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**"Herbert Anderson, Don Browning, Ian S. Evison, and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, eds., The Family Handbook (The Family, Religion and Culture; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998)"**

Paul J. Fitzgerald S.J.  
Fairfield University, pfitzgerald@fairfield.edu

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now-standard theological treatment. 1930 initiated the “postmodern” world with respect to contraception. In that year, the Lambeth Conference proclaimed “the first statement of approval of contraception of any major Christian church” (178) and Pius XI’s *Casti Connubii* castigated contraception as the first of “the vices opposed to Christian marriage” (180). The debate was enjoined, is ongoing in the Catholic tradition, and T. adds his contribution. *Humanae Vitae* was right, he argues, to insist on the inseparability of the unitive and procreative acts in marriage, the acts of love-making and child-making, but that does not mandate a ban on contraception. The argument of the “majority report” from the Commission set up by Paul VI is endorsed: it is not necessary for every act of sexual intercourse to be open to procreation, it is necessary that some acts be so open. It is the marriage which establishes the connection between love and sex, union and procreation, not each and every act of intercourse. The Lambeth condemnation of contraception from motives of selfishness, luxury, or mere convenience is endorsed, and so are the spousal benefits of Natural Family Planning, but the Roman Catholic ban on any artificial contraception is rejected. It is presumably because the data from the external dialogue point to the victimization of unwanted and inconvenient children and the benefit of two committed parents that the chapter on contraception follows immediately on the chapter on the liberation of children. The arguments have all been stated before, and positions have all been taken before, particularly in the Catholic tradition where the attitude towards artificial contraception

has become a litmus test of orthodoxy and clerical advancement. It is worthwhile, however, to restate them within the larger context of the external dialogue so frequently ignored in theological discussions.

I have singled out these sections of the book because they seem to me practically important and probably controversial. That I have focused on these is not to be interpreted as suggesting there is not good material in others chapters; there is. Other sections, however, are more standard. The analysis of biblical models is unexceptional, and so is T.’s treatment of sacrament, though I would have liked a greater unpacking of that concept. Divorce and remarriage continues to be a question, a huge question in the Catholic tradition. The data from the external dialogue continue to show both a high rate of divorce and the fact that Christians are no more immune to divorce than their fellow citizens. The internal dialogue about divorce and remarriage is, of course, largely about the interpretation of biblical texts. T.’s solution to the question is akin to the Orthodox *oikonomia* solution. While it may be true that what “God has joined together let not man put asunder” (Mt 19,6), it may also be true that, in certain circumstances, when a marriage is irretrievably ended, for instance, the church may separate on behalf of God. There is in the Christian Church a claim of more than human power, the power to forgive sins and to transform bread and wine into the Body of Christ. It is not a great stretch to power to acknowledge that a marriage has ended. I am no great defender of the annulment process in the Catholic Church but, for many conscientious people, annulment continues to be an accessible pastoral solution

to the difficult question of divorce and remarriage. T. dismisses it much too quickly.

That said, however, I repeat what I said at the outset. This is an honest and excellent book which will be important well into the next millennium. Everyone interested in marriage, the sacrament of marriage, the theology of marriage, and Christian approaches to marriage should have it on their shelves.

Michael G. Lawler, Omaha

ANDERSON, HERBERT / BROWNING, DON S. / EIVSON, IAN S. / STEWART VAN LEEUWEN, MARY (Eds.): *The Family Handbook*, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1998. – 345 p.

This is an ambitious book. The ninth installment in the series on “Family, Religion and Culture”, it arises within the context of the ongoing debate about “family values” that is all the rage in the United States of America. A cycle of conferences, debates and studies were organized at the University of Chicago Divinity School to dispel some of the theological, historical and social-scientific ignorance that permeates public opinion on a host of issues around marriage and family life. The present volume presents a number of experts addressing many vital questions; the editors have worked hard to include a variety of mainstream viewpoints, an example of “diversity within the bounds of reason”. Informed Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Secular views on family matters are expounded by academics and/or ordained ministers. The result is fine a resource for professionally trained people engaged in all aspects



of family ministry, from premarital counseling through baptismal preparation, child rearing techniques to ministry with the aged and the dying. The book falls at the boundaries of practical and pastoral theology. The many contributors take on the good, the bad and the ugly aspects of family life in contemporary American society: divorce and remarriage, drug and substance abuse, domestic violence and other tragedies.

Encyclopedic in its organization, the book is divided into five principle sections. Part 1 presents the four mainstream perspectives on the current state of families and marriage. Part 2 explores various approaches to “special situations” of family ministry: a very good section on marriage preparation is followed by sections on ministry to couples, to children and youth, to single parents, blended families, the elderly, etc. Part 3 assembles a number of biblical scholars who present brief studies of several Old and New Testament texts that relate to families. Some of these are quite adaptable to ministerial settings, while others are rather technical in language and in argumentation, and their applicability to present day concerns would be quite a stretch. Part 4 includes five essays on families throughout history. These give a helpful perspective on the changing nature of families and dispel the false notion that there was an ideal “golden age”. Part 5 lists and describes 96 agencies which offer a variety of support services to families facing specific tensions and crises. Addresses, telephone numbers and web page addresses are given so that readers may conduct further explorations.

The authors of the many articles are mostly Ph.D.'s who teach in seminaries or in private, religiously

affiliated universities in the United States. They represent the mainstream Protestant denominations in the US, as well as the major streams of Judaism and Roman Catholicism. Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Mormonism, Buddhism and other world religions present in the US are absent from the discussion, though the editors do include a number of entries from a secular humanist perspective. The language of most of the articles is accessible, the arguments are made in plain English, and the emphasis of the book is on pastoral practice. The book is aimed at clergy, lay ministers and health-care professionals who wish either to integrate their own spirituality or be informed about, and respectful of, the spirituality and religious tradition of the people in their care. Most articles are followed by brief bibliographies which point the reader in the right direction for further information.

The structure of the book is that of a large convention, a big-tent approach to family ministry in the pluralistic cultural context of the United States. The big questions are asked, and then one or several voices give various theoretical and practical approaches to the issues – sometimes in pretty direct contradiction one to another. In this super-market of ideas, the reader is invited to browse, dipping not only into one's own tradition but into those of one's neighbors as well. As can be expected, the entries vary in quality, at least in the eyes of this reviewer. Some are quite academic and tightly argued from solid evidence, other entries are popular in style and are tendentious in that they advocate a specific (plausible) reading of a complicated set of issues. Certainly, there is great value in this multi-voiced approach to

such sensitive matters as reproductive technology, marital preparation, and ministry to families with homosexual children. In the latter case we see an example of the typical range of views: Rabbi B. Artson concludes that “loving God and loving Torah have nothing to do with one's sexual orientation but everything to do with how one lives life”. Fr. G. Coleman urges parents to accept and love their gay children without necessarily approving of all their attitudes and behaviors. Evangelical Protestants A. Worthen and B. Davies present their work of “converting” homosexuals back to heterosexuality. Retired Lutheran pastor M. Wiberg tells the story of his and his wife's acceptance and support of their gay son. The editors place these discordant views one after the other; there is no rebuttal, no cross examination among the authors.

The strength of the book, its diversity, hides a weakness. In their desire to be “inclusive”, the editors have asked individuals to speak for large and diverse institutions within a pluralistic society. With the one exception of the case of homosexuality, where a mainline Protestant voice is presented separately from an evangelical Protestant one (and with quite different agendas), American Protestants are routinely lumped together, usually behind a liberal Protestant spokesperson. This may give the European reader a simplistic and misleading understanding of Protestantism in the U.S. A similar confusion arises in entries written from both Catholic and Jewish perspectives, and in nine of the twelve questions taken up in the second section on special situations in family ministry, a lone voice is heard on the matter. In many of the articles, the social backdrop that is assumed is that of



white middle class society – attention is given to women's issues and to those of broken and blended families, but only occasionally is there mention of the poor and of other ethnic groups.

European readers will note the "American-ness" of this book from the outset: scarcely any reference to reality beyond our borders, an implicit (and at times explicit) assumption that American middle-class culture is normative, that practical solutions are available to most problems, and that psychotherapeutic language is easily mated with theological doctrine and religious faith. Europeans will profit from this book as much from the questions and concerns that are raised as from the practical advice that is given. For its breadth of coverage, for its practical information, and for its many interesting articles, this book should be consulted by anyone engaged in family ministry.

Paul J. Fitzgerald S.J.,  
Santa Clara, CA

HEANEY-HUNTER, JOANN / PRIMAVERA, LOUIS H.: *UNITAS: Preparing for Sacramental Marriage, Leaders' Guide – Couple's workbook – Set of 3 videotapes*, New York: Crossroad, 1998.

According to John-Paul II, preparation for marriage has something of the catechumenate. The compilers of this UNITAS course to prepare for the sacrament of marriage share this "mystagogical" vision. That is why they sought inspiration for its content and method in the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults). The course's starting point is that marriage is not a private matter but is something that concerns the whole

local community. This demands much of the parish. Many people must be mobilised to shape this collective responsibility: (1) sponsor couples (2) presenters (3) prayer ministers (4) hospitality ministers (5) parish staff (6) community members. The plan is for seven sessions that treat the following subjects: (1) theology of marriage (2) communication skills (3) individual and family of origin (4) values in marriage (5) intimacy and sexuality (6) balancing practical issues in relationships (7) developing a spirituality of marriage. Various activities are provided for the sessions. Tools are provided to support these activities: questions for discussion, questionnaires and check lists, directions for role playing etc. The material offered is found in the Leader's Guide, the Couple's Workbook and on videotapes that intend to raise the efficiency of the presentations or to provide variety in the presentation of the material.

The inductive methods used here have been borrowed from adult education and are based on discussion and consultation, in which the various participants have their own role and contribution. Much attention is devoted to the ritual rhythm of the whole preparation and to the need to include moments of prayer, for which concrete examples are given. It recommends flexibility in applying the suggestions for organising sessions. Specific elements examined are: (1) time frame (2) prayer in Unitas (3) working with groups (4) couple activities (5) group activities (6) role-playing. Interesting is the way the theme communication is approached and the way it makes clear that marriage is also a "construction of reality" (the unification of different worlds). We

consider important its attempt to convince the couple of the need for a spirituality of marriage. It is in this context that we should view its emphasis on and care for the moments of prayer that have been included in the sessions and the ritualising of the preparation for marriage.

The course tries to start from the couple's real situation. This is apparent from the reference to the many mixed marriages in a modern multi-confessional and inter-religious context. It notes that the faith of the candidate marriage partners in many cases is underdeveloped or very weak and that some have a certain resistance toward the Church. It devotes explicit attention to the situation of the many couples who live together before marriage. It tries to discover the causes of this phenomenon, and offers pastoral suggestions on the subject. Despite being aware of all this, the course does not offer marriage preparation *à la carte*. The course succeeds in maintaining the normative starting points that can be deducted from a theology of marriage. It makes sensible attempts to explain the meaning of marriage as sacrament. Nothing is obfuscated: even the Catholic Church's official teaching on birth control is present without abbreviation. The course also refers to natural family planning and to further sources of information on the question.

This course is the result of a broad experience with many forms of marriage preparation: the various elements tested in several places and – as the references show – the experience of others have been put to grateful use. Its content and method fit well with several insights from research into marriage experience in modern society. Yet we