James Likoudis

As with Pruss and McCarthy’s argument, it seems to me that Flannery has provided decisive reasons to reject GIFT. And Watt’s concluding essay suggests that GIFT in fact violates the “no replacing the marriage act” principle, for whether there is a marriage act in respect of those sperm that are deposited in the vagina, the sperm which are intended to fertilize the oocyte are not those sperm, but sperm held back, washed, and then replaced by catheter into the fallopian tube. It is not clear that these sperm should be considered part of the marital act, or that their holding back is morally justified; if not, GIFT is doubly deficient.

A review of this brevity cannot do full justice either to these arguments, or to the merits of the essays and the collection overall. Suffice it to say that *Fertility and Gender* is an auspicious beginning for the Anscombe Bioethics Centre, and will serve, as will the Centre itself, as an essential reference point for further inquiry into Catholic teaching on marriage, sex, and reproduction.

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In this brief volume, well-known Catholic author, translator, and writer Kenneth D. Whitehead gives a remarkably concise exposition and convincing defense of the doctrinal continuity of Vatican II’s *Declaration on Religious Freedom* (*Dignitatis Humanae*, hereafter *DH*) with past Catholic teaching. The conciliar *Declaration on Religious Freedom* has remained a source of great controversy in the post-conciliar period, giving rise to the only organized major schism, that of Archbishop Lefebvre and his followers, as well as to a spate of other “traditionalist” sectarians—all of whom have accused Vatican II of a radical break with past Catholic teaching on religious liberty. Some “traditionalists” became outright schismatics in denial of the truth of *DH*’s teaching on religious freedom while others have candidly expressed their inability to resolve what appeared to be a contradiction of past Catholic teaching because of *DH*’s doctrinal formulation of religious liberty as “one based on affirming the human dignity of the religious believer.”
As Whitehead notes, “Prior to Vatican II, Church teaching had emphasized the duty of both individuals and society itself and even the State to serve God and the (true) Catholic religion. In this perspective, a favored principle was that ‘error has no rights.’ Hence it was not seen as necessary to accord ‘liberty’ to religious beliefs, opinions, and viewpoints that were not in accord with Catholic truth and that hence by definition were not true. Toleration of them seemed to be the most that could be required, and there were sometimes even some question about that.”

Whitehead observes that long before Vatican II, Pope Pius XII and various astute theologians such as Archbishop Eric D’Arcy, Cardinal Augustin Bea, and the Jesuit John Courtney Murray, had sought to come to grips with one of the major political-religious objections impeding the evangelizing mission of the Church. As Cardinal John Henna expressed it at the Council: “We must put an end to the accusation that the Church claims liberty when she is a minority and suppresses it when she is in the majority.” It is to the credit of the American bishops at Vatican II that they were “solid in their support of an affirmation by the Church of the principles of religious liberty,” for they had seen the Church flourish under the American constitutional system and the First Amendment. A major address by Bishop Emil de Smedt of Bruges, Belgium, laid out carefully and systematically the theological case for DH and thus “enabled the Council Fathers to see that what was being proposed was not contrary to traditional Catholic teaching but rather supplemental and developed.” Whitehead notes significantly that “the traditionalist attacks on DH that came after the Council failed to take into account that both the arguments and the [Papal] texts they adduce against the Declaration had all been thoroughly aired and discussed at the Council before the Declaration on Religious Freedom was finally voted.”

It was the persecutions of the Church by nineteenth- and twentieth-century tyrannical States that spurred an Ecumenical Council to affirm the “inviolable rights of the human person” as including “the right to immunity from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups, and every human power, so that, within due limits, nobody is forced to act against his convictions nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in conformity with his convictions in private or public, alone or in association with others” (DH 2). But how could this be reconciled with “traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ”? This was the burning problem facing the Fathers of Vatican II leading to the various drafts of Dignitatis Humanae and fierce debates among cardinals and bishops whose differing positions are concisely given. The history of Christianity from the time of
Constantine had led many to think that: “If religious truth is God’s truth, then it surely must apply to everybody, and everybody must therefore also accede to it, even if compulsion is required to bring that about. So goes the logic—an all-too-familiar way of thinking!” This, unfortunately, was the logic that obtained for centuries among Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants whose religious tenets were often imposed by the confessional State. The same logic is in evidence today. Today, it is “religious truths” that are being enforced by murderous Islamist regimes and intolerant Hindus, whereas it is “secular truths” that Christophobic European Unionists and American secular humanists seek to impose upon others through the power of the laicist State.

Our author shows well that DH has, in fact, made the Church the world’s greatest defender of human rights and religious liberty against the injustices perpetrated by the totalitarian and collectivist State. He emphasizes that DH was “not a new teaching superseding an old teaching.” Man’s natural right to religious freedom has indeed grown in historical experience. “The idea of religious freedom for all was not an idea that ever got easily and naturally developed in the course of human history.” In a true development of doctrine taking place in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, men of the Church were to realize that though “error has no rights,” the human person does. Even the man in error retains the right to be free from coercion for it was increasingly grasped that “the right to religious freedom is based on the very dignity of the human person as known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself” (DH 2). The only limitations on religious freedom were grave violations of public order involving injustices against others’ human rights. In short, as Whitehead carefully explains, DH’s declared aim was to establish the general principle of freedom from coercion in matters of religious belief and practice, and as a civil right to be upheld by the public authorities. Contrary to the many misconceptions of Vatican II detractors, none of this involved rejection of belief in the Catholic Church as the true Church of Christ, the future possibility of a Catholic State, or the acceptance of that religious indifferentism, ideological liberalism, and theological Modernism so often condemned in papal encyclicals.

This handy volume is recommended for its clear and fair exposition of Vatican II’s authentic doctrine on religious freedom and its historical background. Whitehead argues convincingly that DH’s teaching on religious freedom did not contradict past Magisterial teachings, and refutes the false teaching about the legitimacy of dissent and “freedom of conscience” which noted rebels from Catholic teachings have alleged to be taught by DH. Stressing that past expressions of the Church’s ecclesiastical law and
policy were based on an inadequate theology of religious liberty would have strengthened the author’s welcome commentary on *DH*. It resulted in the Catholic State’s placing restrictions on non-Catholic worship and propaganda but such was not the expression of the definitive doctrine of the Church. A pre–Vatican II theological thesis widely held in the Church cannot be said to have represented the Church’s unchanging and infallible teaching. It was never declared by either the Church’s Extraordinary or Ordinary and Universal Magisterium to constitute irreformable and infallible doctrine.

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The work of historians proceeds with the processes of research and synthesis. Forgotten topics and newly discovered caches of sources frequently produce important monographs while grand narratives synthesize new research into a compelling story. James M. Woods, professor of history at Georgia Southern University, has written *A History of the Catholic Church in the American South, 1513–1900* to collect the research, appearing mostly in obscure books and academic journals, on Catholicism in the South. Well-written, informative, and well-researched, Woods’s “institutional narrative” of the Church in the South is a major historiographical contribution to American religious history and will become the standard work on the subject (xiii). Although Woods disclaims originality in his introduction, his unique analysis emerges through his view of Catholicism in the South as a “tapestry of faith” with many influences (xiii, xv). Woods argues that Southern Catholicism “is a unified cloth of religious doctrines and beliefs, to be sure, yet with many different colors and hues spread across its texture” (xv). The varied influences on southern Catholicism explain both its successes and failures.

Woods first covers the colonial era, demonstrating that the Spanish and French experiences in what would become the American South laid an uneven foundation for the Catholic religion. Spain planted missions and settlements in Florida, parts of what became Georgia and South Carolina, and Texas. Despite the work of many missionaries, the missions did