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CATHOLIC UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN: PRESS RELEASE

RESPECTING CONSCIENCE AS WELL AS EQUALITY

Around 40 people turned out on one of the coldest nights of the year last Thursday (1 March) to hear Professor Roger Trigg of Oxford University speak on “Cakes, Conscience and Freedom” at a lecture organised by the Catholic Union Charitable Trust.

Prof. Trigg posed the question at what point do we in a democracy coerce people to do something that they seriously believe is wrong? With respect to cases such as Ashers Bakery, the so-called “gay cake” case in Northern Ireland, he said that in a clash between religious freedom and equality laws there should be room for a “reasonable accommodation” of conscience. He cited a recent decision of the Ontario Supreme Court in the context of assisted suicide which would force doctors declining to assist on grounds of conscience to ensure an “effective referral” to another doctor. He said that the State was imposing its law and not respecting alternative points of view whereas in a democracy we can often learn from debate with our opponents even if we end up holding our own position more strongly.

He concluded by saying that “Liberalism” betrays itself by pursuing equality at the expense of freedom. Reasonable accommodation of conscience is essential. If public policy bears down on the public manifestation of religion, democracy is in danger.

The Catholic Union of Great Britain: The Voice of Catholics in Public Life

President: Sir Edward Leigh, MP

Vice-Presidents: Professor Lord Alton of Liverpool, Baroness Morris of Bolton OBE, Lord Clarke of Hampstead CBE, KSG,
Mr Jonathan Evans MP, Mr Robert Ffello, Professor John Haldane, Baroness Hollins, Dr Terence Morris,
Mr John Deighan KSG, Mr Leo Simmonds KCSG

Notes for Editors:

A photo is attached featuring from left to right:

David O'Mahony (Chairman), Prof Roger Trigg, Nigel Parker (Director).

The Catholic Union was founded in 1870 and is the voice of lay Catholics in public life. It makes representations to Parliament, the Government, regulatory bodies and the media.

For more information please contact:

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