

The Best People are Home-made

By Father James Tierney

INTRODUCTION

MANUFACTURED used to mean 'made by hand'. Now it has come to mean the opposite, not made by hand, but made by machine.

Thus words can play tricks over a century or two.

Also, 'made by hand' originally meant 'made at home', in the days of family farms and cottage industries.

When it comes to people, home-made is still the best. Machine-made people, still a rarity, were fore-told in gruesome detail in agnostic Aldous Huxley's horrible book, *Brave New World*, way back in 1935.

It wasn't that Huxley himself was a horrible man: it was the horrible world he portrayed, where all human reproduction was by IVF; where the movies had progressed to 'the feelies' — the viewer/listener held on to electrodes to feel by electrical impulses what the actors felt.

Thus in the *Brave New World*, human beings were manufactured — in the modern sense of manufactured — just like Henry Ford's production line for his T-model cars. Indeed, people exclaimed, "O Ford!" and made the Sign of the T. And there was only one Bible still in existence, kept carefully locked in a safe. Religion, along with the family, was abolished.

The word 'mother' was banned from the language. Normal motherhood never happened — except on a reservation for primitive Indians.

What a horrible world! Children were **not 'made at home'**. Children had no home and no family. Children had no mothers and fathers. Children had no brothers and sisters.

The simple truth is that it is best for children to be home-made. The best people are home-made people.

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

This text is from Father Tierney's *Cardinal Newman Catechist Centre Newsletter* n. 57, August 5th, 1988

DID YOU grow up in a family where you were blessed with a really good sister?

For a man or a woman, the inspiration of such a sister is one of the greatest supports anyone can have.

The cheerful goodness of one's own sister is the reason why our whole community agrees to call a trained nurse, "Sister". **It is also the reason why the Catholic Church uses words from family life for the mode of address to a woman in Religious vows. She has become a sister to all in the Church family. She is a source of encouragement and very much the mainstay for the many enterprises of holy mother Church.**

Similarly the men who group together in non-clerical Religious orders are called "Brother", because they are all that a good brother can be, and more, to each man and woman in the Church. "They loved each other like brothers..."

"Sisters" and "Brothers" who group together as Religious make vows of chastity, obedience and poverty, so that they can live together in a community

which is consecrated first to God, and then to some work of the apostolate.

The usual way of being a lay apostle is to receive the Sacrament of Marriage. In this sacrament a baptized man and woman minister to each other the grace of the sacrament, so as to be able to live as husband and wife, and to become the father and mother of a Christian family. They give and receive this sacrament when they make their marriage vows before the witnesses required by the Church, usually a priest and two other witnesses.

Less usual is the calling to remain single, to remain unmarried and to offer one's celibacy or virginity to God, while following an ordinary secular calling.

But the special way of following Christ, apart from receiving Holy Orders, is to be a lay person in a special community, in other words, a Religious. This is a higher calling than marriage although it is not blessed by a special sacrament. It is higher because it is a spiritual marriage with God, and also an image of the Church after the Second Coming of Christ, when all who are saved will become as Religious are now, brothers and sisters in the Lord, totally consecrated to His Worship and Service. In the world to come, there will be no more sacraments, and no more giving and being given in marriage, so it is fitting maybe that the Religious life which directly expresses this is not itself a sacramental state.

Meantime the ordinary laity work for the Kingdom of God by consecrating the world to God in their daily lives. They are helped in this sacred task by the example and work of the Religious.

Greatest of all is the priest. St. Francis of Assisi, himself a deacon, said that if an angel appeared to him with a priest, he would greet the priest first.

The priest consecrates the bread and wine, to make them the Body and Blood of Our Lord. It is His Sacrifice he offers, so that all the baptized can offer, and so Christ can be received in Holy Communion. The priest also forgives sins and gives the Anointing of the Sick.

These things the laity cannot do: their priest is greater than they. Some today react to this with envy: "No one can be greater than I". To which God answers, "Why not?" When you think of it, this envy is a denial of grace, that free and undeserved gift of God, whether it is the *character* of Holy Orders or particular charisms given only to some. We are now coming to realize the blasphemy of the ego-philosophy promoted catechetically since 1971, promoted among Religious even earlier, which turns a man in on himself, "a great *I am*", full of discontent, envy, pride, anger and hate.

The Gospel answer is humility, the First Beatitude, *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of God*. Besides, the best people are home-made, in a family, where roles are different and complementary, and each lives for the others, "that we might live no longer for ourselves, but for Him"!

The Greatest Thing in the World: Love

An Address on 1 Corinthians 13, by HENRY DRUMMOND: this excerpt on GOOD TEMPER

ST PAUL passes this thing, Love, through the magnificent prism of his inspired intellect, and it comes out on the other side broken up into its elements. And in these few words we have what one might call the **Spectrum of Love**, the analysis of Love. Will you observe what its elements are? Will you notice that they have common names; that they are virtues which we hear about every day, that they are all things which can be practised by every man in every place in life; and how, by a multitude of small things and ordinary virtues, the supreme thing, the *sumnum bonum*, is made up?

The Spectrum of Love has **nine ingredients**:-

Patience "Love suffering long."

Kindness "And is kind."

Generosity "Love envieth not."

Humility "Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."

Courtesy "Doth not behave itself unseemly."

Unselfishness "Seeketh not her own."

Good Temper "Is not easily provoked."

Guilelessness "Thinketh no evil."

Sincerity "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth."

THE SEVENTH INGREDIENT is a very remarkable one: *GOOD TEMPER* "Love is not easily provoked." Nothing could be more striking than to find this here. We are inclined to look upon bad temper as a very harmless weakness. We speak of it as a mere infirmity of nature, a family failing, a matter of temperament, not a thing to take into very serious account in estimating a man's character. And yet here, right in the heart of this analysis of love, it finds a place; and the Bible again and again returns to condemn it as one of the most destructive elements in human nature; cf. Proverbs 14:17,29; 15:18; 1 Timothy 3:2,11; Titus 1:7; see also Self-control, 1 Corinthians 9:25, etc.

The peculiarity of ill temper is that it is a vice of the virtuous. It is often the one blot on an otherwise noble character. You know men who are all but perfect, and women who would be entirely perfect, but for an easily ruffled, quick-tempered, or 'touchy' disposition. This compatibility of ill temper with high moral character is one of the strangest and saddest problems of ethics. The truth is there are two great classes of sins — sins of the *Body*, and sins of the *Disposition*. The Prodigal Son may be taken as a type of the first, the Elder Brother of the second. Now society has no doubt whatever as to which of these is the worse. Its brand falls, without a challenge, upon the Prodigal. [For example, Henry Lawson's *Ballad of the Elder Son*, which is, unfortunately, quite bitter.] But are we right? We have no balance to weigh one another's sins, and coarser and finer are but human words; but faults in the higher nature may be less venial than those in the lower, and to the eye of Him Who is Love, a sin against Love may seem a hundred times more base. No form of vice, not worldliness, not greed of gold, not drunkenness itself, does more to un-Christianize society than evil temper. For embittering life, for breaking up communities, for destroying the most sacred relationships, for

devastating homes, for withering up men and women, for taking the bloom off childhood, in short, for sheer gratuitous misery-producing power, this influence stands alone. Look at the Elder Brother, moral, hard-working, patient, dutiful — let him get all the credit for his virtues — look at this man, this baby, sulking outside his own father's door. "He was angry," we read, "and would not go in." Look at the effect upon the father, upon the servants, upon the happiness of the guests. Judge of the effect upon the Prodigal — and how many prodigals are kept out of the Kingdom of God by the unlovely characters of those who profess to be inside? Analyze, as a study in Temper, the thunder-cloud itself as it gathers upon the Elder Brother's brow. What is it made of? Jealousy, anger, pride, uncharity, cruelty, self-righteousness, touchiness, doggedness, sullenness — these are the ingredients of this dark and loveless soul. **In varying proportions, also, these are the ingredients of all ill temper.** Judge if such sins of disposition are not worse to live in, and for others to live with, than sins of the body. Did Christ indeed not answer the question Himself when He said, "I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of Heaven before you." There is really no place in Heaven for a disposition like this. A man with such a mood could only make Heaven miserable for all the people in it. Except, therefore, such a man be born again, he cannot, he simply *cannot*, enter the Kingdom of Heaven. For it is perfectly certain — and you will not misunderstand me — that to enter Heaven a man must take it with him.

You will see then why Temper is significant. It is not in what it is alone, but in what it reveals. This is why I take the liberty of speaking of it with such unusual plainness. It is a test for love, a symptom, a revelation of an unloving nature at bottom. It is the intermittent fever which bespeaks the intermittent disease within; the occasional bubble escaping to the surface which betrays some rottenness underneath; a sample of the most hidden products of the soul dropped involuntarily when off one's guard; in a word, the lightning form of a hundred hideous and un-Christian sins. For a want of patience, a want of kindness, a want of generosity, a want of courtesy, a want of unselfishness, are all instantaneously symbolized in one flash of Temper.

HENCE it is not enough to deal with the Temper. We must go to the source, and change the inmost nature, and the angry humours will die away of themselves. Souls are made sweet not by taking the acid fluids out, but by putting something in — a great Love, a new Spirit, the Spirit of Christ...

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE from *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1958: Henry Drummond, 1851-1897: theological writer and revivalist; brought up in Free Church of Scotland, hi 1883, he published his *Natural Law in the Spi-ritual World*. In later years, he conducted successful mis-sions to universities of Great Britain. He was well known as a geologist/explorer in North America and Central Africa.