

# WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

diary@thetablet.co.uk

## Palpably marvellous

IN THE latest volume of his memoirs, *Varying Degrees of Success*, which covers the years 1992-2020, David Lodge recalls a visit to Chicago in 1995 to speak at a literary festival. The night before, he had dinner with Fr Andrew Greeley, the extraordinarily prolific sociologist and novelist, at a restaurant in the John Hancock Centre, a celebrated modernist skyscraper and city landmark. To Lodge's surprise, it turned out Fr Greeley lived in a spacious and meticulously furnished apartment in same building.

The next day Lodge spoke in the cavernous St James Episcopal Cathedral. "I belong to the last British generation for whom marriage was the only socially approved way of having sex," he told his audience. "There was a special twist to the Catholic teaching... in that when you finally succeeded in getting married you had to choose between having less sex than you wanted or more babies than you wanted." Lodge gambled that there were enough Catholics in Chicago who had read *How Far Can You Go?* for this line to get a laugh.

DAVID LODGE reveals in *Varying Degrees of Success* (published next week by Harvill



Secker) that he "got the idea" for *Thinks...*, his 2001 novel mixing campus politics and Catholic guilt-tinged adultery with ruminations on the mind-body conundrum, from a long review by John Cornwell in *The Tablet* of some recent books about human consciousness. Lodge spoke generously of us when he gave the star turn in 2015 at the literary festival in Birmingham that marked our 175th birthday. Nearly six years later, we're having another bash at a festival – though this time we aren't able to offer the lure of a day out in Birmingham

to help sell tickets. All the events are online.

The novelist Francis Spufford is among our guest speakers. When he was interviewed by Peter Stanford for *The Tablet* earlier this year, he reflected that it was a mistake to try to sidestep, ignore or somehow justify things that go wrong in the Churches. "Christianity is not a clubbable, lowered-voice, best-behaviour, Sunday-best kind of thing ... it is not a denial of the chaos and destructiveness of human experience, but an accepting reconciliation of them, arms wide open."

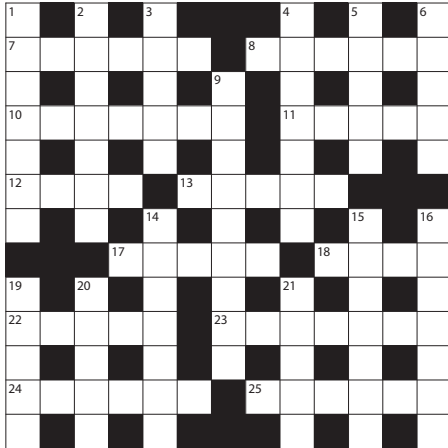
How does such talk go down in the literary circles in which he has moved since starting his career working at a publishing house? Spufford pointed to the transformative role of the Pulitzer Prize-winning American novelist Marilynne Robinson. "She is so palpably marvellous, and her marvellousness is so palpably connected to her faith, that she has prised open a space in literature for people to be curious," Spufford said.

And guess what? On Saturday 28 May, as well as Spufford and Stanford, Marilynne Robinson will be talking to Erik Varden about the themes of fall and redemption in her novels.

For more details of the programme and to book tickets, go to [www.thetablet.co.uk/events/96/the-tablet-spring-festival-all-events-online](http://www.thetablet.co.uk/events/96/the-tablet-spring-festival-all-events-online).

## PUZZLES

### PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 757 Enigma



Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 22 May, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: [thetablet@thetablet.co.uk](mailto:thetablet@thetablet.co.uk), with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Augustine, Christianity and Thomas Aquinas – from the OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random. **We are processing entries but there may be a delay in notifying winners and sending out prizes. Please keep entering.**

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### Across

- 7 A Roman god is heard to support you and me (4,2)
- 8 "British Overseas Possessions", written by a British politician in Ireland (6)
- 10 His great endurance as is his work in a laundry (4,3)
- 11 Stupid in an emergency (5)
- 12 Sent away for decades (4)
- 13 Change the publicity about those chaps (5)
- 17 I am in the soup for being devout (5)
- 18 I write a misleading claim while I am running this (4)
- 22 So Tim leaves it out! (5)

- 23 Ridiculously pleased that time has gone by (7)
- 24 Used to keep stocking up (6)
- 25 What the man I love lacks is some direction in finance (5)

### Down

- 1 Prevent alumnus going through the outskirts of Trieste (7)
- 2 Story of a Catholic nobleman (7)
- 3 Two rings found in the mud at an Italian cathedral (5)
- 4 I am bent on describing what is in the immediate surroundings (7)
- 5 Guy is a bit sick at heart in Italy (5)

- 6 This tells the truth about power (5)
- 9 One can be terribly mean and rude about nothing when in love (9)
- 14 3 Down transported to England (7)
- 15 I'm employing someone who makes me laugh (7)
- 16 Slipped a theologian among those who descended the slope (7)
- 19 Dole out a quarter of the gold to accommodate the Freemasons (5)
- 20 Started a fire, but hesitated to come back with this much water (5)
- 21 That's a malfunctioning drain of the worst kind (5)

### SUDOKU | Beginner

	3			8			
2	5						8
				4	2		7
							1
				6	4		
7	4		5			2	6
		3		8			
					7		1
	6	8	4		9		

Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

### Solution to the 1 May puzzle

7	1	3	8	9	6	5	2	4
4	2	8	3	5	1	9	6	7
6	5	9	2	7	4	8	1	3
5	9	4	6	2	7	1	3	8
3	6	7	9	1	8	2	4	5
1	8	2	4	3	5	6	7	9
8	7	6	5	4	2	3	9	1
9	4	5	1	6	3	7	8	2
2	3	1	7	8	9	4	5	6

### Solution to the 1 May crossword No. 754

**Across:** 1 Amoeba; 5 Lucid; 8 Latin; 9 Parable; 10 Adam; 11 Flyovers; 13 Sedan; 14 Drill; 19 Appraise; 21 Ogre; 23 Sunrise; 24 Totem; 25 Madam; 26 Treves. **Down:** 2 Methane; 3 Etna; 4 Appals; 5 Larboard; 6 Cable; 7 Dressy; 8 Loam; 12 Paradigm; 15 Legatee; 16 Passim; 17 Assent; 18 Perm; 20 Pined; 22 Sty.