

THE BISHOPS & MARRIAGE

In 2015, in *The Family Under Attack* (Loreto Publications, 2015) the Italian priest and seminary lecturer who writes under the name Don Pietro Leone published a theological analysis of the changes that have been mandated by the popes since the Second Vatican Council. We attach an extract (published originally on the website OnePeterFive.com) which goes far to explain the reasons behind the effeteness of Australia's Catholic bishops over marriage and their abandonment of a right understanding of its essence.

The deference to the novel teachings of recent popes, grounded in philosophical and theological incompetence, allied with the ethos of Vatican II that the Church must reconcile herself to the views of the secular world, has served to paralyse the bishops' ability to think and to act in accord with the Church's constant teaching.

The root of the problem has to do with the most important of the causes, the final cause, in the subversion of the primary end of marriage. Get the end for which you are acting wrong and everything else goes wrong. *Circumspicite!* Look around you. That is just what is happening today. For this chaos we can thank the bishops of Vatican II.

A catalyst was Pope John Paul II's reinvention of the Church's teaching so as to elevate man over the nature God had given him. The heresy involved is the ancient one called *Gnosticism*. Don Leone lays out its characteristics—

“[I]t is opposed to Grace and objective Truth, both natural and supernatural ; it attributes equal value to all religions and philosophies ; it is radically subjectivist and anthropocentric with a particular accent on experience and sensuality ; it proclaims as its primary and essential dogma the self-divinization of man.”

A critical element of this abandonment of Catholic principle was John Paul's deference to feminist ideology which denigrated to the point of extinction the subordination Almighty God had ordained between man and woman. The wilful distortion of the Church's interpretation of sacred scripture he undertook in his early Wednesday Audiences was to emerge in the “theology of the body”. Errors precipitated by this deference to feminist ideology infects the Church from top to bottom. The vernacular translations of the sacred liturgy are riddled with them. Our bishops are terrified to open their mouths for fear of offending those whose lack of belief in God is only matched by their belief in political correctness.

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EXTRACT FROM DON PIETRO LEONE'S *THE FAMILY UNDER ATTACK*

A SHIFT IN THE CONCEPT OF LOVE

Church Tradition distinguishes between three basic forms of love. First there is sensible love (or the passion of love), of which sexual love is an example ; second there is rational love (or the virtue of love); third there is Charity, which is that form of rational love which is elevated by Supernatural Grace to love God as He is in Himself and the neighbour in, and for the sake of, Him.

The change in doctrine on the part of Churchmen from the time of the Second Vatican Council onwards with their openness to the World in all its manifestations, and more particularly in their teaching on marriage, consists essentially in the substitution of the Christian love of Charity by sensible love : the senses, sensibility, sentimentality.

THE INVERSION OF THE FINALITIES OF MARRIAGE

Now the Church teaches that marriage has three finalities [1] : 1) the procreation and education of children ; 2) the mutual assistance of the spouses ; 3) the remedy of concupiscence. The Church teaches further that the first finality is also the primary finality (see the Magisterium, the Holy Scripture, patristics, and the traditional arguments of speculative theology).

In opposition to this teaching, certain modern authors hold the view that the good of the spouses (cf. the second finality) is on the same level as, or on a higher level than, the good of the children (cf. the first finality).

This modern view has been condemned by the Magisterium. A Declaration of the Holy See of April 1944 (AAS XXXVI p.103) poses the question:

'Can one admit the doctrine of certain modern writers who deny that the procreation and education of the child are the primary end of marriage, or teach that the secondary ends are not essentially subordinate to the primary end, but rather are of equal value and are independent of it?

They replied:

No, this doctrine cannot be admitted'.

In his *Allocution to the Midwives* (1951) Pope Pius XII refers to such doctrines as 'a serious inversion of the order of the values and of the purposes which the Creator has established Himself.'

Despite these declarations, this modern view was re-proposed on the floor of the Second Vatican Council, and found its way (albeit in covert form) into the texts of *Humanae Vitae*, and from thence into the New Code of Canon Law, the New Catechism, and *Familiaris Consortio, inter alia*.

Theology of the Body must be seen against this background. Even if it does not explicitly deny that the procreation and education of children is the primary finality of marriage, it is almost exclusively concerned with spousal love, at best mentioning procreation simply as an adjunct, as when the Pope, in reference to 'the communion of persons which man

and woman form...’ adds: on ‘all this, right from the beginning, there descended the blessing of fertility’ (Nov. 14th 1979).

As for the particular understanding of conjugal love manifest in *Theology of the Body*, namely that of reciprocal self-gift, we observe that this understanding was already present in certain of the authors who denied the absolute priority of the procreative finality of marriage. The Declaration quoted above states that certain of these authors take as the primary finality : ‘the reciprocal love of the spouses and their union to be developed and perfected by the physical and spiritual gift of their own person’ and Pope Pius XII in the Allocution quoted above states similarly that some of these authors take as ‘the peculiar and the deeper meaning of the exercise of the marital right’ : ‘that the bodily union (be) the expression and actuation of the personal and affective union’, and adds that : ‘We are face to face with the propagation of a body of ideas and sentiments directly opposed to serene, deep, and serious Christian thought.’

A NEW VISION OF CONJUGAL LOVE

We here consider in more detail the thesis that the act of conjugal love consists in ‘the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife’ (*Familiaris Consortio* n. 32, quoted in the new Catechism [CCC] n. 2370. This thesis forms the basis of the entire system of *Theology of the Body*).

The thesis is *prima facie* false : first metaphysically, because the human person is incommunicable ; second physically, because the act of conjugal love essentially involves the seeking and taking of pleasure, without which it would indeed be impossible ; and third morally, because the Church teaches first that the husband has power over his wife’s body and the wife over her husband’s (I Cor.7.4) which means that each partner must not only give but also take ; and secondly (and more generally) that total self-giving love is commanded (and indeed only possible) to God alone (Lk. 10.27), whereas man is commanded to love his neighbour to a lesser degree, and where conjugal relations are concerned, with modesty and moderation [2] (cf. Roman Catechism on the Use of Marriage). Indeed to love one’s neighbour with a total love would be idolatry. [3]

In the light of the distinction about the three types of love made above, the act of conjugal union in its ideal form is to be understood rather as an act of sensible love informed by rational love, which enables one spouse to love the other not as an object but as a person, and further informed by Charity, which enables the spouse to love the other in, and for the sake of, God.

SILENCE ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF THE HUSBAND AS HEAD OF THE FAMILY

What is notably lacking in *Familiaris Consortio*, the new Catechism, and in recent Church marital teaching on the magisterial, episcopal, and even purely parochial level, is the doctrine that the husband is the head of the family as Christ is Head of the Church. Similar tendencies are seen in the *Theology of the Body* of Pope John Paul II. This doctrinal deficiency is re-inforced by the new liturgy in which the relevant passage in St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians (chapter 5) is no longer obligatory, but rather optional alongside a number of other possible readings (among which is a reading from the same chapter from which the key verse 23 has been eliminated).

It would seem that those responsible for the respective sections in the Second Vatican Council together with Pope John Paul II were seeking to substitute this doctrine with a doctrine denoting total equality based on the equality of personal dignity. The Pope quotes *Gaudium et Spes* in the abovementioned encyclical (n.19) as follows : 'The unity of marriage confirmed by the Lord appears very clearly also in the equal personal dignity of the man and the woman, which must be recognised in mutual and full love' ; similarly (n.22) : 'First and foremost the equal dignity and responsibility of the woman is to be stressed in relation to the man.' What we see here is the suppression, or the passing over in silence, of a Catholic doctrine established by Tradition and rooted in Holy Scripture itself in favour of a purely philosophical principle.

This philosophical principle, that of the equal dignity of the husband and wife, clearly does not elect either of the two spouses as head of the family ; rather it leaves open who is to assume this role in any given case. The result of this silence concerning the man's authority has clearly contributed to the domineering stance of the wife manifest ever more clearly in contemporary marriages in regard to the running of the family.

It is regrettable that the result of this silence on the part of the Magisterium corresponds to profoundly anti-Catholic ideologies and attitudes, such as feminism, and the emasculation of the image and figure of the man, the husband, and the father[4].

AN ANALYSIS OF THE NEW TEACHING ON MARRIAGE

We here compare 6 principal doctrines, one after the other, first the traditional, then the modern one (in its *prima facie* sense).

- 1a) The primary finality of marriage is procreation;
- b) The primary finality of marriage is love.
- 2a) Marital love is reciprocal assistance;
- b) Marital love is total self-giving.
- 3a) Large families are recommended;
- b) Small families are recommended.
- 4a) Natural birth control is disfavoured;
- b) Natural birth control is favoured.
- 5a) Marriage is inferior to the consecrated life;
- b) Marriage is on the same level as the consecrated life.
- 6a) The husband is head of the family;
- b) Husband and wife are on terms of strict equality.

In relation to this comparison, we ask the following questions, and give the following answers :

- 1) Is the doctrine the same in both cases? No.
- 2) Does the new doctrine represent a development of the old in clarity and depth? No.
- 3) Is it a different doctrine, then? Yes
- 4) Is the traditional doctrine Catholic? Yes.
- 5) Is a doctrine different from a Catholic doctrine non-Catholic? Yes.
- 6) Is a Catholic doctrine true? Yes.
- 7) Is a non-Catholic doctrine false? Yes.

We conclude that the new teaching in its *prima facie* sense is false.

But is this teaching perhaps Catholic in a secondary sense ? Inasmuch as it is not formally heretical in its original expression and does not therefore formally contradict a Catholic dogma, one should be able to interpret it in a way that conforms to Catholic teaching.

But to what end ? We surely do not want to justify these false and profoundly harmful doctrines and those who have rashly promulgated them even out of motives of piety towards a Pope or a Council. The only reason for interpreting them in a Catholic sense is to show that they are not formally heretical, but that is of purely academic interest.

The Magisterial Personalism that informs this new teaching constitutes in the final analysis a *rapprochement* with the World. But the Church's mission is not to yield to Fallen Nature, but rather to resist, combat, castigate, and heal it as much as is possible, to prepare it to receive Divine Grace in this world and the stable and definitive union with God in the next.

Magisterial Personalism has opened the door to all the abstruse divagations of *Theology of the Body*, and has helped to foment bold attempts to justify impurity in the name of 'love', culminating in various macabre non-Catholic declarations in the first Synod of the Family.

The doctrines which are informed by this Personalism together with all the other new doctrines proposed by men of the Church from the time of the Second Vatican Council onwards represent an abuse of the *munus docendi* of the Church.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF THE NEW TEACHING

The foundation for the new teaching lies in the doctrine which we may call 'Magisterial Personalism'. The motivation for this doctrine seems to be the desire to establish moral principles acceptable to all men (of good will). For this reason 'positive' elements are brought into the foreground such as the common dignity of man, and 'negative' elements are passed over such as Original Sin and Hell ; for this reason too, objectivity cedes to subjectivism, and Faith to philosophy. In this connection a broadcast by the Pope... at the time of the Second Vatican Council is revealing. In it he says: 'The Council and the Church ... regard the call concerning the dignity of the human person as the most important voice of our age... The matter of the dignity of the human person... is certainly an ecumenical element, an element common to all people of genuinely good will.' ('On the Dignity of the Human Person')

Behind the desire to establish moral principles acceptable to all men of good will is the desire, or so it would seem, to unite all men of good will. The deepest motivation of Personalism would then be the desire for union, or in other words love, since love seeks union.

In commentary it may be said first that universal philosophical principles are indispensable to the establishment of Truth, both natural and supernatural, but they must be sound and can only be applied within the boundaries that are rightfully theirs ; otherwise they do not lead to the Truth. Second it may be said that the whole moral law may be expressed by the commandment to love (Mt. 22, 40 and Jn. 13, 34) but that of

course this love must be based on truth ; otherwise it cannot in any sense be said to be authentic.

The particular error of Personalism is to accord the subject of a given nature logical priority over that nature, that is to say the subject of human nature over human nature itself. In the field of ethics this means to give priority to the order of the Good over the order of the True : to the good of the person (at least as he subjectively may view it) over his objective nature – which includes the natural law.

In the final analysis, Personalism is defective in the priority which it accords to the Order of Good over the Order of the True, to Love over Knowledge, to sensible love over the love of Charity : a consequence of its radical subjectivity.

THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE NEW TEACHING

Where do we arrive if we follow this subjectivism, this anthropocentrism, to its logical conclusion? To the divinization of man despite God, or in other words without sanctifying Grace.

Clearly this tendency is devouring the Church from within. One might ask whether it is merely a destructive tendency or whether it is in the process of substituting the Faith with a new religion, or pseudo-religion.

The answer is clear. This destructive tendency, as I have attempted to elaborate in the recent article in *Rorate Caeli*, [cf. <https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2016/10/the-new-religion-free-online-booklet-by.html>] is none other than the operation of a parasite in the bosom of the Catholic Church, that parasite which is the primordial rival of the of the Catholic Faith : the system of thought and action known as ‘Gnosis’. It is in the process of transforming the Catholic Faith into that amorphous, promiscuous, and indiscriminate mixture of truth and falsehood which is Gnosticism. This it attempted to achieve in the first centuries of Church History until it was defeated by the men of the Church : its saints and doctors. Two thousand years later it has returned to the Church in triumph on their invitation.

Gnosticism possesses the following characteristics of its parent system, Gnosis : it is opposed to Grace and objective Truth, both natural and supernatural ; it attributes equal value to all religions and philosophies ; it is radically subjectivist and anthropocentric with a particular accent on experience and sensuality ; it proclaims as its primary and essential dogma the self-divinization of man.

NOTES:

[1] or two finalities, taking the second and the third finalities together as the second finality.

[2] Moderation in the area of sexuality is equivalent to chastity; modesty is a virtue complementary to it.

[3] ...

[4] The situation is comparable to that of the man and father within the priesthood.
