

Naomi Schaefer Riley, *Til Faith Do Us Part: How Interfaith Marriage is Transforming America*, Oxford University Press, 2013

In the last decade 45% of all marriages in the United States were between people of different faiths. A book just published by Naomi Schaefer Riley looks at the effect this has had, both for marriages and religious practice. She is well-qualified to write such a study by drawing even from her personal life, as she is of Jewish background, married to a black American who had been raised a Jehovah's Witness, although he had left this group while in college. Based on various surveys and investigations Riley noted that on the positive side interfaith marriage means that different faiths and immigrant groups are becoming part of American society. On the negative side the data she found indicates that interfaith marriages are generally more unhappy and often more unstable.

One of the main problems, she noted was that "interfaith couples tend to marry without thinking through the practical implications of their religious differences." Looking at the situation of the different faiths, Riley said that a 2001 survey showed that 27% of Jews, 23% of Catholics, 39% of Buddhists, 18% of Baptists, 21% of Muslims, and 12% of Mormons were married to a spouse with a different religious identification. Another interesting trend that she identified was that interfaith marriages are more common among older couples. According to a survey she conducted, the rate of interfaith marriage was 58% for those married between 26 and 35 years of age, 10 points higher than for younger couples. The period between when a child leaves the family home and marries is commonly "a religious downtime," Riley explained. Often marriage is

the time when adults return to church.

She also commented that many consider it is more important that couples share the same values, regardless of whether they have the same religion. The concept of common values is, however, a very generic idea and Riley wondered if it is enough of a basis on which to build a successful marriage. The substance and specifics of values come from religion, but, she added, in order to get along, many members of interfaith couples "simply stop practicing the specifics of their religion very much." "Indeed, those who marry outside their faith tend to take religion less seriously or lose their faith entirely," Riley observed. Nevertheless, she noted, "faith is a tricky thing," and events such as the birth of a child, the death of a loved one or the loss of a job can trigger a desire to return to the faith someone was brought up in.

Yet, in spite of faith being an important factor in a person's life, what stands out in Riley's investigations is the lack of serious discussion between prospective spouses about religion. She found that more than half of interfaith couples said they did not discuss the religion of any eventual children before marrying. How does this happen, she asked. Is it because of the current tendency to favor tolerance and not wanting to discriminate? Is it because people don't see religion as something important to consider in their relationships? There are also consequences for the children. A 2006 survey showed that 37% of those raised by parents of different religions reported weekly attendance at religious services, compared with 42% of those raised by parents with the same faith. An important influence is if the parents have agreed to raise the children in a particular faith. Once this is done, and if the parent who shares the children's re-

ligion is committed, then the children are more likely to practice their faith.

On the subject of divorce Riley concluded that interfaith marriages are more at risk. A 2001 survey of 35,000 respondents found that people in mixed-religion marriages were three times more likely to be divorced or separated than those who were in same-faith marriages. In fact, Riley commented, most religious leaders she spoke with advise people to marry within the faith, both for the preservation of the faith and the long-term stability of someone's marriage. In her concluding chapter Riley observed that interfaith marriage "is often a story of competing loyalties." People can place their religious lives on hold for many years, but eventually the original religious attachment reasserts itself. The trend to interfaith marriage continues to rise, Riley admitted, and shows no signs of slowing.

Apart from the impact on couples, this trend will influence churches. Many will experience a decline in membership, Riley argued, particularly those that do not easily accept interfaith marriages. One thing she recommended is that future spouses, with the support of their churches, need to discuss the issues regarding their religious differences more fully. A very useful suggestion, particularly given the problems that Riley identified in her study.

John Flynn, L.C.

Courtesy of Zenit News Agency (October 11, 2013)

Tonino Cantelmi - Marco Scicchitano, *Educare al femminile e al maschile*, Paoline, Milano 2013, 187 pp.

Puede parecer sorprendente, pero el mundo contemporáneo necesita redescubrir, en modos nuevos y bien fundamentados, cómo la dife-

rencia entre niño y niña explica por qué es conveniente ofrecer una educación adecuada, diferenciada, para cada uno. Ese es uno de los objetivos de este volumen, de fácil lectura, que se adentra en el amplio mundo de la educación infantil y juvenil, con la ayuda de algunos estudios recientes sobre el tema.

En la presentación, Chiara D'Urbano saluda la publicación de esta obra sobre la educación que se construye desde el reconocimiento de las diferencias sexuales entre el hombre y la mujer, de modo especial ante propuestas que, orientadas hipotéticamente a la (necesaria) igualdad entre los sexos, llevan en realidad al extremo de un neutralismo exagerado que olvida los datos biológicos, neurológicos y psíquicos que se explican desde la pluralidad complementaria que caracteriza a los seres humanos (pp. 5-8).

La introducción arranca con la «historia» de una niña que se siente marginada porque su padre ha escogido a sus hermanos (varones) para acompañarlo en un paseo por el bosque, y que recibe la explicación del abuelo sobre cómo tratar, de modo diversificado, a cada una de las plantas que se encuentran en una huerta (pp. 9-10). A partir de tal historia, los Autores subrayan el hecho de que la humanidad siempre se ha basado en la distinción entre las funciones masculina y femenina, mientras que la idea que considera la división de sexos como fuente de discriminaciones está creando un grave daño en el mundo educativo (pp. 12-13).

Con la ayuda de los estudios de Leonard Sax sobre el tema (según se indica desde el inicio, p. 14), el volumen dedica el primer capítulo a preguntarse sobre lo que significa educar en el mundo contemporáneo. El capítulo segundo busca evidenciar las diferencias que subyacen a los dos modos de existencia humana, masculina y femenina, con la ayuda de recientes estudios científicos. El capítulo tercero se adentra en el tema de la educación diferenciada en la familia con una mirada puesta en los padres, mientras que el capítulo cuarto analiza el tema en

las instituciones, especialmente la escuela. Estos dos últimos capítulos están acompañados, respectivamente, por dos entrevistas, una a Costanza Miriano, escritora que trata con incisividad el tema de las diferencias entre hombre y mujer; y otra a Andrea Monda, profesor de religión en una escuela secundaria y gran conocedor del pensamiento de Tolkien.

Para los Autores, como se subraya en el capítulo primero, estamos ante una auténtica emergencia educativa (fórmula hecha famosa al ser usada por el Papa Benedicto XVI en un discurso), porque los adultos han renunciado a educar a las nuevas generaciones. Por eso se hace necesario reproponer el sentido auténtico de la tarea educativa, que consiste en hacerse cargo del otro (p. 39). Ello implica no dejar de lado las diferencias sexuales, como pretende la ideología de género, si bien queda claro que hablar de diferencia no significa hablar de falta de igualdad, sino de comprender que las diferencias son datos ineliminables que enriquecen a cada persona en su singularidad (p. 35). Desde lo apenas evocado se explica el sentido del capítulo segundo, que presenta las diferencias entre lo masculino y lo femenino con ayuda de estudios recientes. Sea a nivel de la misma percepción, sea en lo que se refiere a los sentimientos y autoestima, sea en las maneras de pensar y ver el mundo externo, sea en los modos de asumir la propia sexualidad, sea en la ética, sea incluso en los tipos de juegos preferidos, entre el hombre y la mujer (el niño y la niña) hay diferencias que explican tantos fenómenos que se producen en las aulas y fuera de ellas, y que justifican metodologías educativas diferenciadas, personalizadas, en orden a conseguir mejores resultados.

Desde el inicio del capítulo tercero se critica la opción de muchos padres que renuncian a escoger lo que sería mejor para sus hijos, con lo que ello implica de derresponsabilizarse y, en definitiva, de condicionar seriamente a esos hijos en el camino de su maduración personal (pp. 104-105). Al contrario, los pa-

dres deben asumir su propia tarea, especialmente a la hora de educar a los hijos en su camino por lograr una adecuada aceptación de su identidad sexual (p. 106).

En esta parte se ofrecen consejos sumamente prácticos, sobre todo en campos como la disciplina: un modo adecuado de mandar y de exigir lo mandado, con claridad y respeto, ayuda mucho a los hijos en su camino hacia la madurez personal (pp. 120-127). También se dan cuatro pautas para que los padres, en plena sintonía y como modelos creíbles, puedan ejercitar su tarea educativa con eficacia (p. 124).

Al final de este capítulo se encuentra la primera entrevista antes mencionada, a Costanza Miriano. En la misma encontramos estas frases sintéticas sobre las diferencias entre el padre y la madre: «la madre es la acogida, el padre el sentido de la realidad. La madre es el suelo que sostiene, el padre el muro que protege pero que también limita. La madre enseña a vivir, el padre a morir. La madre hace que el nido sea acogedor, el padre da el valor para dejarlo» (p. 133).

Al entrar al capítulo cuarto, los Autores notan cómo desde que se ha implementado la coeducación, resulta casi un tabú hablar de diferencias entre los hombres y las mujeres. En realidad, y desde estudios sobre las recientes experiencias de educación en aulas donde están separados niños y niñas, se desvela la utilidad y conveniencia de esta propuesta educativa, siempre que se aplique de modo adecuado (pp. 138-141). Al mismo tiempo, con el estímulo de un artículo de Michel Size que suscitó gran polémica en Francia, se busca hacer notar que la educación igualitaria (mixta) ha llevado a un aumento de estereotipos sexistas en las escuelas, en vez de promover un clima de mayor respeto (pp. 162-163).

Tras una breve conclusión, que subraya el sentido de la obra y que invita a posteriores lecturas, encontramos una bibliografía y una lista de algunos sitios online sobre los temas afrontados.

Con este volumen se ofrece, en resumen, una nueva ayuda para com-

prender la tarea educativa a todos los niveles, en vistas a acompañar a las nuevas generaciones, constituidas por hombres y mujeres, en su esfuerzo por encontrar caminos para la propia maduración, que incluye asumir correctamente la diferencia complementaria e ineliminable entre hombres y mujeres.

Fernando Pascual, L.C.

Maciej Zieba, *Papal Economics: The Catholic Church on Democratic Capitalism, From Rerum Novarum to Caritas in Veritate*, ISI Books

Catholic social doctrine is often misunderstood and as often, simply ignored. A new book seeks to remedy this by providing an overview of more than a century of papal writings. “For a long time to come, this book may well be the definitive work on the economic teaching of the modern popes,” declared Michael Novak in his preface. It is written by Maciej Zieba, OP, a Polish Dominican priest, who was a good friend of John Paul II. He is a founder of the Kraków-based Tertio Millennio Institute, set up in 1996 to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and in particular to examine the Church’s social teaching. Zieba explained that his book seeks to correct the misconceptions about the Church’s teachings on economics. He also argued that the social encyclicals display a continuity that many have missed. For example, already in 1891 *Rerum Novarum* contained a strong rejection of socialism. In general the encyclicals endorse the market economy, but they also point out the dangers that exist. While the 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* was written in the context of a world economic depression Pope Pius XI’s criticism of the failings of liberalism did not mean he was any less critical of socialism, Zieba pointed out. The Pope also rejected a more moderate form of socialism in a combination with Christianity. Thirty years later John XXIII published *Mater et Magistra*.

It contained a defense of private property and business, but also expressed a desire to humanize work relationships.

Zieba goes on to look at subsequent social encyclicals but always within the context of a point he made at the beginning. The Church, he explained, does not endorse particular social institutions. “It reminds us, more broadly, of the relationships between man, society, and the state and of the pre-eminence of culture over politics and economics.” John Paul II also explained in his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*: “The church’s social doctrine is not a ‘third way’ between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism.” Instead it is in a category of its own based on complex human realities, faith and the Church’s tradition. Following the overview of the encyclicals from 1891 to 1987 the bulk of the book consists in a detailed analysis of John Paul II’s 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, which, as many have observed, is notable for its qualified approval of the free market.

A concluding chapter takes Zieba’s survey up to Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. According to Zieba it evokes more the spirit of Pope Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio* than John Paul II’s writings. One of the main issues highlighted by Benedict XVI is globalization. In particular he mentioned two problems related to culture. The first is a cultural eclecticism, which leads to cultures being seen as substantially equivalent and interchangeable. The second is a cultural leveling that leads to an indiscriminate acceptance of all types of conduct. According to Zieba Benedict XVI’s encyclical is often in accord with *Centesimus Annus*, but it has a more negative assessment of the modern economy.

In his closing reflections Zieba returns to the contribution *Centesimus Annus* has made to social teaching. In one part he asked if a liberal culture, economy and politics will seek to eliminate transcendent truth from public life. John Paul II,

he commented, did affirm that it is possible to build a free society that would also respect the absolute. There are, however, difficulties in reconciling the two, Zieba admitted. The influence of the Enlightenment thinkers and the more recent impact of secularization has widened the gap between Catholic thought and liberalism.

As John Paul II pointed out, the problem with the trend towards individualism and relativism is that it undermines liberalism itself both in terms of politics and the economy. In *Centesimus Annus* John Paul II argued that the market economy needed to recognize the importance of transcendent truth and a common vision of the dignity of man. “Where the Christian culture gave shape to freedom by associating it with responsibility, the Enlightenment culture produced an ideology of liberty according to which freedom is justified by itself,” Zieba observed.

Yet, as John Paul II noted in *Centesimus Annus*, “in a world without truth, freedom loses its foundation.” Zieba shows how the social encyclicals of the Church have gone far beyond commentaries on current problems in the economy, as they have drawn attention to the underlying truths about the human person. In this way, Zieba concluded, the Church can provide vital assistance to liberal culture by insisting on the need to keep freedom and truth united. It remains to be seen, he added, if this offer will be accepted.

John Flynn, L.C.

Courtesy of Zenit News Agency (November 22, 2013)

Suzanne Corkin, *Permanent Present Tense: The Unforgettable Life of the Amnesic Patient*, H. M., Allen Lane, 2013, 346 pp.

More than a biography of an individual, this publication presents a quest of the scientific community. In this quest the figure of Henry Molaison was to play a historical role. The author Doctor Suzanne

Corkin followed and studied, probably closer than anyone, the man known in journals as “HM”.

His true identity was kept secret from many. To Corkin, Henry Molaison (1926 – 2008) was much more than an anonymous initial: he was the key to new and urgently awaited discoveries. In her book we are offered an engaging account of the progress in understanding human memory from the perspective of neuroscience over the last four decades.

But how an epileptic boy came to become one of the most studied patients in the history of neuroscience? From early adolescence his seizures were so frequent and disruptive that by the time Henry was 27, he and his parents were ready to try almost anything. This was in the 1950’s when “Psychosurgery” and Lobotomies (the surgical removal of parts of the brain with a device not unlike an apple corer) were all the rage. The ethical implications of lobotomizing schizophrenics or emotionally disturbed children against their will is not going to be discussed here and is thankfully a thing of the past in most countries. In the case of Henry, an invasive procedure involving the removal of a large section of the inner brain (where the seizures originated) seemed the only hope for his future at that time. The operation was performed by William Beecher Scoville in 1953. As hoped, the result included a significant reduction in Henry’s major seizures. What no one anticipated however is that Henry would suffer the loss of a fundamental human capacity: he would no longer be able to form new memories.

Scoville confessed that he deeply regretted his mistake but there was no going back. As we now know, the removal of the hippocampi inevitably causes anterograde amnesia. Any retention of more than twenty to thirty seconds is classified as long-term memory (because the processes involved in retaining information within this short window of time are markedly different – that is, for short-term memory).

From the moment he woke from the operation until his death at the age of 82, thirty seconds had – in a sense – become the limit of Henry’s universe.

In the 1960’s neuro science was in its infancy and the tragedy of Henry’s operation coincided with a surge of interest in the study of memory. Donald Hebb’s model from 1949 gave the neurological basis for describing memory in terms of synaptic reinforcement. But this was only the beginning of our exploration at the cellular level and in 1960 we were still very far from mapping the processes on a larger level or understanding the systems of organization involved. Being an otherwise healthy individual without either of his hippocampi made HM unique from the clinical standpoint. Corkin and other scientists now had the opportunity to run all kinds of tests to try and discover the exact role of this exceptional and hitherto little known cerebral organ. The history of our understanding of the role of the hippocampus (hc) is well documented in the fourth chapter of the book.

Over the decades that followed it became increasingly evident that human memory, far from being a single basic mechanism with slight variations is rather an immensely complex collection of processes. The different types of memory, already terminologically distinguished from each other, became appreciated in a new light. To give some examples: memory can be declarative (what I did yesterday) or non-declarative (how to ride a bike). It can be episodic (events) or semantic (language based), working memory (used for mental calculation), or emotional memory... What we now know is that each of these uses an astonishingly varied collection of complex processes involving different regions of the brain in mutual collaboration. This may not sound like such a revelation but researchers into the brain often experience a sense of awe when a lump of jelly (which is what the brain is from a purely empirical standpoint) turns out to op-

erate with such unbelievable sophistication.

Another aspect in brain science which has caught the fascination of many over the last decade is neuroplasticity. However Corkin puts no special emphasis on this aspect, perhaps deliberately, since scientists of different generations still have different views on how far the term should be applied, although a consensus is foreseeable in the future.

Throughout her account of the discoveries linked to HM there are certain “mysteries” or “unexplained” incidents when he somehow remembered things that “he had no business remembering”. Could these not be evidence for neuroplasticity? Corkin does not jump quickly to conclusions. Her reflection is always based on her careful examination of the evidence and her awareness of the complexity of the mesh of elements involved.

We have seen that without the hippocampus long-term memory formation is almost invariably impossible. I say “almost invariably” because for whatever reason, there were some situations (post-operative) in which HM was able to retain data of an episodic and particularly emotional nature. For example, he retained an exhilarating experience of sitting at the controls of an airplane as a boy. There were also other memories that were perhaps not “emotional” in origin such as his ability to draw the floor plan of a house that he had known only after his operation.

One of the cautions that Corkin reiterates is that before the post-mortem examination of his brain (and meticulous slicing-up and preservation of which is narrated in the final chapter) there was no way of knowing exactly how much of the hippocampi and surrounding regions had been removed in 1953. The earlier scans gave us an idea (just under two centimeters of the hippocampal complex and a similar portion of the parahippocampal gyrus) but not with the desired exactitude. This made it difficult to exclude the possibility

that residual parts of these systems were functioning (in a very impaired way) and allowing for the “exceptions”. Even after the post-mortem examinations however the mystery is given to conclusive explanation.

The role played by emotion in forming lasting memories is undeniable. Corkin mentions the power of emotions in shaping memory when she recounts the incident of the roadside accident that HM saw and was shocked by – he retained this for days afterwards. Another example was the absence of his mother when she was too ill to take care of him. Whether the factor of emotion as a powerful motor of neuroplasticity is given enough consideration here is probably something that future studies will have to elucidate better.

Benjamin Errington, L.C.

Rodney Stark, *How the West Won: The Neglected Story of the Triumph of Modernity*, ISI Books, 2014

The unique contribution of Western civilization to world history is the theme of Rodney Stark’s latest book. In his previous book, “The Victory of Reason,” Stark examined in detail the contribution made by Christianity to Western civilization. His new book concen-

trates more on general cultural factors, without ignoring the contribution made by Christianity. His book, he noted in the introduction, is “remarkably unfashionable.” Typically, today in universities, courses in Western civilization are depicted as being excuses for Western hegemony and oppression.

Why is it, Stark asked, that the Western Europeans were able to achieve such a remarkable level of technological superiority compared to other regions of the world? While factors such as climate and natural resources can play a role, Stark focused above all on the role of ideas. How is it, he asked, that science developed to the degree that it did only in the West? “We owe this belief partly to the ancient Greeks and partly to the unique Judeo-Christian conception of God as a rational creator,” he said. Stark then goes on to an extensive historical overview, ranging from Greek and Roman society, through the following centuries up to the scientific developments in the early modern world, the period of colonization, the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution.

In relation to the role of religion Stark said that “faith in progress was fundamental to western Christianity.” This was in contrast, he noted, to Orthodox Christianity and to Islam. Stark also offered interesting reflections on the role of

Christianity in the rise of capitalism. The Bible may well condemn greed, but it does not condemn commerce, he noted. Evidence of the positive role of Christianity is the flourishing of the Italian city-states. The Christian conception of God, he continued later, “continually prodded the West along the road to modernity.”

Stark concluded by observing that building a modern society depends on much more than just owning cell phones and drinking Coca-Cola. Democracy is sorely lacking in Middle Eastern countries and in China, he noted. “A substantial degree of individual freedom is inseparable from Western modernity, and this is still lacking in much of the non-Western world,” he commented. Western modernity has its limits and defects, Stark admitted, but it is better than any of the alternatives. This is so not so much because of its superiority in technological matters, but because of its commitment to freedom, reason, and human dignity. The tragedy today would be for society to turn its back on religion, supposedly in the name of progress, only to find that it has shut off the greatest source of its success.

John Flynn, L.C.

Courtesy of Zenit.org
(March 30, 2014)