

Tories Pro Vita

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FOOD AND DRINK by J. Alan Smith

Food and drink are the subjects of the first two of the Corporal Works of Mercy: feeding the hungry; and giving drink to the thirsty. These are more than nice things to do if we have a spare moment: we are instructed to perform these works at the risk of our immortal souls, as clearly laid down in Matthew 25: 31-46.

Recent changes in medical practice have undermined the universality of these duties. Where the provision of food and water is made by tube it is argued that these services have undergone a substantial change and become medical treatment.

On the other hand it is clear that the provision of food and drink by tube is essentially different from medical treatment. If inappropriate medical treatment is withdrawn from a patient, the patient *may* die if no better medical treatment is found: however, the cause of death will be the patient's original illness and not the withdrawal of the inappropriate medical treatment. In contrast, if food and drink are withheld, the patient *will* die from starvation or dehydration, unless some other cause of death intervenes. This is sometimes called 'death with dignity'.

One example used to argue for accepting the practice of withholding food and drink from 'hopeless' cases is that of Tony Bland, the victim of the Hillsborough disaster. The popular myth is that he died when his life-support machine was switched off: but he was not on a life-support machine. Food and water were withdrawn from him and he died as a result of a lack of hydration and nutrition.

The decision to withdraw food and water from Tony Bland was taken to the courts before it was implemented. Regrettably the Law Lords decided that food and drink could be withdrawn: as Beachcomber pointed out: 'Justice not only has to be seen to be done, it has to be seen to be believed.' Fortunately, we do not live in a country where the decisions of senior judges are treated as Holy Writ: if we believe a judicial decision is in error we have a right to seek to overturn it through Parliament. Baroness Knight of Collingtree, who, as Mrs, later Dame, Jill Knight, was the Conservative Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston, 1966-97, has introduced into the House of Lords the Patients' Protection Bill to ensure that patients may not legally be starved to death.

Perhaps we are seeing a polarization of views, depending on whether or not physical death is believed to be the end of life: between a Third Reich functionary putting down 'useless mouths' in the economic interests of the State and a Mother Teresa caring for a dying baby retrieved from a dustbin to do 'something beautiful for God'.

The SPUC Conservative Group comprises those members of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children who are also supporters of the Conservative and Unionist Party: *Conservatives and Unionists protecting human life from the moment of conception until the time of natural death.*

CONSERVATISM MAGAZINE

Conservatism is the quarterly magazine of the Conservative Christian Fellowship. Like the Fellowship it does not insist upon specific policies as the only way of advancing a particular principle or worldview. All articles — including the editorials — are personally signed and are the view only of the individual authors. Most contributors are members of the Fellowship but people of other religious and secular belief systems are also invited to participate in the magazine's discussions.

The four pillars of *Conservatism's* own worldview are listed below:

Respect for all human life: Created in the womb by God until the end of natural life; the biblical worldview teaches that every life of every skin colour and every degree of physical or mental ability is infinitely valuable.

Liberty within community: Marriage, church and nation have been instituted by God for our freedom and well-being. The right to live freely and choose one's own beliefs is essential to human dignity. Freedom flourishes within strong civil societies that nurture citizens of character and compassion.

Compassion for every neighbour: We are called to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger and visit the prisoner. Good neighbours will oppose injustice and share wisdom, time and money with those in need.

Stewardship of Creation: Wealth creation and development must benefit the world's poor and succeeding generations as well as meet today's needs. We are all responsible for good stewardship of God's beautiful, but broken, world.

Membership of the Conservative Christian Fellowship is £20 a year (£9 for the unwaged or low-waged). Members receive *Conservatism* automatically. It is, however, available, without membership, for £15 a year. Contact: Conservative Christian Fellowship, 32 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HH (Tel: 020-7984 8200).

E-mail: www.ccfwebsite.com ; website: ccf@conservatives.com .

SNIPPETS

Prag No. 90, *Feast of the Annunciation 2003*, contains 'An Attack on the People' by Dr Douglas A. Sylva, an exposé of the United Nations Population Fund's promotion of abortion. **Prag** is a 'Christian, Tory Quarterly', edited by J. Alan Smith. Annual subscription is £4 from: Prag Publications, 40 Albany Court, Epping, CM16 5ED. E-mail: j_alan_smith@dial.pipex.com .

The October-December 2002 issue of **Right Now!** contains 'Engendered Confusion' by J. Alan Smith, an examination of sex-change operations. Annual subscription for six issues is £11 from: Right Now!, PO Box 2085, London, W1A 5SX. E-mail: rightnow@compuserve.com ; website: www.right-now.org .

UNIONIST Issue 32, Sept/Oct 2002 contains a review by J. Alan Smith of **A Way of Life: Affirming a Pro-Life Culture in Northern Ireland**. Annual subscription is £4 for six issues, payable to 'Christopher Luke' from: Christopher Luke, Flat 5, Kirkdale House, Kirkdale Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN1 2SB.

Tough Talking from the Right No. 19, July/August 2002, contains an item on 'The Practice of Euthanasia'. Contact: TTFTR, PO Box 29208, London, SE8 3ZU.

Tories Pro Vita is sent automatically to members of the SPUC Conservative Group. If you are not a member of this Group but would like to join: if you are already a member of SPUC, contact the Membership Department and ask for your records to be updated with the fact that you are a supporter of the Conservative and Unionist Party; if you are not already a member of SPUC: contact them at the address below; ask for a Membership Application Form; complete it and return it, stating that you are a supporter of the Conservative and Unionist Party. Printed and published by SPUC, Phyllis Bowman House, 5/6 St Matthew Street, London, SW1P 2JT.