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Kevin Hume

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### *The Scientific Foundations of the Ovulation Method*

by Thomas W. Hilgers, M.D.

*Pope Paul VI Institute Press, Omaha, NE*

It was a happy day for humanity when Dr. John Billings in 1953 reluctantly responded to the persistent imploring of Father Maurice Catarinich, a marriage guidance counsellor, to assist him in overcoming problems encountered in the teaching of Calendar Rhythm at Melbourne's Catholic Family Planning Centre. He offered his services for three months but, like the rest of us, Tom Hilgers included, became enmeshed in the absorbing and fascinating study of human fertility; he found his life gradually taken over in the course of his development of an entirely new approach to natural family planning. Now in 1995, long past normal retirement, John Billings, one of Australia's most outstanding neurologists, and his wife Evelyn, trained as a pediatrician, find themselves fully committed to meeting urgent requests from every corner of the globe first to inform and then to train teachers of the Ovulation Method in their respective countries, of which the latest is the People's Republic of China.

Dr. Thomas Hilgers has set out, as he says in his introduction, to compile the extensive scientific framework on which is built what John Billings has named the Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning. The BOM (Billings Ovulation Method) by which it is affectionately known to the now thousands who comprise the international OM family of enthusiastic teachers and promoters, is unique in its development. It was developed initially by a team of clinicians and cooperating couples working together for ten years before Dr. James Brown, a world renowned expert in the study of ovarian hormones, was captivated, by the team's excellent groundwork. He offered the facilities of his laboratory to underpin the authenticity of the BOM by hundreds of hormone studies. He is still working, developing and refining an affordable do-it-yourself kit to help in difficult areas, such as breastfeeding, women coming off the Pill and the premenopause.

The team was expanded by the contributions of endocrinologists of repute such as Professor Henry Burger and Dr. John Casey, and gynaecologists like Dr. Patricia Harrison who worked with nursing mothers applying the BOM to avoid follow on pregnancies. Meanwhile, the Billings had identified the Peak symptom while the pre-ovulatory dry day was later established as an expression of infertility. By 1968 the method, already carefully evaluated in Australia, was ready for export and the saga of its penetration of what at first was a very hostile medical world, began.

From the mid 1970's onwards the development of the method received a tremendous fillip by its absorption and utilization of the totally independent researches on the bio-physical properties of the cervical mucus by Professor Erik Odeblad of Umea in Northern Sweden. Dr. Hilgers, already involved with the BOM, was stimulated by Erik Odeblad's studies and undertook independent research on the correlation of crystallization patterns of the cervical mucus and the women's own observations of the mucus discharge on the vulva. From that time onward, Dr. Hilgers has set his own course of research. He has specialized in the development and refinement of teaching the method. He raised the standard of teaching to university level by instituting courses devoted entirely to a thorough study of natural family planning and especially to his unique system, well described in this book as the Creighton Model of the Ovulation Method.

As those fortunate enough to obtain a copy of this book will find, Dr. Hilgers has produced for us a compact account that is notable for its thoroughness. He is a person obviously in love with his subject and anxious to share his knowledge down to the last detail. This he has achieved with carefully phrased definitions and meticulous attention to clinical and scientific data well displayed by charts, graphs and tables.

His book remains true to his objective, being "written primarily with scientists and physicians in mind." There is more than enough here to satisfy the thirst for knowledge of the scientifically

inclined. It opens up a new vista for physicians whose professional minds have been occupied over the past three decades with the suppression of fertility by drugs and devices and the "quick fix" of sterilization. In spite of these "advances in fertility control" marriages and less permanent unions have been put to the guillotine by all the trappings that have accomplished the sexual revolution.

As the author says the BOM is not a contraceptive method. It belongs in a class of its own because of its ability both to assist conception and to postpone it, while measuring up to the standards of effectiveness in avoiding pregnancy as determined by the terminology imposed by the proponents of contraception.

Dr. Hilgers has shown us how the BOM is an invaluable diagnostic tool. It also provides an answer to the current demand for the empowerment of women by education and putting them in control of their fertility, because the method does just that.

For those inclined to think that the BOM is just a passing fad, could I suggest a few minutes spent perusing the references at the end of this book? Many doctors have been mystified by women's charts presented to them as an aid in unraveling their complaints, not realizing what valuable information they contain. *The Scientific Foundations of the Ovulation Method* deserves careful reading by physicians if they are to keep abreast of significant advances in fertility and its control. For those who already have this knowledge, this publication offers a handy, compact book of reference for a method of fertility control whose time has come.

— Dr. Kevin Hume, KSG, FRACGP  
Sydney, NSW, Australia

## *The Mystery Hidden for Ages in God*

by Paul M. Quay, S.J.

*American University Studies, Peter Land, N.Y. Pp. 438, \$63.95*

For a world mired in self-absorption, Paul Quay's book is liberating. Although written for the professional theologian, the ideas presented as part of American University Studies' Theology and Religion Series combine ecclesiality and originality. The book culminates Quay's lifetime of prayer, study, and spiritual direction. In the personalist mode he utilizes his encyclopedic knowledge of scripture and patrology to teach about, and how to attain, the individual union to which God calls each one of us. Quay begins with the question of why Christianity is not more persuasive to non-believers, and examines the question not just from the point of view of the believer but of the object of our belief — God.

The seminal absence of the life of grace at the time of our conception limits our human vision. Original sin negated the love of God in all of us. Baptism begins the life of grace but leaves us the struggle to reach self-possession so as to be able to give ourselves to God, and to others, in true love. Quay shifts the perspective from man to God. In Chapter 3, he examines the inner structure of uncreated love: the loves between the Father and the Son, and the Son for the Father, and the love of the Spirit, which is the Glory of the Father and the Son. This chapter culminates in a novel and excellent solution of the *Filioque* controversy, proposing how the Holy Spirit, as the Glory of the Father and the Son can be viewed as the reciprocal praise of known excellence — the definition of Glory. Thus the Spirit can originate in the Father and be reflected in the Son in such a way that it appears to originate from the Son as well. The Love of the Trinity for Jesus the man extends through Him to all of Creation and becomes the source of our own love for the Trinity through the primal gift of Christ Himself in the Incarnation and our own Baptism.

Each Christian is called to recapitulate Christ's life, even as He recapitulated the entire life of Israel, and thus pass through many purifications to share in the Mystery of Christ. Because the Church is the new Israel, recapitulation must be within the Church, including its institutional aspect, a Church called to transcend as well as transform all cultures. When Western Christendom lost the understanding of the significance of the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament it became rigid, macho and authoritarian. The consequent loss of the feminine caused a lack of balance which of necessity emasculated Western Christendom. A lack of balance prevents reaching maturity. This