

FR MCGAVIN AGAIN

Fr Paul-Anthony McGavin has published another paper purporting to justify the position taken by the heterodox bishops at the recent Synod on the Family.¹

There he criticises Cardinal Pell's upholding of the Church's teaching on marriage and the family as confusing "fundamentals and the way in which fundamentals have been interpreted and upheld in the practices of Latin tradition". There must be, he says, "a critical examination of received modes of thought and received ways of knowing what we know..." He repeats the error in his earlier paper of arguing as if what appears ("in practical terms the matrimonial state is no longer present"), the 'phenomenological' or physical, somehow abstracts from the demands of the metaphysical, the reality that marriage is an indissoluble bond.

Truth (i.e., logical truth) is the identity between what is asserted and what is. The measure is always *reality* : what is : the objective. In the case of marriage and the family, the reality is Christ's explicit words concerning the institution established by God and the Church's teaching based on those words. Fr McGavin inverts the definition. What matters is not Christ's (and the Church's) teaching on the institution, but how one interprets that teaching. Truth for Fr McGavin becomes reality's identity with *its right interpretation* which is, of course, the interpretation asserted by Fr McGavin and those of his mind. In other words, truth becomes something relative.

The distinction to which he appeals is not real but conceptual.² He may *conceive* of the fundamentals as not being in dispute but in reality the denial of principle arrived at in his interpretation disputes them. His construction is a sort of mental dressing-up, the Wolf pretending to be the benign grandmother to fool Little Red Riding Hood. Unless the faithful Catholic exercises greater prudence than the little girl in the fable he will be fooled as she was and share a similar fate.

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The present debilitated state of Catholic moral life owes much to forty years of serial neglect by a majority of the Church's bishops to teach and to enforce Catholic principle in the face of a rampant secularism and atheism. The foundation of this neglect is the ethos of Vatican II which held—and holds—that the Church's teaching

¹ *Discerning the Bergoglio mission to revivify Catholic tradition* published on the *Chiesa* website at <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1350909>

² The vice from which Fr McGavin suffers is the heresy isolated and condemned by Pius X in 1907 in the encyclical *Pascendi*. His paper is replete with Modernism's terminology ; words and phrases such as 'memory' and 'ecclesial memory', and terms, such *pericope*, which serve to degrade what Our Lord said to the level of a mere 'story' ; that Christ's teaching must be restricted to its 'cultural context' (as if the nature of man admitted of change) ; that the doctrinal must give way to the pastoral ; and so on He speaks of the metaphysical but he does not understand that the state established by mutual vows of fidelity may have no empirically verifiable mark, but it is real, as real as the souls of those who have vowed themselves, whose existence is just as impossible of physical verification.

and praxis must defer to the Protestant and the secular.³ Part and parcel of this deference is a laissez faire attitude to the institution of marriage which has seen bishops oversee the issue of annulments almost on demand. The seed long since sown, the plant has come to flower and the fruits are all about us in the gross irregularity of the lives of many who profess to be Catholic. The most telling instrument of this ethos has been the degradation of the Catholic school ; its most telling statistic the loss to the faith of millions of Catholic children whose parents entrusted them to Catholic authority only to discover too late that their bishop's negligent oversight had ensured the schools would be little better than seminaries of atheism.

Fr McGavin's solution to the resulting systemic crisis is not conversion, the return of bishops to the exercise of the duties of their office and of the priests under their authority to a strict adherence to Catholic principle, but that *they accept and endorse the moral dysfunction which has resulted from their own neglect* and modify Catholic principle accordingly.

It was almost inevitable Vatican II's admission of the secular into the realm of the sacred would produce a crisis. The crisis is almost upon us. There are only two possibilities. Either the sacred will give way to the secular or it will re-assert itself. We, who trust the promise of Our Saviour in respect of His Church, know the outcome already. Even if bishops, *even if a pope*, should fail, God's Holy Church will not fail.

Before an individual can undergo conversion of heart from his wrongful way of life, he must realise his error and identify its cause. It is the same with the members of Christ's Church. In the event that a failure to stand up for Catholic principle occurs at the highest level of the Church's hierarchy, the faithful will begin to grasp the cause underlying their failure. With the assistance of the Holy Spirit they will come to understand the truth that it was the course on which the bishops of the Second Vatican Council set the Church fifty years ago that is to blame. Once that occurs, the ground will be laid for the Church to resume her rightful position in the world.

First, however, we will need a Catholic Heracles to cleanse the Augean stables.

Michael Baker

10th November, 2014—*St Leo the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church*

³ It is no accident that Fr McGavin's distinction repeats the departure from principle accepted by the Anglican Lambeth conference of 1930.