

# TRIUMPH OF PROTESTANTISM IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

## The Pope Abandons Marriage's Indissolubility

The state of matrimony does not derive from human will but from nature ; it was given us with our humanity. Marriage is a bellwether issue in morals ; its right understanding is vital. It is no accident that the current problems that beset the world began over a marriage. Henry Tudor's rejection of the obligations to his wife Queen Catherine confirmed the Protestant rejection of God's authority, even as it reflected the ground on which that rejection was based, so called 'primacy of individual conscience'.

The drift to embrace Protestant values among Catholics has been with us for more than a hundred years. It threatened the Catholic mind prior to 1960 as is clear in the works of certain theologians. (Cf. John C Ford SJ and Gerald Kelly SJ, *Contemporary Moral Theology, Volume Two, Marriage Questions*, Westminster, Maryland, 1964, Ch. 1) But the drift became a flood under John XXIII and the bishops of the Second Vatican Council as they moved to compromise Catholic integrity by deferring to Protestant principle. Its influence may be seen in *Humanae Vitae* in Paul VI's elevation to parity with the procreative, as the primary end of marriage, of the unitive, the Protestant view. The concession contributed to the disobedience to the Church's teaching that followed.

The same deference has afflicted the Church's bishops since Vatican II in the *de facto* abandonment of insistence on marriage's indissolubility in their marriage tribunals and in the Nelsonian attitude adopted towards the Church's ban on the cooperation by Catholic lawyers in the evils of divorce. They have allowed respect for the world to supervene over the respect they owe Christ and His Church. This serial negligence has brought us to the apotheosis. One of their number, elevated to the papacy, has elected to make explicit the abandonment of Catholic principle under the colour of mercy, in his misunderstanding of which virtue one is reminded of John XXIII's *Opening Speech* to the Second Vatican Council.

For the abandonment of principle on marriage is the effect of the two documents issued *motu proprio* by Pope Francis, *Mitis iudex Dominus Iesus*, for the Latin Church, and *Mitis et misericors Iesu*, for the Oriental Churches (8<sup>th</sup> September 2015). He effectively dismantles the presumption of validity of the marriage bond which Benedict XIV (in the decree *Dei miseratione*, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1741) entrenched in canon law precisely to counter the Protestant influence in the Enlightenment. Pope Francis's embrace of Protestant principle is manifest in his juxtaposition of “[t]he enormous number of the faithful... wanting to look after their conscience” against the rigour of “the Church's juridical structures”.

The documents do more. They expose the reason behind the Pope's removal from office as Prefect of the *Apostolic Signatura*, in November, 2014, of Raymond Cardinal Burke. He would almost certainly have resigned in protest at their abandonment of principle. They show, too, that the Pope's much vaunted *Synod on the family* to be held in Rome next month will be largely an exercise in futility.

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The curse of the age, inherited from the Protestant revolt, is *subjectivism*, the mindset that holds that what matters is not reality but what one thinks about reality. Here, in the Pope's two decrees we see

subjectivism rampant. What matters is not *the reality* the parties have embraced, that objective thing, marriage—the state instituted by God, freely entered into for life by a man and a woman, the great gift ennobling human freedom—but what *they (or one of them!)* think about that reality.

Roberto de Mattei highlights the flaw in the Pope's approach.

The indissolubility of marriage is a Divine and un-modifiable law of Jesus Christ. The Church cannot “annul” a marriage in the sense of dissolving it. She can, through a declaration of nullity, [only] verify its non-existence, due to the lack of those requisites which assure its validity. This means that in the canonical process the Church’s priority is not the interests of the spouses to obtain the declaration of nullity but the validity of the marriage bond itself. In this regard Pius XII reminds us that, “in the matrimonial process the one final end is the judgment in compliance with the truth and the law, consisting, within the procedure of nullity, of the assertion of the non-existence of the marital bond.” (*Catholic Divorce Arrives : The Papal Marriage Annulment Reforms are a Wound Inflicted on Christian Marriage*, quoting Pius XII's *Allocutio to the Roman Rota*, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1944. Cf. *Rorate Caeli* blogsite, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015)

To understand how the Pope's initiative departs from Catholic principle we need only consider that paradigm of Protestant perversity, Henry Tudor's rejection of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. He contrived, through a declaration of nullity by Archbishop Cranmer, to have it proclaimed that he and his wife were never validly married. For greater caution he had this enacted as 'a law' by a compliant parliament. Henry lied ; Cranmer lied ; the Parliament lied. What was achieved was not annulment but divorce, and for that violence against nature Sir Thomas More, England's former Chancellor, was martyred. Convicted on false evidence of denying that Henry was the head of the Catholic Church in England, More berated the court that tried him over the cause which had precipitated the schism—

“Howbeit, it is not for this supremacy so much that ye seek my blood, as for that I would not condescend to the marriage !”

It has been the long-standing contention of this website, in the face of extensive opposition, that Vatican II was *not* an ecumenical council, and that no determination of its bishops that departed from the Church's constant teaching is binding on the faithful. In vain for the bishops of the Second Vatican Council, it would seem, did St Paul teach—

“Do not harness yourselves with unbelievers. Virtue is no companion for crime. Light and darkness have nothing in common. Christ is not the ally of Belial, nor has the believer anything in common with the unbeliever...” [2 *Corinthians* 6 : 14 et seq.]

The bishops sought, or co-operated in, accommodation with the secular world and compromise with Protestantism. The chaos that has afflicted the Church ever since is testimony to their collective folly.

The Council's fallibility is demonstrable. The chief passage to which theologians turn in their efforts to defend its integrity is found in *Lumen Gentium* n. 25 :

“[R]eligious submission of mind and will [of the faithful] must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*. That is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence and the judgements made by him are sincerely adhered to according to his manifest mind and will, [judgements] which may be known chiefly either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine or from his manner of speaking.”

That this grossly overstates the obligations of the faithful may be seen in what follows.

There have been any number of judgements of a pope since 1965 which have occasioned the gravest concern but which, “from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine or from his manner of speaking”, have manifested his “mind and will” and, in line with this ersatz statement of principle, have required of the faithful “religious submission of mind and will”. The classic instance is John Paul II's endeavours to force Sacred Scripture to conform to the demands of feminist ideology, reiterated week after week in *Wednesday Audiences* from 1978 to 1980, taught formally in the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (15<sup>th</sup> August 1988), and promoted in his catechesis, *Theology of the Body*. The teaching was patently false. Pope Francis's initiative to devalue matrimony's integrity is another such papal 'judgement' which the credulous will insist requires of the faithful “religious submission of mind and will”. It is more dangerous than John Paul's error because its evil is more subtle, inviting the legalistic defence that it involves a procedural, rather than a substantive, change in the Church's teaching. But the procedure proposed betrays the substance.

How much more sane as a statement of principle for the Catholic faithful was the robust comment of the Dominican, Melchior Cano, theologian to the Council of Trent :

“Peter has no need of our lies or flattery. Those who blindly and indiscriminately defend every decision of the supreme Pontiff are the very ones who do most to undermine the authority of the Holy See—they destroy instead of strengthening its foundations.”<sup>1</sup>

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Knowing what was about to befall the Church at the hands of the Pope, the Prefect of the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, Gerhard Cardinal Müller recently warned the faithful to exercise vigilance over the risk of imminent division in the Church having regard to the “effects of the Protestant schism” five hundred years ago. But it is precisely the “effects of the Protestant schism” that have brought us to the present pass where a pope thinks he is acting for the good of the faithful by adopting the Protestant poison. Subjectivism, materialism, occasionalism, Modernism, the 'higher' biblical criticism, agnosticism and the tendency to atheism, each owes its provenance to that revolt. Moreover, Protestantism is not just a *schism* ; it is a *heresy*.

But the greatest evil in the business is the scandal that will flow to the world at large because of the crippling of the Church's teaching function. *If the legislation embodied in these two papal documents is put in place* no longer will the irreligious, the secular or the atheistic take seriously as the mark of the Divine in nature and the antithesis of their position the Church's claim that marriage is indissoluble.

A good argument could be mounted that for fifty years a majority of bishops of the Catholic Church have conducted themselves more like sheep than shepherds. Will we see, at last, some episcopal leadership ? a refusal by certain of them to attend the *Synod* in protest at this exercise in papal folly ? Or will they fold before the specious reasoning advanced in support of the Pope's position ?

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21<sup>st</sup> September 2015— *St Matthew*

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1. Quoted in George Weigel, *Witness to Hope, The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, New York, 2001, p. 15.