

## THE PRICE OF ATHEISM

“Tear the very idea of God from the hearts of men, and they are necessarily urged by their passions to indulge in the most atrocious barbarity...”

Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, March 19, 1937, § 20

Those members of the Catholic faithful who, fifty-five years ago, urged Pope Paul VI to adopt the recommendations of the majority report (in favour of change) of members of the Papal Commission appointed to advise him on the moral acceptability of contraception were, in the main, oblivious of the motivation which underlay their actions.

The theologians (more than two hundred of them) who subscribed their names to the letter by Fr Charles Curran to the *New York Times* on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1968 opposing the Pope’s definitive teaching on the topic in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (July 25<sup>th</sup> 1968) were, likewise, oblivious of their underlying motivation. In each case it was a desire to reject the Divine rule reflected in the natural order. It was incipient atheism.<sup>1</sup>

In 1968, despite pressures and individual decisions in criminal cases by judges who chose to subject the principle of the sanctity of human life to the claims of individual conscience, artificially induced abortion was regarded as abhorrent. Pope Paul referred in his encyclical to the connection between the two. Contraception compromises the moral law that prohibits abortion and leads, inevitably, to a loss of respect for all of human life. The practice attacks the Fifth Commandment tacitly, undermining the society in which it is practised. Its exponents, rejecting the moral law laid down by the Author of reality for man’s good, attack God’s authority. This is inchoate atheism.

What progress the atheistic putsch has made in the years that have followed! From rejection of the natural order in sexual matters to toleration—then approval—of more aberrant behaviour in homosexuality leading to paedophilia; from denial of the order of nature in human generation to a denial of the natural order generally (manifest in enthusiasms which range from ‘gay marriage’ and ‘gender selection’ to ‘global warming’); from abandonment of the protection of the lives of the innocent unborn to a condign abandonment of protection of the lives of the elderly.

To remark the radical changes that have occurred one has only to obtain a copy of an old newspaper and compare it with a current one. Fifty years ago violence was episodic and infrequent; today it is a permanent feature of daily social life. Forty years ago one heard each morning on Australian national radio a reading from the Bible; today our national broadcaster engages in systematic mockery of religion. Newspapers and media outlets have come to be run, or to be controlled, by ideologues. The ‘news’ they publish is largely conjecture.

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<sup>1</sup> It would be instructive to investigate the subsequent careers of each of those theologians to see just how many of them have retained the faith.

'Newspaper talk' used to be a pejorative of questionable news reports; now, most news reports seem to fall into that category. Hardly a by-line appears that is not aimed at promoting social division.

Contraception has proved itself a sure means for the destruction of marriage—individual marriages ending in divorce; the married state rejected in favour of concubinage—with inevitable harm to those for whose sake marriage exists, the children. Recently I was a witness to morning assembly of one of our public high schools. The recorded background noise—it could hardly be termed music—was what one might expect from a gathering of savages. The three hundred or so adolescents were dressed to suit; untidy and disheveled, their only conformity a lack conformity, their preponderant characteristic an absence of self-discipline. What hope could they possibly have? Without some miracle their lives will be as purposeless as that of those whose bad example and lack of principle have formed them. Atheism deprives its exponents of all hope of the transcendent. No wonder western society has a problem with teenage self-abuse and suicide!

It is instructive to study the summary of the moral law contained in the Ten Commandments and note how each has been eroded by these atheistic protocols.

1. I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before me
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain
3. Keep holy the Sabbath day
4. Honour thy father and thy mother
5. Thou shalt not kill
6. Thou shalt not steal
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods

Breaches of the Fifth Commandment have proceeded apace. The killing of the innocent unborn goes on every day—and the vast majority of people in the societies in which it is practised remains silent. Old people are frequently abandoned by members of their families in nursing homes to die uncomforted. Euthanasia is promoted and legislation to permit it has been passed in various states. The Sabbath has been abandoned, and degraded, because the majority has abandoned belief in God, acknowledgement of God, and the truth that each of person is dependent on God for what he is—his *essence*, and that he is—his *existence*. This collective forgetfulness has proved convenient for those desiring to indulge in breaches of the Seventh or the Ninth Commandments, aided by the contraceptive facility; convenient, too, for those who place their security in possessions by breaches, if necessary, of the Sixth and Tenth Commandments. The blasphemies and abuse of God's name uttered daily simply confirm the contempt of society's members generally for their Creator and Redeemer.

In his 1937 encyclical condemning Russian Communism, *Divini Redemptoris*, Pope Pius XI laid down atheism's operative principle:

"[A] moral sense of responsibility... can find no place in a system as thoroughly materialistic as Communism. Terrorism is the only possible substitute, and [terrorism] having failed... to stem the tide of moral corruption... it is incapable of preventing the dissolution of society itself." (§ 23)

What the Pope said of the evil of atheism enforced through Communism applies equally in countries in which, absent that philosophical error, it has been wilfully embraced. The price of atheism is society's destruction. We are witnesses to the accuracy of the Pope's teaching that it does so through conduct which involves the most atrocious barbarity.

Atheism's flourishing in the western world was greatly assisted by the collapse of religious principle that followed the Second Vatican Council's abandonment of the Catholic Church's claim to be the one true religion on earth, coupled with its election to allow the secular access to the Church's precincts. The ethos so generated served to eviscerate the resolve of bishops and priests to stand up for the Church and for Catholic principle. Many of the priests and religious who remained, enamoured with the secular and oblivious of its accompanying perils, forsook the immense dignity of the vocations to which they had been called and indulged in sexual immorality, with the gravest consequences to those placed in their care, and the greatest scandal to believers and non-believers alike.

One can see, then, that it was no accident that the enthusiasm of the bishops of Vatican II for the program in favour of secularism they precipitated in the Catholic Church was aided and abetted by a refusal by Popes John XXIII and Paul VI to allow any criticism to appear in the Council's documents of Russia's Communist regime whose activities were steeped in atheism's protocols.

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