what issues are raised when professional carers with legal responsibilities enter into relationships with disabled people?

There are no easy answers. It is one thing to oppose the fundamentalist (Catholic or evangelical) attitude towards sexual fulfilment because of the deep wounds it has caused, and David Brown is right to call us to a more active role in that. But the issue of human sexuality, particularly when considered in the wider context of human nature and destiny as Christian faith seeks to address them, is never simple. What do we mean by “sexual fulfilment” anyway? (If we are anything more than mere animals, it must mean something more than getting our rocks off on whatever turns us on; though we do well to remember that we *are* animals in part.) Can sexual fulfilment ever be a drug, blinding us to other dimensions of the spiritual (I choose my words carefully)? What about when one person’s sexual fulfilment causes suffering to another – a quite frequent phenomenon? What about the ambiguities of power in sexual relationships, which may be acutely present in situations such as paedophilia but are actually pretty universal in some measure? And how in any case do you reconcile fulfilment-language with other and seemingly very different forms of Christian discourse? David is right to remind us that these are all far, far bigger questions than specific issues such as homosexuality and the priesthood. If we could find “answers” to the big questions, the more specific ones would be solved far more easily. But are there “answers” in that sense? The fundamentalists say Yes. We may question their answers, but if we put other pat answers in their place we may simply be falling into the same simplistic trap. On the other hand, if we are not constantly seeking some sort of approach to answers, we have nothing to offer those who look for guidance and wisdom, and the two extreme approaches, of fundamentalism and anything-goes, will flood in to fill the vacuum.

Yet I spoke earlier about tectonic movements under the surface of the Churches. The Roman Catholic ban on contraception is almost universally ignored, and that, surely, represents a large-scale recognition of the positive value of sexual expression over and above its role in procreation. The Church of England now officially accepts divorce, admittedly under very limited circumstances; and, despite the hard line which the Anglican Communion generally appears to be taking on homosexuality and “family values”, there must be few congregations which do not include some gay people, some cohabiting people, and a variety of other “deviants”. Even US evangelicals, I am told, now encourage sexual experimentation and a search for fulfilment, albeit strictly within monogamous heterosexual marriage. A few decades ago, none of this would have been the case. In truth, I suspect, the majority of people are finding their own answers to the big questions. Often – too often – that process will lead them out of our churches. But sometimes it will not, and those who remain are amongst our most precious resources. They, after all, have done and are doing the theology. They are living it. They have discovered answers of a sort, however provisional, which work for them here and now.

It is, above all, to share this experience that CSCS exists. We began life as the “intellectually respectable” (and hence charitable) arm of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, which is why issues around homosexuality may sometimes seem to dominate our deliberations even though we have long since dropped our formal LGCM links. We remain in some measure, in intent if less so in actuality, a “learned society”, which is why we must sometimes seem all too like a talking-shop responding to the latest fads and fancies of academics interested in our area. But our ultimate aim is

to lubricate the tectonic movements to which I have referred. If the quest of the intelligent Christian can be defined as “faith seeking understanding”, then our task is to help in that search particularly for those very people for whom David Brown acts as advocate. To do so will involve serious theological work, and far too few theologians are effectively and accessibly addressing the big issues of Christianity and sexuality. But it should also involve much more mutual care, sharing of experience and education of people in the pew.

These reflections on CSCS’ role lead me to some domestic matters. First of all, I am sorry that it has been necessary to print the announcement at the beginning of this Newsletter – but needs must. Perhaps next year, if the AGM agrees a new structure of subscriptions (with or without *Theology and Sexuality*), the problem of arrears will ease – for it should then be possible to be a member of CSCS for somewhere around £15 per year for those who do not want the learned journal. Our survey of members during the Summer suggested that about two-thirds wanted to continue to take the journal; but this was on a response rate of only about one-third of the membership, so it may be that the journal becomes a minority interest. We are in discussion with Sage Publications, the publishers of the journal, about the implications of all this, and we will keep members posted.

After the (possibly) not so good news, some that is very good indeed. With this Newsletter you will receive a flyer for the major joint residential conference with the Modern Churchpeople’s Union (and the Student Christian Movement) next summer. We have some truly outstanding speakers. As one who attends MCU conferences every year, I can assure readers that this is tremendous value for money (and any full-time students who are SCM members can receive bursaries). THIS CONFERENCE WILL BE A SELL-OUT – there is an absolute maximum of 200 places – SO BOOK NOW!

Don’t forget also that we will also be having our own usual annual conference and AGM on 11 February 2006 – this time, we hope, with a distinctly ecumenical flavour. Details to follow.

Many other organisations are now interested in those great questions with which I began this Editorial and on which CSCS focuses. One of them of course is LGCM, from whose loins in a sense we sprang, and I hope you will find interest in both the book review and the flyer in this issue. MCU is another, and our links with them are proving of increasing value. There are more, including such relative latecomers as Inclusive Church. Is there still a role for CSCS? We remain the only organisation with a truly broad and multi-issue interest strictly focused on questions of faith and sexuality. In theory we are surely needed as never before. But is there a role for us in practice? Only you, the membership, can decide that. If you feel that our conferences and newsletters (let alone *Theology and Sexuality* for those who continue to take it) make no contribution to your part in the vital dialogue about sexuality and faith, then it is your right to answer No. But if you continue to be involved with us, at this challenging time, then the Committee feel confident that many will continue to say Yes. Yes to faith. Yes to sexuality as a glorious gift of God, rather than the embarrassment which some people of faith appear to find it. And therefore, hopefully, Yes also to CSCS.

*Anthony Woollard*

## **CSCS and Sexual Healing**

Just over four years ago, a young man came to see me in my professional capacity as a sexual therapist. He was suffering from depression, sexual dysfunction and social isolation. Recognising that his primary needs were deeper rooted than purely the sexual and social level, I counselled him to discover God’s Love and to open himself to the potential that his life held for him if he made the shift to finding his Real Self; the immortal, indestructible soul within which is not separate and

isolated from the Source of Love and Life. He took my words to heart and, over the next few months, and with the help of books, tapes, "God TV" and well-meaning Christian people he "became a Christian". Recently, almost five years later, he telephoned me in confusion. In effect, he has been told by his pastor and the other members of his church, that any sexual thought, word or deed (other than sex within traditional marriage) is sinful and must be avoided at all cost. Masturbation is sinful because, they have told him, he would need to be thinking sexual thoughts in order to get an erection suitable for masturbation and that the sexual thoughts were contravening Jesus' warning regarding "adultery in the mind". The young man, desperate to alleviate his depression and isolation through practicing Christianity, is still depressed and sexually and socially isolated but is now also confused, sexually repressed and frustrated.

I find myself wondering why the Christian Church seems to be so preoccupied by issues such as sex outside marriage, homosexuality, etc. when they cannot even come to terms with the concept of self pleasuring when one is alone with one's Self. Where do they get this repressive doctrine of abstention from masturbation? Is it from the Bible? What scriptural reference would be quoted; a misinterpretation of Onan spilling his seed, perhaps? Masturbation in itself is not sinful, nor harmful. What is harmful is the mistaken belief about what sexuality is and our relationship to our own human sexuality that society has projected, and the Christian religion has bought into. It is this incomplete and erroneous perception of where the source of sexuality, sexual arousal and sexual control comes from that lowers our consciousness of the place of the Divine in intimacy. The Church would do better to stop debating the ethics of *who* we are having sex with, or *where* or *when*, and start re-discovering that it is the *kind of sex* that is being engaged in that is the important spiritual issue that differentiates between the sacred and the profane.

There are primarily two distinct approaches to intimacy and sexuality; one is the "Outside-In" approach and the other is the "Inside-Out" approach. The "Outside-In" is fundamentally masculine in model and therefore the resultant sexuality is measured by performance and goals. This style of sexuality depends upon mental fantasy or stimulation to achieve an end result. The hope is that, in some cases, the fulfilment will reach the "Inside" of the participants but, in reality, it rarely does. The other approach to the sexual relationship is the "Inside-Out" approach, which is usually stereotyped as the feminine way, but is actually the naturally created, God-designed approach. "Inside-Out" sexuality starts on the inside, with the Real Self, and involves rather than being validated by the physical body. The "Inside-Out" approach is built upon spirituality and authenticity; the power is connection. This is the intimacy which God created all human beings to be capable of expressing. Fulfilment in the "Inside-Out" approach to sexuality leads the partners closer to a consciousness and an experience of God, rather than into conflict with Him / Her.

Why does Christianity produce such sexually repressed children? One reason is that it may be afraid to re-evaluate a history of patriarchal abuse and denial of the Feminine aspect of the Divine and of women and female sexuality in general. The experiential affect of Christians allowing God to become The Source of All, both masculine and feminine in energy, would be massive and would pave the way for unity of fellowship with all religions and faiths as well as restoring sexuality to its rightful place as a true gift of God to all mankind. In that process of re-evaluation of gender theology, however, Christian leaders would also have to admit that they, themselves, might not know how to make love without it being performance centred. Others may have to open themselves to the concept of teaching their congregations the positive aspects of sexuality, and would realise their insufficiency. Some ministers may feel totally inadequate with the prospect of needing being more like a real father to their flock rather than hiding behind the role of teacher, priest and guru. Spiritual sexuality requires openness, self appraisal and self awareness; to recognise vulnerability as being a character strength, which is attractive, rather than as a weakness. Others may have to open themselves to the need to counselling individuals and couples within their congregations in matters about which they have little personal knowledge. It is distinctly possible that some church ministers

and leaders may have to face the personal difficulties within their own marriage or relationship that they can otherwise pretend does not exist.

It seems to be asking rather a lot of a religion which has built a dogma of sexual control and prohibition in the name of righteousness for fifteen hundred years; this change may take the next fifteen hundred years to effect. In the short term, the answer may be for some specialised Christian Ministries, rather than the whole Christian Church, to provide a lead and to offer help to the churches or to their members in the area of spiritual sexuality. Such help could be offered by way of seminars, workshops and individual counselling and teaching. Could this be an area where CSCS could become something other than another voice that sometimes appears to be trying to persuade or argue the same theological chestnuts with the same theologians as have already been polarised for as long as any of us can remember?

I attended the last annual CSCS Conference and, while being delighted to meet others there and to listen to an admirable talk in the morning session, I left feeling a little empty. Who are we as CSCS trying to reach? What is our aim? Are we simply here to represent a balancing view on the repressive views of the Church in respect to same sex relationships; a voice calling in the wilderness? If so, what of the countless ordinary people in church pews, and those who are not in the pews but are nevertheless searching for Reality in a Christian country; many who are sexually dysfunctional or repressed or even suicidal for lack of positive help and guidance.

If the scriptures are intended to reflect the context of our contemporary culture, it is possible that Jesus may actually wish to add to the list of omissions of which the “goats” were guilty: “Lord, when was it that I saw you isolated and in despair or divorced or broken, and did not help or accept you in your need?” Then the ruler will answer them, “Just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me”.

*David Brown*

## **Book Review**

*Andrew Linzey, Has Anglicanism A Future?, LGCM 2005, pp ii + 20, ISBN 0 946310, no price.*

This short statement on behalf of LGCM in response to the Windsor Report summarises very well the problems which all liberals have with that Report and with current trends in the Anglican Communion generally. It does not, perhaps, quite answer the question which it poses – but it certainly poses that question very sharply.

The gist of Linzey’s argument is that that Report, and those trends, appear to assume a drive for international uniformity which is no part of Anglican tradition. They leave no room for the workings of the Holy Spirit in new responses to new challenges within individual churches. And they narrow down the historically very wide category of “things indifferent” (adiaphora) on which local churches and indeed individual Anglicans have agreed, and can agree, to differ. Linzey instances, from his own experience, the question of stances on nuclear war. Anglicans can and do differ on this but that does not result in breaches of communion. He does not deny that there may be lines to be drawn on some issues – but why homosexuality rather than nuclear war? And he points out that the logic of the position of some fundamentalist evangelicals, with whom present trends appear to be in sympathy, is even more rigorous than would be suggested by the exclusion of ECUSA and the Diocese of New Westminster; it would excommunicate the Archbishop of Canterbury, for a start, since he has admitted to ordaining an openly gay priest. That way lies a very narrow sectarianism.

Linzey makes clear that the doctrine of “not causing offence”, which is so central to the Windsor Report, would result in a stagnant church. He reminds readers that – however much the Report tries to gloss over the fact – offence *has* been caused by the action of certain national churches on the ordination and consecration of women, and yet somehow the Communion has learnt to live with this. Again, why is homosexuality so different?

This booklet raises many issues which cannot be addressed in so short a compass, not least about the theology of sexuality as such. Although the spirit of Richard Hooker and other mainstream Anglican thinkers lies so clearly behind it, it makes no claim to be a scholarly analysis. But as a statement to put into the hands of those doubtful on the “gay debate” within the Anglican Communion, and to provoke thought and discussion, it will beyond question be helpful to many.

*Anthony Woollard*

**This newsletter is produced for CSCS**

**Chair:**  
**Jane Fraser**  
**Sunnybank House**  
**Holly Green**  
**Upton-on-Severn**  
**WORCESTER**  
**WR8 0PG**  
**Phone: 01684 594715**  
**E-mail: [cscs@revjane.demon.co.uk](mailto:cscs@revjane.demon.co.uk)**

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE**  
**(<http://www.cscs.co.uk>)**  
**for more information on CSCS, its Committee and its activities.**

**Next copy deadline for the Newsletter is 1 December 2005.**

**Please send your contributions to:**  
**Anthony Woollard**  
**1 Chestnut Walk**  
**STRATFORD-UPON-AVON**  
**CV37 6HG**  
**Phone/fax: 01789 204923**  
**E-mail: [woollard@btinternet.com](mailto:woollard@btinternet.com).**

**Please submit contributions by e-mail if possible. If e-mail is not available contributions on disk are appreciated.**