

The Family Under Attack

A Philosophical and Theological Defense of Human Society

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Don Pietro Leone



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*Si quid boni hic libellus continet
Beatissimae Virgini Guadalupensi
humillime dedicatur*

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“...We need now more than ever to have the courage to look the truth in the eye and to *call things by their proper name*, without yielding to convenient compromises or to the temptation of self-deception.”

–Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (58)

Preface

The shift in popular consciousness from a prohibitive to a permissive attitude towards sexuality and abortion and its consequences in terms of a viral epidemic of unprecedented scope and savagery and in terms of the direct and systematic destruction of billions of human lives each year (cf. ch. 7), represents an inordinate attack on the goods of marriage and would appear to demand, as a matter of urgency, a considered moral appraisal of the nature of sexuality, contraception, and abortion.

Such an evaluation is attempted in the present book from two distinct perspectives (although there will be a certain overlap): from a philosophical and a theological perspective,¹ from a perspective that affords the maximum possible generality, and from a perspective that affords what is arguably the most influential, the most clearly defined, and also the deepest understanding of these issues.

An adequate system of philosophy or theology produces an objective vision of reality. This is the vision that shall be presented in this book. This vision will be contrasted with the subjectivist vision of reality, be it egoist, humanist, or personalist.

In the introductory section a number of themes are presented which will prepare us to properly understand the issues in question. Among these themes are included a discussion of certain approaches to philosophy and theology found in the Magisterium in recent years (particularly under the pontificate of Pope John Paul II), most notably the confusion of the natural and

¹ We have been careful to clearly distinguish between the natural and supernatural orders throughout, especially in view of the tendency to confuse them now prevalent in contemporary thought (cf. the following paragraph).

supernatural orders, and the system that we shall call ‘Magisterial Personalism’. These approaches are hard to reconcile with Catholic doctrine as the Church has, with ever greater depth and clarity, understood and presented it over the centuries—in other words with Tradition. The duty of the teacher of Catholic doctrine, the catechist, is to present Catholic doctrine in all its depth, and with clarity. Where official declarations do not harmonize well with this doctrine, or even appear to contradict it and hence risk leading the faithful into error, it is the catechist’s task also to bring this fact to light. This task will be undertaken with regard to the confusion of the natural and supernatural orders and in regard to Magisterial Personalism in chapter three. Examples of these tendencies will be analyzed in the rest of the volume as and when they occur. In virtue of the profundity of Catholic doctrine concerning the matters treated in this volume, as indeed arguably on all other matters (cf. ch. 12), it will be prudent to take seriously the Church’s teaching that acts of sexual immorality (adultery in the generic sense) and abortion are sins the object of which is ‘grave matter’ and that sin, the object of which is grave matter, and that is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent is mortal. In other words if it is not redeemed by repentance and God’s forgiveness, it causes the soul’s eternal separation from God in Hell.

Now although we can judge that an act is in itself a mortal sin, we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God. This statement does not imply that we are to remain silent in the face of evil. Indeed the first three of the seven spiritual works of mercy are: to counsel the doubtful, to instruct the ignorant, and to admonish sinners. In light of this fact, the following pages are intended not merely to provide a moral evaluation of sexuality and abortion, but also to warn those given to contrary ways of behavior that such behavior involves the death both of the body and of the soul, and to urge them to conversion and repentance.

Part I:
Introduction

Chapter 1

Philosophy and Theology

This chapter presents, in the briefest outline, the Church's understanding of philosophy and theology, certain objections to it in general, and certain objections to it in the areas covered by this book.

Man was created to know and love God. There are two types of knowledge: natural knowledge and supernatural knowledge. Natural knowledge is knowledge acquired through experience and reason. Supernatural knowledge is knowledge attained through faith. Natural knowledge of God, of the fact of revelation, and of the signs of the credibility of that revelation, provides the foundation for supernatural knowledge of God. This supernatural knowledge transcends natural knowledge, and it is an elevation and illumination of the mind to assent to God's self-revelation on the ground of God's testimony alone.

Philosophy is the exercise of reason on the objects of human experience. It gives rise to natural knowledge, the highest form of which is the knowledge of God. It is marked by the systematic treatment of its subject matter, the certainty of its demonstrations, and the certitude of the mind in regard to its propositions. More technically it is known as the science of all things according to their ultimate causes. The Church teaches that the human mind is capable of attaining to the truths of God's existence and to the truths of morality by means of philosophy alone, but that it needs the revelation of these truths by moral necessity, in order to know them promptly, without any admixture of error, and with certitude.

Theology means teaching concerning God: “*de divinitate ratio sive sermo.*” Thus theology is the science of God. The object of theology is firstly God, and secondly created things as they are ordered to God as their beginning and end: “*Omnia pertractantur in sacra doctrina sub ratione Dei, vet quia sunt ipse Deus, vet quia habent ordinem ad Deum ut ad principium et finem.*”² As we shall later see, this definition includes the discipline of moral theology.

Theology is divided into natural theology and supernatural theology. Natural theology, or theodicy, is that part of philosophy which provides knowledge of God. It is the scientific exposition of the truths concerning God, in so far as these can be known by natural reason. Supernatural theology is the scientific exposition of the truths about God in the light of divine revelation.

General Objections

Objections are often made to the Church’s understanding of philosophy and theology; first that reason either disproves the existence of God and the soul or it gives no ground for accepting it; and second that it is possible to reach all metaphysical truth by reason alone, but that since the object of (supernatural) theology, namely the tenets of revelation, cannot be discovered by reason alone, they cannot be true.

To the first assumption it may be replied that reason can indeed prove the existence of God and the soul, by methods that will be referred to below, and to the second assumption it may be replied that although the tenets of revelation cannot be discovered by reason, this does not prove that they are untrue, for there are no grounds, apart from man’s pride, for supposing that it should be possible to reach all metaphysical truth by reason alone.

In fact, it may be shown (by the discipline known as Apologetics) that the tenets of revelation are not only not irrational but also that they are rational. To show that a proposition or theory is rational, one must either prove it rationally, or where it is not possible to prove it rationally, as in the case of the tenets of revelation or indeed of any religion, theory, or proposition with claims to truth or wisdom, one must justify it rationally. To justify a given proposition rationally, one must show first that it is not contrary to reason, and second that it provides the best explanation for some given phenomena.

² St. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* I 1.7 St. Augustine *De Civ. Dei* VIII.

When the phenomena at issue are the deepest in human experience; when they concern the foundation of morality, the nature of man, the meaning of life, death, and existence, the existence of the soul and of God, the explanation must itself be the deepest explanation of these phenomena.

Not only are the tenets of revelation not contrary to reason, but they also do arguably provide the deepest explanation of these phenomena, by reference to God's creation of man out of love, and his redemption of man out of love through the passion, death, and resurrection of his Son. This contention is offered to the reader in the barest outline. Constraints of space do not permit its further exposition here.

Particular Objections

Now, when one is considering any particular philosophical topic, one is confronted with an array of conflicting philosophical theories. Frequently it is not possible to prove which theory is correct. In such cases, as said above, it may however be possible to show that a particular theory provides the best explanation for the phenomena in question.

Such a situation exists in relation to the philosophy of sexuality and abortion. Moreover, since this philosophy addresses some of the deepest phenomena in human experience (some of the same areas as revelation addresses) such as the person, the soul, suffering, life and death, the explanation, again as said above, must itself be the deepest. This, then, is one of the criteria by which philosophical theories will be assessed in this book, especially in chapter eight.

To the reader who would deny that such philosophy concerns that which is deep, this book is not addressed; nor is it addressed to the reader who would deny that such philosophy is a serious enterprise, rather than the search for a logically coherent system undertaken as an abstract game, or in order to justify misconduct. In short it is addressed not to the shallow man, but to the man who takes serious things seriously, who is open-minded, open-hearted, right-thinking, and decent. It is addressed to the man of good will.

What is the nature of popular objection to the Church's teaching on sexuality and abortion? It may indeed be described in Pope Paul VI's words in *Humanae Vitae* (18)³ as "an excessive and

³ Throughout the book, the number(s) following the title of an encyclical or other

clamorous outcry,” an outcry which is in fact not directed against a moral system peculiar to the Church alone, but rather (as Part II of this book purports to demonstrate) against the natural law itself, the irrefutable conclusions of moral reasoning. It is the outcry of fallen man, the outcry of the passions against the intellect, an outcry both brute and meaningless.

The people who reject the Church’s teaching on these issues are typically those who do not live according to it. These may be divided into two groups: those outside the Church who reject Catholicism outright along with it, and the liberal⁴ or, more accurately, merely nominal Catholics.⁵ Suffice it to say that one who lives unchastely is not in a position to evaluate the Church’s teaching on chastity, for chastity can only be properly understood by one who lives it.⁶

Perhaps the most common criticisms of Catholic teaching on sexuality and abortion are that it is repressive and outmoded. Indeed, to many the term Catholicism seems synonymous with repressive, outmoded, *Schadenfreude*.

Far from being repressive, however, and opposing man’s freedom and happiness, Catholic teaching is in reality a challenge to courage, love, responsibility, and self-mastery (cf. ch. 11 on chastity) which lead to peace and happiness; whilst it is the liberal, permissive attitudes that lead to unhappiness (cf. chapters 8 and 12): “*Contritio et infelicitas in viis eorum, et viampacis non cognoverunt*” (Psalm 13.3): “Destruction and unhappiness in their ways and the way of peace they have not known.”

source indicates the section from whence the quotation is taken. Also, s. indicates the word section.

⁴ Liberalism in regard to Catholic doctrine represents in the final analysis nothing less than a liberation from Truth, so that it is not only false but also the ultimate form of slavery.

⁵ We have been careful clearly to distinguish the natural and supernatural orders throughout, especially in view of the tendency to confuse them now prevalent in contemporary thought (cf. the following paragraph).

⁶ The reason would seem to be that purity is a quality of the soul *qua* soul, and thus encompasses both the purity of the will, which is chastity, and purity of the intelligence, which is wisdom.

To call Catholic teaching outmoded is to suppose that it amounts simply to the opinion of a number of Catholics or (more superficially) to the opinion of the Pope himself, opinions which are no more valid than any other opinions, opinions that can be changed, and, indeed, should be changed to accord with changing circumstances. From the Catholic perspective by contrast, the moral teaching of the Church is not a matter of opinion but of divine authority. It is established by God in the Old Testament, by Our Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and preserved ever afterwards by the Holy Spirit. It communicates an objective moral law which is constant, unchanging (itself a strong argument for its divine origin), and unchangeable.

Reflection on this second criticism reveals the existence of two distinct and irreconcilable moral systems: one objective and theocentric and the other (typically) subjective and anthropocentric. Now in order to show that one system of philosophy or theology is defective, it is clearly not sufficient to show that it does not conform to the standards of another system. What must be shown rather is that the system is prey to one or more of the following defects:

- (1) It is logically incoherent; or
- (2) It fails to provide an explanation of reality; and in the case of a moral system:
- (3) It fails to provide a sufficiently deep explanation of reality as stated above;
- (4) It is impracticable: it cannot be put into practice in such a way as to attain personal fulfilment or happiness.

The Catholic faith is not prey to these defects, for:

(1) It is logically coherent: it has a perfect harmony and by its moral doctrine does indeed further the purpose for which it exists, namely the sanctification of man for God's glory.

(2) and (3) It does provide an explanation, indeed arguably the deepest explanation, of life, death, love, the person, suffering, as indeed of the whole of reality.

(4) It has by its moral precepts enabled men over the ages to live a life of fulfilment and happiness.

The subjectivist, anthropocentric system by contrast is prey to these defects, as shall be seen later with regard to hedonism in that:

- (1) and (4) Since it characteristically leads to suffering (cf. ch. 8) it is both logically incoherent and impracticable.

(2) and (3) It provides no explanation, or no adequately deep explanation, of life, death, love, the person, suffering, or reality; nor, it may be added, of any phenomena that argue for the existence of God, such as the phenomena of order and change in the universe, or, more generally, the phenomena of faith, holiness, pious works, and the sublimity of religious art.

Chapter 2

Morality

The word moral comes from the latin word *mos* which signifies custom, and seems to be connected with the word *modus*, measure, hence also containing the concept of just measure. Philosophy, as noted above, is the exercise of reason on the objects of human experience. Moral philosophy is synonymous with ethics. The word ethics comes from the Greek work *ethos* which signifies custom or attitude. Moral philosophy/ethics is a practical science concerning man's free actions, it is a normative science concerning the ideal laws of such actions. In short, it may be defined as the science of the ideal laws of free human actions as such. It is to be distinguished from moral theology which judges human actions according to revelation and the tenets of faith. The term morality as used in this book is understood to encompass both moral philosophy and moral theology.

Ethics is divided into general ethics which concerns the universal principles of ethics, and special ethics which comprises personal ethics and social ethics. Personal ethics respects the duties and rights of persons in regard to the body, the soul, and to God; social ethics comprises in its turn interpersonal ethics respecting the relations between persons—justice, charity, and property and employment rights; as well as family, civil, and international ethics. The present chapter is directed to certain principles of general ethics.

Now *omnis agens agit propter finem*: every agent acts in virtue of an end, and the end of a given action can either be the final end of all an agent's actions or a means to a further end. If it is a means it must be motivated by the further end. If this further end

is itself not the final end, it must in its turn be motivated by a yet further end. But this series cannot be infinite, for if there were no final end there would be nothing to motivate any intermediate end. It follows that there must be a final end or supreme good which is desired by man as the absolute term of all his action (see St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, II q. 1 a. 6 where this argument is compared to the argument for the First Cause). The existence of a final end permits a more explicit definition of moral philosophy or ethics in the following terms: the science of the ideal laws regulating man's free actions in such a way that he attain his final end.

With regard to the concept of the final end, we can see the dependence of ethics on metaphysics (the philosophy of being). There are in fact three philosophical disciplines on which ethics particularly depends: metaphysics, providing an understanding of the nature of man, his last end, good and evil, justice, duty, rights, laws, virtues, wisdom, the principle of the sufficient reason, etc.; psychology, which concerns the existence and nature of the soul; and theodicy, which concerns the existence and nature of God. This dependence is a consequence of the principle *agere sequitur esse*: the order of being determines the order of acting. In these four disciplines, as indeed in all disciplines of philosophy, it is taken as axiomatic in this book that the true philosophy is the perennial philosophy of the Church: the Aristotelian-Scholastic philosophy, particularly that of St. Thomas Aquinas. That this axiom is true is the central contention of the book *An Introduction to Philosophy* by Jacques Maritain.⁷

Moral philosophy depends essentially on other branches of philosophy, then. It also depends essentially on moral theology, first in so far as natural reason, the instrument of ethical (as indeed of all philosophical) knowledge, is illumined by the lights of faith, the healing power of grace unblocking the impediments which the wounded, fallen, condition of the human mind puts in the way of the right exercise of reason, and second in so far as the philosophical understanding of man and his final end are completed by the theological understanding of man as the subject of a human nature

⁷ Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (London: Sheed and Ward 1988—first published 1930).

fallen and redeemed, and as *in via* to a final end which is supernatural and which represents the consummation of human nature.

In order to provide a context for the treatment of the particular moral themes of this book, let us proceed to outline four central principles of morality: namely the final end of man, the moral law, the dignity of the person, and the nature of love.

1. The Final End of Man

There are two aspects to the final end: a subjective aspect which is beatitude, and an objective aspect which is the concrete good in the possession of which man attains his beatitude. Man has a natural desire for beatitude and perfection which determines his every action. Beatitude is defined by Boethius as “*statu(s) bonorum omnium congregatione perfectus*,” a state constituted by the union of all goods. It is defined by St. Thomas as “*bonum perfectum intellectualis naturae*,” the perfect good of the intellectual nature. What is the nature of this union of all goods, of this perfect good, or, as it is commonly known, the sovereign good? It must be absolute and not relative to a further good, it must be perfect, excluding all privation of that which is proper to it, it must be stable and accessible to all men. Now since there must be proportion between a nature and its final end and sovereign good, we may conclude that the sovereign good of man must perfectly fulfil the most essential and the most profound aspirations of human nature, namely the need to know and to love. Now the object of the intellect is the True and the object of love is the Good, and the True and the Good in their plenitude exist only in God (St. Thomas, *Summa* I, II 2 a 8). The final end of man in its objective aspect is therefore God himself.

Furthermore, it is apparent from metaphysics and theodicy that God has a purpose in creation. This purpose cannot be his own perfection since he already possesses, and indeed is, the sum of all perfections, but rather is his glorification by his creatures through their likeness to him. Irrational creatures bear a likeness to God in their mere existence, and in the perfections of their nature and of their activities by which they reveal his being, power, and wisdom. Rational creatures bear a likeness to God above all by their knowledge and love of him and by their personal fulfilment and beatitude which this knowledge and love brings. (St. Thomas, *Contra Gentiles* 3, 25).

Man's final end consists then in his beatitude in the possession of God to the glory of God. This glory of God is known as the primary final end of man, and man's beatitude is known as the secondary final end of man. Revelation completes the picture by teaching us that the possession of God consists in the vision of God. "Now this is eternal life that they may know Thee, the one true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." (Jn. 17:3) "Father I want those whom Thou hast given me to be with me, where I am, so that they may see my glory which Thou hast given me because Thou hast loved me before the constitution of the world." (Jn. 17:24) "We know that when he is revealed we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." (1Jn. 13:2) The final end of man is the *visio beatifica* then, by which the soul will contemplate the very essence of God face to face and will thus participate in the life of the divine Trinity. This fact is known to us not by reason but by revelation alone. It is not a natural end but (absolutely) supernatural, its attainment transcending the intelligence and capacities of created nature, which therefore need to be strengthened by divine grace and by what has been defined in the Council of Vienne (1312) as the *lumen gloriae*.

Were the final end of man purely natural it would consist in the knowledge and love of God accessible to his natural reason: an analogical knowledge of God as the first cause and final end of creation. The Church holds it possible that such a purely natural paradise (Limbo) is reserved for children before receiving baptism and before attaining to the use of reason: they have not been cleansed from original sin so cannot attain a supernatural paradise, but at the same time have contracted no personal sin so have incurred no punishment. This possibility is of course of particular relevance to the issue of abortion (cf. later in this chapter).

An act is good or bad according as it is oriented or not oriented to the final end of man: to his beatitude, or in other words to his perfection in being, the perfection and fulfilment of his human nature. It is by faith and the exercise of the virtues that man attains to these perfections.

The orientation of an action to the final end is determined partly by the nature of the act itself, e.g., almsgiving is good, the murder of the innocent is bad; and partly by the intention of the agent, which can make an act good in itself better or bad such as

almsgiving to improve a recipient morally as against almsgiving to corrupt a recipient; which can never make an act bad in itself good; and which determines acts morally indifferent of themselves such as walking, as either good or bad, e.g., walking to gain strength for work as against walking to avoid performing a duty.

2. The Moral Law

Now that which leads each being to its end, final or proximate, is the law (St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica* I, II, q.93 a. 1): “*Lex aeterna nihil aliud est quam ratio divinae sapientiae, secundum quod est directiva omnium actuum et motionum.*” the eternal law is nothing other than the disposition of divine wisdom, according as it directs the actions and movements of things. St. Augustine’s definition following Cicero’s, which is often quoted by St. Thomas, is as follows: “*Ratio vel voluntas Dei ordinem naturalem conservari jubens, perturbari vetans.*” the divine disposition or will of God that decrees the conservation, and forbids the disruption, of the natural order. This eternal law exists in God and is none other than God Himself. It is binding for all being: for irrational beings where it has a physical, irresistible nature, and for rational beings, where it has a moral nature and can be obeyed or disobeyed according to the use each agent makes of his free will. The eternal law is promulgated in creation, and the participation in this eternal law on the part of rational beings is known as the natural law: “*Lex naturalis nihil aliud est quam participatio legis aeternae in rationali creatura.*” (St. Thomas, *Summa* I, II. q.1 a. 2) Man is then able to read off, as it were, the requirements of this law inscribed in his nature and act accordingly. Because the purpose of this law is to guide man to his final end, it is possible to define the morality of an act not merely in terms of the final end but also in terms of the moral law: according as it does, or does not, conform to the moral law. Moreover this definition may be said to be the most specific because conformity to the moral law involves the application of a rule to each specific action.

The first precept of the natural law ordains in a universal manner the orientation of human action towards the final end of man. The principle states: Do good and avoid evil. It is constitutive of what is called moral sense: the immediate and absolute sense of the law regulating practical knowledge and action. (St. Thomas,

De Veritate q. 16 a 1) This moral sense is also known as synderesis. The moral conscience is by contrast not a sense but a practical judgment (the last practical judgment) as to the morality of our acts, by which we decide what concrete act we should perform and what we should avoid.

The further principles of the natural law relate to the fundamental inclinations of man: as a living being he must respect and conserve the being he has received from God; as a rational being he must act as a person, developing his reason by seeking the truth, his liberty by the mastering of his passions, his moral life by religion; as a member of a species he must work for the conservation of this species in marriage and the procreation and education of children; as a social being he must respect the order of society and contribute to the common good of the city and of humanity itself. These principles form the basis of duties, and these duties form the basis of natural rights, the right to life, to truth, to justice, to liberty etc. These principles of natural law entail certain immediate consequences amongst which are the Ten Commandments which together with the principles constitute the primary natural law. They also entail certain less immediate consequences relating to the application of such principles (e.g., to property rights). These constitute the secondary natural law.

3. The Dignity of the Person

It would in fact appear that the notion of person even more than the notion of human being or man, contains the notion of dignity or worth, as in the expression “he is a person, not a thing.” And in fact St. Thomas Aquinas enunciates this fact as follows: “*In nomine personae intelligitur personae dignitas*” (*Summa* II, II, 63 a. 1): by the name of person is understood the dignity of the person.

The danger in using the term ‘dignity of the person’ is that it has been often understood in a humanistic, atheistic sense or in an undefined sense, therefore open to the humanistic, atheistic sense. It shall accordingly be necessary to define the term precisely, before proceeding to apply it to concrete situations. The importance of the issues to be discussed for the understanding of man and his tendency towards sin shall merit a detailed explication.

“Dignity signifies the goodness of someone for himself (*propter seipsum*), whereas utility for another” (*propter aliud*). (St. Thomas,

III *Sent* q1 a4; q3 sol. 1) In virtue of this fact and of the fact that in common parlance dignity demarcates a quality or perfection which distinguishes one person from another, let us consider what is the particular goodness or perfection which distinguishes the person. Let us ask this question first of the person in relation to other beings, then of individual persons in relation to other persons: This study shall enable us to specify two principal forms of dignity that the person possesses.

i) The Natural Dignity of Man

Let us first consider the natural perfection of man. Human nature surpasses other natures, namely inanimate natures and animate natures lacking a spiritual soul, in its intellectuality: in that part of its nature that consists of a rational, intellectual soul. It is this intellectuality which lends a person dignity, it is indeed the reason why he is called a person: "*Persona non est nisi in natura intellectuali.*" (*I Sent.* dist. 23.11) Now the particular excellence of intellectuality is its transcendental orientation: the intellect and the will are ordered towards God as being under the aspect of the True and the Good respectively.

St. Thomas Aquinas takes this orientation as a basis for one of the three ways in which man is in the image of God. He writes (in *Summa* I q. 93 a. 4) that if it is true that man is in the image of God according to man's intellectual nature, then the more his intellectual nature is able to imitate God, the more he will be in God's image. His intellectual nature imitates God to the highest degree by imitating God's knowledge and love of Himself. There are three ways that this is possible. The first is as follows: (the second and third shall be mentioned later) "*Secundum quod homo habet aptitudinem naturalem ad intelligendum et amandum Deum: et haec aptitudo consistit in ipsa natura mentis, quae est communis omnibus hominibus:*" according as man has a natural aptitude to know and love God, and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men.

This first form of dignity is however affected by sin, both original and actual. The effect of original sin is that *Homo per peccatum (Adae) spoliatus est gratuitis, vulneratus in naturalibus:* by Adam's sin man is deprived of the gratuitous (supernatural) gifts and wounded in his nature. (*Summa* III 85,1; *Sent.* U d.29q.la.2)

This state is known as the state of fallen nature. The supernatural gifts consist of (the absolutely supernatural) sanctifying grace, which makes possible the beatific vision, and the (preternatural) gifts of integrity. The wounding of nature according to St. Thomas and most of the theologians consists of the loss of the gifts of integrity. These gifts comprise infused knowledge, the possibility of neither suffering nor dying, and the domination of the reason over the lower faculties (or in other words of the soul over the body) as a result of the will's subjection to God. Adam lost the first of these gifts for himself, since it was a personal gift to himself, and the rest of these gifts for the whole human race. The loss of the domination of the reason over the lower faculties is known as concupiscence: namely *ignorantia*—the difficulty of knowing the truth; *malitia*—the weakening of the power of the will; *infirmitas*—the recoiling before the struggle for the good; and *concupiscentia* in the narrow sense—the desire for the satisfaction of the senses against the judgment of reason.

The wounding of nature is the loss of integrity then, and comprises the loss of the domination of the reason over the lower faculties (integrity in its narrower sense). (*Summa* III q.85 a.3) The loss of this domination may be expressed as the loss of man's natural inclination to virtue (*Summa loc. cit.*) or a weakening of man's attachment to the True and the Good. Consequently (as stated in ch. 1), the truth of God's existence and morality which are not inaccessible to reason, need, by moral necessity, to be the subject of revelation in order that they be known by all promptly, with certitude, and without admixture of error (Vatican Council I, s. III ch. 2, *Humani Generis* Pius XII). Moreover man is unable to love God as the author of nature more than himself, or to choose him as his final end without the healing power of God's grace. (*Summa* III q.109 a.3)

In the *Summa* III 85, St. Thomas enquires into the effects of original sin on the dignity of human nature. He concludes that this dignity is diminished by the loss of sanctifying grace and integrity, in particular by the diminution of man's natural inclination to virtue, but at the same time, that dignity is retained which derives from the principles of human nature and its properties such as the powers of the soul. The Council of Trent reaffirms this point with regard to free will. (Session VI, ch. 1) In general we

may infer that despite the fall man possesses a dignity in virtue of his intellectuality, particularly in its radical orientation, albeit weakened, towards the True and the Good, or in other words towards God as being under the aspect of the True and the Good.

The natural dignity of the person is diminished not only by original sin but also by actual sin. All persons that have attained the age of reason (with the exception of course of the Blessed Virgin) have sinned, for “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1Jn. 2:8) The effect of mortal sin is that it expels God and sanctifying grace from the soul, if they were present, and makes the agent a slave of sin for “whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” (Jn. 8:34). The effect of venial sin is that it deprives the soul of new graces. The effect of both kinds of sin is that it weakens the agent’s control of his passions inclining him to further and greater sins.

In summary, as Leo XIII states in the encyclical *Immortale Dei* (1885): “If the intelligence adheres to false ideas, if the will chooses evil and attaches to it, neither the one nor the other attains its perfection, but both fall from their native dignity and corrupt.” Indeed in a passage concerned with capital punishment in the *Summa* (II II q 64 a. 2), St. Thomas states that a criminal through grievous sin “loses his dignity” *simpliciter*, in other words despite his radical orientation to the Good and the True, for such is the malice of sin: “*Homo peccando ab ordine rationis recedit: et ideo decidit a dignitate humana, prout scilicet homo est naturaliter liber et propter seipsum existens, et incidit quodammodo in servitutum bestiarum, ut scilicet de ipso ordinetur secundum quod est utile alii... Et ideo quamvis hominem in sua dignitate manentem occidere sit secundum se malum, tamen hominem peccatorem occidere potest esse bonum...:*” By sinning, man departs from the order of reason and consequently falls away from his human dignity, in the sense that being naturally free and existing for himself, he falls in a certain manner into the slavish state of the animals, so that he may be disposed of according as is useful to others... Hence, although it be evil to kill a man who preserves his human dignity, yet it may be good to kill a sinner.⁸

⁸ With the contemporary glorification of natural life—even in the Magisterium—(as an example of the confusion between the natural and supernatural orders),

ii) The Supernatural Dignity of Man

Whereas the form of dignity just discussed is a natural dignity deriving from man's natural aptitude to know and love God as being under the aspect of the True and the Good, there is a further form of dignity accessible to man which is of a supernatural nature and which derives from man's actual knowledge and love of God in conformity with supernatural grace. Now the first way in which St. Thomas understands that man is in the image of God is, as we have seen, in his aptitude to know and love God; a second way is in his actual or habitual knowledge and love of God. A third way which does not concern us here since it refers not to man in his life but to his nature in Heaven is in his perfect knowledge and love of God.

St. Thomas describes the second way as follows: "*secundum quod homo actu vel habitu Deum cognoscit et amat, sed tamen imperfecte: et haec est imago per conformitatem gratiae... Prima ergo imago invenitur in omnibus hominibus: secunda in iustis tantum, tertia vero solum in beatis:*" "inasmuch as man actually or habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly, and this image consists in the conformity of grace... The first is found in all men, the second only in the just, the third only in the blessed." (*Summa* I 93 a 4) Let us emphasize the fact that the dignity which derives from man's actual knowledge and love of God in conformity with supernatural grace is the property not of all men but only of the faithful who are just: it is the dignity possessed by a saint and not by a sinner, and possessed in a higher degree by a more holy than a less holy man. We may call this second form of dignity the supernatural dignity of man.⁹

Now, as we have seen, original sin brought about the loss of sanctifying grace and of the gifts of integrity, and has been inherited by all the sons of Adam. However it is possible to eradicate original sin, in its narrower sense as the lack of sanctifying grace, by justification. Justification is "*translatio ab eo statu in quo homo*

such traditional justifications for the death penalty or for warfare have typically been ignored.

⁹ In the present age when faith and holiness are held in little account, it is typical to insist on the natural, rather than the supernatural, dignity of man, just as it is typical to insist on God's love for man on the basis of his natural, rather than his supernatural, dignity (i.e., on the basis of his human nature rather than his holiness).

nascitur filium primi Adae, in statum gratiae et adoptionis filiorum Dei per secundum Adam Jesum Christum Salvatorem nostrum:” a translation from that condition in which man is born of the first Adam into the state of grace and adoption among the children of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer (The Council of Trent session 6). Justification in the negative sense is the eradication of sin; in the positive sense it is a sanctification and renewal of the inner man: “*non est sola peccatorum remissio, sed et sanctificatio et renovatio interioris hominis.*” Justification is effected by the infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul of the faithful in the sacrament of baptism. The Council of Trent quotes Jn. 3:5 to the effect that “No one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven if he is not reborn of water and the Holy Spirit.” The faith that is required for justification in the case of young children is the faith of the Church (*Summa* III 68 a. 9 ad 2), in the case of adults it is a firm acceptance of the divine truths of revelation on the authority of God revealing and the good works that proceed from this faith, as well as the fear of God, hope, love of God, sorrow, and penance.

If a man loses sanctifying grace by his actual sin, he is able to regain it through the sacrament of Penance: he regains grace, is forgiven his sin, and reassumes the dignity of the sonship of God. (*Summa* III 89) It is this supernatural dignity of adoption by baptism that is referred to in the following words of St. Leo: “Recognize, O Christian, your dignity and become a participator in the divine nature, do not return by depraved conduct, to your ancient misery” (*Serm. de Nativit.*); and in the following words of St. John Chrysostom: “[The Apostle] affirms that if, being baptized, you do not let yourselves be guided by the Spirit, you lose the dignity with which you were honored and the privilege of adoption.” (*Hom. XIV in Rom.*)

iii) The Dignity of Vocation

Let us now proceed to present two further forms of dignity taught by the contemporary Magisterium. The first may be termed the dignity of vocation, and is expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*—or, the new catechism¹⁰—(1700) as follows:

¹⁰ When we use the term “new catechism” we refer to *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published in 1992.

“The dignity of the human person... is accomplished in his vocation to divine beatitude.”

We shall first consider the type of vocation at issue here, then the type of dignity.

Now, to say that man has a vocation to a given end suggests that God has put man into a state such that he is oriented towards that end. This was true of our first parents, who God, by means of grace, endowed with the state of original justice that oriented them towards Heaven; this is also true of the baptized, who God, again by means of grace, puts into a state that orients them towards Heaven. This is not however the case with the vocation to divine beatitude, for there is nothing in human nature that orients man towards Heaven: since Heaven is absolutely supernatural, man needs something supernatural (that is supernatural grace) to orient him towards it.

The type of vocation at issue here does not derive from a state of human nature, then, but rather from the constant calls that God makes to man. As the new catechism states (1): “... at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength ... etc.” Moreover these calls do not constitute an immediate orientation to Heaven, but only a mediate one, through the acquisition of sanctifying grace.

We see that this sense of vocation is diluted. It manifests a naturalizing and universalizing tendency on the part of the contemporary Magisterium which seems to aim at attributing to man in general a characteristic that otherwise belongs to the baptized alone.

We proceed to examine the dignity of this type of vocation. In order to do so, we shall contrast it with the dignity of vocation referred to above, which is treated by St. Paul at Eph. 4:1: “I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called.” We notice here that this dignity is characteristic of Christians, and refers to Christian faith and virtue (“... supporting one another in charity...one Lord, one faith, one baptism” Eph. 4:2–7) and consequently amounts to the supernatural dignity presented above; whereas the dignity at issue in this section is a feature of all men and purely natural in character. In a word, the vocation is of a universal and natural character, and the dignity is so too.

What type of dignity is the dignity of vocation? It is not a moral dignity because Christ “came to call sinners” (Mt. 9:13) nor is it an ontological dignity: it does indeed derive from an ontological dignity, namely the natural dignity of man described above, but is not identical to it, at least not in the contemporary theories of the dignity of man. Rather it is a merely relational dignity. In scholastic terms it is a predicamental relation: an accident the entire being of which consists in its reference to another.

This dignity does not reside in man’s intrinsic excellence, but derives from the excellence of his goal, inciting him to achieve it and shaming him if he fails. This is why the most fitting context for the dignity of vocation is that of exhortation. (e.g., “Walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called” Eph. 4:1, see above)

The dignity of vocation may be understood as a form of nobility. A nobleman possesses a form of excellence which consists solely in its reference to another, namely a noble forbear. This form of nobility is an incentive to “walk worthy” of a heritage, to live a noble life, and it is a source of shame for a nobleman if he fails to do so. We recall the admonishment of St. John the Baptist to the Jews: “Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” As St. Cyril comments in the *Catena Aurea*: “What profits the nobility we inherit through the flesh, unless it be supported by kindred feelings in us? It is folly then to boast of our worthy ancestors, and to fall away from their virtues.”

In conclusion, the dignity of vocation is a natural and relational dignity. It should serve as an incentive to the life of virtue. It is less perfect than that form of dignity which is supernatural, intrinsic, and moral. The new catechism, by stressing the former at the expense of the latter, again manifests a naturalizing tendency.

iv) The Dignity Consequent on the Incarnation

Another form of dignity taught by the contemporary Magisterium is expressed in the following section of the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (see ch. 12): “By his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being...¹¹

¹¹ *Gaudium et Spes* 22

This saving event reveals ... the incomparable value of every human person.” In a similar vein in his speech *On the Dignity of the Human Person*¹² the Pope to be, while enumerating the grounds for human dignity, writes: “Furthermore God also became a human being, redeems man, and permeates the human being with divine grace... The matter of the dignity of the human person ... is certainly an ecumenical element, an element common to all people of genuinely good will.” (viz., the last section of ch. 3).

How are we to interpret this form of dignity? The Pope seems to conceive it as a form of ontological dignity, indeed of the supernatural order.¹³ However, the Incarnation did not change human nature, and only Christians in a state of grace possess a supernatural dignity. How can we understand it in the light of the Catholic faith?

In Fr. Matthias Joseph Scheeben’s analysis of the patristic tradition in his *Mysterien des Christentums*¹⁴ as presented by Fr. Johannes Dôrmann,¹⁵ the Incarnation constituted a form of simple union or dead union with the whole human race in the sense of a material precondition for the living union in the mystical body of Christ and the Church through faith and baptism. We may conclude that if we wish to speak of a dignity consequent on the Incarnation then we should speak of the dignity consequent on the simple union of Christ with mankind, which is but another form of dignity of vocation, namely vocation to the Christian faith.

Comparing this fourth type of dignity to the third, namely to the dignity of vocation as taught by the contemporary Magisterium, we note that both are merely relational dignities, the former as to divine beatitude, and the latter as to the Christian faith.

¹² Karol Wojtyła, *On the Dignity of the Human Person* Pg. 180 in *Karol Wojtyła Person and Community* (Selected Essays, transl. Theresa Sandok, OSN (New York 1993 pg. 180). See the next chapter.

¹³ We note in passing that if this were true, then the Incarnation would furnish a basis for the vocation to divine beatitude comparable to original justice or baptism. See the previous section.

¹⁴ Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *Mysterien des Christentums* Freiburg: Herder, 1941 pg. 295–356

¹⁵ Johannes Dôrmann, *Der theologische Weg Johannes Paulus II. zum Weltgebetstag der Religionen in Assisi* (senden Sitta-Verlag 1990) I, III, 2.3

Leaving aside the fourth form of dignity due to the indeterminacy of its content, let us briefly review the two principal forms of dignity¹⁶ as well as the dignity of vocation to divine beatitude in virtue of its prominence in the new catechism (especially part III).

We may say then that a person may possess three forms of dignity: first a dignity of vocation to union with God, second a natural dignity of orientation (albeit weakened by original sin) to God as being under the aspect of the True and the Good; and third a supernatural dignity of actually knowing and loving God, which is at the same time the sonship of God and a sharing in the divine life. We see that these three forms of dignity belong to one and the same scheme of things. God desires union with man in Heaven (the ground of the first dignity), to this end he gives man a natural orientation (the ground of the second dignity), and offers him supernatural assistance thereto (the ground of the third dignity).

Before moving on, let us show that the third form of dignity is superior to the others, and this in three ways.

The first way is causally: the vocation and the orientation are means towards the end, namely the (supernatural) union: the vocation is a vocation to union with God and the orientation is an orientation to union with God. The vocation and the orientation are but the necessary means for union with God (although not sufficient means because they constitute natural perfections whereas the union with God in question constitutes a supernatural perfection). In addition, since the dignity of union with God is in fact the final end of man, it follows that it is the highest form of dignity even on earth.

The second way is morally: the dignity of union with God on earth is a moral dignity (leaving aside the case of a baptized infant who is united to God but not as a result of his actions); a moral excellence is higher than a natural or a teleological excellence.

The third way is ontologically: the vocation and the orientation are related to the union as potency to act: the vocation is related to the attainment of the goal (namely the union), the orientation which is the potential to know and love God (in the ultimate, supernatural sense) is related to the actual knowledge and love of

¹⁶ Which in the interpretation of the Fathers of the Church together constitute the image and likeness of God in man.

God; act is superior to potency. In addition, the dignity of union is a supernatural excellence whereas the dignity of vocation and of orientation are merely natural excellences.

4. On the Nature of Love

Now in the previous section we have noted that it is dangerous to use the term ‘dignity of the person’ in a sense that is undefined and hence open to misinterpretation. The same is true of the term ‘love’. Love in particular may be understood merely emotionally. In order therefore to understand properly the love relevant to sexuality, let us begin by offering a brief analysis of the nature of love.

i) God’s Charity

In order better to understand man’s love, let us begin by considering that perfect love which is God’s love. St. John tells us in his first Epistle 4:8 that “God is love” which may be understood in the following terms: The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, and the Holy Spirit is their united act of love. Two general features of this love which are of note are that it is self-giving and unitive.

As for God’s love for man, St. John tells us in his Gospel 3:6 that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.” Here again God’s love is manifest both in self-giving, for in the person of the Son he gives himself to mankind, and as unitive, for in so doing he unites himself with mankind. A third feature of the love here described is what we might term its fruitfulness, or its promotion of a good, in this case life everlasting. The fruitfulness of love is most evident where the object of love is created being, expressing God’s will that created being should exist and should attain its end.

ii) Man’s Charity

Man’s love for God in Heaven is a sharing in God’s love for himself. It is therefore a self-giving and unitive love. It is also a fruitful love with regard to man because it constitutes the attainment of man’s final end. In an extended sense it is also a fruitful love with regard to God, not because it gives anything to him who possesses, and indeed is, the sum of all perfections,

but because it increases his *gloria externa*: it magnifies him as in the words of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist *magnificat, magnificari*: it accomplishes his purpose in creating the universe which is the communication of his goodness and the manifestation of his glory in creation.

The love so far described: God's love for himself, God's love for man, man's love for God in Heaven, is known as 'charity'. This love is supernatural. For man it is a participation in God's love and life, a participation that is only possible by means of supernatural grace. Without this grace it is impossible for man to love with a love of charity. This love is possible in the present world as well as in Heaven, and it has as its objects God or one's neighbor for the sake of God. The love of God comprises acts of the love of God such as acts of adoration, as well as all of a man's actions when he performs them for God, for the sake of God: to the glory of God (1Cor. 10:31), to God (Col. 3:23), in the name of God (Col. 3:17): "All whatsoever you do in word or in work do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"; the love of neighbor includes the love of enemies. Charity transforms the actions it accompanies, elevating them to a divine level. As with all realities revealed by God, charity can only be understood in a limited sense. It cannot be comprehended by philosophy, and so is not an object of philosophy.

To the comments on the three general features of love noted above, one may add in the case of man's charity on earth that it is always characterized by giving, since it consists in actions performed for the sake of God; and that it is also always characterized by union with God, since it is a sharing in the love and life of God. It is fruitful for the agent in promoting his final end, it is fruitful for any human object it may have either in directly promoting his final end, or in indirectly promoting it as for example it consists in bringing him happiness and peace, the best conditions for progressing towards the final end.

In Heaven in the beatific vision, man will behold God as he is in himself according to his own ineffable mode of being: *sicuti est* (1Jn. 3:2), and will hence love God as he is in himself in charity.

Now the basis for man's knowledge and love of God in the next world is the radical orientation of his intellect to God as being under the aspect of the True and the radical orientation of his will to God as being under the aspect of Good. As for this

world, these radical orientations form the basis equally for man's knowledge of God as the True and the Good in the light of reason alone (albeit weakened by original sin); for his knowledge of God as he is in himself: *in seipso* by faith; and his love of God as he is in himself in charity.

Man's love of the Good in all its finite embodiments and his love of God as the Good is known as rational love. It is a purely natural love and is distinguished as such from his supernatural love of God in charity.

iii) Rational and Sensible Love

Now man is not merely a spiritual being; he is also a physical being and to preserve him in his journey towards his final end, and to ensure that he has progeny, he has been given the faculties of sense perception by which he apprehends individual being under the aspect of the true, and of sense appetite by which he desires it under the aspect of the good. This sense appetite is known as sensible love or the passion of love.

Sensible love is a feature of man as a psychophysical organism. Its goal is pleasure which it seeks by taking, by attaining union with its object, for pleasure arises from union. (*Summa* II 1 a.30) It is in the service of biological life: the conservation and promotion of the individual organism or the species. It looks to what is presented by the senses as requisite and congenial here and now. It is subjective, and its dynamic is that of potency seeking its own fulfillment. Examples of it are the desire for food and drink and, unless and until they are informed and elevated by rational love or charity, family love and sexual (or erotic) love.

The nature of sensible love is largely the same for man as for the animals, although in man it is elevated by the presence of the spirit to a status higher than in its animal counterpart.

Rational love is a feature of man as spirit, its term is being itself. The radical dynamism of spirit is one of act, of abundance. It looks to absolute being and seeks to promote it in all its finite embodiments by giving. Examples are the natural love for God and the love of friendship.

Comparing sensible love and rational love in regard to the three features of love noted above, we may say that sensible love involves taking, rational love giving; sensible love is characterized

more markedly by union than rational love—as in the case of doing good to an enemy; sensible love promotes the good of the self as psychophysical organism and of the species, rational love promotes the good of the other as a rational being as well as the good of the self as rational being, since in promoting the good of the other the agent gives, and in giving he advances towards his own final end: his perfection in love.¹⁷ (It should however be noted here that since rational love is not a supernatural love (like charity) but only a natural love, it does not promote the agent's final end, which is supernatural, immediately (like charity) but only mediately, in disposing the agent towards this supernatural end.) The fruitfulness of rational love in regard to the other may be described in terms of the Aristotelian-scholastic phrase as “willing the good of the other.”

Now rational love, when it has man as its object, is known as the virtue of love. The virtue of love differs from charity in quality and scope: it is a natural and not a supernatural form of love, and has a narrower range, not including the love of God or the hallowing of man's every action. The virtue of love is often contrasted with the passion of love, which is another name for sensible love. The virtue of love may be defined as that virtue by which a man altruistically wills the good of his neighbor by promoting it to the best of his ability wherever and however he can. A prime example of the virtue of love is the love of friendship, which is characterized by its mutuality and by the virtuousness and likemindedness of the pair: *idem velle idem nolle*. Further examples are family love and marital love where the virtue of love informs and elevates that family love or erotic love which are initially merely sensible. Let us note that friendship is here understood in a narrow sense. In a broader sense it is understood to characterize other forms of rational love too, such as family love and marital love, as well as charity itself, as St. Thomas shows in the *Summa* (II II q.23.a.l).

Sensible family love is the love between parents and children or between children. It can become inordinate to the detriment of justice. When it is informed and elevated by rational love it becomes unselfish, the child regarding the parent as a good person

¹⁷ Rational love is known as *amor benevolentiae* in regard to the other, and as *amor concupiscentiae* in regard to the self. In our brief outline on the nature of love we shall be concentrating on the former.

for example, or as worthy of his love, and the parent relinquishing his possessive hold on the child. Erotic love is in man's fallen nature tinged with lust, seeking pleasure for its own sake and regarding persons as objects, tending to transfer from one person to another even though the mediation of successive 'marriages.' When erotic love within marriage is informed and elevated by rational love it is transformed into marital love regarding persons as persons. Such are the ways in which sensible love becomes truly human, receiving depth from rational love and becoming an expression of it. For Christians in the state of grace this rational love is in its turn informed and elevated by charity and thus becomes a form of supernatural love.

Discussion

To recap, we have briefly examined charity in its fourfold aspect: God's love for himself, God's love for man, man's supernatural love for God, man's supernatural love for man. We then examined rational love, including man's natural love for God and the virtue of love, and finally sensible love.

In most general terms, the following may be said of human love. Human love is rooted in man's imperfection and indigency. On the natural level he is unable, of his own resources, to preserve himself as an individual or as a species: he needs to eat, drink, and to procreate. On the supernatural level he is unable, of his own resources, to attain his goal which is supernatural perfection. He needs the help of grace. These goods that man needs are fruitful for him and must be communicated to him from without. Human love pertains to the communication and fruitfulness of these goods, and hence has two elements: the element of communication (or union) and the element of fruitfulness. The element of fruitfulness is primary because it regards his perfection; the element of union is secondary, because it regards the means to this perfection.

Let us conclude by briefly comparing and contrasting the love of God for man and man for God in two of its aspects.

Amor Dei est infundens et creans bonitatem in rebus (*Summa* II q.20 a.2) the love of God infuses and creates the goodness which is in things. His love is the principle of the creation and continuing existence of all that is. It is the principle of their desirability. Man's

love by contrast is essentially passive: a response, a movement elicited from without. God gives goodness to things, he does not, like man, submit to their attractions. His love is sheer benevolence, gratuitousness, selflessness. He gains nothing from us while we gain everything from him.

The love of God is a love of self-giving, as is the love of man to God to which man is called. The love of man for his neighbor (whether rational love or the love of charity) may by contrast more aptly be characterized simply in terms of giving: it may be described as self-giving only in a secondary sense (e.g., in phrases such as: “he gave of himself”).

Let us briefly show the application of this introductory section to the particular moral themes of this book.

The final end of man, Heaven, or the beatific vision, provides the foundation of all morality. Since this vision is purely supernatural, the means for attaining it must also be purely supernatural, that is to say, sanctifying grace. This grace is acquired by baptism alone, with the result that the unbaptized are unable to attain Heaven.

Now, since there are only two final destinations for man, namely Heaven and Hell, it follows that the unbaptized are consigned to Hell. Hell consists essentially of the deprivation of the beatific vision: the consequence of mortal sin, whether original or personal. Unbaptized infants are deprived of the beatific vision because they have inherited the stain of original sin from which they have not been purged by baptism. Since, however they have committed no personal sin, they are not liable to suffering, which is the punishment for personal sin, but rather dwell in a place in Hell characterised by a purely natural happiness, the purely natural final end. The name given to this place is Limbo (See Appendix B).

Aborted children cannot be supposed to enjoy either of the two substitute forms of baptism, namely baptism of desire and baptism of blood,¹⁸ for the former requires perfect contrition of heart of which, having not yet attained the age of reason, they are incapable, and the latter requires martyrdom for the faith of Christ. Neither can they be considered to be baptized by the pious practice of prayer together with the sprinkling of holy water, for baptism requires the infusion of water over a living person.

¹⁸ Editor's Note: For a substantive treatment of the topic of baptism of desire and baptism of blood, see *Catholicity and Baptism*, Loreto Publications 2012.

The moral law entails the principles quoted above that man as a living being must respect and conserve the being he has received from God, and that man as a member of a species must work for the conservation of this species in marriage and in the procreation and education of children. These principles in their turn entail the fifth and sixth commandment, namely Thou shalt not kill (prohibiting abortion) and Thou shalt not commit adultery (prohibiting all forms of sexual immorality).

Moving from general ethics to special ethics, in particular to interpersonal ethics, we may proceed to consider these moral themes in the light of the dignity of the person and the virtues. Since it is by the practice of the virtues that man attains his final end and obeys the moral law, it is possible to analyze a moral act in terms not only of the final end and the moral law but also in terms of the virtues. Taking account of the dignity of the person and the nature of the unborn we conclude that the virtues relevant to the issue of abortion are both justice (*suum cuique dandi*)—the virtue of rendering to each his due, and the virtue of love—that of selflessly promoting the good of the other. Taking account of the dignity of the person and the nature of sexuality, we conclude that the virtue requisite to sexuality is the virtue of love: that of selflessly promoting the good of the other. Of course if the agent is a Christian this love should in both cases be transformed into charity. The dignity of the other requires justice and love (or charity) in the first case and love (or charity) in the second case, but what of the dignity of the agent? We have seen that the primary dignity of the person derives from his actual knowledge and love of God, which is at the same time the sonship of God and a sharing in his divine life, or in other words it derives from his charity. The means by which a Christian agent respects this dignity in himself is by performing all his actions with charity, or in other words for the sake of God. It is then not only the dignity of the other person but also his own dignity that obliges a Christian to act for the sake of God, to act with charity, when he acts towards the unborn or in his marital relations, or indeed, in a more general sense, in everything that he does.

Chapter 3

A Novel Tendency in the Magisterium

Having offered a brief sketch of the foundations of catholic morality, let us proceed to examine a novel tendency in the Magisterium which bears upon the themes treated in this book.

I Radical Subjectivism

1. Radical Subjectivism Defined

This tendency may be defined as radical subjectivism, in the sense of a movement away from the object (that is to say in scholastic terms, from being) towards the subject.

We propose to consider two aspects of this subjectivism, namely the movement away from objective truth of the supernatural order, that is to say the distancing from the faith; and the priority given to the order of the Good over the order of the True (whether this Truth is natural or supernatural).

i) The Distancing from the Faith

In regard to the distancing from the faith in general, we refer to Fr. Johannes Dôrmann's analysis of the encyclicals *Redemptor Hominis*, *Dives in Misericordia*, and *Dominum et Vivificantem* in his four-volume work on the theology of Pope John Paul II (referred to above), and Romano Amerio's analysis of the encyclical *Tertio Millenio Adveniente* in his work *Stat Veritas* (in publication *du Courrier de Rome* 1997).

In the recent teaching of the Magisterium on the themes treated in this book, the distancing from the faith occurs principally by means of a confusion of the natural and supernatural orders.¹⁹

¹⁹ This tendency was already manifest in the Second Vatican Council. In the first

This confusion occurs when the attempt is made to apply elements of the faith universally, so naturalizing and degrading the supernatural order, and supernaturalizing and unduly glorifying the natural order. Examples of this confusion are analyzed in the discussion of the vocation to religious life (see ch. 4), the vocation to divine beatitude, the dignity of the latter vocation, the dignity subsequent on the Incarnation (ch. 2), limbo (Appendix B), the concept of love (ch. 3 and the appendix on the ‘Theology of the Body’), and the concept of life (ch. 12). Here we see respectively how the vocation to a supernatural goal is confused with a purely natural impulse; how the vocation of the faithful is confused with the vocation of all men; how the supernatural dignity of man is (in two cases) confused with his purely natural dignity; how the supernatural end of man is confused with a purely natural end; and how (in two cases) supernatural love is confused with natural love, and supernatural life with natural life.

ii) The Priority of the Good Over the True

The motivation for this distancing from the Faith seems to be the precedence given to a new ideal, namely the loving communion of men irrespective of their beliefs, in other words to the priority of Love over Truth: the priority of the order of the Good over the order of the True. This priority runs counter both to reason and to faith, for reason demands that one must first know an object before one can love it, and love it in the appropriate way; and faith is given us as “a light for our steps”, in other words in order that we might love with the love of Charity.

Moreover, on a yet more profound level (as Romano Amerio explains in *Iota Unum*)²⁰, Faith teaches that the procession of the

chapter of *Die ‘Neue Théologie’*- Oder : “Sie glauben, gewonnen zu haben” (Sion Les Amis de St. Francois de Sales 1995), the comment of the Jesuit Fr. Henri Bouillard S.J. is quoted that: “The Second Vatican Council avoided the expression ‘supernatural’ in its principal documents.” In this connection Romano Amerio in *Iota Unum* points out (at paragraph 253 in ch. 35 on Ecumenism) that in the two documents *Ad Gentes* and *Nostra Aetate* (on Ecumenism and the non-Christian religions) the word ‘supernatural’ does not even appear.

²⁰ cf. *Iota Unum*, Romano Amerio A study of Changes in the Catholic Church in the XX Century, Sarto House P. O.Box 2700611, Kansas City MO, 64127-0611 (1996)

second person of the most holy Trinity from the intellect of the first person, precedes the procession of the third person of the most holy Trinity from the will of the first and second persons.

This priority of the Good over the True is manifest in the falsely conceived principles of ‘dialogue’²¹ and ‘ecumenism’²² where union between parties is sought even at the expense of the truth. An example may be seen in the magisterial document *Ut Unum Sint* (1995) in regard to ‘sister churches’ (see below).²³

As far as the themes of this book are concerned, the aforementioned priority is particularly manifest in an approach to philosophy that we have called ‘Magisterial Personalism.’ According to this approach, man is prized not in virtue of objective moral or supernatural standards, but solely in virtue of his humanity (see the section on the dignity of man in ch. 2); marriage is understood not in accordance with the objective moral law but simply in terms of ‘love’, and is described in terms of ‘life and love’ (ch. 4); it is insinuated that the primary end of marriage is ‘love’ (ch. 5); the conjugal act is presented as ‘total self-giving love’; and contraception is presented as sinful on this basis (ch. 5). This form of personalism finds a particularly clear expression in the doctrine known as ‘Theology of the Body’ (see Appendix A).

2. Anthropocentrism

This subjectivism (which we have understood as a movement away from the object towards the subject), when viewed from

²¹ Cf. *Iota Unum*, s.151.

²² Cf. Fr. Georg May, *Der Oekumenismus als Hebel der Protestantisierung der Katholischen Kirche*, (Mustair: Verax-Verlag, 2000). Ecumenism, being above all a doctrinal matter, most obviously errs in according priority to the order of the Good over that of the True; but it also typically errs in ignoring grace, which is a feature of the Catholic confession, of not all of the other confessions, and of none of the non-Christian religions. It thereby also falls prey to the naturalism noted above.

²³ We refer also to the liturgical example of the bidding prayer in the *Novus Ordo* for Good Friday, that the Jewish people ‘may continue to grow in the love of his name and faithfulness to his covenant’; to paraliturgical functions such as the placing of a statue of the Buddha on the tabernacle of Assisi, the strangling of a cock on the altar of St. Clare in the course of the same proceedings, and the organization of Hindu rituals in the Sanctuary of Fatima; and to diplomatic gestures intimating that the Catholic faith is on the same level as other world religions.

the standpoint of religion, in other words from the standpoint of man's relation to God, amounts to anthropocentrism, that is to say a movement away from God towards man. Such an anthropocentrism may be described as a new humanism which is neither atheist nor Christian, but a hybrid of the two.

This anthropocentrism is clearly manifest in the following text of the Second Vatican Council: that "*homo ... in terris sola creatura est quam Deus propter seipsam voluerit.*" man is the only creature on earth that God willed for its own sake (*Gaudium et Spes* 24, quoted by Pope John Paul II in a speech on conjugal love in *Osservatore Romano* January 17, 1980). As Romano Amerio in chapter 30 of his *Iota Unum* points out, the Church has always taught that "*Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus.*" (Prov. 16:4): The Lord has made all things for himself. Man was therefore created not for himself but for God.²⁴ Furthermore he was also redeemed for God, that is to say in the first place so that divine justice might be satisfied; and only in the second place for his (man's) own good.

The same anthropocentrism may be seen in the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* (1) where Pope John Paul II states "whereas the various currents of human thought in the past and present have had, and continue to have, a propensity to divide and even contrast theocentrism from anthropocentrism, the Church... is concerned to introduce into human history their deep, organic connection. That is also a fundamental thought, perhaps the most important in the teaching of the last council." In this connection we may also mention the remark of Pope Paul VI (quoted in the *Osservatore Romano* of March 6, 1969 and quoted in the same ch. 30 of *Iota Unum*) that: "on this matter the council has considerably modified attitudes and judgments concerning the world."

²⁴ It is true that in a passage mentioned in the discussion of the natural dignity of man in the previous chapter (at *Summa* III q.64 a.2), St. Thomas says that man exists for himself, but the context shows that he understands this not in an absolute, but in a relative sense: man exists for himself, or has an intrinsic dignity, in virtue of his orientation to eternal beatitude. But by grave sin he can lose this orientation and this dignity, so that he can be treated as a means to an end—as an animal. And in any case man's eternal beatitude is not an absolute, but rather is relative to the glory which he gives to God.

Fr. Dörmann, in his book on the theology of the former Pope (*op. cit* Vol. II/2, 1.4), argues that the Pope understands as the ontological ground for the union of man and God referred to in this encyclical, the union of the Son of God with every man on the occasion of the Incarnation (See the discussion of the dignity of man in ch. 2 above).

This purported union would also provide a justification for loving man in an absolute sense, as Pope John Paul II advocates in the following two instances: first in the speech to UNESCO at Geneva in 1980 where he said: “man should be affirmed for his own sake, and not for any other motive or reason: uniquely for his own sake. Still more, man should be loved because he is man; love for man must be demanded because of the particular dignity which he possesses.” We qualify this statement by noting, as does Romano Amerio, that the Pope was here addressing non-religious humanists, but this having been said, we recall that the love of charity that we owe to man is a love essentially related to our love for God: it is a love for the sake of God, a love by which we love man in God, or so that he might be in God, a love motivated by the fact that God loves man and has redeemed him.

A second instance where the Pope advocates that man should be loved in an absolute sense is his doctrine that man should be loved with a total self-giving love (see ch. 4), that is to say with a love otherwise reserved for God alone.²⁵

²⁵ This purported union would also provide a justification for the cult of man, where we see the correspondence of belief and prayer, in accordance with the principle *lex orandi lex credendi*. In this context we note the words of Pope Paul VI in his allocution of 7 December 1965 quoted in Mgr. Brunero Gherardini's *Le Concile ecuménique Vatican II—un débat à ouvrir*, (Frigento :Casa mariana editrice 2009 (ch.6.3): “We also, We more than anyone, We have the cult of man.” This is particularly true of the *Novus Ordo Missae* instigated by this same Holy Father (see the chapter on the Cult of Man in Michael Davies' book *Pope Paul's New Mass*, *op. cit.* and my essay, published by *Rorate Caeli* (<http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/search/label/Don%20Leone%27s%20%22The%20Roman%20Rite%22>) October 18, 2011). This new Mass is essentially anthropocentric in the sense that it represents a movement away from God towards man, as may be clearly seen in comparing the *Novus Ordo* with the Roman Rite Ordo, its predecessor. It may be yet more clearly seen in the practices to which this anthropocentrism has led in

If we follow this radical subjectivism, this radical anthropocentrism, through to its logical conclusion, where do we arrive? at the divinization of man in despite of God, or in other words without sanctifying grace.

Clearly this tendency is corroding the Catholic faith from within. We might ask whether it is a solely destructive tendency or whether it is in the process of replacing the faith with a new religion, or pseudo-religion.

The answer is clear. This corrosive tendency is nothing other than the work of a parasite within the bosom of the Catholic Church, that parasite which is the primordial rival of the Catholic faith, that system of thought and action known as Gnosis. It is in the process of transforming the Catholic faith into an amorphous and indiscriminate mixture of truth and heresy which is Gnosticism. This it attempted in the first centuries of Church history until it was defeated by the men of the Church, its saints and its doctors. Two thousand years later it has made its triumphal re-entry into the Church, but this time at the invitation of the men of the Church themselves.

Gnosticism, which teaches “salvation not by faith and love but by speculative knowledge,”²⁶ possesses the following particular characteristics of its parent system Gnosis: it is inimical to grace, inimical to objective truth whether natural or 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 boasts as its primary and essential dogma the auto-divinization of man.

recent years, by a sort of inner dynamic: the use of the vernacular, the celebration of the Mass with the back to the tabernacle and facing the people, Communion in the hand, the autocelebration of the ‘Community’; not to speak of more heinous abuses such as the vision of the Mass as a party or feast, creativity, clowns, dancing-girls, laughter, and applause. In this regard, Cardinal Ratzinger himself in his autobiography *Aus meinem Leben: Erinnerungen* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 1998 pg. 174) speaks of times when the liturgy is conceived *etsi Deus non daretur*—as though God did not exist.

²⁶ M. L. Cozens, *A Handbook of Heresies*, London, Sheed and Ward 1945, pg. 21

II Magisterial Personalism

Introduction

We shall now return to a particular example of the subjectivism which we have just attempted to expound, namely Magisterial Personalism.²⁷ The importance with which this method of analysis has been invested by the Magisterium in recent times in respect to the themes treated in this book shall require a lengthy treatment.

This method first came to light in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, particularly *Gaudium et Spes*, and is manifest in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* of Pope Paul VI, as in many magisterial documents promulgated under Pope John Paul II, e.g., the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (the new catechism), *Veritatis Splendor*, and *Familiaris Consortio*.

To understand magisterial personalism in theory let us turn to the theoretical exposition of it offered by Pope John Paul II, for whom this philosophy plays an important role. As such it has its origins in the personalism of Max Scheler (1874–1928) and perhaps also that of Emmanuel Mounier (1905–1950). Assuming that Max Scheler, on whom the Pope to be wrote his doctoral thesis, is the principal source for his personalism, let us begin by briefly considering the work of this philosopher.

1. The Personalism of Max Scheler

In the evaluation of Johannes Hirschberger²⁸ on which the following summary chiefly relies, Scheler brought to its fulfilment the phenomenology of Husserl, a philosophy concerning the object and the nature of things. With its motto *Zurück zu den Sachen selbst*: back to the things themselves, this philosophy offered a method of discovering the nature of each thing by appropriate use of the senses

²⁷ We understand personalism here as that system of personal ethics which is grounded in the person rather than in being. We contrast it to personalism as a doctrine of political ethics which gives precedence to the person over the common good, and personalism in metaphysics which defines the person in terms of substance rather than functions.

²⁸ Cf. Joannes Hirschberger, *Geschichte der Philosophie Bd. II: Neuzeit und Gegenwart*, V (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag 11th Edition 1980).

and reason. Scheler applied this method to the broad themes of value, man, world, and God.

The phenomenological acquaintance with the nature of things becomes with Scheler an acquaintance with values which are objective qualities of things or persons, and are apprehended (by those who are not impervious to them) by means of acts. Just as sense objects are perceived and concepts are thought, so values are felt. The acquaintance with these values has both an ethical and a psychological interest for Scheler, who created a philosophy of the emotions, notably of sympathy and love.

His teaching on love constitutes an integral part of his philosophy of the human person. The human person is not the hypostasis, the metaphysical substance of the ancients, which would make man a thing among things, but rather a principle of agency continually in motion, who by virtue of his spirit knows the nature of things and feels values, thereby entering into an ideal sphere, where he is free from the law of causal determinism and thus free from the world, and where he can form himself in his ultimate value as person. Persons do not exist, they become: by “realizing values.” Man’s action is a form of love that conforms to the inner order of the heart and shares in the world of values and in the final analysis in the *Urperson*, or proto-person, who is God.

Scheler’s views about the world and God as well as the drive (or *Drang*) inherent in man we shall leave aside as irrelevant to the matter at hand and as antagonistic to Catholic doctrine.

2. Magisterial Personalism

The future Pope John Paul II was concerned to adapt Scheler’s philosophy to a Thomistic metaphysics. In the following brief summary of his own version of personalism let us concentrate on the central questions of the person, self-determinism, freedom, the dignity of the person, love, value, and truth.²⁹

The Pope to be accepts the Thomistic definition of the person (originating from Boethius): “*persona est rationalis naturae individua*

²⁹ We do this by reference to the book *Person and Community: Selected Essays by Karol Wojtyla* translated by Theresa Sandok OSM: *Catholic Thought from Lublin*, Vol. IV, published by PG. Lang New York 1993. Works referred to below form chapters of this book unless otherwise stated.

substantia.³⁰ The human person is a composite of matter (body) and form (the soul). The latter is the principle of the life and activity of the human being, an activity which operates through the faculties of reason and free will. The soul possesses other faculties of a sensory nature, whether cognitive or appetitive. The later Pope observes that St. Thomas does not speak of the ‘lived experiences of the person.’³¹

By ‘lived experiences of the person’ he seems to refer to consciousness, particularly love, and self-consciousness, particularly self-consciousness inasmuch as it reveals the action of the will in self-determinism. This self-determinism is identical with freedom.³² It is a property of the person³³ by which a person directs an act of will towards a value, thereby determining himself,³⁴ creating himself, making himself ‘good’ or ‘evil’ as a human being. Whilst the term ‘person’ has an ontological sense (as defined above), self-determinism enables one to understand it in an ethical sense as well,³⁵ perhaps even in an additional ontological sense,³⁶ since self-determinism enables self-gift, which is in effect the culmination of personhood. Here³⁷ he quotes from *Gaudium et Spes* 23: “the human being who is the only creature on earth that God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself or herself except through a disinterested gift of himself or herself” As Janet E. Smith observes³⁸ “Talk of gift of self is nearly always linked to the imitation of Christ: ‘Jesus asks

³⁰ Thomistic Personalism, pg. 167.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 171.

³² Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*: translated by Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, Publ. Co. 1979) Ch. 2 s. 3.

³³ Karol Wojtyła, *The Personal Structure of Self-Determinism*, pg. 190.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 191.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 192

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 193

³⁸ Janet Smith in *Natural Law and Personalism in Veritatis Splendor in John Paul II and Moral Theology*, Edited by Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick, S. J., (New York: Paulist Press 1998) pg. 81.

us to follow him and to imitate him along the path of love, a love which gives itself completely to the brethren out of love for God.” (*Veritatis Splendor* 19)

The dignity of the person for the Pope resides in his self-determinism through the free choice of the good, or in other words in his self-giving. To this ethical thesis two theses of a theological nature are added in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:³⁹ “The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and the likeness of God; it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude.”

As for love, in the Thomistic understanding approved by the Pope, it draws together and unifies everything in existence.⁴⁰ There exists a sensible love and “a true love, the kind of love of others worthy of a human person... in which our sensory energies and desires are subordinated to a basic understanding of the true worth of the object of our love.”⁴¹ This love, which amounts to self-giving, relates to the good that each person is and the good comprised by their union, and should serve as the foundation for all human co-existence. Love thy neighbor is a thoroughly personalistic principle. The proper object and subject of love is the person.

The term ‘value’ is used frequently by the Pope, who sometimes substitutes for it the terms ‘good’ or ‘dignity’ (in the case of the person). So, for example, the object of the will is designated sometimes as value⁴² and sometimes as the good.⁴³ By willing the value or good (by self-determinism), the agent himself attains a value⁴⁴ or makes himself good.⁴⁵ This value or good that he attains thus proceeds from himself as its efficient cause. Scheler misses this fact, maintains the Pope, mistakenly viewing value simply as

³⁹ #1700.

⁴⁰ Karol Wojtyla, *Thomistic Personalism*, pg. 172.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* pg. 173.

⁴² Karol Wojtyla, *The Personal Structure of Self-Determinism* pg. 191.

⁴³ Karol Wojtyla, *Thomistic Personalism* pg. 172.

⁴⁴ Karol Wojtyla, *The Person: Subject and Community* pg. 230.

⁴⁵ Karol Wojtyla, *The Personal Structure of Self-Determinism* pg. 191.

the object of emotion.⁴⁶ The value or good that the person attains (when viewed in the third person) is designated by the Pope as the value of the person,⁴⁷ or, more characteristically, as the dignity of the person.

Let us turn to the Pope's notion of truth. He quotes from St. Thomas that "every being is a good from an existential point of view" (in other words, in as far as it exists) and proceeds: "The consciousness of value, on the other hand, arises in us when that existential good... is evaluated in a certain way, namely is placed, so to speak, under the light of truth. Only then can we speak of the lived experience of value."⁴⁸ Here he describes the psychological process which he terms 'evaluation' by which, in Thomistic terms, a thing is both understood as being under the aspect of truth and then as being under the aspect of the good. In everyday language he is speaking of something being first understood and then seen to be good. His notion of truth is Thomistic then, namely a notion of ontological truth: *adaequatio rei cum idea eius sive cum intellectu*: the being of things insofar as it is recognizable (what in common parlance would roughly be called 'reality'). This notion is to be distinguished from the notion of logical truth *adaequatio intellectus cum re*: the correspondence of cognition with being (what in common parlance is simply called 'truth').

The influence of Scheler's philosophy on the Pope John Paul II's personalism is seen particularly in the concept of self-determinism; the equivalence of self-determinism with love (or 'self-giving' in the latter's thought); the importance of freedom; the concept of value (which the latter particularly ascribes to the person and characteristically refers to as dignity); the objectivity and transcendence (however understood) of values, and, in the Pope's thinking, of the Good and True to which one arises, "going out beyond oneself and somehow rising above oneself"⁴⁹—almost the

⁴⁶ Karol Wojtyła, *The Problem of the Separation of Experience from the Act in Ethics* pg. 38–9.

⁴⁷ Karol Wojtyła. *Thomistic Personalism* pg. 173.

⁴⁸ Karol Wojtyła, *On the Metaphysical and Phenomenological Basis of the Moral Norm* pg. 92.

⁴⁹ Karol Wojtyła, *The Person: Subject and Community*, pg. 234.

“ideal sphere” of Scheler—and finally psychology which reveals self-determinism and the lived experience of value. Scheler’s preoccupation with objectivity and psychology of course derives in its turn from phenomenology.

Let us proceed to offer an evaluation of personalism first in general and then in regard to the two formulations outlined above.

3. Evaluation of Personalism

i) Evaluation of Personalism in General

It should be remarked at the outset that personalism is not in itself a complete system of morality, first in that it does not yield a system of general ethics but only a system of personal ethics and to some extent one of social ethics (see the beginning of ch. 2); second, in that it in itself lacks a metaphysical foundation, which is supplied in Magisterial Personalism by the Thomistic ontology of the person, the true, the good, and love. Furthermore even in conjunction with a metaphysical foundation it remains merely a system of ethics or moral philosophy and not a system of moral theology (see the beginning of ch. 1).

Its general advantage, in which it may be seen to supplement the Thomistic ethics, would appear to be that it helps analyze and determine actions relating to a person, by reference to the person himself, at least on the natural level. Indeed in accordance with the previously enunciated principle *agere sequitur esse* it is necessary to understand the nature of the person in order to analyze and determine an action that relates to him. Personalism offers such an understanding. Moreover it is clear that it is the dignity of the person, or in other words that which is most excellent, most elevated, in him that must principally be respected in any action relating to him. Personalism provides a foundation for this dignity of the person, again at least on the natural level.

As far the themes of this book are concerned, it is perhaps a reflection upon the brutal maltreatment and massacre of millions of people during the World Wars and in the Communist republics that has made men of good will more aware of the dignity of the person and has led them to adopt it as a principle uniting them in their resistance to such evils. A comparable maltreatment and massacre in the areas of sexuality and abortion will justify analysis

in similar terms; the extent to which the dignity of the person can however constitute a principle of unity compatible with Catholic teaching will be discussed in the latter pages of this chapter.

ii) Evaluation of Scheler's Personalism

Let us proceed to evaluate the personalism of Max Scheler by way of a brief glance at his mentor Edmund Husserl. Although the latter, with his motto *Zurück zu den Sachen selbst*, was concerned to construct an objectivist philosophy in reaction to the subjectivist philosophies of Hume and Kant, he nevertheless falls prey to a certain subjectivity, at least from the standpoint of the perennial philosophy. For with his dictum *Erkenntnis ist Anschauung*: Knowledge is Observation, by which he expressed his theory that the nature of things is known by observation, he presupposed that a thing consists of its observable qualities, thereby leaving out of consideration the actual existence of the thing. In brief, the perennial philosophy teaches that a thing consists of both essence and existence. Husserl teaches that it consists of essence alone. By bracketing out existence, he detaches himself from objective reality and thereby falls into subjectivism.

Scheler adopts Husserl's epistemological principle *Erkenntnis ist Anschauung* and applies it to values. Husserl's theory that the nature of things is known by observation becomes in Scheler the theory that the value of things is known by feelings, and just as Husserl detaches the essence of things from the things themselves, so Scheler detaches the value of things from the things themselves, thereby also falling into subjectivism. According to the perennial philosophy, by contrast, the goodness of a thing is identical with the thing itself: *ens et bonum convertuntur*. Moreover there is also such a thing as a moral good (e.g., a morally good action) and a supernatural good (e.g., a morally good action performed by an agent in a state of grace).

In the perennial philosophy, the faculties of a person that relate to a good of any of these three types, are first the understanding, by which the good is apprehended as true, and then the will (or love) by which the good is willed. The order of the true hereby takes epistemological precedence over the order of the good. To Scheler, by contrast, the faculties which relate to values are first the feelings by which the value is apprehended, and secondly love, by which

the value is realized. The lack of reference to objective truth and understanding entails that Scheler effectively gives precedence to the order of good over the order of true. Indeed in *Zur Ethik und Erkenntnislehre*,⁵⁰ he writes: “*der Mensch ist, ehe er ein ens cogitans ist oder ein ens volens, ein ens amans.*” Man is first of all a loving being before he is ever a knowing or a willing being.

To Scheler the person is a principle of agency who realizes himself as a person by loving, by realizing values. So much, one might say, for the person as viewed from inside. From outside, or judging by our acquaintance with a person outside us, a person is, or possesses, a value. According to the principle of *Erkenntnis ist Anschauung*, I am acquainted with the value that this person is, or possesses, by means of feeling. This feeling gives me an intuitive acquaintance with the person. In the perennial philosophy, the person is understood ontologically: as something that exists, and that has a nature, namely body and soul. He exists; he is not in the process of becoming a person; he does not create himself—except in a moral sense inasmuch as he makes himself good or evil by his actions; he is not a value.

Let us now turn to Scheler’s notion of freedom, first suggesting that two types of freedom may in general be distinguished in the history of human thought: the freedom to do what I desire (or what I, autonomously, consider right), and the freedom to do what is good. The first may be termed subjectivist, the second objectivist. Scheler’s freedom is of the subjectivist type: it is the freedom to do what one desires, the freedom to realize oneself. The freedom of the perennial philosophy, by contrast, is of the objectivist type: the freedom (more fully) to know what is true and to do what is good. Furthermore in the philosophy of Scheler, as in all subjectivist philosophies, freedom is a perfection and plays a primary role because it is the faculty by which the agent attains his end: his self-realization; whereas in the perennial philosophy freedom is a perfection only inasmuch as it may be exercised in relation to the True and the Good; inasmuch as it may be exercised in relation to falsehood and evil it is an imperfection. It plays a secondary role, because the faculties by which the agent attains his end are

⁵⁰ Max Scheler, *Zur Ethik und Erkenntnislehre. Schriften aus dem Nachlass*, I. X, (Bern Francke Verlag, 1957) pg. 356.

the intellect and the will, freedom being simply a determination of them. We notice in passing that Scheler describes man's end in subjectivist terms, by reference to the self: as self-determinism, whereas the perennial philosophy describes it in objectivist terms, by reference to God.

The above evaluation reveals that the fundamental feature of Scheler's personalism is its subjectivism. On the basis that the fundamental feature of the perennial philosophy is its objectivism, we may conclude that the two systems of thought are in fundamental opposition to each other. Let us proceed to ask how they are reconciled in Magisterial Personalism, first in theory and then in practice.

iii) Evaluation of Magisterial Personalism

a) Magisterial Personalism in Relation to the Perennial Philosophy in Theory

We have seen how the Holy Father adopts terms characteristic of personalism such as value, love, the person, freedom, and self-determinism, and is concerned to give them objective content in accordance with the perennial philosophy: value is identified with the Good, which is subordinated to the True and which is the object of love. The person is the composite of body and soul. His freedom, which is identical to his self-determinism, relates to the Good and the True. Janet E. Smith (op. cit.,) shows how his personalism is compatible with objective morality (at least on the natural level), that is with Church teaching on the natural law in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *Veritatis Splendor*.

Moving from the general to the particular, let us now briefly consider the personalistic doctrine that self-gift determines personhood, because this doctrine seems to find an echo in Magisterial Personalism, although this is unclear. Noting first that for the purposes of this section we understand 'self-gift' as that giving that is a feature of rational love (see the end of the previous chapter), we may certainly admit that self-gift is related to personhood on a deep level, while denying that it determines it ontologically. Its relation to personhood, according to the perennial philosophy, would rather be that of exemplary cause (as an expression of God's love for himself and for us).

In fact, for the sake of clarity, the relation of self-gift to personhood as well as the relation of the body and soul to personhood may be understood in terms of the Aristotelian doctrine of the causes: self-gift is the exemplary cause of the person; the body is the material cause; and the soul is the formal cause. The exemplary cause is an extrinsic cause so it does not determine the person ontologically; the material and the formal causes are by contrast intrinsic causes, so do determine the person ontologically.⁵¹

We see how personalism (that of Scheler) is adapted to objective truth and goodness on the natural level, that is in theory. Let us proceed to ask how it is adapted to natural truth and goodness in practice.

b) Magisterial Personalism in Relation to the Perennial Philosophy in Practice

We observe first that natural truth and goodness are neglected. In *Humanae Vitae* for example, as we shall show later (in ch. 5), natural law arguments are for the most part ignored, and in *Familiaris Consortio*, a lengthy encyclical in eighty-six sections treating of family love, the objective foundation of love is never revealed.

We observe secondly that personalistic terminology such as freedom, value, love, and truth, is in practice not defined. The immediate consequence is that the terms are unclear: the term value for instance is not replaced by the precise philosophical term good; in itself it has a mercantile sense which has no bearing on personal ethics; the term love is notoriously broad; the term truth is in common parlance most commonly understood in its logical sense

⁵¹ On the basis of such considerations, one may distinguish three errors in defining the relation between self-gift and personhood. The first is to identify the two as does Scheler, or even certain Catholic writers such as Fr. R. D. Johann, S.J. in his article on love in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*: (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) "The truth is that the self exists only in this relationship (its loving relationship to being) and apart from it is nothing at all." The second error is to state that self-gift determines personhood ontologically, as we have just attempted to refute. The third error is to be moved by the fact that since self-gift is neither identical to personhood nor determines it ontologically, to ignore the fact that the two are related to each other on a deep level.

(see above) but is used differently in Magisterial Personalism—indeed in an almost mystical sense as in the phrase: “somehow rising above oneself...” (see above). The consequence of this unclarity is that the terms are taken in the sense in which they are most readily understood, namely for the most part in a subjectivist sense: freedom is taken as the freedom to do what I desire; value is taken as that which I have freely chosen as a value or as the object of my love; love is taken as sensible love.

Indeed, since the Holy Father does not usually situate the terms in the context of the perennial philosophy, one may well ask whether he does not usually understand them in a subjective sense himself, giving the terms a different content at different times in accordance with an eclectic, rather than synthetic, manner of thinking.

We see then how Magisterial Personalism gains a subjectivist character in practice, first by neglecting the objective realm and second by employing terms, which are *prima facie* subjectivist, without redefining them.

c) Magisterial Personalism in Relation to Faith

If Magisterial Personalism lacks reference to the objective realm on the natural level, it does so also on the supernatural level, as can be seen in the magisterial treatment of the dignity of the person. For the Pope, this dignity resides in man’s self-determinism or self-giving, in his creation in the image and likeness of God, and in his vocation to divine beatitude. This self-giving is in fact conceived by him as relating to the creation in the image and likeness of God, for he describes self-giving as free and as directed towards the Good and the True, and the new catechism⁵² explains creation in the image and likeness of God by reference to a spiritual soul, intellect, will, and freedom.

This form of dignity which we have described above (in ch. 2) as the natural form of dignity, has been diminished by original sin. The new catechism does in fact refer to original sin “by which man is now inclined to evil and subject to error,”⁵³ but does not admit that this has diminished man’s dignity.

⁵² 1705

⁵³ 1707

As to the supernatural dignity of man, which is ostensibly the most elevated form of dignity (ch. 2), the Catechism remains silent. Although it speaks of man conforming or not to the “good promised by God”⁵⁴, attaining the “perfection of charity which is holiness”, and maturing in grace,⁵⁵ it does not identify this charity or holiness with his dignity, nor identify a loss of this charity or holiness with a loss of his dignity.

In a similar way, the Pope to be, speaking in a broadcast at the time of the Second Vatican Council *On the Dignity of the Human Person*,⁵⁶ explains that this dignity (understood in the natural sense) derives from the intellect and free will; and that it is confirmed by the fact of revelation, namely to the human being made in the image and likeness of God. He then adds (as quoted earlier): “God also became a human being, redeems man, and permeates the human being with divine grace...” Here redemption and grace are mentioned but, as explained above (in ch. 2), are not taken as the ground for the supernatural dignity of man, but simply as an added ground for man’s natural dignity. The endeavor to subordinate the supernatural to the natural realm is also seen in the magisterial treatment of love as will be exemplified in the second half of chapter 4 and as is expressed in the statement mentioned above: “love thy neighbor is a thoroughly personalistic principle.”

We see then how Magisterial Personalism lacks reference to the objective realm both on the natural and the supernatural levels. What is the reason for this?, one might ask.

Magisterial Personalism neglects the objective natural order because, whatever its theoretical claims, it remains a form of personalism and as such is fundamentally subjectivist.

Why does it neglect the objective supernatural order? The answer has already been given at the beginning of this section: Personalism is a system of philosophy, of ethics, and not of moral theology. As a system of philosophy it relies on the senses and the reason for attaining truth, as we have seen clearly with Scheler and his mentor Husserl. Senses and reason can only attain natural truth, never supernatural truth.

⁵⁴ 1700

⁵⁵ 1709

⁵⁶ Karol Wojtyla, *On the Dignity of the Human Person*, pg. 179.

Even when personalism is adapted to a Thomistic metaphysics, it remains a system of philosophy and not of theology. It is true that certain theological elements are added to personalism such as the imitation of Christ and of the Holy Trinity, but other theological elements of central importance for Catholic morality are omitted, such as the supernatural dignity of man and supernatural love, or charity. If all such relevant elements were incorporated into personalism, it would cease to be a system of moral philosophy but would instead become one of moral theology with personalistic insights. This is indeed its role, for since theology is the higher science, philosophy must serve as her handmaid rather than the reverse.

Magisterial Personalism neglects the objective realm both on the natural and the supernatural level then, because it is subjectivist and because it is merely a philosophy. However sound it may be in theory, however noble in intention (see below), it must be admitted out of respect for the truth, that in practice it is less than felicitous. Its neglect of the objective realm on the natural and supernatural levels represents a shift on both levels from the objective to the subjective, and effectively a shift from the theocentric to the anthropocentric; in addition it represents a shift from the supernatural to the natural level: from faith to philosophy.⁵⁷

In a word it tends to supplant the perennial philosophy as a teacher of natural truth and to supplant moral theology as a teacher of Catholic morality. It has a limited role to perform when properly applied within personal and social ethics, but here it exceed these limits, leading its adherents into confusion and error.

The sort of error to which it can give rise may be illustrated by the following example: Take a man who is a model of self-giving but in a state of mortal sin. Magisterial personalism would accord him dignity, indeed a high dignity on account of his exemplary self-giving. According to Catholic teaching, by contrast, this man would possess no supernatural dignity and a much diminished natural dignity, so that St. Thomas would say that he possesses no dignity *simpliciter*. if he died unrepentant he would be condemned to Hell. The clear statements in the new

⁵⁷ We have presented this tendency to naturalize in the beginning of the present chapter.

catechism on the nature of sin would safeguard a reader from falling into such an error, although one must admit that there is a lack of coherence in the new catechism and in the contemporary teaching of the Magisterium, when taken as a whole.

4. The Motivation of Magisterial Personalism

The motivation of this form of personalism 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 the broadcast (cited above) by the Pope to be 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...⁵⁸ The matter of the dignity of the human person... is certainly an ecumenical element, an element common to all people of genuinely good will."⁵⁹

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 (as we have argued above) 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 give logical priority to the subject of a nature to the nature itself: to the human person over human nature. In the realm of ethics, which interests us in this book, this means to accord priority to the order of the Good over the order of the True: to the good of the person (or to that which

⁵⁸ Karol Wojtyla, *On the Dignity of the Human Person*, pg. 179.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 180.

he subjectively regards as a good) over his objective nature, which of course encompasses the objective natural law.

We have referred to this error of Personalism at the beginning of the chapter, an error that we have also expressed in terms of the priority of Love over Knowledge. The root cause of this error is the radical subjectivity of Personalism.

III The Origin and Correct Evaluation of the Novel Tendency

Having been at pains to identify a novel tendency in the Magisterium which has been manifest in that system of thought which we have called Magisterial Personalism, we proceed to examine its origin and ask how we should correctly evaluate it.

1. The Origin of the Novel Tendency

Now, the very *raison d'être* of the Magisterium is to teach the Catholic faith and to condemn heresy. This it did in the Syllabus of Bl. Pius IX (1864) when it condemned the principal errors of our age outside the Church (*Praecipuos Nostrae Aetatis Errores*); this it did in *Lamentabili* of St. Pius X (1907) when it condemned the modernist doctrines (*Errores Modernistarum*) which had crept into the Church by way of unofficial teachings of certain of its members; but now these same errors have crept into the Magisterium itself,⁶⁰ and into the teaching of a not inconsiderable sector of the hierarchy and the clergy as well, casting a veil of darkness over all things.⁶¹

How did this happen? Fr. Wiltgen, S.V.D. in *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber* (Le Rhin se jette dans le Tibre, Paris: Cédre, 1975) and in English (*The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: A History of Vatican II*, Charlotte: TAN Books, 1991), and Romano Amerio in *Iota Unum* relate how the whole of the preparatory work of the Second Vatican Council, which was of a traditional tenor, was eliminated “so that of the twenty original schémas, only the one on the liturgy remained. The general spirit of the texts was changed...” (pg. 43 of

⁶⁰ Cf. *Iota Unum*, pg. 24

⁶¹ The origins of these novel doctrines are to be traced, then, to an intellectual movement of the nineteenth century (which is an expression of the spirit of the world), and not merely to the Second Vatican Council, or to the postconciliar “spirit”.

the latter work). Both authors show that these changes were wrought by a working alliance of French, German, and Canadian bishops of a modernist persuasion (pg. 43). If formal heresy was avoided, Catholic doctrine was expressed with ambiguity, an ambiguity, to be precise, which favors heresy. In this connection Romano Amerio writes (pg.50 *op.cit.*): “These inexact formulations were deliberately introduced so that post-conciliar hermeneutics could gloss or re-inforce whichever ideas it liked. “*Nous l’exprimons d’une façon diplomatique, mais après le Concile nous tirerons les conclusions implicites.*”⁶²

2. The Correct Evaluation of the Novel Tendency

We may distinguish three ways of evaluating the novel tendency: we may give a novel doctrine priority over the traditional doctrine; we may reconcile the two (declaring the opposition to be merely apparent); or we may give the traditional doctrine priority over the novel doctrine. The first position, seemingly adopted without reflection by most members of the Church today, is in fact untenable in regard to divine Tradition, since Truth, whether natural or supernatural, is by its very nature unchanging and unchangeable; it is untenable in regard to ecclesial Tradition since the presumption is in favor of Tradition rather than modernity, since Tradition constitutes established Catholic doctrine.

This first position, that we may describe with Fr. Chad Ripperger, as ‘Magisterialism’ holds that “whatever the current Magisterium says is *always* what is ‘orthodox’” and maintains that “because it is present (Hegelianism), because it comes from us (immanentism) [the newer] is necessarily better.”⁶³

The second position, which we can describe as ‘irenism’ holds that the conflict is only ever apparent and must be understood (and accepted) “in the light of Tradition.” This position has three limitations:

⁶² “We will express it in a diplomatic way, but after the Council we will draw out the implicit conclusions.” Statement by Fr. Schillebeeckx in the Dutch magazine *De Bazuin*, No. 16, 1965, quoted in *Itinéraires*, No.155, 1971, pg. 40.

⁶³ Fr. Chad Ripperger, “Operative Points of View” *Christian Order*, March 2001, (www.christianorder.com), to which the reader is referred for the whole topic under discussion here.

1) It is unrealistic, because it ignores the dishonesty of the modernizing lobby, accepting their texts without criticism, as though written under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁴

2) It is not necessarily always tenable, for there is no reason in theology why there should not be a real contradiction between traditional and recent teachings of the Magisterium, the conditions for infallibility not applying to all declarations of the Magisterium. In such a case the light of Tradition would show the recent teaching to be incompatible with Tradition and therefore unacceptable from this perspective.

3) When it is tenable, it is one-sided, because it only understands a given ambiguous statement in a Catholic sense, whereas to understand an ambiguous statement, one must clearly understand it in both of its senses, which means in the present context both its Catholic and its non-Catholic sense. An example is the ambiguous phrase “the Sister Churches” as in the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* (1995). To understand this phrase we must understand it both in its Catholic and its non-Catholic sense. In its Catholic sense it means the particular churches, Catholic or non-Catholic, which have a valid episcopate and Eucharist, to which the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Universal Church is not the Sister but the Mother;⁶⁵ in its non-Catholic sense it can be taken to mean that the Catholic Church is on an equal footing with the “Orthodox Church(es)” and the “Protestant Church(es)” as condemned by Bl. Pius IX in *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* (1863), and the *Syllabus Errorum* (1864) on pg. 18 under the name of Latitudinarianism.

To understand an ambiguous statement we cannot then ignore one of its senses. This is particularly so if this sense is its *prima facie* sense.

But there is another reason why we cannot ignore the non-Catholic sense of a given phrase or statement of this type, and that is that it constitutes, together with the *prima facie* non-Catholic sense of many other declarations of the Magisterium, a

⁶⁴ And obscured, as it were, only by the excess of divine light, or by their sublime or oracular mode of expression.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Note on the Expression Sister Churches* from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 30 . 2000.

body of doctrines which the Church has condemned as heretical under the name of Modernism.

The third position, which we may describe as Traditionalism,⁶⁶ seeks to evaluate the modern doctrine (in its one, or in its various, sense(s)) in the light of Tradition: to accept what is compatible with Tradition,⁶⁷ and reject what is incompatible with it.

This is at any rate the task of the traditionalist theologian or catechist. As for the traditionalist member of the faithful, that is to say the Catholic *tout court*, his task is not particularly to determine the Catholic, or non-Catholic sense of any given statement. Rather, in virtue of the fact that traditional doctrine is clear and that the novel doctrine is typically unclear, his task, in order to know what the Church teaches on any of such themes, and to live accordingly⁶⁸ (where there is a moral dimension), is to refer directly to Tradition and to leave the novel doctrine aside.⁶⁹

Before proceeding further, however, let us explain what we mean here by Tradition and Traditionalism. By Tradition we mean everything that is handed on (*tradere*) to subsequent generations by the Church: that is the holy scriptures, as well as the unwritten patrimony of the Church ('Tradition' in the restricted sense). This unwritten patrimony comprises divine (or intrinsic) Tradition (which together with the scriptures constitutes revelation, or the *Depositum Fidei*), and ecclesial (or extrinsic) Tradition (which includes non-infallible teachings of the Ordinary Magisterium and the Church's disciplinary code as set out in the *Code of Canon Law*).

A Traditionalist takes Tradition as the canon of orthodoxy for Catholic teaching.⁷⁰ A Traditionalist theologian who treats modern

⁶⁶ We note that the terms 'traditionalism' and 'traditionalist' are not here used in a pejorative sense, nor used to refer to a position which may be placed on the same level as modernism.

⁶⁷ As for example the dogmatic definitions reiterated in the Second Vatican Council.

⁶⁸ Ambiguity and equivocation in matters of the faith not only confuse the mind but also make it more difficult to lead a good life. They are a danger to souls, acting insidiously in the manner of a slow poison.

⁶⁹ This principle applies to the whole of the Second Vatican Council.

⁷⁰ As well as for Catholic discipline (e.g., in the rules of Catholic communities) and the liturgy.

doctrine that, either in its one sense (as in the case of natural birth control) or in one of its senses (as in the non-Catholic sense of ‘Sister Churches’) contradicts ecclesial or divine Tradition, must clearly reject it.

The motivation for Traditionalism is in the first case fidelity to the Truth, and in the second case fidelity to the *Mens Ecclesiae* formed by the wisdom and labor of the Church and the saints over a period of two thousand years (see the article by Fr. Ripperger footnote 61).

The motivation for Traditionalism is in fact nothing less than Catholic, and the Traditionalist is no more and no less than the Catholic: in the first case because divine Tradition is one of the two sources of Catholic Truth (the other being the sacred scriptures); in the second case because the term ‘Catholic’ derives from the Greek term for ‘entire,’ which may reasonably be understood to encompass not only divine, but also ecclesial Tradition.

Someone might object that we should never call into question anything taught by the Magisterium or by the Pope. We should rather respect each of these declarations and assent to it “with a ready and respectful allegiance of the mind.” In reply, we should indeed respect them, which we do by evaluating them in the light of Tradition, in the light of established Catholic doctrine, and by accepting them in that light if it is possible. Yet the assent that we are required to give is an assent overriding any contrary personal opinions that we may have; it is not an assent overriding other declarations of the Magisterium, that is to say in the present context all other relevant declarations of the Magisterium in the course of Church history: namely Tradition itself.

Let us return to the example of Sister Churches. The Traditionalist theologian understands it in its two senses: its Catholic and its non-Catholic sense; he accepts its Catholic sense and rejects its non-Catholic sense. Indeed, as a Catholic theologian, or catechist, he has a duty to reject, or rather condemn, non-Catholic, or indeed heretical, doctrine because it is deleterious to the faith and the faithful.⁷¹

⁷¹ This duty also extends to liturgical and paraliturgical abuses, as referred to in the footnote above.

Part II
From the Philosophical
Perspective

Chapter 4

The Nature of Sexuality (Marriage in Ethics)

In this chapter we shall consider the nature of sexuality first in the light of the moral law, and then in the light of love.

I In the Light of the Moral Law

We have seen that it is a principle of natural law that man conserve his species through the institution of marriage. The primary reason why the exercise of the sexual faculty belongs within marriage alone is that this faculty is ordained towards the procreation of children, who require a stable home and background for their development. Marriage is, then, an institution of natural law because it is required by nature and the natural consequences of sexual union.

The present paragraph gives a brief summary of the *Roman Catechism* (of the Council of Trent) on the nature of marriage according to the natural law. Marriage is defined there as “the conjugal union of man and woman, contracted between two qualified persons, which obliges them to live together throughout life.”⁷² The *Roman Catechism* explains that “the obligation and tie expressed by the word ‘union’ alone have the force and nature of marriage”; that the word ‘conjugal’ gives the special character of

⁷² “*viri et mulieris maritalis coniunctio inter legitimas personas individuum vitae consuetudinem retinens.*” (P.2.c.8,q.3) This classical definition derives from Roman law (inst. L.1,c.9), St. Augustine, in *Gratian* (c.3, C.27, q.2), Gregory IX (c.2, X3,33), and a number of the 13 century scholastics, notably St. Thomas (Suppl. q.44, a.3). Cf. Fr. Dominic M. Prummer, O.P., *Handbook of Moral Theology* (New York: P.J. Kennedy & Sons, 1957) pg. 628.

this union; that the phrase “between qualified persons” relates to the legal provisions; and that the life-long duration of the marriage expresses the indissolubility of the tie. Marriage is consummated by the marriage debt but exists as a true marriage even without it. It is brought into being by the mutual consent of the couple, which is internal, and that consent is expressed externally by words that refer to the present time. (It may be noted that the consent of the parties is what constitutes the sacrament of marriage when the conditions for sacramentality are met, and that their freedom relates to the undertaking of this contract, but not to its later possible dissolution, for this is excluded by the finalities⁷³ of marriage.) Marriage has three main motives or ends or finalities, which are procreation; companionship and mutual assistance; and the remedy against concupiscence. (The second and third are traditionally taken together and are expressed as mutual support and love.⁷⁴) Marriage has two additional properties: union and indissolubility—the latter already contained in the definition above.

We note here that marriage is brought into being by the consent of the spouses and it consists in their union. The word union expresses the marital tie, a tie or bond (*vinculum*) that is indissoluble. Magisterial Personalism, by contrast, presents this union not as a tie or a bond but as an “intimate communion of life and love.”⁷⁵ Again we witness a shift from the objective to the subjective order (cf. the previous chapter), and in particular from a theological definition to a psychological description of marriage. The neglect of the objective order, or in other words of the essence of marriage, is misleading, as can be seen in the following example: a married couple who no longer lives an “intimate communion of life and love” may believe that their marriage no longer exists, but this is true only in the subjective and psychological order, whereas in the objective and theological order, or in other words in reality, the marriage still does.

⁷³ By the term finalities is meant the ‘ends’ in the language of scholastic philosophy. It refers teleologically to the ultimate purpose for which something exists or is ordained towards.

⁷⁴ In the sense of marital love, as a type of the love of friendship

⁷⁵ *Gaudium et Spes* 48; *Familiaris Consortio* 11; *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1603; *Evangelium Vitae* 1471.

Marriage according to revelation will be considered in ch. 10; we shall here proceed to expound the finalities and the properties of marriage from the ethical standpoint.

The primary finality of sexuality and marriage, as will be explained in detail in the next chapter, is the propagation of the human species. The sexual differentiation of man and woman and its natural orientation towards sexual union may ultimately be understood only in reference to procreation. But the duties of the parents do not end with the birth of the child, for a child when born needs to be nurtured physically and emotionally, not least through the love of both parents, and to be educated intellectually and morally, but above all spiritually, for as Pope Pius XI states in the encyclical *Casti Connubii* (12): “God wishes men to be born not only that they should live and fill the earth, but much more that they may be worshippers of God, that they may know him and love him and finally enjoy him forever in Heaven.”⁷⁶ This process of education constitutes a form of continuing procreation whereby, to the enrichment of God’s creation, the couple lives out their sublime dignity of parenthood (the woman in particular with her inborn propensity for motherhood) and manifests to each other in the highest degree their mutual support and complementarity for the sake of their progeny, the finest fruit of their love and marriage.

The secondary finality of sexuality and marriage is this very mutual support and love of the couple. It promotes their emotional, moral, and, ultimately, spiritual perfection and brings them happiness which Régis Jolivet describes as follows: “*le vrai bonheur de l’homme qui est spirituel, s’achète souvent au prix des plus durs sacrifices exigés par la fidélité au devoir.*”⁷⁷ All of the mutual relations of the couple should be guided by divine charity, and as for the satisfaction of the sexual instinct, which provides a remedy against concupiscence, it is a part of the couple’s mutual love and subordinate to it, for, as we shall later see, sexual love, marital love, is more than simply sensible love, a love of the senses: it is rational love, a love guided by reason and directed not towards the self, but towards the being of the other. It should always respect the dignity of the woman.

⁷⁶ Cf. Apoc. 6.11.

⁷⁷ Régis Jolivet, *Traité de Philosophie Morale* (Paris: Emmanuel Vitte, 1941) pg. 410.

The love between the spouses is moreover essential for the happiness and the psychological well-being of their offspring.

A further finality of marriage in particular and of the family is to serve the community, society, country, and nation. The well-being and flourishing of these social entities depends on the well-being and flourishing of that very cell of society, which is the family.

The Church teaches that the properties of marriage that best ensure the attainment of these finalities are its unity and indissolubility.⁷⁸ The necessity of the unity and indissolubility of marriage may be established on both philosophical and anthropological grounds.

The unity of marriage, or monogamy, fulfils the primary finality of marriage, namely procreation, more efficiently than polygamy, for polyandry, the marital relation between one woman and many men is clearly less fruitful than monogamy, apart from the fact that a woman's fertility is apparently endangered by relations with many men, and polygamy, the marital relation between one man and many women, is, according to statistics,⁷⁹ also less fertile than monogamy, there being less offspring per woman in polygamous societies than in monogamous societies.

Moreover, the proper education of children, the development of mature, happy, and harmoniously well-balanced progeny, requires, as noted above, a harmonious complementarity of parents and a loving devotion towards children. This is however not possible in polygamous, but only in monogamous, marriages, for in polygamous marriages the child is characteristically left with the mother and hence lacks the attentions of a father, whose identity (at least in situations of polyandry) the child may not even know. Such troubles are aggravated by rivalries and jealousies between the various members of this promiscuous *consortium*.

The second finality of marriage, the mutual support and love of a couple, the physical and spiritual union of two persons, is clearly excluded by polygamy. When indeed, as is natural and typical, a man and a woman in a polygamous marriage form a particular

⁷⁸ *Essentiales matrimonii proprietates sunt unitas et indissolubilitas*. CIC 1056.

⁷⁹ E. g., Abbé Jacques Leclerq, *La Famille*, vol. 3 of *Leçons de Droit Naturel* (Namur: A. Wesmael-Charlier, 1933).

alliance with each other, other consorts are neglected contrary to the spirit of marriage, and rivalries and jealousies ensue, as noted above. Furthermore, polygamy promotes sexual incontinence and hence the abuse of the marital partners and of marriage itself. In such ways polygamy hinders the couple's growth towards emotional, moral, and spiritual perfection. It is particularly wounding to the woman who by her nature is disposed to devote herself entirely to a single man, to love and to be faithful to him alone, and to expect him to respond in like manner.

The indissolubility of marriage, its life-long character, provides the appropriate conditions for the procreation and education of children. For only a lasting bond enables a couple, and especially a mother, to undertake all the heavy burdens that a family life brings with it. Only a lasting bond enables the parents to work together in a complementary manner for the education of their children.

Assuming that a child requires twenty years to attain to full physical and mental maturity and that a couple in their generosity gives birth to several children, the bond must be at least thirty to forty years in duration. In fact, though, it is clear that the bond must be life-long, for only the intention of life-long mutual devotion on the part of the parents, only this degree of love and dedication is sufficient to provide a home and a background stable enough for the development of mature and happy children. An intention, a love and a dedication, which is only temporary or conditional, disrupts the background, the home, and the development of the children.

The indissolubility of marriage is also necessary for the mutual love and support of the couple. Marriage is the most intimate form of friendship that exists, and the more intimate a friendship is, the firmer and more lasting it needs to be. That friendship which is the most intimate needs to be the firmest and the most lasting, and hence life-long. Moreover, the bond formed by the mutual love of the spouses is strengthened by the existence of a child, for as Aristotle states in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.14, "children are the common good of both and that which is common holds together"; it is strengthened also by the educational needs of the child. In addition, the indissolubility of marriage gives the couple the forum they need for living a life of dedicated love. This is particularly true of the woman in consequence of her womanly nature. It also serves to protect her from the danger

of abandonment at an age when it would be difficult for her to secure a new alliance or to care for her progeny.

Finally, the *Roman Catechism* explains that the indissolubility of marriage gives prospective spouses to understand that “virtue and congeniality of disposition are to be preferred before wealth and beauty”: it renders them less prone to strife and discord, and if they do for a while live apart, it provides the basis for their future life together.

In opposition to the indissolubility of marriage stand extramarital sexual relationships and divorce, which constitute a rejection of all the values inherent to marriage. They further sexual incontinence and undermine respect for marriage and the moral law; they destroy respect for the dignity of the person and lead above all to the degradation of the woman; they damage the physical, financial, and spiritual well being of those affected, particularly the woman and child; they lead to frivolous and unhappy marriages; they loosen public morals and thereby damage the common good; they prepare the way to the decline and fall of entire peoples. The mere possibility of divorce in the mind of spouses is indeed sufficient to engender mistrust, to weaken their powers of moral resistance, and to promote sexual incontinence and a hedonism the most evil fruit of which is the murder of the unborn child. This is the very situation of the world that we are living to-day

Such then are the arguments for the unity and indissolubility of marriage. They are vindicated by history and anthropology as the original characteristics of marriage and as the characteristics that subsist among primitive peoples to this day.

II In the Light of Love

1. The Traditional Doctrine

Our analysis of the nature of sexuality in the light of the moral law has shown us that it is a form of love that belongs in that life-long relationship which is marriage: such a relationship alone provides the support that both parties need for undertaking the heavy burdens of parenthood, it alone provides a background for the development of mature and happy children, the basis for the highest and deepest union and friendship that exists between persons, and the support of these persons in their old age.

Since the contemporary Magisterium understands sexuality primarily as a form of love, let us now attempt to analyze it as such in more detail.

What is sexual love then? In brief: a) it is a form of love; b) it is radically a form of sensible love; c) it is a form of sensible love that should be informed by rational love and d) by charity; e) it is a form of marital love. In more detail:

(a) as a form of love it involves union and fruitfulness;

(b) as a form of sensible love it relates to a person as an object, seeking pleasure, physical union, and the procreation of offspring;

(c) as informed and elevated by rational love, while continuing to seek pleasure, it relates to a person no longer as an object but as a person, or in other words according to the dignity of the person, since 'person' contains the notion of dignity, as shown in ch. 2. As such it is ordered towards giving, the union of two persons, and the promotion of the good of these two persons as well as the good of the new person who is the intended fruit of this union;

(d) as further informed and elevated by charity, as it must be between Christians, it is undertaken for the sake of God; it is, in its spiritual dimension, a union with God; and it aims at procreation for the glory of God, "who has made everything for himself." (Prov. 16:4)

(e) since sexual love belongs within the marital relationship, it follows that it must also share in the qualities of this relationship: it must involve intimacy and union, not just with a body but with a person in all his or her various dimensions: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual; it must involve affection, giving, and dedication. In the context of sacramental marriage it should in addition be the fruit of holy prayer (see Tob. 6:16, 17, 22 and the *Roman Catechism* quoted below in ch. 10).

2. The Novel Doctrine

Let us now see how the contemporary Magisterium understands sexuality. In *Familiaris Consortio* (11) it is described as a "total physical self-giving, the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving."

This phrase has advantages and disadvantages. Its advantages are that it shows how sexuality must be anchored within marriage, and how marital love should be characterized by selflessness.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ "Toute la doctrine catholique du mariage...implique et exalte le renoncement

Its first disadvantage is the imprecision of its formulation, for this phrase is not a definition of love according to traditional categories, and indeed given its imprecision, it cannot in fact be said to be a definition at all, but rather only a description of sexual love.

Its second disadvantage is that it is *prima facie* non-Catholic.

Let us attempt to show this by way of the more basic concept of 'self-giving love.' This has often been taken as an expression of spousal love: both of the mutual assistance of the spouses and of the marital act. In the first case it expresses the service, dedication, and selflessness of the spouses to each other; in the latter case it expresses the giving and taking of power over each others' bodies (1Cor. 7:4).⁸¹

We must however observe that the concept of self-giving love (like the concept of total self-giving love) is imprecise. For it is metaphysically impossible for one human person to give himself to another human person:⁸² one can only give oneself to a being who can receive one and take possession of one. But a spouse is unable to receive a spouse or take possession of a spouse as a person. Rather he can only receive the spouse to the extent of his capacities (*recipitur in modo recipientis*) and take possession of him or her only to this extent: in other words only in a human and limited manner,⁸³ that is to say by accepting the day-to-day service of the other and by taking power over the other's body in the marital act.

Consequently, one spouse can only give himself to the other spouse in a human and limited manner, in a self-giving only in a secondary sense (see the end of the section on love in ch. 2). It is possible to give oneself, and give oneself totally, to God alone,

des époux a l'égoïsme..." (Conclusion to the article on marriage at column 2316, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, (Paris VI: librairie Letouze et Ane, 1927).

⁸¹ Though of course in the context of "a special, holy, and pure love," and with modesty and moderation (cC. *The Roman Catechism* on Matrimony, the sections on Fidelity and the Use of Marriage respectively).

⁸² This impossibility may alternatively be expressed in terms of the doctrine in the perennial philosophy of the incommunicability of the human person. Here we see another point of divergence between this philosophy and personalism.

⁸³ Which is why one spouse cannot alienate his right over the body of the other to a third party

for in his omnipotence God alone exercises, and can exercise, total dominion over a person, and hence he alone is able to receive him and take possession of him as a person, and in a total sense.

Let us proceed to evaluate the concept of 'total self-giving love' metaphysically, physically, and morally. If between two human persons self-giving love is metaphysically impossible, then total self-giving love is so *a fortiori ratione*.

In the marital act, total self-giving love is in addition physically impossible, since as a radically sensible form of love, it essentially involves the seeking and taking of pleasure, without which the act itself would be impossible. Moreover, in the moral domain total self-giving love is legitimate to God alone, in accordance with the commandment to love God with "thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." (Lk. 10:27) but to love the neighbor to a lesser degree, that is to say: "as thyself." To attempt to love another human being in an absolute sense is idolatry and therefore wrong: spousal love should therefore be characterized by restraint. Indeed spouses not only avoid the sin of idolatry thereby, but also practice the virtues of temperance, modesty, and reserve, respecting themselves and each other, and safeguarding their personal privacy physically, psychologically, mentally, and spiritually. Reserve has a particular importance in the spiritual domain where the intimate relation between God and the soul is concerned.

But someone may object here that spousal love may indeed amount to a total self-giving, if it is understood to refer to a total self-giving to God in charity within marriage, for marriage is indeed one of the ways in which man is able to love God. But this love, this self-giving, to God within marriage cannot be total, for a spouse can only love God with a divided heart: "He that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world: how he may please his wife. And he is divided" (1Cor. 7:33). Pius XII in his encyclical *Sacra Virginitas* (1954, s. 20) comments here: "The Apostle...is asserting clearly that their hearts are divided between love of God and love their spouse." (Cf. also ss. 15 and 24.)

A further objection may be made to the above thesis, in arguing that since marriage is a symbol of Christ's union with his Church, it must share in its qualities, amongst which is the totality of self-giving. In this connection Pope John Paul II writes in *Familiaris*

Consortio: “the couple participates in and is called to live the very charity of Christ who gave himself on the Cross...the content of [this] participation [is that] conjugal love aims at a totality” (32). In reply, for one thing to be a symbol of another thing it must share in some of its qualities, but not all, otherwise it would not be a symbol of it but identical to it. *The Roman Catechism*, as we shall see in the later chapter on marriage, specifies the relevant qualities of the love in question as its intimacy, immensity, and holiness. The couple is called to imitate these qualities of Christ’s love for his Church, but not others such as its totality, which is anyway excluded by the arguments outlined above.

In summary, self-giving love (in its strict sense) and total self-giving love are possible, as we have said, only in relation to God, and possible only directly: without the mediation of another human person. This is why they can only exist within a life of perfect chastity, which therefore constitutes a more perfect symbol of Christ’s union with his Church even than marriage.⁸⁴ In this

⁸⁴ Although the two states of life are placed on the same level in the contemporary Magisterium. For example, the new catechism at 1603 speaks of “the vocation to marriage”, and *Familiaris Consortio*, as we shall see in the next chapter, speaks of the vocation of all men to total love in marriage or in virginity/celibacy. We also note here the modern tendency to speak of a “vocation to marriage” on a par with the vocation to the consecrated life (whether religious or priestly). Traditionally, however, vocation is understood only in the latter sense—which is also the most obvious and deepest sense of the term—and the two forms of movement are distinguished as follows: the vocation to the consecrated life proceeds 1) from without human nature, 2) directly 3) from a personal being, namely from God, in order 4) absolutely to transcend the limits of human nature; whereas the tendency towards marriage proceeds 1) from within human nature, that is to say 2) is a prompting of human nature, and therefore 3) comes only indirectly from God, in order 4) to realize a potential of that nature. If one puts the two forms of movement on the same level, one blurs the distinction between the supernatural and the natural, degrading and naturalizing the spiritual vocation—the more common eventuality, or elevating and supernaturalizing the natural tendency. We have explained this type of confusion at the beginning of ch. 3.

Finally, if both the states of life are the object of vocation and both involve a total self-giving love, how can we argue that the consecrated state is “better and more blessed” than the married state? as the Council of Trent dogmatically declares

regard it is instructive to read in the encyclical *Sacra Virginitas* of Pius XII: “The greatest glory of virgins is undoubtedly to be the loving images of the perfect integrity of the union between the Church and her divine Spouse.”⁸⁵

Let us ask at this point how we should characterize marital love in so far as it relates to the spouses themselves. Marital love, as we have seen, is traditionally understood as a form of friendship and defined as mutual assistance. This friendship and mutual assistance must clearly relate in the first instance to the primary duty of the spouses, that is to say the procreation and education of children; as a form of rational love, though, it is of course at the same time oriented to the reciprocal good of the spouses.

In the course of time, as the children grow up and no longer require such an assiduous educative formation, and as the initial attraction of the spouses lessens in intensity, their physical union (a lesser form of union—matter being the *principium individuationis*) tends to give way to a union of hearts, which in its turn is called to become the union of souls in God. Here their pursuit of each other’s good reaches its highest point in their mutual sanctification.

This orientation of marital love to mutual sanctification of course applies even more precisely to couples who are unable to have children or who make a vow of perfect chastity, where the secondary finality of marriage effectively becomes its only finality. This accords with St. Paul’s teaching that conjugal union is in general necessary, but continence superior.

In this connection Fr. Stanislas Lestapis, S.J. writes:⁸⁶ “*S’adressant aux chrétiens mariés Paul voudrait les voir progressivement tendre à une spiritualisation de leur amour conjugal, jusqu’à la limite, à une continence parfaite. Cependant il les met en garde contre l’illusion: pas d’angélisme!*”⁸⁷ [Addressing himself to married Christians, Paul would want to see them progressively tending to a spiritualization of

in s. 24, canon 10: *Si quis dixerit...non esse melius ac beatius, manere in virginitate aut caelibatu, quam iungi matrimonio: Anathema sit.*

⁸⁵ v30-31 (see ch. 11 below).

⁸⁶ Fr. Stanislas Lestapis, S.J., *La Limitation de Naissances*, (Paris : Spes 1958) pg.132.

⁸⁷ 1Cor. 7:1-6 , 29; 1Tim.5:14.

their conjugal love to the limit, to a perfect continence. However, he puts them on guard against illusion: no angelism!] In the same vein, this author comments on 1Cor. 7:5 that the temporary abstinence of the couple for the sake of prayer, enables them “*être, par le sacrifice, plus spirituellement au Christ,*” [to be, by the sacrifice, more spiritually [like] Christ] and emphasizes the importance of prayer together in general and of frequent recourse to the sacraments (cf. ch. 10 of this volume).

Similarly the author Gustave Thibon in his work *Ce que Dieu a uni, Essai sur l'Amour* (Paris: Editions Universitaires 1946, ch. III amour et prière), writes of the reflection of the divine in the spouse, quoting Dante's: “*Elle regardait en haut, et moi en elle*” and Victor Hugo's: *sentir l'être sacre frémir dans l'être cher,*” while adding: “*La vie à deux s'épanouit dans une prière unique.*”

Such considerations indicate that it is more fruitful for an evaluation of marital love to consider its spirituality than its totality.

How then are we to understand the statement in *Familiaris Consortio* above? Not in an absolute, but in a relative sense, in relation to the natural law: to the finalities of marriage. Marital love (including sexuality) must be total in relation to the ends of marriage, that is to say procreation and the good of the spouses (or mutual aid, or fidelity and union, as it is variously expressed). Certain sins against marriage can be considered as sins against the totality of love in this sense e.g., contraception (as the Holy Father states—see the next chapter) and divorce.

Just as we have seen in the discussion of Magisterial Personalism that the terms freedom, value, love, and truth when undefined are taken in the sense in which they are most readily understood, a sense moreover that is misleading, so it is here with the term ‘total self-giving’, which may most readily be understood in the sense just criticized.

We may add that, like the term ‘love’ itself, it may at the same time most readily be understood in an emotional sense, that is to say as equivalent to sensible love; and yet any attempt to found marital ethics on the phenomenology of love is destined to failure because, like the phenomenology and personalism to which it belongs, it is (as seen in ch. 3) essentially a subjectivist way of thinking, and as such incapable of providing a foundation for an objective philosophy, ethics, let alone moral theology. The phenomenology of

love in fact belongs less to philosophy than to empirical psychology (as providing material for psychological analysis).⁸⁸

We have argued on the basis of the natural law that sexuality belongs within marriage alone. Let us conclude by suggesting philosophical grounds for holding that marriage is sacred and therefore must be consecrated to God. (Our analysis of marriage will be completed in ch. 10 in the light of revelation.)

By reason alone, more specifically by the classical Arguments for the Existence of God, it is possible to establish the existence of God as *inter alia* the Supreme Good, and as the beginning and end of all things. Now since God is the beginning, the creator, of all things, the procreation of children by a man and a woman is in its ultimate sense a collaboration with God the creator, and since God is the end of all things, the procreation and education of children is a task performed for God. It follows that the life-long relationship ordered to this procreation, the procreation of man in the image and likeness of God possesses a sacred character.

Furthermore, according to faith, man is called into this world in order to perfect himself in love in preparation for union with God who is perfect love. Now although it is impossible to attain to

⁸⁸ In more detail this failure of the phenomenology of love may be seen on three counts:

The object of this phenomenology differs from the object of ethics and moral theology: the object of the phenomenology of love is that love which may be said to have an 'appearance'—namely sensible love *simpliciter* and sensible love as informed by rational love. Rational love otherwise (e.g., performing a good work out of a sense of duty) and charity do not have an 'appearance' and hence do not fall within the scope of phenomenology. The love which is the object of ethics is by contrast rational love (and not sensible love); the love which is the object of moral theology is the love of charity.

The object of sensible love is indeterminate:—it is uncertain in any particular case whether or to what extent the apparent beloved (often described indeterminately as a thou) is the object of this love rather than the lover himself projecting some form of goodness onto the beloved.

The content of sensible love is indeterminate as is seen in Scheler's indeterminate designation of this content as 'value', or e.g., in the phenomenon of being 'in love'. (Given its indeterminacy as well as its power, sensible love is in fact better expressed in poetry or music than in philosophy.)

this tenet of faith by reason alone, it commends itself rationally not only by virtue of its profundity, but also by virtue of its acceptance by countless multitudes of believers. In short then, the life-long commitment of man and woman to procreate and bring up children to this end, and thereby to attain it themselves, may be seen to possess a sacred character inasmuch as it furthers to an eminent degree the sacred purpose for which they have been created.

Pope Pius XI in the encyclical *Casti Connubii* derives the sacredness of marriage from the fact that it has “God for its author and has been even from the beginning a foreshadowing of the Incarnation of the Word of God” (quoting from *Arcanum* of Leo XIII), and (in the same vein as what has been written above) “from its purpose which is the begetting and educating of children for God, and the binding of man and wife to God through Christian love and mutual support; and finally, it arises from the very nature of wedlock ... [which is] the means of transmitting life, thus making the parents the ministers, as it were, of divine omnipotence.” (s. 80)

Chapter 5

Contraception

Many who call themselves Catholic, including members of the hierarchy of the Church,⁸⁹ have claimed and continue to claim that contraception is not wrong, or that it is a matter of conscience;⁹⁰ or they have been pleased to pass over, and to counsel others to pass over, the matter in ‘prudent’ silence.⁹¹ The faithful should however distinguish between the view of some member of the hierarchy of the Church and the teaching of the Church. The Church has always taught that contraception is wrong. It is an authoritative doctrine of the Church and as such the faithful are to assent to it “with a ready and respectful allegiance of the mind,” and form their conscience accordingly.

In this chapter we shall consider this form of adultery which has been the object of so much controversy in recent years.

As a brief introduction to this topic let us note that the function of the virtue of temperance is to regulate the sensual appetites and

⁸⁹ For example the American, German, Dutch, and Canadian bishops viz., *Iota Unum*, pg. 62–63.

⁹⁰ Whereas of course the conscience must be informed by the moral law, which in this case has been clearly stated by the Church.

⁹¹ As though it were better to leave the faithful in ignorance, because then, if contraception were indeed wrong, the faithful would not be subjectively accountable for it; and if they were told it was wrong, they would continue to practice it anyway, so becoming subjectively accountable. In reply, it should be said that contraception is a grave sin and therefore a grave offense against God, and for this reason it is not subjective accountability that should be avoided but rather this offense against God. The clergy who prefer not to talk about it, should try to acquire the fear of God; they should remember that they have been entrusted with the *Munus Docendi*, and should have more confidence in the good will of the faithful, in prayer, and in divine providence.

pleasures, and the acts connected with them, particularly in relation to eating, drinking, and the sexual faculty. Temperance in the sexual domain is known as chastity (for a fuller description see ch. 11). We have seen in the previous chapter that the primary finality of sexuality is the procreation of children and that within marriage chastity serves this primary finality of marriage, whereas unchastity, the vice opposed to chastity, acts counter to it.

Unchastity takes one of two possible forms: it is either in accordance with nature, when it involves a natural act of sexual intercourse between a man and a woman outside marriage, or contrary to nature when it involves a sexual act which is not a natural act between a man and a woman. In the first case the act may be viewed as outside its proper context; in the second case the act may be viewed as contrary to its proper end. Examples of the first form of act are fornication, adultery (in the narrow sense), and rape; examples of the second form of act are masturbation, homosexual acts, and onanism. Moral theology treats contraception as a form of masturbation.

After a brief historical sketch of the Church's condemnation of contraception in earlier and more recent times up to the Second Vatican Council, we shall briefly present the teaching of that council, then (in greater detail) of *Humanae Vitae* and *Familiaris Consortio*, concluding with a commentary on the two encyclicals.

I Historical Sketch

St. Clement of Alexandria taught that the purpose of marital intercourse was procreation. He wrote in AD 195 that "because of its divine institution for the propagation of man, the seed is not to be vainly emitted, nor is it to be damaged or wasted." (*Paedagogus*, 2.10. 91. 2. and 95. 3.) This rule became the dominant opinion of the Fathers, and effectively excluded contraception. St. Augustine taught that procreation was the primary good of marriage. He declared that in the systematic avoidance of children the woman behaved like a harlot (*De Moribus Manichaeorum* 18), the man like Onan (*Adult. Conjug.* 2. 12. 12.), and the couple manifested a lustful cruelty or cruel lust (*Nupt. et Cone.* 1.15.17). St. Thomas Aquinas ranks the evil of contraception immediately after that of homicide, in that the first destroys human nature and the second prevents it from coming into being (*Contra Gentes* 1.3, c. 122).

Gregory IX was the first Pope to condemn contraception in a papal act (*Si Conditiones* 1227–1234 A.D.).

In recent times Leo XIII writes in *Rerum Novarum* (1891) 12: “No human law can abolish the natural and original right of marriage nor in any way limit the chief and principal purpose of marriage ordained by God’s authority from the beginning: ‘Increase and multiply.’” Similarly Pius XI declares in *Casti Connubii* (1930) that the principal purpose of marriage is procreation (11) and forcibly condemns contraception: “Any use whatever of marriage, in the exercise of which the act by human effort is deprived of its natural power of procreating life violates the law of God and nature, and those who do such a thing are stained by a grave and mortal flaw” (AAS⁹² 22: 560). As we shall later see, Pius XII confirms this teaching in his *Allocution to the Italian Midwives* (1951) and adds restrictive conditions for natural birth control.

1. The Second Vatican Council

As an introduction to the two following encyclicals we shall briefly consider how the theme of contraception was treated in the Second Vatican Council. The historian, Professor Roberto de Mattei, in his book on this council,⁹³ (Cf. ch. 5 sec. 10) relates that many of the Council Fathers had accepted the Malthusian prophecies about a population explosion and the consequent dire need for birth control. He quotes the speeches of the Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh and Bishop Méndez Arceo in this connection, with their accent on love, responsibility, and freedom; and the speech of Cardinal Suenens with its emphasis on the second finality of marriage, which he names “the growth of conjugal unity,” over against the first, which is procreation. The Professor relates how various cardinals faithful to Catholic doctrine responded to these innovatory ideas: Cardinal Ruffini accused the innovators of declaring as moral that which had always been held to be immoral; Cardinal Ottaviani defended established Catholic doctrine on the generosity of parents; and Cardinal Browne briefly set forth the

⁹² *Acta Apostolica Sedis*.

⁹³ *II Concilio Vaticano II: Una storia mai scritta*, (Milan: Lindau, 2010 and in English *The Second Vatican Council: an Unwritten Story*, (Fitzwilliam, N.H., Loreto Publications, 2012).

principles of Catholic marital doctrine. The historian explains how the chapter of *Gaudium et Spes* dedicated to the dignity of marriage and of the family expresses the innovative rather than the traditional teaching, and that it represents an unhappy synthesis of the two opposing tendencies.

2. *Humanae Vitae*

Pope Paul VI opens this encyclical with the assertion that the transmission of human life is a collaboration with God, and after presenting the background to the debate, approaches the issue of contraception through an analysis of marriage, married love, and responsible parenthood.

In his analysis of marriage and married love the Pope connects married love with the procreation of children: in marriage “husband and wife through that mutual gift of themselves ... develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another co-operating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives.” Married love *inter alia* is fecund: “it is not confined wholly to the loving interchange of husband and wife, it also contrives to go beyond this to bring new life into being.” Here he quotes from the Second Vatican Council *Gaudium et Spes* (50): “Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the procreation and education of children.”

Pope Paul VI makes another central point in this introductory section, in his analysis of married love and responsible parenthood, regarding man’s freedom and control in the domain of married love: “It is not merely a question of natural instinct or emotional drive. It is also, and above all, an act of the free will.” “With regard to man’s innate drives and emotions, responsible parenthood means that man’s reason and will must exert control over them.”

The Pope speaks of marriage in terms of “true mutual love and its ordination to the supreme responsibility of parenthood to which man is called.” He re-iterates the connection between married love and procreation: “the inseparable connection ... between the unitive significance and the procreative significance of the marriage act.” This connection is governed by “laws written into the actual nature of man and woman.” These laws manifest God’s ‘design’, ‘plan’, and ‘will’. For this reason the man who breaks the connection between married love and procreation breaks these laws and frustrates God’s design, plan, and will.

Pope Paul VI proceeds specifically to outlaw artificial methods of birth control: “the direct interruption of the generative process already begun and, above all, all direct abortion,... are to be absolutely excluded as lawful means of regulating the number of children.” He then also condemns direct sterilization and “any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse is specifically intended to prevent procreation.” Such actions are wrong in themselves and thus cannot be justified as means to any putative good. (see Rom. 3:8)

Although artificial birth control is wrong, a married couple may have recourse to a form of natural birth control by engaging in marital intercourse during infertile periods. While it is true that couples who have recourse to artificial birth control and those who have resource to natural birth control both intend to avoid children, yet the former do wrong in obstructing the natural development of the generative process whereas the latter in fact manifest “a true and authentic love.” They abstain from intercourse during fertile periods and have recourse to it in infertile periods so “expressing their mutual love and safeguarding their fidelity to one another.”

The Pope proceeds to set each form of birth control in its context. Artificial birth control is likely to produce bad consequences: marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards especially among the young, also that “a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman ... and reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires.” Another danger is that if married people regard artificial birth control as lawful, a government may impose such measures on a whole country.

The context to which the natural method of birth control belongs is quite different. The natural method is accompanied by many merits: “the spouses fully recognize and value the true blessings of family life” and completely master themselves and their emotions by reason, free will, and self-denial. The expression of love will then conform to right order. Their self-discipline manifests their chastity, transforms their love, making it more human, enables self-fulfillment, and brings spiritual blessings, tranquillity and peace. “It fosters in husband and wife thoughtfulness and loving consideration for one another. It helps them to repel inordinate self-love ... it arouses in them a consciousness of their responsibilities.

And finally it confers upon parents a deeper and more effective influence in their education of their children.”

The last part of the encyclical is devoted mainly to exhortations of public authorities, scientists, couples, doctors, nurses, and the clergy to conform to and promote the Church’s teaching on birth control. This teaching “will appear to many not merely difficult but even impossible to observe,” indeed it cannot be observed without the grace of God. Married couples should “implore the help of God with unremitting prayer and, most of all, let them draw grace and charity from that unfailing fount which is the Eucharist.” If sin still exercises its hold on them they must, “humble and persevering, have recourse to the mercy of God abundantly bestowed in the sacrament of Penance.”

3. *Familiaris Consortio*

In *Familiaris Consortio*, his exhortation on the Christian Family, Pope John Paul II reaffirms the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*. His substantive teaching begins in part II with a section on Man, the image of the God who is Love. His teaching on the transmission of life in particular in Part III section II proceeds as *Humanae Vitae* had done from the notion of collaboration with God: “God calls a couple to a special sharing in his love and in his power as creator and father through their free and responsible co-operation in transmitting the gift of human life;” they actualize in history the original blessing of the creator; their love is a “unique participation in the mystery of life and the love of God himself.” He quotes *Humanae Vitae* to the effect that there is an inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative significance of the conjugal act; that it is immoral to render procreation impossible. He states: “Fecundity is the fruit and the sign of conjugal love,” and here he quotes from *Gaudium et Spes*: “the true practice of conjugal love ... (has) this aim: that the couple be ready with stout hearts to co-operate with the love of the creator and the Savior who through them will enlarge and enrich his own family day by day.” The Pope adds that “procreation represents a Yes to human life, that Yes, that Amen, who is Christ himself with which the Church replies to the No that assails and afflicts the world.” He re-affirms the principle of natural birth control whereby a couple has recourse to infertile periods accepting “dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility, and self-control.”

What Pope John Paul II develops in the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* (contained particularly in section 9) is principally a doctrine concerning the totality of married love. He argues to this totality first by reference to God: God is love and has created man in his own image, therefore man is called to total love. This vocation may be realized in its entirety either by marriage or by virginity/celebrity. Sexuality is an integral part of married love, it is a total physical self-giving, the sign and fruit of total personal self-giving. "This totality which is required by conjugal love also corresponds to the demands of responsible fertility. This fertility is directed to the generation of a human being." (section 11)

The Pope argues to the totality of married love also by reference to Christ: Marriage is a symbol of "the new and eternal covenant sanctioned in the blood of Christ." The couple "participates in and is called to live the very charity of Christ who gave himself on the cross." The content of this participation is that "conjugal love involves a totality... it aims at... unity... mutual giving, and it is open to fertility." (section 13)

By contraception the couple manipulates and degrades human sexuality and with it themselves: by altering its value of "total self-giving... they falsify the inner truth of conjugal love which is called upon to give itself in personal totality." (section 32)

We conclude the chapter with a brief remark on the teaching of *Familiaris Consortio*. It may be said on the basis of the analysis of love in ch. 2, that contraception offends against conjugal love not only in limiting the mutual love of the spouses, but also in thwarting procreation. As regards procreation, we have seen above that fruitfulness is an essential component of love (especially of that love which involves created being), and that the primary fruitfulness of conjugal love is its procreativity. It is not the case that sexual love consists solely in the sexual act in isolation from its consequences: it is not the case for example, according to popular contemporary belief, that sexual love consists of any affectionate sexual act between persons and that procreation is an optional outcome which a couple may choose licitly and 'responsibly' (or in other words in their *prudentialia carnis*) to prevent, but rather, as consideration of the moral law has shown us, that the act and the consequence are inseparably conjoined, and, as analysis of the nature of love has shown us, that they are both essential components of conjugal love.

The teaching on contraception as expressed in *Humanae Vitae* and amplified in *Familiaris Consortio* may be summarized as follows: God has established an inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of the conjugal act. To separate them is wrong because it goes against his will and thwarts the total self-giving of sexual love.

II Commentary

It is incumbent on the commentator first to acknowledge with gratitude that contraception has been condemned in modern Church teaching as vigorously as in the past; but second that this teaching is at divergence from Tradition in a number of points, of which we shall proceed to consider three:

- 1) It no longer accords priority to the procreative finality of marriage, but rather accords priority (at least implicitly) to 'love';
- 2) It condemns contraception not for its frustration of the procreative finality of marriage, but rather⁹⁴ for its rupture of the bond between 'the unitive and procreative meanings of the conjugal act';
- 3) It advocates natural birth control.

These three points are all manifestations of Magisterial Personalism: particularly in their favor for love, as shall be shown in detail later. The second point also manifests personalism in its favor for psychology, the subject, and a non-standard notion of truth. The concept of 'total self-giving love', which is also novel and personalist, has been discussed in the previous chapter.

⁹⁴ It is true that argumentation based on the inseparable connection of the unitive and procreative characters of the marital act had previously been used in traditional moral theology (see St. Thomas' discussion of *mollities* in the Summa II II, and in John McHugh, O.P. and Charles Callan, O.P., *Moral Theology: A Complete Course*, Vol. 2, (New York: J. F. Wagner, 1958) Art. 8 § 2534 (a)-(d)), and yet the traditional argument against contraception, which is also the most obvious argument, is that it frustrates the primary finality of marriage (see the historical sketch at the beginning of this chapter).

1. The Order of the Ends of Marriage

i) The Novel Doctrine

Paul VI himself comments on *Humanae Vitae*: “We willingly followed the personalistic conception that was characteristic of the Council’s teaching on conjugal society, thus giving love—which produces that society and nourishes it—the pre-eminent position that rightly belongs to it in a subjective evaluation of marriage.”⁹⁵

Pope Paul gives love the pre-eminence over procreation by grounding his reflections on love on God, who is Love, by always treating love before procreation, and by giving love the greater emphasis. *Familiaris Consortio* will follow suit (as we have seen), as will the *New Code of Canon Law* and the new catechism (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*).

In 1601 of the latter work the good of the spouses is mentioned before the good of procreation; in 1604 God, the author of men and marriage, is Love; in numbers 1643, 1646, and 2353 etc. the good of the spouses is mentioned before the good of the offspring. Number 1601 of the new catechism is in fact a direct quotation of the *Code of Canon Law* 1983 c. 1055.1:” The marriage covenant... is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children: “*Matrimoniale Foedus...ad bonum conjugum atque ad prolis generationem et educationem ordinatum;*” whereas the *Code of Canon Law* 1917 c. 1613 had stated: “the primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children; the second is the mutual aid and the remedy against concupiscence:” “*Matrimonii finis primarius est procreatio atque educatio prolis; secundarius mutuuum adjutorium et remedium concupiscentiae.*”

In the light of this innovative teaching let us first present the traditional Catholic teaching, and thereafter consider how, if at all, the innovative teaching may be accommodated to it.

We note at the outset that it is possible to treat contraception both in philosophy and theology. Although we have decided to treat it in the philosophical part of the book, we shall here examine it both from the philosophical and theological standpoints to avoid repetitions later. According to normal procedure in theology we

⁹⁵ Pope Paul VI, as quoted in: John Galvin, *Humanae Vitae* Heroic, Deficient—or Both?, *Latin Mass Magazine* Vol. 11 No. 1 Winter 2002.

shall (in the briefest outline) present our material in the following order: Magisterium, sacred scripture, patristics, speculation.

ii) The Traditional Doctrine

a) The Magisterium

We begin with the declaration of the Holy See in April 1944 (*Decretum de Finibus Matrimonii*, AAS XXXVI, p.103) concerning the modern authors who deny the absolute priority of the procreative finality of marriage. It observes *inter alia* that certain 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.” The Declaration⁹⁶ of the Holy See ends with the following question addressed to the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office: “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 sub-ordinate 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 Italian Midwives* (1951), Pius XII refers in a similar vein to modern authors who claim that “the peculiar and the deeper meaning of the exercise of the marital right should consist in this: that the bodily union is the expression and actuation of the personal and affective union.” Such ideas, he writes, constitute “a serious inversion of the order of the values and of the purposes which the creator has established himself. We are face to face with the propagation of a body of ideas and sentiments directly opposed to serene, deep, and serious Christian thought... The truth is that marriage, as a natural institution, is not ordered by the will of the creator towards the personal perfection of the husband and wife

⁹⁶ We note that less than 40 years later another author was to write of marriage in these terms, and that was Pope John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio*. We can trace the inversion of the finalities of marriage in the recent Magisterium to the modern authors, through the personalism of Pope Paul VI (both mentioned above), and the new theories bruited about on the floor of the council, even by cardinals such as Léger and Suenens, “which reduced the importance of the procreative purpose of marriage and opened the way to its frustration by elevating its unitive end and the gift of self to an equal or higher level.” (*Iota Unum* s.46)

as its primary end, but to the procreation and education of a new life. The other ends, although part of nature's plan, are not of the same importance as the first end, still less are they superior; on the contrary they are essentially subordinate to it."

A little later, Pius XII asserts that one would not wish to deny or belittle "whatever is good or right in the personal values which result from marriage and from the marriage act, for in marriage God has destined human beings, made of flesh and blood, and endowed with a mind and heart... to be parents of their progeny," yet the primary function of marriage remains the service of a new life, and "not only the exterior common life, but also the personal wealth, the qualities of mind and spirit, and finally all that there is more truly spiritual and profound in married love as such, has been placed by the will of nature and the creator at the service of the offspring." He explains that this conjugal love "is necessary for the sincere care of the child and is the guarantee of its realization."

b) Sacred Scripture

Such traditional Church teaching on marriage, as well as the doctrine of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of St. Paul, refer back to the two passages in Genesis which describe the creation of man. Each passage gives a purpose for man's creation and each purpose represents one of the two ends of marriage.

The first passage (Gen. 1:26–31) sets man in the context of the living beings capable of procreation and portrays his creation as a culmination of the work of the Six Days: the plants and the trees bear seed according to their species and produce fruit which has seed in itself (Gen. 1:12); the animals receive God's blessing and his command to increase and multiply (Gen. 1:22); finally God creates man in his own image: "Male and female he created them. And God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it and rule..." (Gen. 1:27–28). The passage thus introduces us to the human couple formed and blessed by God for the purpose of generation.

The second creation account (Gen. 2:7–25) is very different, presenting us with Adam as created prior to Eve, with God remarking (Gen. 11:18): "It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself." When Eve is formed from his rib, Adam exclaims (Gen. 11:23): "This now is bone of my bones and flesh

of my flesh...”—a being perfectly proportioned and adapted to himself, the text concluding with the following words: “wherefore a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall be two in one flesh.” This second passage presents us then with the human couple formed for mutual assistance, love, and intimate union.

Here, at the very beginning of revelation, we see the two ends of marriage clearly expressed: first procreation, given the greater importance by being treated in the first account, and by the blessing and the express commandment which relate to it; and second mutual assistance and union. We note also the importance given to procreation by God in later passages of the bible: to Noah (Gen. 9:1, 7), to Abraham (Gen. 17:4–6), to Jacob (Gen. 35:10–12), and to Moses (Lev. 26:9).

c) Patristics

As to the Fathers of the Church, we have already seen that they either considered procreation as the sole end of marriage (like St. Clement) or as a primary end (as St. Augustine). We note that St. Thomas Aquinas follows St. Augustine (in *Suppl.* Q49, Q65), and indeed states: “*proles est essentialissimum in matrimonio.*” (*Suppl.* Q49 a3). Indeed he compares marriage to nutrition (*Suppl.* Q65 al), arguing that marriage tends of itself to procreation, just as nutrition has as its principal end the conservation of life.

d) Speculative Theology

Finally, three speculative considerations may be advanced as to the primacy of the procreative over the unitive end of marriage. The first is that the common good is superior to the individual good (e.g., *Summa* II. II. Q39), which entails that the procreative end of marriage, as serving the common good by augmenting human society, and more especially the Church, is superior to the unitive end, which only serves the individual good.

The second is that substance is higher on the scale of being than its accidents, so that the procreative end of marriage which serves substance, that is to say the life of the human race, is superior to the unitive end, which serves only an accident of that substance, namely the perfection of human life.

The third consideration is that the unitive element of love in general is subordinate to its fruitfulness, as means are subordinate to end (see ch. 3 on love). The perennial philosophy has always viewed sexual love in this light, namely as being ordered towards the conservation of the species. This is confirmed by the differing natures of the male and female bodies and psyches: for their bodies are clearly ordered towards reproduction as an eye is ordered towards sight, while both on the physical and psychological level the male has a natural propensity towards work for keeping the family, whereas the female has a natural propensity towards the care and nurture of offspring.

Conclusion

In summary, we can understand how Fr. Ludwig Ott in his *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*⁹⁷ designates the doctrine that the primary end of marriage is procreation as a *sententia certa*. This squares with the very etymology of the word matrimony, which, as the *Roman Catechism* explains, derives from the words *matris* and *munus*: the office of mother.

iii) Analysis of the Novel Doctrine

It remains to be seen how we should understand the statements in *Humanae Vitae* and later magisterial documents expressing ‘the pre-eminence of love.’ To do so, let us take as our starting point a passage from *Casti Connubii* of Pius XI (1930), which seem to have served as a precedent for *Humanae Vitae*; “The love of husband and wife...pervade[s] all the duties of married life and holds pride of place in Christian marriage...In this internal and mutual formation of the spouses and in this assiduous application to the work of reciprocal perfection one can see in all truth, as the *Roman Catechism* teaches, the cause and primary reason for marriage, if matrimony is looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of the child, but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and the sharing thereof.” (section 24)

Let us first consider the *Roman Catechism*. It is true that in its section concerning the motives and ends of marriage it considers

⁹⁷ Fr. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1955).

the spousal relationship first, but this is clearly but a reflection of the fact that the spousal relationship is the primary reason for marriage on the part of the couple and in the order of chronology: it is what gives the prospective spouses the initial impulse, or motive, for marriage. The procreation and education of children, by contrast, remains the primary reason on the part of God and in the order of perfection. *The Roman Catechism* expresses this latter truth when it states in the very next paragraph: “This was besides the only reason [the blessing of children] that God instituted marriage from the beginning;” when it states in the previous paragraph: “The following words of the Lord: Increase and multiply are intended to elucidate the reasons for the institution of marriage;” and in its later section on the blessings of marriage when it places the blessing of children in first place. Since God’s intention and the *finis operis* take precedence over man’s intention and the *finis operantis*, we can conclude that in the *Roman Catechism* procreation is the primary finality of marriage *simpliciter*.

In the passage from *Casti Connubii* the spousal relationship, or love, assumes greater importance: here constituting not the initial impulse for marriage, but rather informing the whole of marriage as such. Indeed the wording “blending of life as a whole and a mutual interchange and sharing thereof” seems to suggest that love should become the very key-note of marriage, not only for the spouses but for all the members of the family.

Yet if love has assumed a primary importance here, it has done so only on the psychological or subjective level, for procreation remains primary on the objective level in the encyclical as when Pius XI speaks of the “natural and primeval right of marriage—the principal ends of marriage laid down in the beginning by God himself in the words ‘Increase and multiply’ (8), or when he quotes St. Augustine’s words that procreation is “the reason for marriage”, and that “the children hold pride of place amongst the goods of marriage,” or again when he quotes Canon 1013 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law (see above) and describes “as secondary ends the mutual aid, reciprocal love, and the remedy of concupiscence” which “must remain subordinate to the primary end of marriage.”

For all that, we can admit that the passage quoted from *Casti Connubii* (23–4) lacks clarity, as Pius XI reputedly regretted in his later years (as reported by Fr. Boissard in footnote 43 to Q5 in

his article quoted above). But any suggestion that the love of the spouses might be the primary end of marriage *simpliciter* was, as we have seen, later to be definitively rejected by Pius XII.

When we compare *Humanae Vitae* with *Casti Connubii* in the area in question, we see that both Pius XI and Paul VI accord love the pre-eminence on what the latter calls “the subjective evaluation of marriage,” but that whereas Pius XI accords procreation the pre-eminence on what we might call the objective evaluation of marriage, Paul VI does not. In fact, by ignoring the objective evaluation of marriage, he implies that the subjective evaluation of love is dispositive.

Various elements of Magisterial Personalism are in evidence here: subjectivism, along with a preoccupation with psychology, love, and the person, the disregard for objectivity, along with Tradition, past Magisterial teaching, sacred scripture and natural law arguments (see the article by John Galvin referred to above). The consequence is that there is a return to ideas and modes of expression that had been superseded, and the secondary end of marriage moves thereby into the foreground and the primary end into the background.

On the basis of established Church teaching that the primary end of marriage is procreation, can we describe as anything other than misleading statements according the pre-eminence to love?—and the more misleading, the more they become enshrined in the Magisterium and the more their proponents are raised to the honors of the altar. How, might we ask, can the Mystical Body of Christ ever be purged of such errors except by the shedding of blood?

2. The Unitive and Procreative Meanings of the Marriage Act

In our section on love in chapter 3, we analyzed love in terms of union and fruitfulness. Since the fruitfulness of marital love is above all procreation, we can understand how marital love, and the marital act in particular, may be analyzed in terms of both a unitive and procreative element.

But what does it mean to designate these elements as ‘meanings’? In his essay, *The Teaching of the Encyclical Humanae Vitae on Love: An Analysis of the Text*⁹⁸ in the fourth section entitled,

⁹⁸ Which constitutes ch. 19 of the book *Person and Community*, op. cit..

A personalistic view of conjugal love, Pope John Paul II comments on this text: “By appealing to the meaning of the conjugal act, the Pope places the whole discussion... in the context of human awareness, in the context of the awareness that should correspond to this act on the part of both the man and the woman—the persons performing the act.” On the following page he states: “The man and woman are aware of the meaning of the conjugal act. Moreover in performing this act they can and should intend by it precisely what it means essentially. It means both a special union of persons and, at the same time, the possibility (not the necessity!) of fecundity, of procreation.” He goes on to say that if this is their intention, then “the activity is intrinsically true.” Here he regards the conjugal act as an act of love, whereas Church Tradition regards it as procreative. Prima facie, the Pope seems to be correct in his view, because the conjugal act is essentially an act of sensible love which will not necessarily lead to procreation as he declares with an exclamation. And yet he is correct only on the subjective evaluation, that is in relation to the *finis operantis immediatus*, and not on the objective evaluation, that is in relation to the *finis operis*. The view which he expresses here corresponds to the definition that he gave of the conjugal act in *Familiaris Consortio* (as a ‘total physical self-giving’ see above) and to the modern view of love as the primary finality of marriage. The teaching of Church Tradition, by contrast, that the conjugal act is procreative,⁹⁹ corresponds to an understanding of marriage the primary finality of which is procreation. What we said above in our discussion of the primary end of marriage we may repeat of the conjugal act itself: the modern evaluation is subjective and the traditional is objective; the defect of the modern view is that it leaves out of account the objective evaluation.

We observe here simply that there is a certain move away from objectivity and God’s purpose to subjectivity and man’s purpose, but that this does not affect the substance of the Church teaching.

Let us now proceed to consider the connection between these two meanings on which *Humanae Vitae* bases its teaching on contraception. Presumably this teaching is the fruit of reflection on the following fact: that those who practice contraception engage

⁹⁹ as eating is for nutrition—see the remark of St. Thomas in the section on patristics at the beginning of this chapter.

in union and exclude procreation, whereas God has ordered union towards procreation (although not invariably). The encyclical then prohibits contraception in virtue of this connection between union and procreation, which God has established in human nature (and hence as a precept of the natural law).

Comparing this prohibition of contraception with the traditional prohibition (namely that it thwarts the primary finality of marriage, which is procreation), we note first that it is less clear, relying as it does on an instrumental cause and intermediate end of marriage rather than its final cause and ultimate end; and second that it has a narrower application to sins against the sixth commandment than do arguments based on the two ends of marriage: for it does not establish as wrong sins that do not involve this connection, e.g., the refusal of a spouse (who has not made a vow of perfect chastity) to pay the marriage debt, or the decision of spouses to engage in the marital act exclusively during infertile periods.

But perhaps this latter fact provides the very rationale for the new doctrine. For if contraception is prohibited on the basis of the connection of the two elements of the marital act, and there are periods where this connection does not obtain, then it will be perfectly licit for the spouses to engage in the marital act, and thereby in a form of natural birth control, during such periods.

3. Natural Birth Control

i) The Traditional Doctrine

Clearly the Church's view of natural birth control will depend on her attitude towards procreation. Her view of the former in Tradition has been restrictive, since her attitude towards procreation is formed by God's commandment to the first parents and to the founders of the Jewish people (see above) to "Increase and multiply."

We observe that multiplication, in the common acceptance of the term, means multiplication by a factor of more than one, so that it excludes the maintenance of the status quo, which would be achieved by the procreation of only two children (in which case each generation up to the present day would only contain two members), and therefore indicates families of more than two children. The attitude of the Church towards procreation is in short one of generosity.

As a proponent of this generosity, Pius XII, for example, in his *Address to Large Families* (1958) calls for “esteem, desire, joy, and the loving welcome of the newly born right from its first cry. The child, formed in the mother’s womb, is a gift of God, who entrusts his care to the parents.” He observes that the Old Testament abounds in references to fruitfulness: “With what delicacy and charm does the sacred scripture show the gracious crown of children united around the father’s table! Children are the recompense of the just, as sterility is very often the punishment for the sinner. Hearken to the divine word expressed with the insuperable poetry of the Psalm: “Your wife, as a fruitful vine within your house, your children as olive shoots round about your table. Behold, thus is that man blessed, who fears the Lord!”, while of the wicked it is written: “May his posterity be given over to destruction; May their name be blotted out in the next generation.”

In a similar vein Cardinal Mercier expresses Church teaching as follows (as quoted in the article by John Galvin): “The original and primary reason for the union of man and woman is the foundation of the family, the begetting of children whom they will have the honor and obligation to rear in the faith and in Christian principles...Rather than seeking out the means—even legitimate means—of limiting the offspring, what is really important for the married couple is to discover the reasons for having many children. How beautiful are such reasons!”

Since the Church advocates generosity in procreation, she teaches that natural birth control should be severely restricted. In his *Allocution to the Midwives* (op. cit.,) Pius XII declares: “Now on married couples, who make use of the specific act of their state, nature and the creator impose the function of providing for the preservation of mankind. This is the characteristic service which gives rise to peculiar value of their state, the *bonum prolis*. The individual and society, the people and the state, the Church itself depend for their existence in the order established by God, on fruitful marriages. Therefore to embrace the marital state, to use continually the faculty proper to such a state and lawful only therein, and at the same time to avoid its primary duty without a grave reason, would be a sin against the very nature of married life.”

Indeed, the intention from the outset of the marriage on the part of at least one of the spouses to limit the marriage right to

infertile periods would render the marriage invalid; whereas “if...the limitation of the act to the times of natural sterility refers not to the right itself but only to the use of the right, there is then no question of the validity of the marriage. Nevertheless the moral lawfulness of such conduct would be affirmed or denied according as to whether or not the intention to keep constantly to these periods is based on sufficient and reliable moral grounds. The sole fact that the spouses do not offend against the nature of the act and that they are willing to accept and bring up the child that is born notwithstanding the precautions they have taken... would not of itself alone be a sufficient guarantee of a right intention and the unquestionable morality of the motives themselves.” (III)

At the same time, however, “serious reasons, often put forward on medical, eugenic, economic, and social grounds can exempt from the obligatory service even for a considerable period of time, even for the entire duration of the marriage. It follows from this that the use of the infertile periods can be lawful from the moral point of view and, in the circumstances which have been mentioned, it is indeed lawful. If however, in the light of a reasonable and fair judgment, there are no such serious or personal reasons, or reasons deriving from external circumstances, then the habitual intention to avoid the fruitfulness of the union, while at the same time continuing fully to satisfy sensual intent, can only arise from a false appreciation of life and from motives that run counter to true standards of moral conduct.”

ii) The Novel Doctrine

Turning now to *Humanae Vitae*, we remark that it makes no appeal to generosity or fruitfulness (apart from one comment that “marital love is fecund”), but rather to “responsible parenthood.” Mr. Galvin points out that this phrase is used seven times in the encyclical, and occurs in the title of the Majority Report produced by the Papal Commission prior to the encyclical, which in fact favors artificial contraception.

This appeal to responsible parenthood is made in the context of “the difficult conditions which today afflict families and peoples” with particular reference to population growth.¹⁰⁰ In this context

¹⁰⁰ In fact, this encyclical on contraception was to pose problems in Europe rather

the Church wishes to strengthen the faithful “in the path of honest regulation of birth” and comfort them. In fact the proper regulation of birth may be regarded as the principal theme of the encyclical, constituting its official title (*On The Proper Regulation of Birth*) and recurring as a phrase in sections 19, 20, 21, and 24. It is presented as the means to exercise responsible parenthood.

This proper regulation of birth, or natural birth control, consists in what one might describe as a wide, or relatively wide, use of the marriage right during infertile periods. At times the encyclical does indeed present the more restrictive traditional teaching, saying of spouses that “they must conform their activity to the creative intention of God, expressed in the very nature of marriage and of its acts, and manifested by the constant teaching of the Church,” and speaking of “serious motives” for natural birth control; but at other times it speaks merely of “plausible reasons... to seek the certainty that offspring will not arrive,” or enumerate reasons as general as “harmony and peace of the family” and “better conditions for education,” reasons which can “derive from the physical or psychological conditions of husband and wife or from external conditions”, while an earlier section had listed “physical, economic, psychological, and social conditions.”

We remark that *Humanae Vitae* advocates a wide use of natural birth control. We have seen in the summary above how it also praises the practice in glowing terms.

We remark too that in advocating a wide use of natural birth control, it never warns against an excessive use as Pius XII had done, and that in solemn tones. In fact the divergence between the two encyclicals may be summed up by the positions they adopt on the systematic use of natural birth control. As we have already seen, Pius XII demands “serious motives or grave reasons” for natural birth control “even for a considerable period of time, even for the entire duration of the marriage.” He declares that to avoid the primary duty of marriage without such a grave motive would be “to sin against the very nature of married life.” How could this sin not be mortal, one might ask, if the matter is grave, concerning as it does the conservation of the human race? (*Summa* II.II Q153 a3)

than in the countries with population growth. Cf. Yves Chiron, *Paul VI* (Paris: Perrin, 1993), ch. 9.

There is nothing in *Humanae Vitae* comparable to these warnings. And while Paul VI's appeal to the creative intention of God would be enough to prohibit an invariable use of natural birth control, it would not be sufficient to prohibit it for a considerable period of time; indeed his approval of natural birth control would seem rather to recommend this.

In synthesis, Tradition adopts a severely restrictive attitude towards natural birth control because it views the primary finality of marriage as procreation; *Humanae Vitae*, by contrast, presents natural birth control as a good because (at least implicitly) it views the primary finality of marriage as 'love.' Two different ideals inform the two different approaches: the Traditional ideal is that of large families; the ideal of *Humanae Vitae* is that of limited families.

iii) Comparison of the Traditional and the Novel Doctrines

We shall now briefly compare the Traditional and novel doctrines on the themes discussed in this chapter. The doctrines are comparable in their condemnation of artificial contraception. They diverge in the following respects: The traditional doctrine is that the primary finality of marriage is procreation, which is the rationale for large families, for the disfavor for natural birth control, and for the wrongness of artificial contraception. The novel doctrine (at least implicitly) is that the primary finality of marriage is 'love', which justifies small families and natural birth control. The wrongness of artificial contraception is presented as the rupture of the unitive and procreative meanings of the marital act.

What divides the two doctrines is their respective visions of the family: its primary finality and, consequently, its size and the possibility of limiting its size. Clearly the two doctrines are in conflict, so that the modern doctrine (in its *prima facie* sense) cannot be considered as a deepening or a clarification of the traditional doctrine. For this reason it cannot be considered as Catholic either.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ We are confronted, in short, with doctrines that are *prima facie* non-Catholic. These doctrines, moreover, appear alongside authentic Catholic teaching, that is to say on the evil of contraception. The encyclical thus presents an unhappy synthesis of the two opposing tendencies, as we have remarked in regard to the comparable section in *Gaudium et Spes*.

To show that the novel doctrine is not unambiguously modernist, one would have to explain that it can give the finality of love priority over the finality of procreation only chronologically; that the responsibility that it advocates cannot favour natural birth control (except in extreme cases) or exclude generosity, but must entail the attitude whereby parents accept the number of children that God in his providence wishes to send, and at the time that he wishes to send them.

This then is how we interpret the modern magisterial doctrine on these issues, observing in passing that it is a symptom of a grave crisis in the Church that the Magisterium, the function of which is to deepen and clarify Catholic doctrine, has in the last forty to fifty years been producing texts obscure or misleading, which cannot be understood without expert theological exegesis.

We conclude these three chapters on Magisterial Personalism with a brief comparison of Traditional and novel doctrines in respect of marriage, taking the latter doctrines in their *prima facie* and most obvious sense, and suggesting how we should view them in the light of the Faith.

iv) Conclusion on the Novel Doctrines on Marriage

In the following paragraph we compare the doctrines line by line, first the Traditional, then the novel, doctrine:

1. a) The primary finality of marriage is procreation;
b) The primary finality of marriage is love.
2. a) Marital love is understood as mutual assistance and support;
b) Marital love is understood as total self-giving.
3. a) Large families are recommended;
b) Small families are recommended.
4. a) Natural birth-control is disfavored;
b) Natural birth-control is favored.
5. a) Marriage is considered as inferior to the consecrated life;¹⁰²
b) Marriage is considered on a par with the consecrated life.

¹⁰² We refer to the footnote in chapter four.

6. a) The husband is the head of the family;¹⁰³
- b) The husband and wife are to be considered in terms of strict equality.

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

- 1) Is the doctrine the same in each case? No.
- 2) Is the novel doctrine a development in clarity and depth of the traditional? No.
- 3) Is it a different doctrine? Yes.
- 4) Is the Traditional doctrine Catholic?¹⁰⁴ Yes.
- 5) Is a doctrine that is in conflict with a Catholic doctrine non-Catholic? Yes.
- 6) Is a Catholic doctrine true? Yes.
- 7) Is a non-Catholic doctrine therefore false? Yes.

We conclude that the novel doctrine in its *prima facie* sense is false.

But what about its secondary sense? Since in its original expression it is not formally heretical, not in formal contradiction of Catholic dogma, we should be able to interpret it in a way that conforms to Catholic doctrine, as we have done above in regard to the teaching on contraception.

But to what end? We hardly wish to justify these false and deeply harmful teachings or justify those who rashly promulgated them, even for motives of piety towards a Pope or a Council. The only motive that we might wish to interpret them in a Catholic sense is to show that they are not formally heretical, which of course is problematic theologically. But this is a motive of a purely academic order.

No, for all practical purposes, after having shown that they are *prima facie* false, we should simply proceed as I have suggested above¹⁰⁵ and described in my article *How to regard the Second*

¹⁰³ We here anticipate our treatment of this theme in chapter ten.

¹⁰⁴ We refer to our exposition of the nature of Tradition in chapter three

¹⁰⁵ In chapter three

Vatican Council (the website *Rorate Caeli* 2013): by implementing that theological principle of interpretation called ‘The Hermeneutic of Forgetfulness’.

The Magisterial Personalism which informs the above doctrines in the final analysis represents a *rapprochement* with the World, which is nothing other than the realm of Fallen Nature. But the Church’s mission is not to indulge Fallen Nature, but rather to resist, combat, castigate, and to heal it as much as is possible; to prepare it for the reception of Divine Grace in this life and union with God in Heaven.

Magisterial Personalism has opened the door to all the extravagant vagaries of Theology of the Body, and helped to fuel attempts to justify fornication in general in the name of ‘love’, culminating in the various abstruse and macabre *fantasticherie* of the Synod of the Family in 2014.¹⁰⁶

The doctrines that this Personalism informs, together with all the other novel doctrines proposed by men of the Church from the time of the Second Vatican Council onwards,¹⁰⁷ represent an abuse of the Church’s teaching authority, and cast a dark shadow on the recent canonizations and beatification of the three Conciliar Popes: on the prudence of such acts and indeed on their very validity.

¹⁰⁶ We also note the criticism of large families in the mouth of the Holy Father himself in January 2015, an act without precedent in the history of the Church, and in terms (‘breeding like rabbits’) without precedent for the Vicar of Christ.

¹⁰⁷ Such as ‘collegiality’, and the thesis that the Church of Christ is greater in extent than the Catholic Church.

Chapter 6

The Expansion of Impurity

Let us consider the expansion of sexual impurity in the contemporary West, although similar remarks may be made, *mutatis mutandis*, about the issue in general. In chapter 12 this process is analyzed in terms of hedonism; in the present chapter it is analyzed in terms of undisciplined desires.

As is explained in more detail in the later chapter, the widespread contemporary rejection of God has led to widespread blindness to objective meaning, good, and morality, so that man has been delivered over from what is objective to what is subjective, namely his passions.¹⁰⁸ In the area of our present concern, the rejection of God has engendered a blindness to the objective meaning and goodness of chastity, marriage, and procreation, as well as to the supernatural graces that are available and necessary for their fulfilment. The consequent deficiencies and failures in chastity, marriage, and procreation have obscured their meaning and value still further and have seemed to confirm that they have no access to supernatural grace.

Now the most fundamental passion is love, in other words sensible love, and unless rational love governs sensible love, “unless spirit truly and vigorously assumes the ascendancy, man’s lower drives run riot in their strident search for satisfaction.” (Fr. R.O. Johann, S.J. in the article on love in *the New Catholic Encyclopaedia* op. cit.) Of all forms of sensible love erotic love is the most powerful, and, as stated above, when it is uncontrolled by reason, seeks to take rather than to give; it seeks to enjoy

¹⁰⁸ We note that our way of treating inordinate passions is decisive for the spiritual life: by indulging them we fall into moral depravity, as we attempt to describe in this chapter; by setting them in order by charity we sanctify ourselves.

the pleasures of love without the demands of self-sacrifice, thus degrading the person and treating the person of each party as the mere object of pleasure.

Let us proceed to offer a fuller picture of how atheism leads to sexual impurity (to which further, theological considerations are added in ch. 12). In outline it would appear that atheism augments man's desire for love in general, his desire for human love particularly, and his desire for love as a passion more particularly; that these augmented desires in their turn fuel his desire for erotic love, and that in the absence of objective moral values this desire issues into impurity.

In rejecting God, man rejects his ultimate and only fulfillment and happiness, and banishes himself into a world that is ugly, desolate, and meaningless.¹⁰⁹ Man thus augments and intensifies his desire for love: his desire for communion, understanding, hope, and fruitfulness, for that which is good, true, and beautiful. Moreover, the rejection of God is connected in most cases with the rejection of objective morality, since God is typically rejected as the author of objective morality, as a threat to an individual's moral autonomy. This in turn produces greater selfishness and consequently greater suffering. The existence of greater suffering augments man's desire for love since love has the capacity of terminating or healing suffering.

This progression from evil to suffering to the desire for love is particularly evident in family relationships. In the present age it has become commonplace for parents to neglect, abandon, and abuse their children. This deprivation of love in itself causes extreme suffering for the child and makes him or her feel deficient and undeserving of love, a condition, which if uncorrected, persists into adulthood and engenders intense longing for love, which is its only remedy.

We see then how atheism augments man's desire for love in general. Let us now consider how it augments his desire for human love, and his desire for love as a passion. Man's love is ordained towards God immediately and mediately: towards God in himself and man for the sake of God. In the world that has rejected God,

¹⁰⁹ For the manifestation of this in the arts see Hans Sedlmayer, *Die Revolution der modernen Kunst* (Frankfurt am Main: Rowholt, 1955), and Hans Graf Huyn, *Ihr werdet sein wie Gott* (Muenchen:Universitas Verlag 1988).

man directs his love away from God in himself and man for the sake of God towards man in himself, towards an exclusively human love. If man has intimations of divine love, the atheistic world in which he finds himself imbues him with no sense of obligation to cultivate it. In the absence of a sense of obligation, he is inclined towards human love which, being predominantly given by the senses, is patent, immediate, easily accessible, and present to him in all its reciprocity, in all its fullness in this world, rather than towards divine love which is mysterious, subtle, encountered characteristically in response to stillness, recollection, and prayer, and is present in its fullness only in the next world.

The rejection of God draws man away from divine love to an exclusively human love, then. Similarly the rejection of objective morality to which it gives rise, draws him away from any love that lacks a passionate dimension (such as the performance of a duty) to the love that possesses a passionate dimension. With objective morality rejected, or at least considerably impoverished, appreciation for the former type of love diminishes in the popular consciousness and appreciation for the latter correspondingly increases.

We see then how atheism augments man's desire for love, particularly his desire for human love and more particularly his desire for passionate love. In more general terms we can say that atheism diverts man's fundamental desire for divine love towards a surrogate love, a merely passionate human love. In this way violations of the First Comandment result in violations of the Sixth. The Old Testament affords many examples of this trajectory. More generally we may say that the two violations correspond to each other, for not only does the former result in the latter, but also the latter results in the former, the hatred of God being one of the daughters of lust (as we shall mention a little later).

Now of all the types of passionate human love that there are, sexual love of the rational type exerts a considerable power over man because, as remarked in ch. 4, it involves two persons loving one another in all their dimensions: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Part of the power of this love over man especially in the present age is its healing quality for in loving another person in this way one gives him or her to understand that he or she is deserving of love in all these dimensions, and hence brings him or her healing of past sufferings.

It may be noted here that even a sexual relationship that does not constitute sexual love of the rational type, for example a relationship outside marriage, may have a healing effect. But this healing can only be partial and is counteracted by new wounding. For since any love that is contained in an extramarital relationship is (inasmuch as it falls short of marital love) only limited, it can only benefit the couple to a limited degree and therefore can only heal them to a limited degree. And since the extramarital relationship fails to treat persons with the respect due to them, namely with a full marital love, it maltreats and abuses them: it inflicts new wounds upon them.

It may also be noted that the extramarital relationship may bring with it a certain sense of fulfillment, but that this does not originate in anything positive in the relationship, but rather from the fact that it satisfies the appetites of fallen nature and deludes the couple into believing (even subconsciously) that it is a form of marriage.

We see then the power that sexual love exerts over man, and we see how it is principally his desire for sexual love that is fuelled by his augmented desire for passionate love.

The desire for sexual love issues into sexual relationships of an affectionate nature, which do not however amount to authentic love then, for the man and woman refuse to submit to the canons of objective morality or to recognize the importance of chastity, marriage, and procreation. Instead they subject themselves to the exclusive domination of the passions practicing contraception to avoid the 'burden of children' and remaining faithful to each other only for as long as their passions survive, be it a matter of a few months or a few years. If they have any appreciation for the marriage covenant, they are alarmed by its frequent demise (perhaps especially in the case of their own parents) and are reluctant to commit themselves to marriage at all, or until they have made a success of an extramarital 'trial marriage.' In short, the desire for sexual love issues into a pale simulacrum of sexual love and into a pale simulacrum of marriage.

Now it is hard for a man once prey to adulterous passions to correct his ways, for as St. Thomas states (*Summa* II153 a.5—on the Daughters of Lust): "the effect of this vice is that the lower appetite, namely the concupiscible, is most forcibly intent upon its object, that is the object of pleasure, on account of the vehemence

of the pleasure. Consequently, the higher powers, namely the reason and the will are most grievously disordered...” The disorders he enumerates here may be translated as: blindness of the mind, lack of judgment, inefficacy, rashness, self-love, hatred of God, love of this world, and abhorrence of a future world. In the case of mortal sin in particular, the agent departs, as remarked in ch. 2, from the order of reason: losing his orientation to his final end, he declines into a process of spiritual disintegration. Is this, one may ask, what lurks behind the brazen faces and clouded eyes of the youth one encounters increasingly on the streets of the great cities of today? Are these the ranks from which the ‘philosophers’ are taken with their hymns to adultery¹¹⁰ and their condemnation of the innocent child?

The media, for motives of financial gain, engaging in that same flattery or *kolakeia* by which the cook,¹¹¹ the rhetorician, the beautician, and the sophist “use pleasure as a bait to catch folly” (Plato’s *Gorgias* sections 463–4) exacerbates man’s desire for sexual pleasure and for affectionate extramarital sexual relationships (‘love-affairs’): the advertising industry manipulating the former desire in order to sell those products in particular (such as clothing) deemed capable of enhancing a person’s power of sexual attraction, but also in order to sell an abundant cornucopia of other products, where, in the absence of inherent logical connections, recourse is made to contrived visual,¹¹² verbal, or conceptual juxtapositions; song, television, and the fictional arts, whether literary, dramatic, or cinematographic, exacerbating both desires by forcing on man’s attention the contemporary sexual *malaise*, or by exaggerating it with the object of providing entertainment and excitement.

¹¹⁰ In the generic sense, i.e., all types of impurity.

¹¹¹ Armed, as it were, with his battery of chemicals and ‘microwaves’.

¹¹² We recall a scantily-clad couple eating ice cream while embracing, favoured by the London bus shelters not so long ago, a naked woman advertising a hand-bag and a naked man advertizing pet-food on the facade of the church of San Simon Piccolo in Venice (representing the triumph of Eros not only over the Church, but also over art and logic—*Omnia vincit amor*). Certainly these commissions were a challenge to the advertisers. As to whether or not they were equal to their task we defer to the respective sales statistics.

At the same time, international sex-education programs are being promoted by agencies of the United Nations,¹¹³ and by multi-national pharmaceutical companies¹¹⁴ with the support of local governments. These programs promote fornication (natural and unnatural), contraception, and abortion¹¹⁵ within a purely hedonistic vision of sexuality,¹¹⁶ Clearly a particularly heavy burden

¹¹³ See the address by the president of Family Watch International to the UN Commission on Population and Development, New York, 15 April 2010 (in *Christian Order* vol. 51, June–July 2010).

¹¹⁴ See the internet for the remarkable work of Bayer Schering Pharma in Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, America, and Europe. Amongst their various world-wide enterprises is to be noted World Contraception Day, doubtless a feast-day of a certain *ampleur* in the *Ordo liturgicus Satanae*.

¹¹⁵ In the name of health, the body, affectivity, the woman, gynaecology, obstetrics, and parenthood. In ch. 13 we show how evil presents itself as good or as morally neutral.

¹¹⁶ For a refutation of this moral vision see ch. 13. An example of such a theory being promulgated at the time of writing is that of 'gender.' The very term gender is itself a sure indication of the falsity of the theory which it denotes, for, if it were true, then one of the great thinkers of the past would certainly have elaborated such a thing before now.

The theory holds that sexuality is determined by culture and must be freed of all constrictions and inhibitions by which it has been encumbered. Essentially it aims at promoting homosexuality and pedophilia, and this with the intention of controlling world population. Its ultimate objective is the establishment of a totalitarian World Order.

Leaving aside the political question, let us proceed to examine the theory in the light of reason and faith.

Now it is evident that sexuality can be influenced by culture, as also by the particular circumstances of any given life. But it is also evident that it ultimately derives from human nature itself, differentiated as it is into two distinct sexes: male and female, each with its respective psychophysical characteristics.

The sexual differentiation may, in the final analysis and as we have already stated above, be understood only in relation to procreation or, in other words, to the conservation of the human race. Procreation is only licit within the context of marriage, as only marriage can provide the foundation for the education of well-balanced and happy children. The conservation of the human race is the

greatest natural good that there is: thus the frustration of this good through the use of sexuality outside of marriage or against the finalities of marriage is the worst thing that there is—the corruption of the best being the worst: *corruptio optimi pessima est*.

These truths of the natural law are confirmed by Holy Mother Church in her doctrine on marriage, on the gravity of sins of impurity of all types, and on the particular depravity of homosexual acts, not to speak of pedophilia.

The theory of so-called “Gender” is false for four reasons:

1) It is unreal in the sense that it has no foundation in reality: *nullum fundamentum in re*: it has no foundation in human nature, that is to say in the psychological characteristics, whether male or female, of any given person; rather it regards the person as a type of boat, and sexuality as a type of sail, on which the wind of culture blows, thus pushing the person in whichever direction it pleases.

2) It is irrational because, being contrary to the natural law, which is the foundation of ethics, it is also contrary to Reason itself.

3) It is superficial because it elects emotion as a guide to human conduct rather than the faculties of the intellect and the will, and the True and the Good which are their proper objects.

4) It is incoherent, and this for two reasons:

a) it promotes the very action that it claims to oppose: that is the influence of culture on sexuality;

b) it is a type of hedonism, as such advocating happiness while procuring unhappiness. Suffice it to think of the last two generations of young people, impregnated as they have been with the ideal of earthly happiness: Are they any happier than those who came before them? Who would be so foolhardy as to assert such a thing?

The theory of ‘Gender’ is false, then: unreal, irrational, superficial, and incoherent. Promoting it in schools is a sin of particular gravity in that it promotes the evils that we have mentioned above. The gravity is all the greater in view of the public nature of the sin: inasmuch as it touches a great number of people and causes public scandal; and in view of its effect which is to corrupt the souls of innocent children of the most tender age.

With regard to those who act in this way, Our Lord Jesus Christ says: “And whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me; it were better for him that a millstone were hanged around his neck, and he were cast into the sea.” (Mk. 9. 41).

The fact that this educative initiative has been widely accepted by public authorities throughout Europe manifests an acceleration in the Devil’s operations

of responsibility weighs upon the international bodies that promote this corruption and murder of innocent children for motives of financial gain; and upon the school principals (especially those acting in the name of the Church) who are perverting the very children to whom they have been entrusted, and paid, to educate.

The children are being provided with a similar fare in the 'literature' classes. Are the education authorities intent on degrading them? or somehow aspiring to ingratiate themselves with them by engaging with the intellectual dullness and moral turpitude which they presume to be theirs? or are they simply swimming, like dead fish, with the tide? The message that the media and these various bodies are at pains to communicate may be expressed as follows: fornication is the *ne plus ultra* of human existence.¹¹⁷ Everyone engages in it; it is identical to love. The purported universality of the phenomenon gives a person a sense of security about engaging in it; its purported identification with love gives it the appearance of moral probity. By its insistence and ubiquity the statement, reiterated as by the incessant and baleful croakings of a host of demonic frogs, (Apoc. 16:13) drowns the voice of the conscience, it penetrates the mind and renders it incapable of critical thought, or indeed of any thought at all.

in this world as well as his growing audacity; it manifests equally a moral blindness of unparalleled scope, and the abysses of degradation into which modern man has fallen in his apostasy from God. We in whom the light of Reason is not yet entirely extinguished, and particularly we Catholics, must do all that is within our power to fight against this high tide of iniquity, before our children are perverted and before we all perish in the flood.

¹¹⁷ The same applies to the use of the words masculinity and femininity as well, rather than paternity, maternity, and virginity, as models of strength, constancy, and charity. We note in passing that fornication is a mark of softness, or effeminacy, rather than of manliness, as shown in Homer's portrait of Paris in the *Iliad*.

Chapter 7

The Practice of Abortion

“See these young sitting in the houses like the figures of dreams, children killed by their dear ones...” (Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, from the Speech of Cassandra, LL.1217–9).

The term abortion is understood in this book to refer to the destruction of human life within the mother’s body in the phase between conception and birth. It is thus understood to refer both to deliberate abortions, such as surgical abortions, and to abortions which are not deliberate such as many of those resulting from the use of ‘contraceptive’ pills (see below). In conjunction with abortion, will be considered the destruction of human life outside the mother’s body in the first nine months of its existence. Such destruction may either be deliberate as in the case of the destruction of ‘surplus embryos’, or not deliberate as in the case of the death of embryos occasioned unintentionally by *in vitro* fertilization.

As an introduction to this topic we shall consider in this chapter the nature of the unborn, the principal types of abortion practiced, and the law in England that governs its practice.

1. The Unborn

The following information on the nature of the unborn is taken from the document *The First Nine Months*:¹¹⁸ “Day One: Sperm joins with ovum (egg) to form one cell—smaller than a grain of salt. The new life has inherited twenty-three chromosomes from each parent, forty-six in all. This one cell contains the complex genetic blueprint for every detail of human development—the

¹¹⁸ Vicki L. Dihle and Bradley G. Beck, *The First Nine Months* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family 2010).

child's sex, hair and eye color, height, and skin tone. Days 3–4: The fertilized egg travels down the fallopian tube into the uterus, where the lining has been prepared for implantation. Days 5–9: During this time, the fertilized egg implants itself in the rich lining of the uterus and begins to draw nourishment. Days 10–14: The developing embryo signals its presence through placental hormones, preventing the mother from menstruating. Day 20: Foundations of the brain, spinal cord and nervous system are already established. Day 21: The heart begins to beat. Day 28: The backbone and muscles are forming. Arms, legs, eyes and ears have begun to show... Day 35: Five fingers can be discerned in the hand. The eyes darken and pigment is produced. Day 40: Brain waves can be detected and recorded. Week 6: The liver is now taking over the production of blood cells, and the brain begins to control movement of muscles and organs. Week 7: The embryo begins to move spontaneously. The jaw forms, including teeth buds in the gums. Soon the eyelids will seal to protect the embryo's developing light-sensitive eyes. Week 8: At a little more than an inch long, the developing life is now called a fetus...Everything is now present that will be found in a fully developed adult. The heart has been beating for more than a month, the stomach produces digestive juices and the kidneys have begun to function. Forty muscle sets begin to operate in conjunction with the nervous system. The fetus' body responds to touch... Week 9: Fingerprints are already evident in the skin. The fetus will curve its fingers around an object placed in the palm of its hand. Week 10:...The fetus can squint, swallow and wrinkle its forehead. Week 11: At this time, the fetus is about two inches long. Urination occurs. The face has assumed a baby's profile, and muscle movements are becoming more coordinated. Week 12: The fetus now sleeps, awakens, and exercises its muscles energetically turning its head, curling its toes, and opening and closing its mouth. The palm, when stroked, will make a tight fist...Week 13: Fine hair has begun to grow on the head and sexual differentiation has become apparent. Month 4: by the end of this month, the fetus is eight to ten inches in length and weighs a half pound or more...The ears are functioning, and there is evidence that the fetus hears... the mother's voice and heartbeat as well as external noises... Month 5:...The fetus is about 12

inches long. The mother has definitely begun to feel movement by now. If a sound is especially loud or startling, the fetus may jump in reaction to it. Month 6:...If the baby were born in this month and given the proper care, he would survive. Month 7: the baby now uses the four senses of vision, hearing, taste and touch. He can recognize his mother's voice. Month 8: The skin begins to thicken, with a layer of fat stored underneath for insulation and nourishment...Month 9: Towards the end of this month, the baby is ready for birth."

2. Principal Types of Abortion

We may categorize abortions/destructions of the unborn into three types: abortion during the earliest period by means of 'contraceptive' pills (whether the pill, the mini-pill, or the post-coital pill) and by means of vaccines, implants, and the intrauterine device; the destruction of the unborn in connection with *in vitro* fertilization and embryonic and fetal experimentation; and abortion during a later period whether by chemical or by surgical means. Let us now consider each type of abortion/destruction of the unborn in turn.

Contrary to popular belief, the contraceptive pill known colloquially as the pill, has a capacity to act not solely in a contraceptive manner, but rather has a capacity to act in three distinct manners: "The pill may suppress ovulation; or it may alter the mucus in the neck of the womb (the cervix) and discourage the passage of sperm into the womb; or it may act on the lining of the womb and disturb the implantation of the already fertilized egg (the embryo)." (*The Pill and Sex Risks to Health and Fertility* published by the Medical Education Trust) The third manner of acting is of course abortifacient. The mini-pill, by contrast, has a capacity of acting in two distinct manners: "The mini-pill... acts on the mucus in the neck of the womb, and on the lining of the womb. This reduces or prevents implantation of the embryo." (*Ibid.*) The second manner of acting is abortifacient. The post-coital pill, the so-called morning after pill, equally has a capacity of acting in two distinct manners: it may suppress ovulation or it may act on the lining of the womb and prevent or disturb implantation. The second manner is abortifacient. It may be noted that all these forms of abortion have been labelled

simply as 'contraception,' the third form of abortion as 'emergency contraception.' Implants and vaccines effect abortion by chemical means: implants by methods comparable to the methods outlined above, vaccines, regardless of the dangers seen all too clearly in the A.I.D.S. epidemic, by attacking the immune system of the body. The intrauterine device has the capacity to act in a contraceptive or abortifacient manner. In the latter case it effects abortion by intervening between the womb and the embryo.

In vitro fertilization leads to the elimination of 'surplus embryos', or, as Cardinal Ratzinger puts it in *Human Life under Threat*: "frequently becomes the occasion for selective abortion (e.g. choice of sex) when there are undesired multiple pregnancies."¹¹⁹ Statistics show that 96–97% of all embryos generated by *in vitro* fertilization are destroyed or perish in the course of the treatment.

The best known form of chemical abortion in the later period is effected by the pill known as RU486. This pill is administered typically in the second month of pregnancy. The information in this paragraph is taken from *Medical Abortion—The Ugly Truth* by Dr. Peter Doherty¹²⁰ (though let us note with regard to the title of this pamphlet that the term 'medical abortion' is unfortunate because it would imply that the unborn must be treated with medicine, and is therefore a form of malignant growth). RU486 when taken in insufficient doses has caused multiple malformations of the unborn. If, as is sometimes the case, it is only partially effective, it must be followed by surgical abortion. As the president of its manufacturing company states: "It is not at all easy to use... the woman has to 'live' with her abortion for at least a week." In addition to this psychological trauma, its side-effects for the woman include: extensive bleeding, leading in some cases to serious haemorrhage, severe pain, and even heart-attacks.

The pamphlet referred to in the previous paragraph concludes with the following quotation from the writings of Gonzalo Herranz, a leading bioethicist from the University of Navarre. The passage affords a fitting commentary on the practice of late chemical abortion.

¹¹⁹ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "The Problem of Threats to Human Life," *Osservatore Romano*, April 8, 1991.

¹²⁰ Peter Doherty, *Medical Abortion—The Ugly Truth* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1992).

“The significance of this type of abortion is extremely important. It will establish as an admitted social fact that the human embryo is a mere product of debris. Not only is the embryo made into a thing, stripping it of all its human value; it is reduced to the negative condition of an excrement. In the same way that a laxative is capable of freeing a sluggish colon of its fecal contents, the new pill will enable the gestating uterus to free itself from the embryo growing within it. Disconnected from the mother by a clean mechanism of molecular competition between anti-hormones and hormones, and catapulted towards the network of sewage systems through the action of specific stimulators (prostaglandins) of the uterine myosins, the embryo ends its existence in an unspectacular fashion. The transmission of human life, mankind’s supreme capacity to co-create that sharing in God’s creative power, will be converted into a function of the same physiological, psychological, and moral level as micturition or defecation.”

Surgical abortion is effected by poisoning the child, or by cutting him or her to pieces, or by crushing or by mutilating him or her to death by a vacuum machine. An additional method of late abortion, which has recently gained popularity amongst abortionists on account of its speed of execution, is the so-called partial birth abortion whereby the body of the child is pulled out of the womb, feet first, up to the neck, and then, after the extraction of the brain by means of a vacuum machine and the consequent implosion of the head, is pulled out in its entirety. This type of abortion, as has been noted by others, is largely infanticidal, whereas certain other practices commonly described as abortion are in fact wholly infanticidal, as when developed crippled children are born by means of induced labor, and killed by starvation, poisoning, drowning, or by the removal of live brain tissue required for the treatment of certain medical conditions such as Parkinson’s disease. Here infanticide masquerades as abortion just as abortion masquerades as contraception above. The significance of such deception is explained in ch. 13.

It is difficult to gauge the number of abortions performed per year worldwide, although the World Health Organization estimates a figure of 40–55 million for clinical abortions, and an equally high figure might be estimated for abortions resulting from the use of the intrauterine device and for the destruction

of the unborn resulting from *in vitro* fertilization. As for those caused by pills and chemicals in the earliest period (abortions of the first category discussed above) one might reasonably guess that their numbers amount to hundreds, thousands, or millions of millions per year. Such numbers of human lives destroyed each year make the genocides of Hitler (an estimated six million) and Stalin (an estimated ten to twenty-five million) seem almost insignificant and without any doubt whatsoever exceeds the numbers of human lives destroyed by any other method in the history of mankind. What is perhaps most remarkable about these numbers is not their sheer magnitude, but the mercy of God in allowing the world to continue to exist in the light of them.

3. The Law on Abortion

Vaccines and implants are not currently available in England. The pill, the mini-pill, the post-coital pill and the intrauterine device may be freely obtained from a medical practitioner, although where the young woman in question is less than sixteen years of age, the provision of these pills is subject to the doctor's discretion, and the provision of the intrauterine device is, in practical terms, unlikely. The destruction of the unborn in connection with *in vitro* fertilization and research is permitted up to the fourteenth day by the Human Fertilization and Embryology Act of 1990. Abortions in the later period, whether by chemical or by surgical means, whether wholly abortive, or partly abortive and largely infanticidal, and the infanticide which masquerades as abortion are governed by the Abortion Act of 1967 as amended by the Human Fertilization and Embryology Act of 1990:

Abortion is legal up to 24 weeks gestation (in other words up to 5% months from conception): If the "continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated, of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of her family."

Abortion is legal up to birth:

- (1) If the termination is necessary to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.
- (2) If the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

(3) If there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

Suffice it to say in commentary on these provisions that the vagueness of the concept 'risk to the mental health' gives ample grounds for legally justifying abortion up to 5 ½ months from conception, and not insignificant grounds for justifying it up to birth.

Chapter 8

The Ethics of Abortion

Let us first set forth the philosophical arguments against murder from the catholic standpoint and then apply them to the case of the unborn.

I Catholicism

1. It is Wrong to Kill an Innocent Person

Murder, by which we understand the killing of an innocent person, may be shown to be wrong in regard to human life, in regard to the subject of human life, in regard to the community of which the subject of human life is a member, and in regard to the master of human life, Who is God.

The first argument against murder may be expressed in terms such as that human life is a good, that human nature is a good, in terms such as human dignity and the dignity of the person. These terms are simply various different expressions of the excellence of the person which has been defined in ch. 2 in terms of the dignities of the person: particularly his natural and his supernatural dignity.

Another three arguments may be found in the *Summa* (II. II. 64. 5) in St. Thomas' discussion of suicide.

The second argument is as follows: everything naturally loves itself and hence naturally keeps itself in being. Suicide is contrary to this inclination of nature, which is a natural law, and therefore is wrong. We may add here that this natural law entails a duty to preserve one's life and that this duty entails a right to life.

The third argument is that each man is part of the community and hence belongs to the community. Therefore by killing himself he injures the community. We may remark that the community

may be understood in a narrow sense as the family and in a broad sense as the state.

The fourth argument is that: 'Life is God's gift to man and is subject to His power, Who kills and makes to live. Hence whoever takes his own life, sins against God.'

Let us note that the killing of an innocent person is in all four cases a sin against justice; and that in the first three cases it is also a sin against Charity. In the first case St. Thomas remarks (at II.II.64.6): 'In every man, though he be sinful, we ought to love the nature which God has made'; in the second case it is contrary to the Charity whereby everyone should love himself; in the third case it is contrary to the Charity that we owe to the community.

Now the four arguments above *mutatis mutandis* apply equally to the killing of another, but with two exceptions, that of legitimate self-defense and that of legitimate capital punishment. In such circumstances a person's right to life is limited by other natural rights: an unjust aggressor forfeits his right to life in face of the right to self-defense of his victim, when the killing of the aggressor is justifiable in the interests of legitimate defense; similarly a criminal forfeits his right to life in face of the right of the legitimate authority to inflict the death penalty when it is necessary to do so in order to preserve public order. But surely to kill an evildoer is to act contrary to his dignity, is to injure the community, is to usurp God's right over life and death? This is not so, for as St. Thomas says at II.II.64.3 (quoted in ch. 2), the evildoer loses his dignity (*simpliciter*), and should be killed for the welfare of the community; and the legitimate authority does not usurp God's right over life and death but rather legitimately exercises it. Also, a similar remark may be made in respect of the unjust aggressor.

We conclude that murder is wrong for the four reasons stated above and, after consideration of the two exceptions, we define murder as the direct and deliberate killing of an innocent person.

To determine whether abortion is wrong, we must now ask whether the unborn is an innocent person. Clearly he is innocent, as is eloquently declared by the Holy Father John Paul II as quoted in ch. 12, but is he a person? Let us consider the personhood of the unborn first from the theological, then from the philosophical perspective.

2. The Unborn is an Innocent Person

i) From the Theological Perspective

From the theological perspective, three grounds may be given for holding that the unborn is a person from conception: the analogy with the Incarnation, the analogy with the Immaculate Conception, and the law on baptism. Let us consider each in turn.

a) The Analogy With the Incarnation

The analogy with the Incarnation is not an analogy between the beginning of human personhood and the beginning of the personhood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, because his personhood is not a human personhood but a divine personhood and therefore exists outside time. Rather it is an analogy between the beginning of human personhood and the time of the assumption of human nature by the Word of God. The Church teaches that the Incarnation took place at the moment of conception: at this moment his body and soul came into existence; at this moment his body and soul, his human nature, were assumed by the Word of God, were hypostatically united to the Word of God. The Apostles' Creed confesses: *Filium eius unicum Dominum nostrum, qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto* (His only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit). St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches (Eph. 30) "The God-Logos from the moment of conception united with himself the temple assumed of the Holy Virgin (the human nature)."

b) The Analogy With the Immaculate Conception

The analogy with the Immaculate Conception is of course an analogy between the beginning of human personhood in general and the beginning of the personhood of the Blessed Virgin in particular. The definition of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary promulgated by Bl. Pius IX in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* of December 8, 1854 declares: "The most Blessed Virgin Mary at the first moment of her conception was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin." Now since freedom from original sin can only meaningfully be ascribed to a person, it may be concluded that the personhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary exists from conception.

c) Canon Law

Canon 871 of the Code of Canon Law states that “if aborted fetuses are alive, they are to be baptized if this is possible.” The term fetus is here used not in its technical sense to signify the unborn human being in the period between the beginning of the eighth week from conception until birth—as opposed to the unborn human being in the period between conception and the beginning of the eighth week from conception (the embryo)—but in a generic sense to signify the unborn human being *simpliciter*. Now since the only subject of baptism is the person, it may be concluded that the person exists from conception.

ii) From the Philosophical Perspective

Let us now consider the personhood of the unborn from the philosophical perspective. A brief section on this issue in the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (s. 60) provides the basis for several arguments that abortion is wrong. Let us quote the section in full:

Some people try to justify abortion by claiming that the result of conception, at least up to a certain number of days, cannot yet be considered a personal human life. But in fact, “from the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with its own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already. This has always been clear, and ... modern genetic science offers clear confirmation. It has demonstrated that from the first instant there is established the program of what this living being will be: a person, this individual person with his characteristic aspects already well determined. Right from fertilization the adventure of a human life begins, and each of its capacities requires time—a rather lengthy time—to find its place and to be in a position to act.” Even if the presence of a spiritual soul cannot be ascertained by empirical data, the results themselves of scientific research on the human embryo provide “a valuable indication for discerning by the use of reason a personal presence at the

moment of the first appearance of a human life: how could a human individual not be a human person?" . . . Furthermore, what is at stake is so important that, from the standpoint of moral obligation, the mere probability that a human person is involved would suffice to justify an absolutely clear prohibition of any intervention aimed at killing a human embryo. Precisely for this reason, over and above all scientific debates and those philosophical affirmations to which the Magisterium has not expressly committed itself, the Church has always taught and continues to teach that the result of human procreation, from the first moment of its existence, must be guaranteed that unconditional respect that is morally due to the human being in his or her totality and unity as body and spirit: "The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life." (*Donum Vitae*)

Before presenting the various arguments in turn, let us consider a point implicit in this passage, that the person is the conjunction of the spiritual soul and the body—the ensouled body or the embodied soul. The term person understood in this sense is synonymous with the terms human being and man. More technically, in the Catholic philosophical tradition, the person is defined as the individual substance of rational nature, or, more briefly, as a rational individual. It is of the person understood in this more technical sense that one says for example, as in ch. 2, that the notion of person entails the notion of the dignity of the person.

Let us now proceed to consider the philosophical arguments that abortion is wrong from the personhood of the unborn. The section quoted yields three such arguments.

The first argument is that the unborn is a person from conception. This argument is based on scientific grounds and may be called the scientific argument. The second argument is that the unborn will be a person. This argument may be called the teleological

argument. The third argument is that there is a possibility that the unborn is a person from conception. This argument may be called the argument from possibility.

a) The Scientific Argument

The scientific argument may be summarized as follows: science demonstrates that the characteristic aspects of the person are already well determined at conception; it indicates clearly that there is a personal presence at conception.

b) The Teleological Argument

The teleological argument derives from the words to the effect that, “modern genetic science... has demonstrated that from the first instant there is established the program of what this living being will be: a person... Right from fertilization the adventure of a human life begins, and each of its capacities requires time—a rather lengthy time—to find its place and be in a position to act.” The argument may be expressed as follows: since the unborn human being at conception will be (or is destined to be) a person, he should be treated with the appropriate respect and not destroyed. Alternatively, since the section leaves open the possibility as to whether or not the unborn human being at conception is already a person, the argument may be expressed more fully as follows: the unborn human being at conception either is a person or is destined to be a person; in either case he should be treated with the respect due to a person and not destroyed.

In expressing the possibility that the unborn is not yet a person but only destined to become a person, the teleological argument allows for the possibility that the unborn is initially animated by a vegetative or animal soul (although this is implausible—see below). It regards the status of such a being as not merely the status of a plant or an animal, for in its orientation to receive a spiritual soul it would possess the dignity of vocation to union with God (admittedly in a remote degree) that has been described in ch. 2, and on that basis alone its destruction would be wrong. In addition it would of course possess the dignity of vocation to personhood, or in other words in its natural course of development determined by the natural law and hence also the

will of God, it would receive a spiritual soul and thereby become a person with all the privileges that personhood entails. Yet it is clearly wrong to break the natural law and to kill a being which God wills to receive a soul and thereby become a person and the subject of the right to life.

c) **The Argument From Possibility**

The argument from possibility is; what is at stake is so important that the possibility that the unborn is a person from conception entails that he is to be respected and treated as a person and hence not destroyed. The argument may be expressed as follows: to destroy the unborn at any time after conception is to risk killing a person and therefore wrong. This argument may be illustrated as follows: a foreman responsible for demolishing a house is uncertain whether there is a person in the house, but demolishes it notwithstanding. We would consider this action wrong and the reason would be that to perform such an action would be to risk killing a person.

iii) **Possible Objections**

Let us now consider certain objections that may be made to such philosophical arguments for the personhood of the unborn.

a) **There is no Proof for the Existence of the Immortal Soul**

A first objection may be that the existence of a spiritual soul, which in Catholic teaching is necessary for the existence of the person, cannot in fact be proved. In reply, there are proofs for the existence of the spiritual soul in the Catholic tradition, such as the following: the ability of the mind to form abstract concepts and judgments and to be conscious of itself cannot derive from matter; it must therefore derive from an immaterial principle, namely the spiritual soul.

There are in addition certain other considerations which argue to the existence of the spiritual soul, such as the conception of the final end of man discussed above. For since the final end of man is attained in the afterlife, then there must exist an entity proper to personhood which survives death, namely a spiritual entity, a spiritual soul.

b) The Theory of the Subsequent Infusion of the Spiritual Soul

A second objection may be made, namely to the scientific argument, that the spiritual soul comes into existence some time subsequent to conception. More fully, on the basis that life begins at conception and that the soul is the principle of life, it is objected that the life that comes into existence at conception is the life not of a spiritual soul but of a non-spiritual soul. The contention is made from the Aristotelian-scholastic viewpoint as described in *The Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* by Fr. Ludwig Ott, in the following words: “in the human embryo three different forms of life follow one another in point of time, in such a manner that the following form at any time takes over the functions of the preceding, namely, the vegetative, the sensitive, and finally (after 40, or *mutatis mutandis*, 80 days) the spiritual.” This is the theory that St. Thomas Aquinas holds: “the soul is in the embryo; the vegetative soul from the beginning, then the sensitive, lastly the intellectual soul.” (*Summa*. I q.118 a.2)

Two main considerations may be offered in support of this contention:

1) The lack of complexity and development of the embryo. This consideration was influential particularly for the Aristotelian-scholastics, and indeed played a role in their doubting the authenticity of the Immaculate Conception (although of course before its definition).

2) The phenomenon of identical twins. This consideration is influential for certain contemporary thinkers.

Now the belief in the lack of complexity of the embryo has been shown to be mistaken by modern science, for the unborn at conception has “...his characteristic aspects already well determined.” (as mentioned above), he has “...the complex genetic blueprint for every detail of human development.” (ch. 7). The lack of development of the embryo does not in itself argue the absence of the spiritual soul, for, as explained below under the examination of weak humanism, the change in appearance and powers of the unborn in the course of his development and the actualization of characteristics which were previously only potential do not argue a substantial change in him.

Rather, the complexity of the embryo together with its specifically human character not only argues against the existence of a non-spiritual soul, but argues for the existence of a spiritual soul. For, by the principle of sufficient reason, the complexity and the specifically human character of the body must be governed by a form and derive from a principle which correspond to them. Now the form and the principle of a living thing is the soul, and the soul which corresponds to the said complexity and character is the human soul, a spiritual soul. There are no scientific grounds for holding that this principle resides in the molecular structure itself.¹²¹

It may be objected here that the form of complexity necessary for the existence of a spiritual soul is an organic and not merely a molecular complexity. As an expert in this philosophical field Professor Horst Seidl remarks in the book *Der Mensch als Gottes Ebenbild*:¹²² *‘Nach einer breiten Tradition gehört es zum Wesen des Geistes, nicht organgebunden zu sein. Sein, Organ’ oder, Träger’ ist das sensitive Prinzip mit seinen Funktionen. Dieses Prinzip kann aber erst an einem Mindestorganismus seine sinnlichen Funktionen ausüben:* According to a wide tradition, the spiritual soul is essentially independent of organic structures. Its organ, or subject, is the sensible principle together with the latter’s functions. This principle however requires a minimum organic structure for the exercise of its sensitive functions.

In reply, the complexity of the embryo is sufficient to prove the complexity of the respective soul; the fact that the complexity of the embryo is not organic excludes not the presence of this soul (which is anyway able to exist altogether independently of matter, e.g., after death) but only its organic functioning.

There is a second reason for positing the existence of a spiritual soul from conception, which is namely the organic development of the living being in question from conception until death. This organic development that accounts for “every detail of human development” (see above), this unity and identity over time, requires

¹²¹ cf. the paper: ‘Are we Fully Shaped and Determined by our Genes?’ R.P.G. Lenartowicz S.J. Jesuit Faculty of Cracow, *Genetik Internationale Mediziner Gemeinschaft*, 41. *Internationales Karwochenseminar* 1997 St. Virgil, Salzburg.

¹²² *Christliche Anthropologie Franz Breidc.* 2001 Stella Maris-Verlag Buttenwiesen, (pg. 62)

a principle which itself possesses unity and identity over time. In later stages this principle is the spiritual soul; since it possesses unity and identity over time, it follows that it is a principle of the living being in question also in the earliest stages of its existence. In the case of identical twins, a fertilized *ovum* in the early stages of pregnancy splits into two identical *ova*. This phenomenon is sometimes taken as the basis of such an argument as the following: the spiritual soul is simple and cannot split; the non-spiritual soul by contrast can split. It is thus reasonable to assume that the soul which animates the splitting *ovum* is a non-spiritual soul.

In reply to this argument it must be admitted that the spiritual soul cannot split, but that this does not exclude the possibility that the original fertilized *ovum* is animated by a spiritual soul. Let us now consider, in brief, certain theses that allow for this possibility:

When the division takes place, the original spiritual soul passes to one of the twins, whilst a new spiritual soul is infused into the other. One difficulty about this thesis is the lack of symmetry with regard to the twins on the spiritual level. While on the physical level there is a symmetry: one object splits into two objects, on the spiritual level there is an asymmetry: the spiritual soul survives in one identical twin, but a new spiritual soul is infused into the other.

A second thesis, which allows for symmetry on the spiritual level, holds that when the division takes place, the original fertilized *ovum* perishes and its spiritual soul leaves it, whilst a new spiritual soul is infused into each of the resulting twins.

Yet both this latter thesis and the former thesis are prey to a difficulty which may be described as follows: the spiritual soul is a principle of unity for the body it animates. In order for division to take place in a body animated by a spiritual soul, there must be a principle of division that overrides the principle of unity. But in order for the principle of division to override the principle of unity, it must be a higher principle, but there is no principle (at least on the human level) which is higher than that of the spiritual soul.

A third thesis holds that the division is caused by the (cloning) action of a second spiritual soul taking a part of the first living being and forming it into a new living being. This thesis is not prey to either of the objections above, for there is symmetry neither on the physical nor on the spiritual level, and the first living being

is divided not by a principle intrinsic to itself, but by a principle extrinsic to itself, namely the operation of a second spiritual soul.

This third thesis explains the division of the fertilized embryo into identical twins at least as well as the thesis which posits the existence of the non-spiritual soul. In conclusion then, the phenomenon of identical twins does not provide grounds either for doubting the existence of the spiritual soul from conception or for believing it.

To draw to a close this discussion of twins, let us briefly consider the phenomenon of recombination. Here two twins fuse together or recombine. If the twins are informed by non-spiritual souls, the explanation is both simple and symmetrical, since the (embodied) non-spiritual soul, being merely a function of the matter it informs,¹²³ can both split and combine with another non-spiritual soul. If by contrast the twins are informed by spiritual souls, there is no simple nor symmetrical explanation. For since the spiritual soul (whether embodied or disembodied) is itself simple, it can by definition neither split into two souls, nor can two such souls combine into one.

It is however possible to explain recombination in the case of the spiritual soul, by positing that one twin absorbs the other into itself. Such a phenomenon would be comparable to the phenomenon of splitting expounded above, on the basis that a person at the early stage of his development is such that:

- 1) a second spiritual soul may take part of his matter for creating a new person, thus causing a split from one person to two; and that:
- 2) a second spiritual soul (this time embodied) may take the whole of him (thereby destroying him as a person) as matter for enlarging its own dimensions, thus causing a fusion of two persons into one.

This theory is no more than a hypothesis but is sufficient to show that the phenomenon of recombination does not necessarily require the existence of a non-spiritual soul.

To summarize this section we conclude that the complexity and the human character of the embryo from conception argues for the presence of a spiritual soul and therefore of the person as

¹²³ *Summa Theological* 118 a 1. "The sensitive soul ...[is] naturally brought into existence by certain corporeal agents."

well, and while this cannot be ascertained by empirical data (cf. the passage quoted above) the best available scientific evidence points in this direction.

In support of this thesis Dr. Ott remarks: “The newer Christian philosophy almost generally expounds the viewpoint that the creation and infusion of the spiritual soul coincides with the moment of conception.” As evidence of this viewpoint, Dr. Ott and others refer to the declaration of Innocent XI in 1679 in which he condemns the error (35) that: “It seems probable that every fetus (as long as it is in the womb) lacks a rational soul and begins to have the same at the time that it is born; and consequently it will have to be said that no homicide is committed in any abortion.”

Let us proceed briefly to expound the difficulties inherent in the theory of the later infusion of the spiritual soul.

Those who hold that the body is informed at conception by a non-spiritual soul are obliged to posit the existence of a being that consists of a human body (as science shows) and a non-human soul (because the human soul is of a spiritual nature). But this thesis has two flaws, for in positing such a hybrid entity:

1) It offends against the first principle of any sound anthropology: that man is a psychophysical unity: In the perennial philosophy this means that he is the unity of (human) body and (human) soul: *corpore et anima unus*.¹²⁴ (The Aristotelian-scholastics do not offend against this principle because they maintain that both the body and the soul of the embryo are non-human.)

2) It offends against the principle of sufficient reason, for since the soul is the principle of the body, it must correspond to it in its nature: in other words, it must be of the human type, therefore spiritual.

Moreover to call this putative being a ‘potential person’ as does Professor Seidl for instance, on the basis that he possesses the physical attributes of human personhood and is ordained to receive the spiritual soul and thereby to become an actual person (op. cit., p. 44 ff.), is inaccurate, for this putative being is not a potential person in the full sense since he lacks an element essential to personhood, namely the human soul.

¹²⁴ Cf. Jean-Pascal Perrenx, *L’Evangile de la Vie* Vol. I (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1999), pg. 75. *La Thèse de l’animation retardée*.

An adherent of this thesis has additional difficulties in resisting the theological arguments above, e.g., that which pertains to the Immaculate Conception (which is the argument most analogous to the issue of human personhood in general). He is forced into one of the three following positions: the first is that the conception in question was that of a potential person. And yet when Bl. Pius IX declared that the Blessed Virgin Mary was “preserved Immaculate from all stain of original sin,” he was clearly speaking of the person in the usual sense, in the full sense, of the term. He is speaking of the person as the composite of body and soul.

The second position is that the moment of the infusion of the spiritual soul, or animation, is the moment of conception in the proper sense; the earlier event, commonly called conception, is in fact merely an initial fertilization. This is however contrary to the common understanding of conception. Clearly, Bl. Pius IX shares this understanding rather than the view of conception prevalent among scientists of the Middle Ages.

The third position is to claim that the Blessed Virgin Mary enjoyed as one of her unique privileges the infusion of the spiritual soul at conception. But there is nothing in the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception (or in any other Marian Dogma) that entails that this conception took place earlier than any other.

Let us briefly consider two theological arguments that Professor Seidl adduces for the infusion of the spiritual soul subsequent to conception (p. 63). The first is the large quantity of early miscarriages during the first 12 days of conception. Professor Charles Probst (in the same book) quotes a figure of fifty percent.¹²⁵ Would God permit so many persons (in the full sense) to perish without baptism and thus be prevented from attaining the beatific vision? In reply: if they were persons only in the putative potential sense, they would be ordained to receive a spiritual soul and to become persons in the full sense, so that their death too prevents them from attaining the beatific vision.

The second theological argument, an argument from analogy, is that everything in God’s creation develops organically: inanimate matter precedes plants which precede animals and finally human

¹²⁵ Cf. Charles Probst, *Gehirn und Seele. Aus der Sicht von Neurochirurgie und Hirnforschung*, in Franz Breid, op. cit., pg. 123–154.

beings. In reply this statement must be qualified by reference to the angels, a higher form of being created prior to the creation of man.¹²⁶ Secondly the argument would have a certain strength if each previous form of being formed the basis for the next—in the case of man, for example, if an animal formed the basis for the first man: for the matter into which the first spiritual soul was infused. This theory however remains purely hypothetical, both in biology and in theology (cf. *Humani Generis*, Pius XII 1950).

In conclusion, the theological and philosophical grounds for the doctrine that the person exists from conception are convincing, although the Church has neither declared this doctrine dogmatically nor has denied the contrary position dogmatically. The philosophical arguments that abortion is wrong; the arguments from science, teleology, and possibility, are convincing. No substantive counter-arguments have been seen.

Having presented a moral evaluation of abortion from the Catholic perspective, let us now proceed to analyze it from certain other moral standpoints.

Now attempts to evaluate the practice of abortion are beset by great confusion, a confusion that derives from the use of terms such as ‘human being’ and ‘person’ in a variety of senses, the variety unrecognized and the senses undefined; and from the application of a variety of moral theories, the variety again unrecognized and the theories typically undeveloped, opaque, and frequently incoherent. Consider, in illustration, the following type of remark made in justification of abortion at an early stage of pregnancy: “I do not believe that that is a human being/a person.” The remark implies a certain concept of the human being or person both ontological and axiological: a concept of his nature and of his worth, but the concept is neither universally shared, nor fully developed, nor clearly defined. The confusion referred to is intensified by the emotions, particularly anger, which attach to the issue and hinder logical thought: for those who condemn abortion characteristically view it as murder, and those who approve it are impelled to defend themselves or others from such charges. Now reflection would seem to show that the

¹²⁶ The Fourth Lateran Council and the First Vatican Council state: *utramque de nihilo condidit creaturam, spiritualem et corporalem...ac deinde humanam.*

two moral standpoints apart from Catholicism that exercise the greatest influence on contemporary man, at least in this area, are humanism and hedonism.

II Humanism

As the word humanism suggests, it is an approach to moral reasoning that affirms human dignity. The term humanism is here understood according to the definition of *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*¹²⁷ as “the Philosophy that recognizes the value or dignity of man and makes him the measure of all things...” Indeed it is the merit of this approach that it attempts to do justice to the dignity and worth of the human being or person (terms which are here used interchangeably).

Now humanism, as it is characteristically believed or unconsciously lived out, views the value or dignity of man (conceived merely as a psychophysical organism) as the highest principle of moral action. Despite its merits, this system of philosophy is thus subject to certain demerits: it effectively denies the existence of God and the soul contrary to reason. Consequently it is unable to yield a deep solution to the meaning of life, or to offer any adequate foundation for objective morality or for the objective dignity and worth of the human being. (We recall indeed that the three forms of dignity of the person distinguished in ch. 2 are all determined by the person’s relation to God.) For these reasons humanism is, according to the criteria for moral systems given at the end of ch. 1, defective, except where the term is used in a different sense to describe those philosophical or religious systems which respect the dignity of man and derive it ultimately from God. The Catholic faith can *par excellence* be described as humanist in this modified sense in that it is centered on a Christ, who in possessing both a human and a divine nature is truly human while at the same time truly divine.

It will however be appropriate to examine abortion in the light of humanism as it is normally understood since this attitude is widely held, and since in the light of (at least one form of) humanism, abortion may be shown to be wrong even without reference to the

¹²⁷ Paul Edwards, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan 1967), entry “Humanism.”

existence of God or of the soul. Let us distinguish between two forms of humanism here: a strong form and a weak form.

1. Strong Humanism

The strong humanist argues that abortion is wrong by reference to the objective dignity and worth of the person. He derives personhood not from the spiritual soul, the existence of which he denies, but from the essence of physical humanity, namely the distinctively human physical organism that comes into existence at conception (as referred to above). Since this physical organism has a peculiar dignity, it must be respected as such, and therefore it is wrong to destroy it (at least while it is in a state of innocence).

2. Weak Humanism

Now according to the arguments in the first section of this chapter and to the strong form of humanism outlined above, the human being or person is the living being with a human genetic structure who comes into existence at conception, who is unchanged in his essential nature from conception until death. The weak form of humanism differs from these theories in understanding the human being or person as the living being of the (biological) human type that has the physical and (particularly) mental characteristics of a born human being—characteristics that will include the organs, limbs, mental functionings, and appearance. It is to the human being understood in this sense that this theory ascribes dignity and therefore also rights, including the right to life.

What position does weak humanism adopt on abortion? To answer this question, we must first ask when the unborn assumes the characteristics of a born human being, when in other words it attains maturity. Since maturity involves a gradual process, there can be no definitive answer to this question; however the unborn may perhaps be recognized as mature at least by the second month from conception, at the beginning of the fetal stage, for by this stage, as noted in the previous chapter, “everything is now present that will be found in a fully developed adult”—the brain functions, the eyes are sensitive to light, even the fingers and toes are clearly defined.

It is indeed arguable that the unborn attains some degree of maturity as early as one month from conception for by this stage

he already resembles a born human being rather than any other physical organism and hence may be said by the weak humanist to be a human being and to possess a corresponding dignity. It is arguable that abortion is wrong as early as this stage, then, but the same may not be said of the earliest period of pregnancy. Indeed it is typically the weak humanist who attempts to justify abortion during this earliest period with the remark quoted above: "I do not believe that that is a person."

This second form of humanism is subject to the general defects of humanism listed above and to the defect of shallowness in that it determines humanity not according to the essence of physical humanity, as strong humanism determines it, but according to its more familiar accidents, namely, as said above, the physical and (particularly) mental characteristics of a born human person.

Let us criticize weak humanism in more detail not on external grounds, by reference to God, the spiritual soul, and the natural law, but on internal grounds, on its own terms. Weak humanism may in fact be criticized in more detail with regard to the criterion by which it establishes personhood, and by which it establishes the dignity of the person. It may also be criticized with regard to the possibility that the human being, and the dignity proper to him come into existence at conception.

Let us assess certain considerations that may lead the weak humanist to suppose that the human being or person comes into existence at the onset of maturity, let us say at the beginning of the fetal stage.

The first consideration is the difficulty of applying the terms 'human being' and 'person' to the embryo—particularly at the cell-like stage. In reply it may be said that this difficulty does not derive from the fact that maturity is essential to humanity or personhood, but it derives from the fact that these terms are commonly used of the born, the term 'human' being typically relating to the physical characteristics of the born, and the term 'person' typically relating to the mental and moral characteristics of the born. It is however clear that these terms may felicitously be applied to the unborn if they are understood as referring essentially to the living physical being of a human type.

The second consideration is that the beginning of the fetal stage marks a significant change of appearance and powers in the

being in question. In reply, the terms human being and person are ontological terms. If one seeks to apply them on the basis of a change, the change must be an ontological or more technically a 'substantial' change. The change of appearance and powers does not represent a substantial change, therefore it cannot mark the coming into existence of a human being or person. If, by contrast, the Aristotelian—scholastic thesis had been correct that the spiritual soul superseded the sensitive soul, which in its turn superseded the vegetative soul, the acquisition of human appearance and powers could arguably mark an ontological change, and so mark the coming into existence of a human being or person.

The third consideration is that the beginning of the fetal stage marks an actualization of characteristics that were previously only potential. Yet, since as noted above, human being and person are ontological terms, this actualization could only mark the coming into existence of a human being or person if it represented an ontological (or substantial) difference in the being in question. There seems, however, no ground for holding this. Rather it would appear that the immature unborn and the mature unborn are ontologically the same; they are different only in the sense that the characteristics of the former are potential and the characteristics of the latter are actual. In illustration, a lily bud is ontologically the same, is of the same order, as a lily. It differs from a lily only in the sense that its characteristics are not yet actualized.

The fourth consideration is that the beginning of the fetal stage marks the assumption of functional characteristics. In reply it should be said that functional characteristics constitute what it is to be a human being or person only on a functionalist, and ultimately hedonistic, understanding of the human being or person, and not on a humanist understanding.

In conclusion, none of these considerations, individually or conjointly, provide grounds for establishing that the human being or person comes into existence at the onset of maturity. Rather the genetic structure provides grounds for establishing that the human being or person comes into existence at conception, as is maintained by the strong humanist. At an early stage (for example in the first week of pregnancy) he is less developed than he is at a later stage (for example in the last week of pregnancy); he has a different appearance (a cell-like appearance) than he has at a later

stage (a mature human appearance); and he lacks the capacities that he will possess at a later stage; but he is not for these reasons a being of a different order from a human being (for instance an animal): he is less developed than a human being at a later stage, but not therefore less of a human being.

A further argument may be advanced at this stage in the light of a fuller understanding of the nature of the human being. This is a temporal argument for the existence of the human being from conception from the standpoint of the weak humanist, which is comparable to the temporal argument for the existence of the human being from the Catholic standpoint above.

Consider any substance that exists over time: existence over time, or temporal extension, is one of its objective properties as a substance. Therefore to consider it in its temporal extension permits one to understand it more fully than to consider it at a particular moment. In illustration: imagine a pencil that was made yesterday and will be destroyed tomorrow. Its temporal extension over two days is one of its objective properties. To consider it in this way permits one to understand it more fully than to consider it simply as it exists at the present moment.

Now the temporal extension of a thing is defined by criteria of unity and identity over time. The unity and identity of the pencil, the fact that it is one and the same pencil from yesterday until tomorrow defines its temporal extension from yesterday until tomorrow. The fact that it is not one and the same pencil as the wood and lead from which it was made yesterday and as the powder into which, let us imagine, it will be ground tomorrow determine that it was not temporarily extended (as a pencil) before yesterday nor will it be so after tomorrow.

Let us turn to the human being. The human being exists over time and has temporal extension, so to consider him in his temporal extension permits one to understand him more fully than to consider him at a particular moment. His temporal extension is defined by his unity and identity over time. The weak humanist would claim that his unity and identity over time extends from the stage at which he assumes the appearance and powers of a mature human being until his death. This claim however, as has been argued above, has nothing to recommend it logically. Rather it would appear that the unity and identity of a human

being over time extends from conception to death, because at conception there comes into existence a being with a particularly human genetic code or genome who develops organically and in an unbroken continuum from this point until death.

Such reflections would appear to be sufficient to show that from conception until death there exists an entity that possesses unity and identity over time, that there exists one life, one living being, which is moreover a living being of a human type, namely a human being. This conclusion has been reached not merely by reference to particular physical characteristics, but also by reference to temporal extension. The human being is understood (that is to say understood in the minimalist sense accepted by the weak humanists) not merely as the being with a human genetic code, but as the being with a human genetic code that extends from the embryonic, to the fetal, to the infant stages, to the stage of childhood, adulthood, and old age.

Having criticized weak humanism with regard to its criterion for establishing the existence of the human being, let us proceed to criticize it with regard to its criterion for establishing the dignity of the human being.

Now the humanist by definition ascribes dignity to humanity: his criterion for humanity and his criterion for dignity are one and the same. The four considerations that have been listed above in relation to maturity can no more serve as grounds for ascribing dignity than they have been able to serve as grounds for ascribing humanity. Rather, just as the human genetic structure is the only factor which may properly serve as the humanist criterion for humanity, so it is the only factor which may properly serve as the humanist criterion for dignity.

A particular criticism of the claim that maturity determines dignity may be made as follows: the weak humanist holds that it is maturity, it is the possession of certain characteristics in an actual form that gives the unborn his dignity. But what reason is there to suppose that it is the actualization of these characteristics which gives the unborn his dignity? It is surely not the actualization of these properties, but the possession of these properties (even in a virtual form on account of a potentiality), that gives the unborn his particular excellence. The unborn possesses these properties prior to maturity, in fact from conception, albeit in a potential

form. In illustration of this argument: if a lily is to be prized, then a lily bud is to be prized; if a great opera singer is to be prized, then a student with the potential to become a great opera singer is to be prized.

Even if the immature unborn possessed a lesser dignity than the mature unborn, it would seem on the above analysis to possess a dignity of the same order. Consequently if the dignity of the latter entailed a right to life, then it would seem reasonable that the dignity of the former entailed a right to life as well. At the very least we could say with certainty that there would be no grounds for denying the former the right to life.

A final criticism of weak humanism concerns the possibility that the person and the dignity of the person come into existence at conception, whether with the coming into existence of the living being with a human genetic code or with a human genetic code conjoined with a spiritual soul (as has been discussed in the first section of this chapter). This is an irrefutable possibility. It is an irrefutable possibility in other words that the embryo is a person and has a dignity which entails the right to life. It follows that to kill the embryo is to risk killing a person. As is stated in the passage from *Evangelium Vitae* quoted above: "What is at stake is so important" that it makes such an action wrong. This argument has been illustrated above.

III Hedonism

Let us now turn to hedonism. In so doing we move from an objective to a subjective system of morality. In the definition of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (op. cit.), hedonism, or 'ethical hedonism,' "affirms that only pleasure is intrinsically desirable and that displeasure (or pain) is intrinsically undesirable...other philosophers have thought that happiness is the only thing that is intrinsically desirable." We may thus understand this system to teach that the only good is pleasure or happiness, the only ill is pain or suffering.

In denying objective good, the hedonist denies the existence of that objective good which is God, or that objective good which is the object of rational love, or the will. In so doing he renders himself incapable of any adequate description of reality, morality, or the meaning of life.

To the hedonist, the human being is not good in himself, he has no dignity, no objective or intrinsic dignity, but only a derivative value, or utility (see the beginning of the section on the dignity of the person above) according to the pleasure or pain he might give or enjoy. For this reason the human being is to be treated as no more than a body: he is to be treated as an object or thing, like any other. The hedonist does not see that it is morally good to visit an invalid: he sees it as a means to relieve the invalid's pain or to satisfy himself. He does not see that suffering is a mystery, that it has a meaning that cannot fully be comprehended by the intellect: he sees it simply as something to be ended. The hedonist proposes that the human being should be motivated by pleasure or at best by happiness: he reduces rational love to sensible love, he understands man on the model of the beasts.

The hedonist offers an inadequate description, a severely impoverished and debased conception of reality and of morality. The hedonist is shallow. In the first chapter of the book it was stated that this book is not addressed to the shallow man. The reason for this may be seen in its fullness with regard to the hedonist: there is no common ground for discussion between a hedonist and a man of good will. All that a man of good will can do is to show that the hedonist either denies, or is unable to explain, those things, which are the deepest, and the most important in human existence.

According to the criteria given in the first chapter, hedonism is in virtue of its shallowness a severely defective approach to moral reasoning—even more so indeed than humanism. Its deficiency is, moreover, evident in the logical incoherence of much of its argument, including its argument on abortion. The unsettling significance of this logical incoherence is elucidated in chapter 13.

Let us look at the hedonistic argument for abortion, which ranges from the weak to the invalid.

Let us distinguish between two types of hedonism: egoism, and utilitarian hedonism. Egoism concerns the individual's pleasure or happiness, pain or suffering. Utilitarianism concerns the maximization of goods (under some description) and/or the minimization of ills (under some description). Utilitarian hedonism in particular concerns the maximization of pleasure or happiness, and/or the minimization of pain or suffering.

Let us consider these two types of hedonism, first with regard to an early period of pregnancy, the first two months, then with regard to a later period of pregnancy, the period subsequent to the first two months.

During the early period, the egoist argument for abortion is weak, because it is not clear that abortion does on balance spare the mother pain or suffering, for many women suffer remorse or regret as a result of abortion.

During this same early period, the utilitarian argument for abortion is weaker still, for it is even less clear that abortion minimizes the combined pain or suffering of the mother and the unborn: not only is there the possibility that the mother may suffer remorse or regret, but there is also the possibility that the unborn may suffer extreme pain in being destroyed, for as early as the second and third weeks from conception certain of the structures necessary to the perception of pain, such as the brain, spinal cord, and nervous system are in the process of development.

During the later period, the egoist argument is weaker than it was before, and becomes progressively weaker the further the unborn develops, for, as noted above, as early as one month from conception the unborn resembles a born human being rather than any other organism, and the longer the pregnancy continues, the more closely he comes to resemble a born human being. Consequently one might reasonably suppose that the mother is more likely to suffer remorse at two months from conception than before, and that the further the unborn develops, the more likely is she to suffer remorse.

During this later period, the utilitarian argument is simply invalid, for there is no ground for saying that abortion at two months or later minimizes the combined suffering of the mother and the unborn: not only is there a substantial possibility that the woman will suffer remorse, and the more developed the child the more substantial the possibility, but it is also an irrefutable fact that all the structures necessary to the perception of pain are in existence from the tenth week from conception, so that we may infer that the unborn is able to experience pain and suffering from the beginning of the tenth week from conception at the latest.

1. Pain and Suffering

We have compared the pain or suffering of the mother in proceeding with her pregnancy with her pain or suffering in undergoing abortion and with the pain or suffering of the unborn. Let us now consider the nature of these forms of pain and suffering in detail, and consider the pain and suffering that motivates abortion in relation to the other factors that motivate abortion.

Abortions may be divided into those that are deliberately intended and those that are not. Typically, the former comprise surgical abortion and late chemical abortion, the latter comprise early chemical abortions (whether by the use of vaccines, implants, or contraceptive pills) and abortions resulting from the use of intrauterine devices and from *in vitro* fertilization.

A certain proportion of those abortions that are intended are undertaken from a consideration of the mother's suffering. Consider, for example, the woman who has become pregnant unexpectedly and is confused, frightened, unprepared for a child, and who is perhaps not assured of the support of the man, who, by contrast tries to coerce her into abortion; or consider the woman who has conceived as the result of rape, or who is expecting a severely disabled child (in which case the prospective suffering of the child is also relevant).

It is typically on grounds of suffering or the human's 'well-being' that the proponents of abortion defend the practice and charge those who oppose it with a lack of compassion.¹²⁸ It is principally on grounds of suffering that the current law permits abortion: risk to the physical or mental health of the mother, risk of a severely handicapped child (ch. 7); it is suffering that gives weight to the slogans *Our Body Our Choice*, *A Woman's Right to Choose*, *No Return to Backstreet Abortions*, etc. (ch. 9).

It must, however, be most clearly emphasized that suffering, or the expectation of suffering, accounts for the motivation of only a small proportion of abortions. What accounts for the other abortions, which constitute the vast majority, is not suffering, but self-interest.

¹²⁸ Cf. Beverly Hildung Harrison, *Our Right to Choose: Toward a New Ethic of Abortion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983).

As for the greater proportion of abortions that are intended: pregnancy, childbirth and parenthood are considered intolerably burdensome, particularly in circumstances of financial difficulty, a demanding or rewarding career, or an unstable non-marital relationship. To label such phenomena as intolerably burdensome, to view them simply as occasions of pain and suffering, is possible only on the shallowest, hedonistic attitude towards these phenomena.

As for those abortions that are not deliberately intended, a small proportion would appear to be motivated by considerations of pain and suffering, as when circumstances of dire poverty or the risk of congenital disease motivates the use of abortifacient contraceptives or when the suffering of childlessness motivates *in vitro* fertilization. The majority of unintended abortions would appear by contrast to be motivated by self-interest.

The attitude of parents towards any unintended abortion that they might cause may be categorized more fully as either pure ignorance, or total disregard for, or sheer indifference to, the destruction of the unborn. Typical of the first category are abortions resulting from the use of abortifacient contraceptives prior to sexual intercourse where the parents are ignorant that the contraceptives that they use have the capacity of acting in an abortifacient manner. They do not intend to destroy a human life; they merely intend to prevent a human life coming into existence. Typical of the second and third categories are abortions resulting from the use of abortifacient chemicals at an early stage of pregnancy, from the use of intrauterine devices, or from *in vitro* fertilization. The motivation for all these forms of abortion is self-interest: in the case of *in vitro* fertilization it is the desire to "have a child at all costs" (*Evangelium Vitae* 23), in the other cases it is the desire for what one might term 'sterile sexual intercourse'.

We have seen then, that only a small proportion of abortions are undergone from a consideration of pain and suffering, but that the vast majority are undergone out of self-interest. We have seen the nature of the pain and suffering that motivates abortion. The pain and suffering that is the actual or potential result of every abortion both for the mother and for the child is, by contrast, of a different order altogether.

A woman who undergoes abortion is prey to the experience of what has been described as post abortion trauma, whereby she

undergoes deep depression and, often unable to reconcile herself to her action, is driven towards despair and even suicide. A vivid account of the trauma is given in the powerful work *Will I Cry To-morrow?*¹²⁹

A brief summary of the symptoms, which may persist for many years, is given in the article *The Divine Remedy* by Madeleine Beard: “emotional distancing and numbing, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, sadness, sorrow, lowered self-esteem, distrust, hostility towards self and others, regret, sleep disorders, recurring distressing dreams, nightmares, anniversary reactions, alcohol and/or drug dependencies and abuse, sexual dysfunction, insecurity, painful unwanted re-experiencing of the abortion, relationship disruption, communication impairment, isolation, self-condemnation, flashbacks, uncontrollable weeping, eating disorders, preoccupation, memory and/or concentration disruption, confused and/or distorted thinking, delusions, bitterness, an enduring sense of loss, survivor guilt with an inability to forgive oneself, psychological distress associated with physical complications.”¹³⁰

What of the suffering of the unborn? We have already noted that the infanticide that follows induced labor and that is deceitfully described as abortion is accomplished by means of starvation, poisoning, drowning, or mutilation.

As for abortions proper, it has already been stated above that all of the structures necessary to the perception of pain are in existence from the tenth week of conception. Indeed, the extremity of the suffering as the unborn is dragged out of the womb feet first and disgorged of the brain, or poisoned, cut to pieces, crushed to death, or mutilated to death by a vacuum machine may readily be imagined. This suffering is manifest in the victim’s desperate struggle to resist abortion and attempts to scream, as may be witnessed on the ultrasound film *The Silent Scream*.

So far we have been considering only the physical suffering of the unborn. It is however evident that they also undergo sufferings of a mental/psychological nature. These sufferings have been attested

¹²⁹ Susan M. Stanford, *Will I Cry To-morrow?: Healing Post-Abortion Trauma* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1986).

¹³⁰ Madelaine Beard, *The Divine Remedy: Collaborating with the Creator*, *Christian Order* Vol. 38 Number 4, April 1997. See also Nancy Michels, *Helping Women Recover from Abortion*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House 1988), pg. 30–1.

to by psychoanalytical observation of the fetus; their nature may be inferred from the experience of the born infant.

Considering the fetus first, we refer to the acclaimed work: *From Fetus to Child*.¹³¹ The author presents case studies on eighteen children, showing the deep effects of pre-natal experiences on their psyches. Case no. 18—Thomas describes the deep traumas of a child whom his parents attempted to abort. Let this brief quotation from the case study suffice: “He spent most of his sessions in almost complete immobility and silence inside the bin....curled up in the fetal position. The end of each session was almost invariably met with desperate, terrified screams. I tried to pull him out of his hiding-place. Rather frequently, though, Thomas also mimed repeated aggressions with all sorts of potentially sharp objects... penetrating and stirring his secluded space. Such sharp persecutors seemed aimed at starting him from his hiding, bringing him to the open, and reducing him to a bloody pulp.”¹³²

Turning now to the born infant, observation reasonably suggests that he experiences an absolute dependence of his life on the life of his mother.¹³³ One might say in other words that the born infant is unable to dissociate himself from his mother or from his emotions. For these reasons he experiences the forceful or unloving sundering from his mother as a sundering of the inmost being, and as absolute—which is why it leaves life-long wounds.

Let us return to the unborn infant and to the nature of his experience of abortion: The physical relationship is even closer, to the extent that the child is actually connected to the mother and exists within her, so that one would be inclined to say that the born infant’s experience of union was not quite absolute, that his

¹³¹ Dr. Alessandra Piontelli, *From Fetus to Child: An Observational and Psychoanalytic Study* (London: Routledge, 1992).

¹³² *Ibid.*, pg. 223

¹³³ See Donald Winnicott, *Home is Where We Start From: Essays by a Psychoanalyst*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 1986) , and the description of his work in *The Companion Encyclopedia of Psychology*, ed. Andrew M. Colman, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 1994), pg. 1267: “The earliest stage in the infant’s experience is one of undifferentiated fusion with, and attachment to, his/her primary object, most likely the mother...”

emotions were not quite absolute, but that those of the unborn child in fact are. It would follow that this experience of being sundered from the mother would approximate even more closely to the experience of being sundered in the inmost being, and be all the more terrifying because it is violent and fatal; and that this experience of sundering, and the terror, and the experience of actual destruction would be absolute.

Let us note here that the typical surgical abortion takes place in the third month from conception (it having taken time to verify pregnancy, and procure abortion) and therefore involves all the physical sufferings and arguably all the mental sufferings as well that have been described in the preceding three paragraphs.

During the early stages of pregnancy, it may be argued that the physical structures necessary for sensation, or for intense sensation, are not yet formed. In reply, as was stated above in the discussion of the nature of the unborn in ch. 7, as early as the second and third weeks from conception certain of the structures necessary to the perception of pain, such as the brain, spinal cord and nervous system are in the process of development. Therefore even at this early stage the possibility of pain cannot be excluded.

Even if the unborn at any stage of pregnancy does not react visibly to stimuli, it does not follow that such stimuli do not cause him pain; it only follows that they do not cause a motor response in him. Finally it should be said that since there is a logical connection between development and (intensity of) sensation, it is reasonable that the embryo be given the benefit of the doubt. In other words, just as we have said of the destruction of the embryo that even the risk that it constitutes the killing of a person makes it wrong, so too we may say that even the risk that it constitutes the infliction of pain or suffering on a person makes it wrong.

Chapter 9

Pro-Choice

To be 'pro-choice' is to hold that a woman has the right to choose whether to proceed with, or to terminate pregnancy. In this chapter let us examine this proposition in general, then in detail, and then investigate its underlying motivation.

I Pro-Choice Claims

The proposition is sometimes accepted as a self-evident truth on one of two grounds. One ground is that proceeding with a pregnancy and abortion are neither objectively right nor objectively wrong, but morally indifferent, morally neutral, options between which the woman has a right to choose as she wishes. This is however untrue if in the previous chapter it has been validly argued that proceeding with a pregnancy is objectively right, and abortion is objectively wrong.

The other ground for accepting the proposition as a self-evident truth is that (again) the two options are neither objectively right nor objectively wrong, but options to which it is the woman's prerogative to give moral content. In other words, it is for the woman to determine which option is right and which is wrong. It must be replied that any serious moral thought reveals that it is not the sentiments or deliberations of a given individual that make certain actions right (such as showing compassion to one who suffers) and certain actions wrong (such as destroying an innocent, defenseless life) but that (again) they are right or wrong objectively.

From the Catholic standpoint this second ground may be expressed in one of two ways: the claim to the moral autonomy of the conscience and the claim to the moral autonomy of man. These two claims are addressed in detail in the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* of Pope John Paul II.

With regard to the first claim, the Church teaches that man must act according to the moral law. It is this moral law that is revealed in the conscience with respect both to general principles of conduct and to particular actions. As is observed in *Veritatis Splendor* (s. 54) quoting from *Gaudium et Spes*: “In the depths of his conscience man detects a law which he does not impose on himself, but which holds him to obedience...” The judgments of conscience are, however, not infallible and should be corrected if in conflict with the moral law, because “Conscience is not an independent and exclusive capacity to decide what is good and what is evil. Rather there is profoundly imprinted upon it a principle of obedience *vis-à-vis* the objective norm...” (*Veritatis Splendor* (s.60), quoting from *Dominum et Vivificantem*).

With regard to the second claim, *Veritatis Splendor* (s. 35) quotes from Genesis 2:17: “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,” and comments as follows: “With this imagery, revelation teaches that *the power to decide what is good and what is evil does not belong to man but to God alone.*” For man to abrogate moral autonomy to himself, for him to constitute himself the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong is to disobey this commandment of God, and to seek to “be like God,” but “without God, before God, and not in accordance with God.” (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*: PG 91, 1156c) It is not just a sin: it is the prototype of sin.

II Popular Feminist Arguments

What particular factors are thought to give a woman the right to choose? Let us now evaluate in the light of the remarks in the previous chapter the most popular feminist¹³⁴ arguments for abortion. These include the slogans referred to in that chapter.

¹³⁴ As Romano Amerio notes in *Iota Unum* (pg. 90): “Feminism...in its last unfoldings.. .is.. .the negation of marriage and the family.”

1. Our Body Our Choice

The slogan suggests that the unborn:

- (a) is part of the mother's body;
- (b) is located within the mother's body;
- (c) cannot exist outside the mother's body (the so-called viability argument).

(a) is untrue: the unborn has a body of his own; (b) is true; (c) is true up to about six months from conception. Can (b) and (c) to the extent that it is true, justify abortion? Does the unborn's location within the mother and dependence upon the mother justify killing him? Not if, as has been argued in the previous chapter, the unborn is a human being (rather than a noxious parasite), a person, with dignity in himself, created in the image and likeness of God.

In illustration: take an invalid dependent on another person for life. His dependence clearly does not justify killing him, wherever he may be located.

2. A Woman's Right to Choose

What factors might this slogan be thought to cover other than factors (a)–(c)?

- (d) The woman's self-sacrifice in proceeding with a pregnancy, in addition to trauma if it resulted from rape;
- (e) The trauma of giving a child into adoption;
- (f) The self-sacrifice involved in bringing up a child especially if the child is disabled.

This trauma and the self-sacrifice involved in these cases is undeniable, but must be seen in the light of the rewards of giving birth to and bringing up a child (particularly a disabled child) if this is undertaken with love.

Now in line with the considerations adduced in the previous chapter, any sufferings here do not clearly outweigh the sufferings involved in abortion, whether to the mother or to her progeny, but in any case cannot justify killing an innocent human being. In short, the fact that a person causes one suffering unintentionally does not justify one in killing that person.

In illustration: one's suffering in caring for an invalid does not justify one to kill the invalid.

3. The Prospective Suffering of the Child in Being Born Disabled or Unwanted

Now, disabled children do, perhaps, suffer more than other children in general but as experience shows, if they are brought up in a loving family, can lead a fulfilled life. Unwanted children may be adopted; it is not evident that adopted children suffer greatly.

In any case it must be said again that any suffering that may be experienced by the child does not clearly outweigh the suffering involved in abortion, and cannot justify killing an innocent human being. With regard to the second point: the possible future suffering of a person does not justify one in killing that person.

In illustration: imagine an invalid who is not at the moment suffering; the possibility of him suffering in the future does not justify one in killing him now.

4. No Return to Back-Street Abortions

This slogan is thought to justify abortion under the present law as preventing backstreet abortions. The slogan expresses the following position: Abortion under the present law, which involves relatively little suffering for the mother (being largely untraumatic and hygienic) is preferable to 'backstreet' abortion—which involves much suffering to the mother (being traumatic and not invariably hygienic).

This argument is also invalid because although under the present law the circumstances of the operation are less traumatic, there are many more women and children involved, so that, in fact, there is both more suffering and more killing.

It may be added here that it would appear that the number of women who died after backstreet abortions in Britain had been vastly over estimated and was already diminishing before the Abortion Act was passed.¹³⁵

III Suffering and Hedonism

As remarked earlier, it is suffering that gives weight to the principal pro-choice arguments, as has been seen in varying degrees in these four arguments. The appeal to suffering is a feature of

¹³⁵ Cf. Michael Jermulowicz et. al., *Life: a series of papers for all concerned with upholding and promoting the utmost respect for human life from fertilisation* (Leamington Spa: LIFE, 1992–1995).

hedonism that has been discussed above, an approach to moral reasoning that prescribes the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain or (in its slightly more sophisticated version) the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of suffering.

It has been argued in the previous chapter that hedonism is a shallow philosophy and hence defective. Just as its shallowness was seen before in its failure to respect dignity of man, so its shallowness is shown here by its failure to respect the importance and the gravity of suffering. Indeed, as suggested before, the two types of failure are related.

A human being has objective dignity, and the fact of his suffering is important and grave. Any philosophical or religious system of depth recognizes these truths. Suffering is not an enemy to be avoided at all costs but something to be accepted and borne patiently, and it is an occasion for learning compassion. A right response to suffering is essential for a life of integrity and spiritual growth: “whoever does not know how to suffer does not know how to live.”¹³⁶ The deepest understanding of suffering is clearly the Christian understanding: namely, that suffering is the highest vocation of all, for it is the vocation of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is for man humbly to accept his sufferings as sent by God, to offer them to him as a loving gift, and as the completion of “what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (Col. 1:24).

Suffering does not give the woman the right to choose. It may, however, give her the belief that she does have this right. In other words it is not so much a rational as a psychological ground for this belief. It may be noted here that an individual’s philosophical outlook often reflects his or her psychological make-up. Atheism, for example, typically results from anger that finds its origin in disappointment, suffering or oppression, especially during childhood.

The typical psychological antecedents for the pro-choice stance may perhaps be described as follows: The motivation for abortion is hedonistic (issuing from considerations of pain, suffering or self-interest—see the last chapter), and will typically flow from a hedonistic sexual relationship. Such a relationship treats persons

¹³⁶ Josef Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Problem of Threats to Human Life*, *op.cit.*

as objects. The woman, who is often the more sensitive party, feels this more deeply: in short, she feels maltreated and abused. If she then conceives and the man refuses to care for her or to take responsibility for their child, and especially if he abandons her, she feels still further maltreated and abused. Her natural response is to become angry and to assert herself as the sole arbiter of her future: she has the right, she feels, to choose abortion, or pregnancy, childbirth, and the raising of the child, together with the concomitant transformation of her entire life. If, in addition, she is told that abortion is wrong and that she must alone bear the life-transforming consequences of the sexual act, and particularly if she is told this by a male and/or in an unsympathetic manner, she will feel a victim yet again of 'male domination' and self-interest and all the more justified in her pro-choice stance. We see, then, how this stance is grounded in the woman's suffering. We also see the role played by anger (which explains the militant nature of the pro-choice movement) and the principal role played by aggression: the aggressive behavior of the male leading to the aggressive stance of the female, leading in turn to the supremely aggressive act of abortion.

Aggression leads to aggression, machismo leads to feminism—as Cardinal Ratzinger points out in *The Problem of Threats to Human Life*—conduct unworthy of a man leads to conduct unworthy of a woman. What is required in place of aggression is first that the man love, respect, and honor the woman. She will then respond in like manner. When a woman becomes pregnant and, perhaps because unmarried, becomes confused and afraid, she deserves again to be accorded the same love, respect, and honor. She deserves to be helped to fulfill her deepest needs, namely by being given support and care during pregnancy, childbirth, and the raising of her child.

The shallow response to the woman's suffering is to advocate and facilitate abortion, to be led by compassion in regard to an evil that one can see to bring about an evil that one cannot see. For abortion does not merely serve to terminate the woman's immediate suffering but exchanges it for greater suffering and for death: the suffering and death of the child together with the long-term suffering and sometimes even the suicide of the mother.

In short, abortion is wrong, and in the words of Pope John Paul II in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (pg. 205): “It is not possible to speak of the right to choose when a clear moral evil is involved, when what is at stake is the commandment ‘Do not kill!’” Rather (pg. 206) “in firmly rejecting ‘pro-choice’ it is necessary to become courageously ‘pro-woman’ promoting a choice that is truly in favor of women... who if they enjoy our support are... capable of heroism.”

Part III

From the Theological
Perspective

Chapter 10

Marital and Non-Marital Sexuality (Marriage in Moral Theology)

The church teaches that sexuality belongs within marriage alone, so let us proceed by first giving a brief summary of the church's theological doctrine on marriage as contained in the Roman Catechism, and then considering sexuality outside of marriage.

1. Marriage as Instituted by God

In the discussion of the ends of marriage we have considered certain passages from Genesis Ch. 1 and Ch. 2 concerning the creation of man and woman. *The Roman Catechism* quotes them to show the divine institution of matrimony. The first passage it quotes is Genesis 1:27–8: “God created them male and female, and blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply.” The second passage is Genesis 2:18: “And the Lord God said: ‘It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself.’” The third passage is Genesis 2:20–24: “But for Adam there was not found a helper like himself...[and after the account of the creation of Eve from his rib] wherefore a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh.” The catechism concludes: “These words, according to the authority of the Lord himself, as we read in St. Matthew, prove the divine institution of Matrimony.” The catechism refers to Matthew 19:6 which, with its two preceding verses, reads as follows: “...Have you not read that he who made man from the beginning made them male and female? And he said: For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man put asunder.”

We see here how God instituted marriage for the two ends of procreation and mutual assistance. Moreover the Council of Trent, quoted here in *The Roman Catechism*, declares that God rendered it perpetual and indissoluble: “What God hath joined together, says

Our Lord, let no man put asunder.” As to the unity of marriage, the *The Roman Catechism* explains in a later section that it is expressed by Our Lord’s declaration: “Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh.” The two main ends of marriage, together with its two properties, were present from its institution then, whereas, since the catechism states that marriage was instituted before the fall, we can conclude that its third end, the remedy for concupiscence, existed only at some time subsequent to its institution, namely after the fall with the onset of concupiscence. This third end is expressed by the words of St. Paul as follows (1Cor. 7:2): “For fear of fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband,” and, after recommending temporary abstinence, the Apostle adds: “Return together again, lest Satan tempt you for your incontinency.” As the catechism notes in a later section on the blessings of marriage, marriage renders sexual relations “right and honorable.”

2. Marriage as a Sacrament

The Roman Catechism explains that marriage as a natural union “was instituted from the beginning to propagate the human race,” it was used by the holy Patriarchs “to bring up children in the true faith and in the service of God,” and it was raised to a sacramental dignity “in order that a people might be begotten and brought up for the service and worship of the true God and of Christ Our Savior” (as we might add: in the Church on earth and ultimately in Heaven, by means of the transmission of natural and above all supernatural life, and by an education above all moral and spiritual).¹³⁷ Matrimony is, in short, a work that is not human but divine. Christ takes it as a sign of the intimate union that exists between him and his Church, of his immense love for us, and the divinity of such an ineffable mystery. These elements are expressed by the fact that the marriage-tie is the closest of all human relations, that it involves the greatest affection and love, and that it is holy.

To demonstrate the sacramentality of marriage, the catechism quotes Eph. 5:28–32 which refers to the passage above and concludes: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall adhere to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This

¹³⁷ Cf. the Council of Florence in the *Decretum pro Armenis*, which establishes as the primary good of marriage: “*proles suscipienda et educanda ad cultum Dei.*”

is a great sacrament; but I speak in Christ and in the Church.” The catechism here relies on Tradition and the Council of Trent (s. 24) adding: “It is indubitable, therefore, that the Apostle compares the husband to Christ, and the wife to the Church; that the husband is head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church; and that for this very reason the husband should love his wife and the wife love and respect her husband. For Christ loved his Church and gave himself for her (Eph. 5:25), while as the same apostle teaches, the Church is subject to Christ. (Heb. 13:4)

Since the Church’s teaching on the husband’s authority over the wife has become unpopular in recent times, one would do well to recall that every society needs some form of authority in order to direct the activities of that society towards its common good (*Summa* I q. 96 a. 4); that God has chosen the man for this function; that Christian authority is not imperious or egoist, but involves service and devotion in the example of the Son of Man “who did not come to be served but to serve” (Mt. 22:25–28); and that the spouses are equals as to their rights, and collaborators as to their common yoke (*conjugalis*).¹³⁸

In a later section *The Roman Catechism* delineates the duties of the husband and wife. The husband must treat his wife generously and honorably: she is his companion like Eve to Adam. He should earn a livelihood for the family and keep it in order, also in the moral sense. The wife should obey her husband, possess “the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit” (1Pet. 3:1–6), train the children, look after the home, and love and esteem her husband above all others after God.

Finally, the sacrament of Matrimony signifies and confers grace (which are the two marks of every sacrament), as the Council of Trent declares: “By his passion, Christ, the author and perfecter of the venerable sacraments, merited for us the grace that perfects the natural love (of husband and wife), confirms their indissoluble union, and sanctifies them.”

3. A Novel Doctrine

Casting a glance at contemporary Church teaching in the light of this summary, we observe a novel approach to sacramental marriage, that is as a sign of the union between Christ and His Church.

¹³⁸ Cf. *Questions Theologiques sur le mariage* III E. Boissard 1948 Cerf.

First let us synthesize the Church's teaching on this issue as we have just expounded it in the previous section, and then show how it has been treated.

The Church teaches that marriage is a sign of this union in three ways:

i. The matrimonial bond is the closest of all human relations and involves the strongest love, for which reason our Lord took it as sign of his intimate union with the Church and his immense love for us;

ii. Sacramental marriage is a sign of this union in that it is oriented to be a love which is special, holy, and pure;

iii. The husband is the symbol of Christ as his wife is the symbol of the Church in the sense that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church.

Now Church teaching from the time of the Second Vatican Council onwards has continued to portray marriage as a sign of Christ's love for His Church in regard to marital love, that is to say as summarized in the first and second points above, albeit not in exactly the same terms.

We have seen this in ch. 4 where Pope John Paul II attempts to justify his thesis of the totality of conjugal love by reference to the totality of Christ's self-giving love to his Church (although unsuccessfully as we have argued).

Other examples may be seen in *Familiaris Consortio* n. 13 where the same Pope writes: "... their belonging to each other is the real relationship by means of the sacramental sign of the very relationship of Christ with the Church," and later at s. 56, quoting from *Gaudium et Spes*:... "as he loved the Church and handed himself over on her behalf, the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-bestowal." Similarly marriage is also presented a sign of Christ's union with his Church in respect of marital love in the new catechism (nn. 1616–1617).

What is notably lacking from *Familiaris Consortio*, from the new catechism, and from recent Church teaching on the magisterial, episcopal as also on the purely parochial level, is the doctrine contained in the third point above, namely that the husband is the head of the family as Christ is of the Church.

We note the same tendency in Pope John Paul II's treatment of the relevant verse in Theology of the Body (see the section on the

Mutual Subjection of the Spouses in the appendix to this book). We also note that the reading from the Epistle to the Ephesians which forms part of the nuptial Mass according to the Old Roman Rite is no longer obligatory in the new order. It has simply become one of various possible readings, amongst which in fact is to found an abbreviated version of this text, from which the verse concerning the man as head of the wife has been removed.

It seems that those responsible for the respective sections of the Second Vatican Council, along with Pope John Paul, wished to replace this doctrine with one of complete equality, grounded in an equality of personal dignity. Pope John Paul quotes *Gaudium et Spes* in the above-mentioned encyclical (n. 19) as follows: “The unity of the marriage will radiate from the equal personal dignity of husband and wife, a dignity acknowledged by mutual and total love;” and again (n. 22): “The equal dignity and responsibility of women with men is realized in self-gift.” What we see here is a suppression or a passing-over of a Catholic doctrine hallowed by Tradition and rooted in the sacred scripture in favor of a merely philosophical principle.

This philosophical principle, that of the equal dignity of the person, obviously does not elect either of the spouses as the head of the family; rather it leaves the question open in every given case as to who should assume this role. The consequence of this silence as to the man’s authority has clearly contributed to the domineering stance on the part of the wife which is ever more manifest in contemporary marriages, in regard to the running of the family.

It is regrettable that the consequence of this silence on the part of the Magisterium corresponds to profoundly anti-Catholic ideologies or attitudes such as feminism and the emasculation of the image and figure of man, husband, and father.¹³⁹

4. Christ Restores Marriage to its Primitive Qualities

After the fall, marriage had fallen from its primitive unity and indissolubility: many of the ancient Patriarchs had several wives at the same time, while under the law of Moses it was permissible to

¹³⁹ The situation is comparable to that of the image of man and father within the priesthood.

divorce one's wife. As to the second point, Christ states: "But from the beginning it was not so." (Mt. 9:8) He restores to marriage its unity and indissolubility by declaring the spouses to be one flesh and by forbidding their separation (Mt. 19:5–6, as quoted above). He expressly forbids polygamy and divorce by the statement: "Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery." (Mk. 10:11–12, cf. Mt. 19:9, Lk. 16:16–8). (We note here that the phrase in Mt. 19:9 and Mt. 5:32: "whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication" does not permit divorce on this condition, although the protestants and the Orthodox church have interpreted it in that way.¹⁴⁰ The phrase should rather be interpreted as permitting the separation of bed and board, with the prior approbation of the Church.)¹⁴¹ The Apostle confirms that the bond of marriage may be dissolved by death alone: "A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband die, she is at liberty; let her marry whom she will, only in the Lord." (1Cor. 7:39, cf. 1Cor. 7:10)

5. The Three Blessings of Marriage

Marriage confers three blessings, or goods: children, fidelity, and the sacrament.¹⁴² Such blessings compensate for the inconvenience referred to by the Apostle in the words: "Such shall have tribulation of the flesh." (1Cor. 7:28) They recall the two principal ends and the properties of marriage, one might say, now seen in a Christian context and elevated by grace.

The first blessing is to be understood of course "not only of bearing children but also of bringing them up and training them to the practice of piety." *The Roman Catechism* quotes 1Tim. 2:15: "The woman shall be saved by bearing children if she continue in

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Encyclopédie Catholique* 1927 op. cit. S. IV column 2317.

¹⁴¹ The explanation which is *melior, antiquior, et communior* according to the analysis of Pruemmer III 662, who quotes St. Thomas 4.dist.35,q.1,a.5, ad 4, the respective declaration of the Council of Florence, the parallels at Mk. 10:10 and Lk. 16:18 etc.

¹⁴² The distinction derives from St. Augustine who speaks of *proles, fides, et sacramentum* as the three goods of marriage in *DeNuptiis et Concupiscentia* Lib.I Cap.17. It is re-iterated by St. Thomas in *Contra Gentes* 1.4,c.78, and declared dogmatically in the Council of Florence in the *Decretum pro Armenis*.

faith;” and Eccl. 7:25: “Hast thou children? Instruct them and bow down their necks from childhood.” (We note here that the Church has always also had a high regard for virginal marriages, where the spouses agree to abstain from their marital rights, thus relinquishing the primary end, or first blessing, of marriage in favor of mutual assistance and companionship.)

The second blessing is “the fidelity which binds wife to husband and husband to wife in such a way that they mutually deliver to each other power over their bodies (1Cor. 7:4), promising at the same time never to violate the holy bond of Matrimony. Matrimonial fidelity also demands that they love one another with a special, holy, and pure love; not as adulterers love one another but as Christ loves his Church (Eph. 5:25)... and surely [Christ’s] love for his Church was immense; it was a love inspired not by his own advantage, but only by the advantage of his spouse.”

The catechism returns to marital love at the end of the section on Matrimony, indicating that this love should be moderate and modest:¹⁴³ “They that have wives, let them be as though they had them not” (1Cor.7:29); St. Jerome says: “The love which a wise man cherishes towards his wife is the result of judgment, not the impulse of passion; he governs the impetuosity of desire, and is not hurried into indulgence. There is nothing more shameful than that a husband should love his wife as an adulteress.” (*Contra Jovian* I). Furthermore, “as every blessing is to be obtained from God by holy prayer, the faithful are also to be taught sometimes to abstain from the marriage debt, in order to devote themselves to prayer.”

The third blessing is the sacrament: “that is to say the indissoluble bond of marriage... And truly, if marriage as a sacrament represents the union of Christ with his Church, it also necessarily follows that just as Christ never separates himself from his Church, so in like manner the wife can never be separated from her husband in so far as regards the marriage-tie.” Indeed the bond of marriage is but a symbol of that union which God desires to contract with each human soul.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Moderation in sexuality is equivalent to chastity; modesty is a virtue complementary to it (see ch. I).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Dom Jean de Monleon O.S.B., *Les Noces de Cana*, (Cadillac : Editions Saint-Remi, 2011) ch. I and the commentary of St. Albert on the Gospel of St.

The Roman Catechism concludes its exposition of marriage with the following paragraph: “Thus will they [the faithful] find the blessings of marriage to be daily increased by an abundance of divine grace; and living in the pursuit of piety, they will not only spend this life in peace and tranquillity, but will also repose in the true and firm hope ‘which confoundeth not,’ (Rom. 5:5) of arriving, through the divine goodness, at the possession of that life which is eternal.”

A final word may be said concerning the various ways in which marriage can be analyzed. We have considered the three motives, ends, or finalities of marriage: procreation; companionship and mutual assistance; and the remedy against concupiscence; we have considered the two properties of unity and indissolubility; and the three blessings (or goods) of children, fidelity, and the sacrament. In more recent times, as in the declarations of Pius XII, marriage is analyzed more simply in terms of two goods: the *bonum prolis* and the *bonum conjugum*: the good of the offspring and the good of the spouses. For the purpose of this distinction, the procreation and education of children is taken as the first good, and all the other elements are taken together as the second good. In yet more recent times we have seen an analysis in terms of procreation and love, where no further mention is made of the priority of ends, but where love is typically placed first and lacks the detailed presentation which the good of the spouses has received in Tradition.

6. Non-Marital Sexuality

The sixth commandment, Thou shalt not commit adultery, has been understood by the Church as encompassing the whole of human sexuality and hence as prohibiting all forms of sexual immorality, which include fornication, adultery, and homosexual activity. Fornication is a carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman, while adultery (in the narrower sense) refers to the sexual relations between two partners of whom at least one is married to another party, and homosexual activity is sexual activity between members of the same sex.

By affirming the Old Testament doctrine of marriage that man and woman become one flesh united by God which “let no man put asunder,” Our Lord teaches that sexuality belongs within marriage

John (XXIV) quoted there.

alone. In St. Mark ch. 7, he specifically condemns fornication and adultery: “fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” Similarly in St. Matthew ch. 15 he states: “Out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person...” In both Gospels he teaches that these evils issue from the human heart, and in St. Matthew ch. 5, whilst extending the application of the Ten Commandments in the Sermon on the Mount, he adds: “If a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

In Ephesians ch. 5, St. Paul writes: “Be sure of this that no fornicator or impure man or one who is covetous (that is an idolater) has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the anger of God comes upon the children of disobedience.” Indeed, “Fornication and all impurity and covetousness should not even be named among you... the things that are done by them in secret it is shameful even to mention.”

In First Corinthians ch. 6 St. Paul gives a more comprehensive list of “the unjust who shall not inherit the Kingdom of God: “Do not err: Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, the effeminate, sodomites, thieves, the covetous, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these shall inherit the Kingdom of God.” He writes that: “The body is not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” He proceeds to distinguish three ways in which fornication is sinful: it is a sin against the body, against Christ, and against the Holy Spirit: “Every sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the fornicator sins against his own body.” “Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a prostitute? God forbid. Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit that is in you, which you have from God ... so glorify God in your body.”

St. Paul shows then that non-marital sexuality is wrong by reference to the body, to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit; it may also be shown to be wrong by reference to each element of the Church teaching on marriage: her teaching on procreation, the fidelity and unity of spouses, on the sacramental nature of marriage, and on the nature of sexual love:

1) It is hostile to children, who, if despite the perils of contraception and abortion, succeed in being born, lack the stable environment necessary for their education and development;

2) It does not serve to strengthen spousal fidelity or strengthen or express spousal unity;

3) It “ignores or scorns the sacramental significance of sexual activity.”¹⁴⁵ It does not symbolize the union of Christ with his Church, being only temporary or experimental, and it has no access to the sacramental grace necessary for a (authentically) loving sexual relationship (i.e., marriage);

4) It does not amount to authentic sexual love, being only sensible, and informed neither by rational love nor by charity, nor forming part of marital love.

Let us consider, with reference to the useful sections on this theme in the new catechism, the particular sinfulness of each of the three main types of extramarital relationship: fornication, adultery, and homosexuality.

2353: Fornication is “gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered, to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children.” (See here ch. 5 on the order of the ends of marriage.) In particular 2390 “so-called free union(s) offend against the dignity of marriage; they destroy the very idea of the family...”

2381: “Adultery is an injustice. He who commits adultery fails in his commitment. He does injury to the sign of the covenant which the marriage bond is, transgresses the rights of the other spouse and undermines the institution of marriage by breaking the contract on which it is based. He compromises the good of human generation and the welfare of children who need their parents’ stable union.”

2357: “Basing itself on sacred scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.”

¹⁴⁵ Ronald Lawler, Joseph Boyle, and William E. May, *Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary Explanation and Defense* (Huntingdon Indiana: *Our Sunday Visitor*, 2011)

Furthermore the sin of the Sodomites is one of the sins that cry to Heaven for vengeance (Catechism 1867). Homosexual acts are contrasted to homosexual tendencies:¹⁴⁶ 2358: “Those who have such tendencies must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.” 2359: “By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.”

Just as the grace of Jesus Christ enables man to fulfill the requirements of the marriage covenant in particular, as noted above, so the grace of Christ enables man to follow the Church’s teaching on sexual morality in general as is set forth in the *Declaration on Certain Questions concerning Sexual Ethics*, (1975): “The person who finds it difficult to practice the Church’s teaching on sexuality, that is to say chastity, can achieve liberation from the ‘law of sin which dwells in his members’ and which holds him captive (Rom. 7:23) and ‘his body doomed to death’ through the grace of Jesus Christ. He must overcome temptation by the power of God (1Cor. 10:13) and stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 7:11) by faith, watchful prayer (Eph. 6:16,18) and an austerity of life that brings the body into subjection to the Spirit (1Cor. 9:27). Particularly important for the protection of chastity is the virtue of humility, because chastity is a gift of God which may be lost by pride.”¹⁴⁷

“Without me you can do nothing,” says the Lord (Jn. 15:5). “In the world you will have distress. But have confidence. I have overcome the world.” (Jn. 16:33)

¹⁴⁶ We note here that the word ‘tendencies’ is vague. One might suppose that it comprises habitual movements of the passions and/or thoughts. Movements of the passions and thoughts that are directed towards an impure object are not in themselves sinful; but they are so in so far as they proceed from or involve an act of the will. It is also to be noted that passions that are disordered in regard to their object or to their degree should be regulated by the will, more precisely by the virtue of temperance, which in the domain of sexuality is known as chastity (see the next chapter). Bad habits should be counteracted by acts of the contrary virtues.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Pius XII, *Sacra Virginitas* (60) 1954.

Chapter 11

Chastity

It will be important to examine the virtue of chastity in the context of the present book since it is this virtue that safeguards man from adultery. In the present chapter we shall consider first the function of chastity in the light of original sin, then offer a brief summary of the Church's teaching on the nature of this virtue, thereafter her teaching on perfect chastity taken from Sacra Virginitas (Pius XII, 1954), and conclude with some of the central elements of a pontifical document on education in chastity.

1. Chastity and Original Sin

In the Introduction we observed that original sin deprived man of both (absolutely) supernatural and preternatural gifts. The preternatural gifts that he lost were the gifts of integrity comprising infused knowledge, the possibility of neither suffering nor dying, and the control of reason over the lower faculties of the soul and body. The loss of this control resulted in four evils: *ignorantia*—the difficulty of knowing the truth, *malitia*—the weakening of the power of the will, *infirmitas*—the recoiling before the struggle for the good, and *concupiscentia* in its narrow sense—the desire of the satisfaction of the senses against the judgement of reason. Now each of these evils attacks one of the four faculties of the soul. The first evil attacks the understanding, the second evil attacks the will, the third evil attacks the irascible power (*viz irascibilis*), and the fourth evil attacks desire (*viz concupiscibilis*). The exercise of the four moral, or cardinal, virtues namely prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, with the assistance of the sacraments and prayer, combats these four moral evils and heals the four wounded faculties of the soul.

Now the particular focus of *concupiscentia*, or concupiscence in its narrow sense, is the satisfaction of the sense of touch, and above all the pleasures of eating, drinking, and sexuality. It is the function of temperance to preserve moderation, particularly in the realm of the senses and above all in the pleasures and the respective acts of eating, drinking and sexuality (cf. *Summa* II 2 141. 4). Temperance in the domain of sexuality is called chastity.¹⁴⁸

2. The Nature of Chastity¹⁴⁹

Now the virtue of chastity has two degrees: imperfect and perfect. In imperfect chastity, the use of temperance and moderation is partial, regulating the pleasures and acts within its scope according to the divine precepts; in perfect chastity the use of temperance and moderation amounts to total abstinence, even where such pleasures are licit—that is to say within marriage.

The motivation for the virtue of chastity may be natural or supernatural. The natural motivation may comprise obedience to the natural law, the respect of human dignity, or any of the many advantages resulting from such total and persevering fidelity, amongst which may be numbered the victory over contrary inclinations and the control of the will over the senses. The supernatural motivation is the hope of the resurrection of the body in Heaven, the example and teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the supernatural respect due to the body consecrated by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and by the reception of the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

The Fathers of the Church, in their preference for perfect chastity over marriage (while not deprecating the latter), enumerate the obligations, cares, and pains inherent to family life. St. Thomas specifies three ways in which perfect chastity is

¹⁴⁸ Fr. Lestapis in his book referred to above, *La Limitation de Naissances* (pg. 213), stresses the positive nature of the virtue of chastity: “*Ce mot de continence... ne suggère pas assez l’aspect positif contenu dans la vertu de chasteté. En effet la chasteté n’est pas autre chose que la charité enrobant pour ainsi dire l’instinct et lui donnant sa véritable portée.* » Again he writes (p.130): *Selon L’Evangile la chasteté devient la vertu suprême de la sexualité*

¹⁴⁹ For this whole section see the *Encyclopédie Catholique* 1927 op. cit.

superior to marriage: it is a divine rather than a human good, a good of the soul rather than a good of the body, and involves a contemplative rather than an active form of life.

Imperfect chastity may be practiced in three distinct states of life: first, prior to marriage, avoiding what is forbidden but without renouncing the hope or possibility of marriage; second, during marriage, regulating what is licit according to the moral law; third, subsequent to marriage where the widow(er) avoids what is forbidden, as before marriage.

The state of perfect chastity, when undertaken for supernatural motives, corresponds to the counsel of chastity expressed by Our Lord in Mt. 19:11–12: “All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who were born so from their mother’s womb: and there are eunuchs who were made so by man: and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven. He that can take, let him take it.”

Let us now compare the virtue and state of perfect chastity with the virtue and state of virginity (that is to say the virtue of virginity considered as a special virtue and the state which it characterizes). The essential difference between the former and the latter is that it is possible for a person who has sinned gravely against purity (*per actum luxuriae consummatae seu pollutionis graviter peccaminosae*)¹⁵⁰ and who has later repented, to enjoy the former virtue and state, but not the latter. In other words the virtue and state of virginity (in distinction to the virtue and state of perfect chastity) are irreparably lost by sins against purity (although not by an act of violation or by medical intervention).

Otherwise the virtue of perfect chastity is equivalent to the virtue of virginity; and the state of perfect chastity (or the counsel of chastity) is equivalent to the state of virginity. This virtue and this state require a firm and unshakable resolution to refrain permanently from all carnal acts and pleasures, so that, since this form of resolution is normally only expressed by a vow, one may conclude with St. Thomas in effect that *virginitas secundum quod est virtus importât propositum voto firmatum integritatis perpetuo colendae* (*Summa* II-II, 152 a 3): virginity as a virtue requires a

¹⁵⁰ R.P.G. Pruemmer, O.P., *Manuale Theologiae Moralis*, (Barcelona: Herder, 1945) II 677.3.

resolution established by a vow of perpetually cultivating integrity. (We remark in passing that it is also possible to make a vow of imperfect chastity.)

Two virtues complementary, or connected, to chastity are those of modesty and abstinence. Modesty (or *pudicitia*) comprises the discretion and reserve in the use of marriage and in everything which may serve to express it (*Summa* II-II, 151 a. 4). Abstinence is that form of temperance that relates to taste. It strengthens the control of the soul over the senses, which leads to a greater spiritual energy for the maintenance of chastity (*Summa* II-II, 151 3).

3. Perfect Chastity

Let us conclude this section with a fuller description of that perfect chastity which is consecrated to God (or sacred virginity) as presented in the encyclical *Sacra Virginitas* by Pope Pius XII (1954). It is according to that pontiff “without doubt among the most precious treasures that the founder of the Church has left in heritage to the society which he established” (1). It is distinguished from other forms of chastity by being assumed by a perpetual vow (or promise), whether public or private (6, 11, 16), and by its primary purpose: “to aim only at the divine, to turn thereto the whole mind and soul; to want to please God in everything, to think of him continually, to consecrate body and soul completely to him” (15), whereas the heart of married persons is divided (24 cf. 1Cor. 7:33). To this end it frees men from the ‘grave duties and obligations’ of marriage (20) and from temporal cares (22). Sacred ministers in particular must cultivate perfect chastity, or purity, not least on account of their service of the altar. (23) Sacred virginity is in fact superior to the married state (32) and this in virtue of its primary purpose (24 cf. St. Thomas *Summa* II II q 152, a 3–4). Was it not Our Lord himself who counsels it for the Kingdom of Heaven? (10 cf. Mt. 13:10–12); and the Apostle who declares: “for I would that all men were even as myself... But I say to the unmarried and to widows: it is good for them if they so continue, even as I?” (24 cf. 1Cor. 7:7–8).

The elements of self-mastery, love, and holiness, are particularly marked in the virtue of perfect chastity. In regard to the first element: “a chastity dedicated to God demands strong and noble souls, souls ready to do battle and conquer,” (49) and “a constant vigilance and

struggle.” In the words of St. John Chrysostom: “The root and the flower, too, of virginity is a crucified life.” “For virginity,” according to Ambrose, “is a sacrificial offering, and the virgin an oblation of modesty, a victim of chastity,” (Ibid.)

The love of one who is perfectly chaste is directed towards Christ. The Fathers of the Church considered perfect chastity as a form of spiritual marriage to Christ (17) and as an exclusive love of Christ. As the consecration of virgins puts it: “The Kingdom of this earth and all worldly trappings I have valued as worthless for love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I have seen, loved, believed, and preferred above all else.” (18) Yet there is more to perfect chastity than the bonds of affection, as Pius XII goes on to declare, for this “burning love for Christ” impels the virgin to the imitation of Christ’s virtues, way of life, and self-sacrifice. In this way virgins “follow the Lamb wherever he goes.” (Apoc. 14:4) (19 quoting St. Augustine and St. Bonaventure). The self-sacrifice that these virgins practice, whether in works of mercy or in the contemplative life, is, like the self-sacrifice of Christ, offered for the salvation of others and for the good of the Church. (43) If Christ is the immediate object of their love, the Church is, then, its mediate object.

Virginity consecrated to Christ, lastly, bears abundant fruits of sanctity. Such souls, in the words of St. Cyprian, are “the equals of the angels of God.” The purity of their love touches others, it witnesses to a good greater than the pleasures of sense, to the mastery of the spirit over the body (with divine assistance), to “the perfect virginity of their mother the Church and the sanctity of her intimate union with Christ.” In fact: “The greatest glory of virgins is undoubtedly to be the loving images of the perfect integrity of the union between the Church and her divine spouse.” Having disdained the bodily union of man and woman they desire the mystery it enshrines. (28–31)

Pius XII notes towards the end of the encyclical that “the eminent way to protect and nourish an unsullied and perfect chastity...is solid and fervent devotion to the Virgin Mother of God.” He quotes St. Augustine to the effect that “the dignity of virginity began with the Mother of the Lord” and St. Ambrose’s exhortation to virgins: “Let Mary’s life be for you like the portrayal of virginity, for from her, as through from a mirror, is reflected the

beauty of chastity and the ideal of virtue...Her grace was so great that it not only preserved in her the grace of virginity, but bestowed the grace of chastity upon those on whom she gazed.”

4. Education in Chastity

In November 1995 the Pontifical Council for the Family produced a document entitled *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (TMHS) for the purpose of providing guidelines for education within the family in the area of sexuality. (The significance of the phrase ‘Truth and Meaning’ here is explained in ch. 5.) The document opens with a description of a state of affairs similar to that which it has been attempted to describe in ch. 6: “Society and the mass media most of the time provide depersonalized, recreational, and often pessimistic information...influenced by a distorted individualistic concept of freedom, in an ambience lacking the basic values of life, human love, and the family.”(1)

It describes how the school carries out programs of sex education in place of the family, sometimes to the deformation of consciences. In the face of the sexual decadence of the present age what is urgently required is an authentic education in sexuality, not simply as a biological phenomenon, but in its moral context; in short, an education in chastity: “that spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it to its full realization.”(4)

With regard to education in all the social virtues, parents have the primary responsibility for their children. “The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to find an adequate substitute. It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow men which will promote an integrated, personal, and social education of their children. The family is therefore the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society.” (23)

“Much of the formation in the home is indirect, incarnated in a loving and tender atmosphere, for it arises from the presence and example of parents whose love is pure and generous.” (149) The object of the parents’ love is God, the children, and each other (52): “The Christian family is capable of offering an atmosphere permeated with that love for God that makes an authentic reciprocal

gift possible... nothing moves us to love more than knowing that we are loved... The self-giving that inspires the love of husband and wife for each other is the model and norm for the love of other members of the family for each other and for those outside the family.” In particular: “In a family where love reigns, this gift [of human sexuality] is always understood as part of the call to self-giving in love for God and for others.” More concretely (20): “Parents are well aware that living conjugal chastity themselves is the most valid premise for educating their children in chaste love and in holiness of life”; (73): “The objective of the parents’ educational task is to pass on to their children the conviction that chastity in one’s state of life is possible and that chastity brings joy.”

The TMHS document shows how chastity engenders those qualities which are necessary for love: “Chastity makes the personality harmonious. It matures it and fills it with inner peace. This purity of mind and body helps develop true self-respect and at the same time makes one capable of respecting others, because it makes one see in them persons to reverence;” (17) “The love for chastity, which parents help to form, favors mutual respect between man and woman and provides a capacity for compassion, tolerance, generosity, and above all a spirit of sacrifice, without which love cannot endure.” (31)

Chastity is an elevated virtue: it is a gift of the Holy Spirit and preserves high human values. With respect to the former point (21): “In order to live chastely, man and woman need the continuous illumination of the Holy Spirit...the interior order of married life, which enables the manifestations of affection to develop according to their right proportion and meaning, is a fruit not only of the virtue which the couple practice, but also of the gifts of the Holy Spirit with which they co-operate.” With respect to the latter point: (105) “The moral order of sexuality involves such high values of human life that every direct violation of this order is objectively serious.”

Chastity is elevated but it is also a delicate matter (48): the elements which it involves: “physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects... as well as the first signs of freedom, the influence of social models, natural modesty, and strong tendencies inherent in a human being’s bodily nature... are converted to an awareness, albeit implicit, of the dignity of the human person, called to collaborate

with God, and, at the same time, marked by fragility.” In view of the above considerations it is clear that specific information about sexuality should be given only with the greatest care and sensitivity. There are four general principles for the giving of this information:

1) It must be individual and personal; (65): “Each child is a unique and unrepeatable person and must receive individualized formation;” (66): “the most intimate aspects, whether biological or emotional, should be communicated in a personalized dialogue;” (67): “experience shows that this dialogue works out better when the parent... is of the same sex as the child or young person.”

2) It must be of a moral nature; (68): “The moral dimension must always be part of their explanations. Parents should stress that Christians are called to live the gift of sexuality according to the plan of God who is love... They must insist on the positive value of chastity and its capacity to generate true love for other persons;” (69): they must correct bad habits with ‘adequate, valid and convincing grounds.’”

3) (We note here that in their work of education the parents must explain to their children that the primary purpose of sexuality, and marriage in which it belongs, is procreation.) It “must be provided in the broadest context of education for love” (70)—love for God and love for neighbor. The means for growing in this love and for overcoming difficulties are: (71) “Discipline of the senses and the mind, watchfulness and prudence in avoiding occasions of sin, the observance of modesty, moderation in recreation, wholesome pursuits, assiduous prayer and frequent reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Young people especially should foster devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God.” To this list is added (at 55) “an attitude of sacrifice with regard to one’s whims” (which together with modesty have been called by Christian tradition the younger sisters of chastity) and (at 57) a respect for privacy: “If children or young people see that their legitimate privacy is respected, then they will know that they are expected to show the same attitude towards others.”

It is particularly in adolescence that parents must endeavor to strengthen their children’s faith (102): “highlighting the inestimable value of prayer and frequent fruitful recourse to the sacraments for a chaste life, especially personal confession.” They must encourage a detachment from the mass media and attachment to positive

models; they must have recourse to specialists in the case of deviant behavior. The objective of the parents' educational task is, as noted above, to show that "chastity... is possible and that chastity brings joy." (73) God's help is never lacking if each person makes the necessary commitment to respond to his grace. (74) As St. Augustine writes in the *Confessions* (6, 11, 20): "No one can be continent unless You grant it. For You would surely have granted it if my inner groaning had reached Your ears and I with firm faith had cast my cares on You."

(4) It must be given "with great delicacy, but clearly and at the right time," (75) "first seeking light from the Lord in prayer." Pope Pius XII¹⁵¹ emphasises the importance of modesty here: "Modesty will moreover suggest and provide suitable words for parents and educators by which the youthful conscience will be formed in matters of chastity... In this matter just temperance and moderation must be used."

There are in fact four stages of development which parents should bear in mind when giving their children education in love: the years of innocence, puberty, adolescence, and the growth towards adulthood.

In their task of education (150): "May parents always place their trust in God through prayer to the Holy Spirit, the gentle Paraclete and giver of all good gifts. May they seek the powerful intercession and protection of Mary Immaculate, the Virgin Mother of fair love and model of faithful purity. Let them also invoke St. Joseph, her just and chaste spouse, following his example of fidelity and purity of heart. May parents constantly rely on the love which they offer their own children... [which] must be aimed towards eternity, towards the unending happiness promised by Our Lord Jesus Christ to those who follow him: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God."

¹⁵¹ In *Sacra Virginitas* (59), op. cit.,

Chapter 12

Abortion and the Gospel of Life

The Church's position on abortion is stated most fully in the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* where it is placed in the context of a contemporary clash between a 'culture of death' and a 'culture of life' and is understood in the light of the Gospel of Life which is Christianity.

The analysis is remarkable for its emphasis on the natural order. It is above all an ethical, rather than moral theological document, and on this level is both wide-ranging and profound. For these reasons it merits to be presented in its context, at length, and with extensive quotations.¹⁵² The sections into which the following résumé is divided correspond to the sections of the Encyclical.

The emphasis on the natural order does however entail a neglect, and sometimes even a misrepresentation, of the supernatural order in its confusion of the two orders. We have warned the reader of this fact in chapter three. Indeed even the title of the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* is an expression of the confusion of these orders (as also the term 'Theology of the Body', see below), since the Gospel is a purely supernatural communication and therefore may properly relate only to supernatural life.

For the sake of clarity we wish then to recall our distinction between the three forms of dignity (as specified in chapter two) that are treated in this encyclical: the dignity of vocation which is treated in the introduction and conclusion; the natural dignity of man and the supernatural dignity of man which are treated in

¹⁵² In order to make the explanation flow more freely, the Editors have omitted the use of quotation marks, except for a few, in this chapter and they recommend referring to the encyclical itself.

sections II and IV particularly. We also wish to recall the distinction between natural and supernatural life. We shall alert the reader to this confusion as and where it is manifest in the following sections.

1. Introduction

The Pope states that the purpose of the encyclical is to make a precise and vigorous reaffirmation of the value of human life and its inviolability... and a pressing appeal... to respect, protect, love, and serve life—every human life! The encyclical begins with a meditation on Christmas joy: “The source of this great joy is the birth of the Savior, but Christmas also reveals the full meaning of every human birth. By his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being.”¹⁵³ “This saving event reveals... the incomparable value of every human person.” (See the discussion on the dignity of the person in ch. 2.)

The meaning and value of human life is revealed by man’s vocation to union with God: Jesus says: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”... Man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God. The loftiness of this supernatural vocation reveals the greatness and the inestimable value of human life even in its temporal phase. (See the discussion of this dignity of vocation in ch. 2.)

Proclamation of the Gospel of Life is especially urgent in view of new threats to human life. The Second Vatican Council condemns: “Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or wilful self-destruction...”, but in the intervening years the situation is worsening: “broad sectors of public opinion justify certain crimes against life in the name of the rights of individual freedom, and on this basis they claim not only exemption from punishment but even authorization by the State.”¹⁵⁴ This has resulted not only in the destruction of multitudes of human lives but in the distortion and contradiction of the very nature of the medical profession and a degradation of the dignity of those who practice it, and finally in a darkening of the conscience which finds it increasingly

¹⁵³ *Gaudium et Spes* 22.

¹⁵⁴ *Gaudium et Spes* 27.

difficult to distinguish between good and evil in what concerns the basic value of human life.”

2. Present-day Threats to Human Life

God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. (Wis. 1.13) Death came into the world as a result of the devil’s envy and the sin of our first parents. (Gen. chs. 2 and 3) A meditation on the biblical account of Cain and Abel reveals certain universal features of murder. Death entered the world through an act of violence, a concession to the thinking of the evil one, an act of envy and anger. When God asks Cain where his brother is, he replies with a lie: I do not know. He denies his responsibility for his brother: Am I my brother’s keeper? and yet life, especially human life belongs only to God: for this reason whoever attacks human life, in some way attacks God himself. God punishes Cain, but places a mark on him lest any man should kill him. In his mercy God does not deprive him of his personal dignity. (However, see the remarks on the effect of sin on the dignity of the person in ch. 2.)

The voice of Abel’s blood cries to God from the ground, as does the blood shed by all men over the generations. The Lord’s question: What have you done? is addressed also to the people of today with regard to murder, war, slaughter, and genocide, and to the violence against the life of millions of human beings, especially children who are forced into poverty, malnutrition, and hunger, and to the deaths resulting from the arms trade, and to the tampering with the world’s ecological balance, the spreading of drugs, and the promotion of certain forms of sexual immorality. Of all these crimes the encyclical is concerned particularly with abortion and euthanasia, crimes (that are considered to be rights) which attack human life at the time of its greatest frailty, when it lacks any means of self-defence, and that are most often carried out in the bosom of the family, which by its nature is called to be the sanctuary of life.

Amongst the factors that have caused this situation must be noted a scepticism in relation to the very foundations of knowledge and ethics that makes it increasingly difficult to grasp clearly the meaning of what man is as well as the prevalence of needless suffering, in particular solitude, poverty, and violence, especially against women. Yet even more significant is an even larger reality, which can be described as a veritable structure of

sin. This reality is characterized by the emergence of a culture that denies solidarity, and in many cases takes the form of a veritable culture of death, a culture excessively concerned with efficiency which constitutes a war of the powerful against the weak: ... A person who, because of illness, handicap, or, more simply, just by existing, compromises the well-being or life-style of those who are more favored, tends to be looked upon as an enemy to be resisted or eliminated. In this way a kind of conspiracy against life is unleashed, a conspiracy that amounts to scientifically and systematically programmed threats against life. Amongst those implicated in this conspiracy are the international institutions that promote contraception, sterilization, and abortion, and the mass media that promote the same evils, (as well as euthanasia), as a mark of progress and a victory of freedom.

Enormous financial resources are invested in research into methods of abortion. Abortion and contraception are often fruits of the same tree in the view that the life that could result from a sexual encounter... [is] an enemy to be avoided at all costs, and abortion becomes the only possible decisive response to failed contraception. The techniques of artificial reproduction, apart from being morally unacceptable in themselves, expose the embryo to a high risk of death and lead to the destruction of 'spare embryos' or their use in research where human life is reduced to the level of simple 'biological material' to be freely disposed of. Prenatal diagnosis frequently occasions eugenic abortion. By the same logic, infants born with severe handicaps or illnesses are allowed to die, and proposals are advanced for infanticide by the arguments used to justify abortion.

In a society that fails to perceive any meaning or value in suffering, but rather considers suffering the epitome of evil, to be eliminated at all costs, there is a temptation to hasten the death of the incurably ill and the dying. The temptation is strengthened by misguided pity and the desire to save society from burdensome financial costs. Thus it is proposed to eliminate malformed babies, the elderly, especially when they are not self-sufficient, and the terminally ill. The problem of overpopulation is treated not by serious family and social policies, programs of cultural development and of fair production and distribution of resources, but by anti-birth policies: contraception, sterilization and abortion.

While the right to life is trampled upon, and crimes against life are claimed as rights, the primary objective and boast of society and of distinguished international assemblies to protect human rights becomes a merely futile exercise of rhetoric. The roots of this contradiction are to be found in a concept of extreme subjectivism that recognizes as a subject of rights only the person who enjoys full or at least incipient autonomy and in a mentality that equates personal dignity with the capacity for verbal and explicit, or at least perceptible, communication, criteria that clearly exclude the unborn, or dying, or indeed any who are completely at the mercy of others. Another root cause of this contradiction is a completely individualistic concept of freedom, that ignores the essentially relational meaning of freedom, its relation to other persons and its relation to objective and universal truth, placing it instead at the mercy of subjective and changeable opinion, or indeed [a person's] selfish interest and whim. This view of freedom leads to the domination of the weak by the strong on the personal, political and governmental level. This view bears a perverse and evil significance—that of an absolute power over others and against others. True freedom dies, genuine human co-existence breaks down, the state disintegrates, and democracy moves towards totalitarianism, the tyrant state.

The deepest roots of the struggle between the culture of life and the culture of death is the eclipse of the sense of God and of man. When the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life; in turn, the systematic violation of the moral law, especially in the serious matter of respect of human life and its dignity, produces a kind of progressive darkening of the capacity to discern God's living and saving presence. Consequently man is viewed merely as a thing, life itself becomes a mere thing to be controlled, and birth and death, instead of being primary experiences demanding to be lived, become things to be merely possessed or rejected.

The eclipse of the sense of God and of man inevitably leads to a practical materialism that breeds individualism, utilitarianism, and hedonism... The so-called quality of life is interpreted primarily or exclusively as economic efficiency, inordinate consumerism, or physical beauty and pleasure, to the neglect of the more profound dimensions—interpersonal, spiritual, and religious—of existence... Suffering... is censored, rejected as useless, indeed opposed as an

evil, always and in every way to be avoided. The body and sexuality are exploited for pleasure, the latter becoming merely the occasion and instrument for self-assertion and the selfish satisfaction of personal desires and instincts. Procreation, the enemy to be avoided in sexual activity, is welcomed only if it expresses a desire, or indeed the intention, to have a child at all costs. Others are considered not for what they are but for what they have, do, and produce. This is the supremacy of the strong over the weak.

This eclipse occurs at the heart of the moral conscience of the individual, and of society, that encourages the culture of death, creating and consolidating actual structures of sin that go against life. As described by St. Paul in Romans Ch. 1: Men have by their wickedness suppressed the truth and having denied God... have become futile in their thinking... their senseless minds were darkened... claiming to be wise they became fools, carrying out works deserving of death... they not only do them but approve those who practice them. When conscience... calls evil good and good evil, it is already on the path to the most alarming corruption and the darkest moral blindness.

And yet, the voice of the Lord in every conscience cannot be stifled, and it is from here that a new journey of love, openness, and service to human life can begin. The blood of Abel and of every innocent victim of murder cries to God, but the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ cries to God in an absolutely singular way: it is the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. (Heb. 12:22, 24) The blood of Christ shows how precious man is in God's eyes and how priceless the value of his life, and it shows that the greatness [of man] and therefore his vocation consists in the sincere gift of self. It shows with absolute certitude that in God's plan life will be victorious.

There are indeed already signs of this victory: in initiatives in support of the weak, in married couples who welcome the birth of children, in families who accept the abandoned and rejected, in centers for the welfare of pregnant women, in the advance of medical science in the fostering of life, in efforts to remedy poverty and suffering in afflicted countries, and in the emergence of pro-life movements. Furthermore, how can we fail to mention all those daily gestures of openness, sacrifice, and unselfish care which countless people lovingly make in families, hospitals, orphanages, homes for

the elderly, and other centers...Additionally, there is a new sensitivity opposed to war and the death penalty, and a reawakening of ethical reflection on issues concerning human life.

Such a situation reveals that we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the culture of death and the culture of life with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life. The words of Moses (in Deut. 30) are an invitation to us also: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live." The unconditional choice for life reaches its full religious and moral meaning when it flows from, is formed by, and nourished by faith in Christ... who became man and dwelt among men so that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

3. The Christian Message Concerning Life

[We note in relation to this section and in this encyclical in general that the Christian message concerning life is essentially a message concerning supernatural life, the life of the Christian in the state of grace, and not a message about natural life as this section would appear to suggest.]

The Gospel of Life is the proclamation of the very person of Jesus who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn. 14:6) and The Resurrection and the Life (Jn. 11:25). In Jesus, the Word of Life, God's eternal life is...proclaimed and given. Thanks to this proclamation and gift, our physical and spiritual life, also in its earthly phase, acquires its full value and meaning, for God's eternal life is in fact the end to which our living in this world is directed and called. In this way the Gospel of Life includes everything that human experience and reason tell us about the value of human life, accepting it, purifying it, exalting it, and bringing it to fulfilment.

In the Old Testament Israel discovered the preciousness of its life in the eyes of God, and even Job, when overwhelmed by suffering, turns to God; but it is Jesus Christ who brings life's meaning to fulfilment. He shows that life is a gift and a good, given meaning and value by the Father. This he shows especially to those who are afflicted by suffering and sin, but only those who recognize that their life is marked by the evil of sin can discover, in an encounter with Jesus the Savior, the truth and the authenticity of their own existence. Even in his own life there

is a dialectic between the uncertainty of human life and the affirmation of its value, and it is precisely by his death that Jesus reveals all the splendor and value of life, for it is the Cross that gives new life to all people and truly great must be the value of human life if the Son of God has taken it up and made it the instrument of the salvation of all humanity.

Life is a good because of man's relationship to God. Man is a manifestation of God in the world, a sign of his presence, a trace of his glory, or as St. Irenaeus states: "Man, living man, is the glory of God."¹⁵⁵ The book of Genesis reveals that man is given dominion over the whole earth and is created as the result of a special decision on the part of God, a deliberation to establish a particular and specific bond with the creator. Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. (Gen. 1.26) The life that God offers to man is a gift by which God shares something of himself with His creature. The Book of Ecclesiasticus understands, as part of this image, the human faculties of reason, discernment between good and evil, and free will—man's ability to attain truth and freedom in the image of God who is true and just.

The life that God bestows upon man is much more than mere existence in time. It is a drive towards fullness of life; it is the seed of an existence which transcends the very limits of time. The divine breath breathed into man that gives him life also expresses his longing for God in his deepest being, and, as St. Ambrose writes, man is the work in which God is able to repose on the seventh day.

After God's plan is marred by sin, this image shines forth anew in Christ, who opens wide to everyone the gates of the kingdom of life. This is the purpose of Christ's mission: He is the one who comes down from Heaven, and gives life to the world. (Jn. 6:33) This life consists of being begotten of God and sharing in the fullness of his love. (Jn. 1:12–13). This life is eternal because it is a full participation in the life of the Eternal One. "This is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (Jn. 17:3). To know God and his Son is to accept the mystery of the loving communion of the Trinity into one's own life which even now is open to eternal life because it shares in the life of God. The dignity of this life is established not only by its origin

¹⁵⁵ *Gloria Dei vivens homo, Adversus Haereses W 20,7.*

in God but also by its end in God. St. Irenaeus adds to his words quoted above: “The life of man consists in the vision of God.”¹⁵⁶

Now man’s life comes from God, and therefore God is the sole Lord of his life. God holds this life in his loving hands. This means that man’s life is sacred and hence inviolable. The commandment: Thou shalt not kill expresses this inviolability and reaches its culmination in the positive commandment: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (Lev. 19:18) To the man who asks Our Lord how to attain eternal life, he replies: If you would enter life, keep the commandments. (Mt. 19:16–17) And he quotes, as the first of these: Thou shalt not kill. To this commandment he adds (Mt. 5:21) But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment. Our Lord further unveils the positive requirements flowing from the inviolability of life in terms of becoming a neighbor to someone in need, to the point of accepting responsibility for his life—as seen in the parable of the Good Samaritan—of loving, doing good, and praying for one’s enemies. In short, the deepest element of God’s commandment to protect human life is the requirement to show reverence and love for every person and the life of every person.

The task of accepting and serving life involves in a special way married couples in the fulfillment of their parental responsibilities, but it also involves everyone especially in regard to life when it is at its weakest. It is Christ himself who reminds us of this when he asks to be loved in his suffering brethren: the hungry, the thirsty, the foreigner, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned. (Mt. 25)

The bible does not explicitly demand the protection of human life at its very beginning and end, but this is because the mere possibility of harming, attacking, or actually denying life in these circumstances is completely foreign to the religious and cultural way of thinking of the people of God. The Old Testament expresses the view that numerous offspring are a blessing and that human life originates in God. In Jer. 1:5 it is written “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you,” and similar sentiments appear in Job and throughout the Psalms. The mother of the seven sons in Machabees sees the creation of man by God as the foundation for the hope of new life for him after death.

¹⁵⁶ *Vita autem hominis visio Dei, St. Irenaeus. Adversus Haereses W 20,7.*

The New Testament celebrates the value of the person from the moment of conception in the Visitation where it is the unborn children who reveal the advent of the Messianic age. As St. Ambrose writes: “John is the first to experience grace at the arrival of the Lord, the Holy Spirit first fills him and then, through him, his mother.”¹⁵⁷

Similarly old age is characterized by dignity and surrounded with reverence. In life, death, and illness man must trust and hope in God. The mission of Jesus shows God’s great concern even for man’s bodily life and yet the life of the body in its earthly state is not an absolute good ... what is more important is remaining faithful to the word of the Lord even at the risk of one’s life. (Mt. 6:17)

In fact it is not only the commandment Thou shalt not kill that protects life but the entire law of the Lord... because it reveals that truth in which life finds its full meaning. In the same vein as Moses’ words (at Dt. 30:15): “If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God... then you shall live,” Our Lord says (Mt. 4:4 quoting Dt. 8:3): “Man does not live by bread alone, but... by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”

It is difficult to remain faithful to this law of life, and when the people of Israel fail, they are rebuked by the prophets, but at the same time called to new life, a new spirit, and a new heart, so they may appreciate and achieve the deepest and most authentic meaning of life: namely that of being a gift that is most fully realized in the giving of self. This truth is expressed in Isa. 53: “when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his life... he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.”

This law is fulfilled in Jesus Christ who gave his life for his friends and it is in the Cross that we can discover the fulfillment and the complete revelation of the whole Gospel of Life. Amidst the massive conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil, between life and death, like the contemporary conflict between the culture of death and the culture of life, the glory of the Cross shines forth ever more radiantly and brightly, and is revealed as the center, meaning, and goal of all history and of every human life. In his greatest powerlessness the Roman centurion exclaims of Jesus, “Truly, this man was the Son of God,” and Jesus works that salvation

¹⁵⁷ *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* II 22-3.

which is the bestowal of life and resurrection: the forgiveness of sins, that is... setting man free from his greatest sickness and in raising him to the very life of God. On the Cross he attains the heights of love: Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (Jn. 15:13). And he died for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). In this way, Jesus proclaims that life finds its center, its meaning, and its fulfilment when it is given up. Indeed, we are all called to give our lives for our brethren and thus to realize in the fullness of truth the meaning and destiny of our existence.

4. Thou Shalt Not Kill

Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves 'the creative action of God'. For this reason it is inviolable and no one can, in any circumstance, claim for himself the right to destroy directly an innocent human being. Put in another way: God proclaims that he is absolute Lord of the life of man who is formed in his image and likeness. (Gen. 1:26–28) Human life is thus given a sacred and inviolable character. Precisely for this reason God will severely judge every violation of the commandment thou shalt not kill. He is the *goel*, the defender of the innocent.

This commandment is found in the Decalogue and in the covenant between God and humanity after the flood. Although negatively formulated, it encourages a positive attitude of absolute respect for life. This commandment and any other commandment are summed up in this phrase "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Rom. 13:9)

To this day the Church permits the taking of human life only in cases of absolute necessity, as for example in the case of legitimate defense against an unjust aggressor or in applying the death penalty when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society. (We note here that the Church in her traditional teaching justifies the death penalty rather in relation to the common good.)

In relation to innocent human life the commandment is absolute. It is taught by sacred scripture, Church Tradition and the Magisterium. It is the result of that supernatural sense of the faith which is inspired and sustained by the Holy Spirit. It is confirmed by the Holy Father as the successor of Peter and in communion with the bishops of the Catholic Church as follows: "I confirm that the direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always

gravely immoral.” Quoting from the Declaration on Euthanasia¹⁵⁸ he states: “Nothing and no one can in any way permit the killing of an innocent human being, whether a fetus or an embryo, an infant or an adult, an old person, or one suffering from an incurable disease, or a person who is dying.”

Amongst all the crimes against life the Second Vatican Council states that “*Abortus necnon infanticidium nefanda sunt crimina*.”¹⁵⁹ abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes.” The acceptance of abortion in the present age is a sign of an extremely dangerous crisis of the moral sense. In the words of Isaias: Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness. (Isa. 5:20) In a climate of concealment, ambiguity, and self-deception, it is important clearly to understand that procured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth. The moral gravity of this act is apparent upon consideration of the elements involved: absolute innocence, weakness, and total entrustment: No one more absolutely innocent could be imagined. In no way could this human being ever be considered an aggressor, much less an unjust aggressor! He or she is weak, defenseless, even to the point of lacking that minimal form of defense consisting in the poignant power of a newborn baby’s cries and tears. The unborn child is totally entrusted to the protection and care of the woman carrying him or her in the womb. No grounds, however serious and tragic, can ever justify the deliberate killing of an innocent human being.

The responsibility lies with the mother, with the father if he encourages the decision or withholds his support hence mortally wounding and profaning the family in its nature as a community of love and in its vocation to be the sanctuary of life, with the wider family, friends, medical personnel and, in broader terms, legislators, and administrators of health care centers, those who have spread an attitude of sexual permissiveness and lack of esteem for motherhood, and who have failed to ensure effective family and social policies in support of families, as well as with the international institutions that campaign for the spread of abortion, in fine, a veritable structure of sin.

¹⁵⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith AAS 72 1980, pg. 546.

¹⁵⁹ *Gaudium et Spes* 51.

Christian tradition has always described abortion as a particularly grave moral disorder. The Didache, repeating the commandment thou shalt not kill, explicitly condemns it, and the early Christians considered as murderesses women who had undergone abortion. In recent times abortion has been condemned vigorously by Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, and the Second Vatican Council, as quoted above. The gravity of the crime and the consequent need for conversion and repentance is expressed by the severe penalties that the Church has exacted for those participating in it, notably excommunication. Paul VI, in view of the unanimity in the doctrinal and disciplinary tradition of the Church declared in *Humanae Vitae* that the tradition is unchanged and unchangeable. Therefore the present Pope, again as successor of Peter and in communion with the Bishops, states: "I declare that direct abortion, that is abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder. No circumstance, no purpose, no law whatsoever can ever make licit an act which is intrinsically illicit, since it is contrary to the law of God which is written in every human heart, knowable by reason itself, and proclaimed by the Church."

This evaluation applies equally to experimentation on embryos, the exploitation of living human embryos and 'fetuses produced' for this purpose by *in vitro* fertilization... as biological material or as providers of organs or tissue for transplants in the treatment of certain diseases, and the use of prenatal diagnostic techniques with a view to eugenic abortion, which expresses an attitude which is shameful and utterly reprehensible. The courage and serenity of those suffering from serious disabilities, when shown acceptance and love, witnesses, by contrast, to that which gives authentic value to life. The Church is close to parents, natural or adoptive, who with great anguish and suffering willingly accept gravely handicapped children.

Euthanasia, which shall be treated only very briefly in this chapter, is also a grave moral evil and a grave violation of the law of God: it is understood to be an action or omission, which of itself and by intention, causes death, with the purpose of eliminating all suffering. This is different from foregoing extraordinary or disproportionate means for prolonging a life, which rather expresses acceptance of the human condition in the face of death.

With regard to euthanasia the attitude that should be cultivated is that expressed by St. Paul (Rom. 15:7–8): If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord: Dying to the Lord means accepting one's death at the hour willed by him, at the completion of the earthly pilgrimage. Living to the Lord means in this context that suffering is a source of good when it is experienced as a loving participation in the redemptive suffering of Christ Crucified. The plea of a suffering person for death is a plea above all for love in the face of suffering, despair, and the rebellion in the face of death, of man who bears within him an eternal seed. True compassion leads to sharing another's pain; it does not kill the person whose suffering we cannot bear. To kill is to usurp God's power of life and death which he exercises with wisdom and love, and to use it for injustice and exploitation.

The trend to demand legal justification for present day attacks on human life invites reflection on the nature and purpose of law. The real purpose of civil law is to guarantee an ordered social coexistence in true justice, so that all may "lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way." (1Tim.) The first and fundamental right that it must protect is the right to life. Disregard for this right, precisely because it leads to the killing of the person whom society exists to serve, is what most directly conflicts with the possibility of achieving the common good. As John XXIII states: a law in contravention of the moral order is not binding; as St. Thomas Aquinas states: "it is not a law at all, but an act of violence."¹⁶⁰ a "corruption of the law."¹⁶¹ The fact that it may be democratically established is irrelevant, for democracy is not a substitute for morality, but is only a means and not an end. Its value depends on conformity to the moral law to which it is subject. Would the crimes against humanity committed in our century cease to be crimes if, instead of being committed by unscrupulous tyrants, they were legitimated by popular consensus? In short, abortion and euthanasia are crimes that no human law can claim to legitimize. There is no obligation in conscience to obey such laws; instead there is a grave and clear obligation to oppose them by conscientious objection.

¹⁶⁰ *Summa* III 93. 3.2.

¹⁶¹ *Summa* III 95. 2.

The *no* of the negative moral precepts which include the commandment thou shalt not kill, is the point of departure for true freedom, for the saying of *yes* over and over again, a *yes* which will gradually embrace the entire horizon of the good. (cf. Mt 5:48) The creator has entrusted man's life to his responsive concern... to preserve it with wisdom and to care for it with loving fidelity according to the law of reciprocity to which Christ has given new content and meaning. The commandment thou shalt not kill is binding on all men; it can be recognized by all through the light of reason and observed by all through the working of the Holy Spirit; it is a service of love to all which will lead to the establishment of a new culture of life, the fruit of the culture of truth and of love.

5. For a New Culture of Human Life

In the words of Paul VI, the Church exists in order to evangelize. An integral part of her Gospel is the Gospel of Life. We are the people of life and for life and have been sent as a people and individually to preach the Gospel of Life, to celebrate it in the liturgy and in our whole existence, and to serve it.

In essence: Jesus is the only Gospel: we have nothing further to say or any other witness to bear. To proclaim Jesus is itself to proclaim life. The Gospel of Life has a marvellous newness since it is one with Jesus who makes all things new and therefore reveals the sublime heights to which the dignity of the human person is raised through grace. As St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:¹⁶² "Once [man] is adopted by the God of the universe as a son, ...man surpasses his nature: mortal he becomes immortal... (Let us note that this divine sonship refers to supernatural grace and not simply to humanity.) This gives birth to gratitude and joy which impel us to share this message with all. The core of this Gospel is: The proclamation of a living God who is close to us, who calls us to profound communion with himself... It is the affirmation of the inseparable connection between the person, his life, and his bodiliness. It is the presentation of human life as a life of relationship, a gift of God, the fruit and sign of his love. It is the proclamation that Jesus has a unique relationship with every person... It is the call for a sincere gift of self. It entails that human

¹⁶² St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Beatitudinibus Oratio VII*

life, as a gift of God, is sacred and inviolable... Not only must human life not be taken, but it must be protected with loving concern. The meaning of life is found in giving and receiving love.

The proclamation of the Gospel of Life falls especially to those who have a teaching ministry in the Church, above all the bishops, but also all theologians, pastors, teachers, and catechists. Sound doctrine must be taught in theological faculties, seminaries, and Catholic institutions, and without dissent, compromise, or ambiguity which might conform us to the world's way of thinking.

The Gospel of Life must be celebrated by fostering a contemplative outlook, seeing in life its deeper meaning... its utter gratuitousness, its beauty, and its invitation to freedom and responsibility... discovering in all things the reflection of the creator and seeing in every person his living image...perceiving in the face of every person a call to encounter, dialogue, and solidarity. It must be celebrated by celebrating the God of life, the God who gives life, in our prayer and in every person; by celebrating the sacraments; by daily living filled with self-giving love for others, even to the point of heroism, to the total gift of self that manifests the mystery of the Cross. Special mention should be made here of the "brave mothers who devote themselves to their own families without reserve."

The Gospel of Life must be served by works of charity to the suffering; by showing care for all life and for the life of everyone; by promoting centers for natural methods of regulating fertility, marriage and family counselling agencies, and centers to assist pregnant women and foster new life; by establishing communities for the afflicted and the elderly, hospitals, clinics, and convalescent homes, all of which acknowledge and understand suffering, pain, and death in their human and specifically Christian meaning. Such projects require the involvement of persons committed to the Gospel of Life in the spheres of health care, spiritual assistance, voluntary work, politics, and the legislature. With regard to the growth of population there must be established a true economy of communion and sharing of goods in both the national and international order. This is the only way to respect the dignity of persons and families, as well as the authentic cultural patrimony of peoples. In fact, a family policy must be the basis and driving force of all social politics.

Within the people of life and the people for life the family has a decisive responsibility. It is called to guard, reveal and communicate love and to be the sanctuary of life. As the domestic church it is itself called to proclaim, celebrate, and serve the Gospel of Life, revealing in procreation that human life is a gift received in order then to be given as a gift. It proclaims this Gospel in the manner in which it raises and educates its children; it celebrates this Gospel in daily prayer and in the family's daily life of love; it serves it by solidarity as regards adoption, by participation in social and political life, and by involvement with the elderly.

What is urgently required is a great campaign in support of life, starting from a formation of consciences on the worth of human life. To this end it is vital to re-establish the essential connection between life and freedom, to understand that love, as a sincere gift of self, is what gives the life and freedom of the person their truest meaning. It is vital to acknowledge that man is a creature to whom God has granted being and life as a gift and a duty. A work of education is necessary, especially in sexuality and love, involving a training in chastity and responsible procreation and in the cultivation of an authentic understanding of suffering and death in the light of the redemption, death, and resurrection of Christ.

In short, there must be an advance from having to being, from things to persons, from indifference and rejection to concern for, and acceptance of, others. Important roles must be taken by educators, intellectuals, those in the mass media, and by women promoting a new feminism, reconciling people with life, and bearing witness to love through their acceptance of every human being, which they have learnt in their experience of pregnancy. Women who have undergone an abortion are called to repentance and to seek God's mercy, to an eloquent defense of everyone's right to life, and to a renewed commitment to life by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them. Prayer and fasting are necessary for spreading the Gospel of Life, which is for all and is an indispensable condition for democracy and peace.

6. Conclusion

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the one who accepted life in the name of all and for the sake of all. She is the incomparable model of how life should be welcomed and cared for. Just as the Church's motherhood is achieved in tension with the forces of evil and darkness as we read in the Book of Revelation, so the Blessed Virgin lived her motherhood amidst suffering. The *yes* of the Annunciation culminates in Calvary where Mary becomes the mother of us all.

The child whom the dragon of revelation wishes to devour is a figure of Christ and of every man, especially every helpless baby whose life is threatened, since, to repeat the phrase quoted at the beginning of the encyclical, (regarding which, see note) by his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person. For this reason rejection of human life... is really a rejection of Christ... Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. (Mt. 18:5) Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me; (Mt. 25:40).

The Angel's Annunciation to Mary is framed by these reassuring words: Do not be afraid Mary, and with God nothing will be impossible (Lk. 1:30–37)... Mary is a living word of comfort for the Church in the struggle against death. In fact the Church assures us that the Lamb who was slain is alive, bearing the marks of his passion in the splendor of the resurrection... and proclaims, in time and beyond, the power of life over death. In our pilgrimage towards the New Jerusalem, where death shall be no more, we look to Mary who is for us a sign of sure hope and solace.

Chapter 13

The Motivation and Sinfulness of Impurity and Abortion

“They are clearly descried crowding their hands with flesh, meat which is of their own family, holding inwards with entrails, a pitiful burden, which a father has tasted.” (Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, LL.1220–2)

1. The Motivation of Impurity and Abortion

i) Apostasy

In virtue of his free will man is able to turn away from God; in virtue of his fallen nature he is indeed inclined to do so. (Gen. 6:5)¹⁶³ This form of apostasy, assuming a public dimension in Christendom at least as early as the Renaissance,¹⁶⁴ fomented by the French and Industrial Revolutions, and at the present time by increasing material prosperity and technological sophistication, has led Western man finally into a proud self-exaltation, to contempt of God, and into sin, which is disobedience—a revolt against God through the will to become like gods, knowing and determining good and evil (Gen. 3:5).

Now since God is the source and ground of all objective truth and good, all objective moral principles and meaning, this contempt of God involves a contempt of all objective good, most notably the dignity of man himself, and all objective moral principles and meaning.

¹⁶³ Notwithstanding man’s radical orientation to the True and the Good—see the discussion of the natural dignity of man in the Introduction to this book.

¹⁶⁴ See Hans Graf Huyn, *Ihr werdet sein wie Gott* op.cit.

In such cases, man's pride places him in a world devoid of goodness, morality, and meaning; no longer under the guidance of what is objective, he finds himself under the dominion of what is subjective, namely feelings, or passions, which, as Plato would say, he finds more compelling than the necessary truths of logic.

Passions are emotions or movements of the sensitive appetite that incline the agent to act or not to act in regard to something felt or imagined to be good or evil. The principal passions are love and hatred, desire and aversion, joy and sadness, courage and fear, hope and despair, and anger. The dominion of the passions is particularly evident in the arena of adultery and abortion: in the former case the passion is sexual desire, the desire for an experience that does not amount to marital love (cf. ch. 6). In the latter case the passion is typically the aversion or fear of the pregnant woman.

We see then how rejection of God leads to adultery and abortion. In a similar vein, St. Paul writes in Rom. 1:24–25: “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their heart to impurity and to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.” St. Paul restates this thesis in more detail in verses 26–27 and 28–32 using all three times the same verb: ‘gave up’—*paredoken*—by which he expresses the fact that when men are deprived of divine grace, they are overcome by their passions (viz. *Summa* III q. 87 a. 2).

Before examining adultery and abortion more closely, let us consider the reasons why they may be considered together. The primary reason is that they are the two crimes most diametrically opposed to the goods of marriage, namely to marital love and to the procreation of children: adultery is the perversion of the first good; abortion is the contradiction of the second. They are also related as follows: abortion typically results from sexual immorality; both abortion and the type of adultery from which it typically results are hostile to life; both have a destructive tendency (as is explained below); both manifest extreme hedonism: one seeks extreme pleasure; the other, in seeking to avoid pain or suffering, wreaks extreme evil.

It is in fact in the form of hedonism that the passions are manifest in this area, so let us begin by analyzing hedonism.

ii) Hedonism

To repeat the definition of hedonism given in chapter 8: Hedonism is the system “that affirms that only pleasure is intrinsically desirable, and that only displeasure (or pain) is intrinsically undesirable.” According to this system the only good is pleasure (or happiness), the only ill is pain (or suffering). The human being has no dignity in himself, but only a derivative value, or utility (see the beginning of the discussion on the dignity of the person in ch. 2) according to the pleasure or pain that he might give or enjoy. For this reason a human being is treated as no more than a body; he is treated as an object, a thing like any other. Crass and shallow though this system may seem when stated thus baldly, it does in fact exert a certain influence on Western man, as may be clearly seen by reference to the themes treated in this book (cf. especially ch. 7). One of the notable activities exercising this influence is embryo research.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ See for instance the document *Donated Ovarian Tissue in Embryo Research and Assisted Conception* produced by the Human Fertilization and Embryo Authority in London, in early in 1994, which proposed the use of *ova* (mature or immature) or ovarian tissue taken from a living woman, or deceased woman, girl, or fetus, in order to generate human beings to be raised by infertile parents or for experimentation—for experimentation, in other words, on living human beings, whether at the embryonic, or indeed fetal stage. Any analysis of these proposals would need to address their evil, the torture of infants, and the trauma that a person would suffer from discovering that he had been conceived from a donated *ovum*, particularly if it had originated from a dead female, who may even have been an aborted fetus. Those who compiled the document are not, however, prepared to concede so much, preferring to leave it an open question how this discovery might affect a child (as though it might even be beneficial). The particular implications of finding out that their genetic mother had died before they were conceived, or was an aborted fetus are unknown. It would be necessary to consider further how to assess the likely effects on children...’ (pg. 23). In short, the proposals rely on utilitarian hedonism, according to which the human being is simply an object, a means to an end. This view is clearly manifest throughout the document which treats human beings on a par with mice, sheep, and guinea pigs (pg. 13), and treats human *ova* as a commodity, referring to them consistently as ‘eggs’, and proposing a ‘positive’ use for them. “The use of material from an aborted fetus for infertility research and to create children is, it could be said, a positive use for material from

Examples of hedonistic attitudes are the favor for sensual delights and the disfavor for irreversible disability and terminal illness. In the first instance the person, or rather the body, is seen as only (derivatively) valuable as the vehicle of pleasure; in the second instance the person is seen as having no worth, only a disvalue as the cause of pain or suffering for himself and for those who look after him, and therefore to merit destruction (euthanasia).

Now it is principally in two forms of hedonism that the passions are manifest in adultery and abortion: in outright hedonism and in hedonism tempered by benevolence.

Outright hedonism operates in sexual immorality as the pursuit of sexual pleasure, it operates in abortion as the avoidance of pain or suffering.

The sexual act is treated as a pleasurable game, the person is treated as a mere body, the mere vehicle of pleasure or passion. Such relationships are indeed a travesty, and the complete antithesis of marriage: the latter involving a selfless love until death for the procreation and education of children; the former a self-centered passion that lasts only as long as the passion lasts, and is hostile to children: attempting to prevent their conception, and tending to abort them if they are conceived and neglect them if they are born.¹⁶⁶

a fetus which would otherwise be discarded.” (pg. 26). What is the difference, one might ask, between this attitude and that put into practice at Auschwitz, where the authorities treated their prisoners as objects, in a camp set up by a chemical company with the express intention of using parts of their bodies for commercial purposes?

Anyone surprised by this document may wish to investigate in the internet the activities of the company Senomyx which uses parts of unborn children for food, in other words for the purposes of cannibalism. We see how far modern man’s practical capacities have outstripped his moral integrity, as a form of perversion becomes a public reality for the first time in the history of civilization, that has hitherto been the object only of mythology or satire (as in the feast of Thyestes in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* referred to in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, the horrific, nightmare representations of Goya, and the colonial gentleman’s intimate dinner for two in *A Modest Proposal* by Dean Swift).

¹⁶⁶ As at the date of writing, the most grotesque and shameful form of these travesties is the ‘homosexual marriage.’ It would appear that homosexual acts and

With regard to abortion, it may be said more fully that since hedonism is based on feelings, it will typically not attach to a being who is invisible and whose status, and therefore whose suffering, seem at best embryonic and therefore questionable, nor will it engage in any analysis of his nature or personhood, let alone appreciate his objective dignity. Rather it will attach to the parents, especially the mother, who is visible and visibly suffering or inconvenienced. If the child is considered at all, he is considered merely as a cause of their suffering or inconvenience, or simply as a “threat to their happiness,” as Cardinal Ratzinger puts it in *The Ratzinger Report*. In this way it addresses the superficial rather than the deeper issues of abortion: the temporary suffering or inconvenience of the mother rather than the life of her child and her own true interests: her need for support, understanding, and education in the nature of abortion and post-abortion trauma.

As we have already noted above, the hedonist understands man on the model of the beast, or, as one might alternatively say, on the model of the infant. In this regard we quote from Michael Davies’ admirable book *Pope Paul’s New Mass* (op. cit., referred to in a footnote to ch. 3) in chapter VII the Cult of Man: “Much is heard of contemporary man coming of age, of his maturity. What we are witnessing is a regression to infancy. The prime characteristic of an infant is that he must have what he wants and have it at once. That is the criterion by which contemporary man regulates his life. Contraception, abortion, and the glorification of sexual perversion are the most evident characteristics of mankind come of age.”

A less obvious, but equally influential, form of hedonism is hedonism tempered by a sort of humanistic benevolence. Although hedonism and humanism, when considered individually as in ch. 8, are distinct approaches to moral reasoning, they may be combined to form a unified moral system as will now be outlined.

iii) Humanistic Benevolence

Benevolence is the will to do good to another. The other is seen either as subjectively good, as in the case of sensible love, or as objectively good as in the case of humanism or Christianity,

behavior have been gaining acceptance in recent years because of the hedonistic view of sexuality, particularly enshrined in the contraceptive mentality, which regards all forms of sexual activity as equivalent.

although in the case of humanism particularly, where the existence of God is denied, this objectivity lacks any adequate foundation.

In order to appreciate the humanistic form of benevolence, let us contrast it with the stern Christian law of self-giving love. This law is stated by Our Lord in Mk. 12:29 as: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength... and love thy neighbor as thyself." It is elucidated in St. John's Gospel 13:34 as follows: "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love another as I have loved you." Humanistic benevolence, by contrast, as expounded by the atheist philosopher David Hume¹⁶⁷ relates to the benevolent qualities which, as he states near the beginning of the chapter on benevolence, "universally express the highest merit which human nature is capable of attaining."

Humanistic benevolence (as a veritable *apocolocyntosis* of 'niceness') has sometimes a positive, sometimes a negative, tendency: it does indeed encompass a spirit of kindness, fairness, fellow-feeling, and respect for others; but also, since it lacks the depth and wisdom of love and refuses to recognize the realm of the spirit, it not infrequently addresses the shallower rather than the deeper issues involved in any situation.

Now when the hedonism of adultery is tempered by benevolence, the parties do not treat each other simply as objects of pleasure or passion, but also benevolently: with affection and with respect for each other's feelings, and the relationship lasts for a longer period: for months or years, for as long as these more tender emotions last. But still the objective order is not respected, and the deeper needs of the parties are not met: the need for a deep love, a love that is fulfilled and fruitful, a love that endures until death.

Whereas outright hedonism advocates abortion on the basis of mere inconvenience, when it is tempered by benevolence it advocates abortion only on the basis of genuine suffering: typically the mental or physical health of the mother or the prospective suffering of a child diagnosed as disabled or due to be born into conditions of hardship (probably the motivation, but certainly not the effect, of current English law, cf. ch. 7). Yet this latter form

¹⁶⁷ David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Principles of Morals*, (London: A. Miller, 1751).

of hedonism does not address the deeper issues of abortion any more than the former: the issues that arise from the inestimable dignity of the person.

2. The Sinfulness of Sexual Immorality and Abortion

i) The Gravity of this Sin

Now acts of sexual immorality and acts of abortion are immoral. Since they are immoral, they are sinful, for to transgress against the moral law is to transgress against the giver of that law, who is God.¹⁶⁸ Moreover acts of sexual immorality and acts of abortion are not merely sinful, but gravely sinful. Sexual sins, sins against purity, are all gravely sinful: *grave ex toto genere suo*, whether committed in the flesh or imagination, singly or in conjunction with another, whether they involve contraception, or adultery, or any other form of immorality. All abortion is gravely sinful.

Now, for a sin to be mortal, three conditions must together be met: Mortal sin is sin, the object of which is grave matter, and that is committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent. This full knowledge encompasses both the nature and the sinful character of the act, so that unintentional ignorance or a temporary loss of the use of reason can diminish, or even remove, the culpability for a grave offense—although no one is deemed to be ignorant of the principles of the natural law. As to the deliberate consent, by contrast, it may be diminished or removed by fear or by the passions, by external pressures, by involuntary habits which have been retracted, or pathological disorders.

In relation to deliberate abortion in particular, it is not possible to appeal to unintentional ignorance, because deliberate abortion is contrary to the law of God which is written in every human heart, knowable by reason itself, and proclaimed by the Church. (*Evangelium Vitae* 62) The same applies to the destruction of embryos in connection with experimentation and *in vitro* fertilization. (*Evangelium Vitae* 63)

¹⁶⁸ The doctrine of philosophical sin, namely that it is possible to transgress against the moral law without reference to God, was condemned by Pope Alexander VIII in 1690.

ii) The Offense Against Reason

Now sin is an offense against reason and truth. Clearly all sin offends against reason ultimately in that it runs counter to man's ultimate good, namely his salvation. But it also offends against reason in terms of the benefit it purports to confer on the sinner. This may be seen in the area of our present consideration as follows: a person engages in immoral sexual relations in order to gain pleasure or happiness, telling himself he is not harming anybody, he seeks abortion in order to avoid pain or suffering, but pain and suffering are the inevitable outcome of both: to the extent that a party seeks pleasure in immoral sexuality he or she feels a sense of emptiness and degradation and is increasingly plagued by sexual desire; to the extent that he or she seeks love, he feels wounded and betrayed when the relationship collapses, and scornful to the other party in consequence. As to abortion, it is capable of bringing untold pain and suffering to the child (see especially ch. 8) and on occasion to the mother as well. This pain and suffering is not clearly less than the pain and suffering of proceeding with the pregnancy. Finally, if the wounds of immoral sexuality and abortion are not always patently manifest, they subsist deep within the psyche and the soul, where, until they are healed and absolved, they yield a constant dark and bitter harvest.

iii) The Offense Against Truth

Sin is an offense against truth. In his letter to the Romans quoted above, St. Paul in 1:18–23 identifies truth with God's eternal power and divine nature which is revealed in his creation and which obliges man to honor him and to give him thanks. St. Paul speaks of those who, by their wickedness, suppress the truth and who became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools. This darkening of the mind is clearly exemplified in the failure to see that the prime purpose of sexuality is procreation; in the area of sexuality and abortion it is exemplified in the failure to appreciate the dignity of the person (cf. chapters 2 and 12). In the area of abortion particularly it is exemplified in the failure to see that the unborn is a child, even with reliance on irrefutable photographic evidence or after participation in its violent and brutal destruction.

Meaning gives way to passion, or as Cardinal Ratzinger puts it in *The Ratzinger Report* the objective reason yields to the subjective reason, namely to the *libido* of the individual. A person engages in sexual relations irrespective of the age or gender of the other party. Where there is a possibility of conception, there is typically a recourse to contraceptive measures; if these fail, abortion is adopted as a back-up solution, as Cardinal Ratzinger notes in *The Problem of Threats to Human Life*, (op. cit.).

iv) The Agency of the Devil

The next two features of sin are intimately connected with the devil, so we shall introduce them by briefly examining his role in sin. The devil in his hatred of God born of pride and envy, finding himself unable to attack God directly, assails his mystical body and that creature formed in his own image and likeness who is vulnerable to his attack, namely man. His purpose is the eternal death of man, which he attempts to achieve by leading man into sin. Through him sin had entered the world, and all subsequent sin is occasioned by him, his angels, and by man himself, largely in consequence of his fallen nature. Marks of the devil's agency may be seen *inter alia* in the wide scale and systematic nature of a given form of sin, as can particularly clearly be seen in the areas under consideration in this book.

a) Deceit

Now whereas man is made for life and happiness, sin leads, as we have recalled, to death and torment. This explains why sin is an offense against reason and truth, and why an agent wishing to seduce man into sin must first deceive him, that is by the lie of temptation, the object of which appears to be good, a "delight to the eyes," when in reality its fruit is death (Gen. 3.6). The deceitfulness involved in the sins of adultery and abortion is then a further mark of the agency of the devil who is "the deceiver of the whole world," (Apoc. 12:9) who "does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (Jn. 8:44) So let us now consider in detail the deceit involved in adultery and abortion.

One general form of deceit is the pretense that these actions are not in fact sinful but simply morally indifferent. The former is

commonly known not by its properly pejorative title of fornication or adultery, but by such terms as ‘affairs’ and ‘cohabitation.’¹⁶⁹ The latter is commonly known not by the title that most accurately describes it, namely pre-natal infanticide, but as ‘terminating a pregnancy’ or ‘losing a child’, as though this act of supreme violence and brutality, the subjection of a child at his or her most innocent, vulnerable, and defenseless moments to the most extreme pain and suffering, and subsequently to murder, could possibly be expressed in terms of bringing to a close a state of affairs or by a phrase denoting total passivity.

A second, and graver, form of deceit is the pretence that what is sinful is in fact morally good: so, benevolence in its negative aspect, the shallow indulgence examined above, masquerades as ‘love’ and ‘care.’ A notable example of the former is the endowment of sexual immorality with the noble or sacred name of ‘love’ between ‘lovers,’ despite the hedonism, abuse, degradation, and scorn with which it is characterized and despite the fact that in lacking commitment to God, to spouse, and to children, it is singularly lacking both in giving and in fruitfulness, which are the two essential components of (rational) love.¹⁷⁰ A notable example of the latter is abortion which in the name of ‘care’ for the confused and traumatized pregnant woman, and in gleaming white hospitals symbolizing health and life, exposes her to extreme and sometimes fatal sufferings, consigns her child to destruction, and puts in danger the eternal salvation of all concerned.

Moreover sexual immorality and abortion are known as ‘love’ and ‘care,’ not merely by given individuals, but are generally accepted as such by the majority of society. Pope John Paul II observes this in regard to abortion when he writes in *Evangelium Vitae* (58) that: “the acceptance of abortion in the popular mind, in behavior, and even in law itself, is a telling sign of an extremely dangerous crisis of the moral sense which is becoming more and more incapable of distinguishing between good and evil even when the fundamental right to life is at stake.” He goes on to quote Isa. 5:20. “Woe to those

¹⁶⁹ Between partners—as though managing their lives together as a sort of non-profit making small business.

¹⁷⁰ Another example is the term ‘boy/girl-friend’ with its pretension to youth, innocence, and constancy.

who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness.”

In most general anthropological terms it may be said of this second form of deceit that it characterizes periods of insurrection. In his account of *stasis* (faction) in book III 82.4 of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides states: “*ten eiothuian axiosin ton onomaton es ta erga antellaxan tei dikaiosei*.” they reversed the customary value of words to accord with deeds in conformity to their own moral judgments. He proceeds to show how they labeled good conduct as bad and bad conduct as good. What he says of *stasis* is equally true of *apostasis*.

b) Death

Now as stated above, sin brings death and not just eternal death but death of the body as well, as is explained in the book of Genesis with regard to original sin at 2:17: “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die,” and after the sin is committed at 3:19 in God’s words to Adam that he will “return to the ground, for out of it you were taken, you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” This fourth feature of sin, which may perhaps be expressed more generally as its violatory and destructive quality is clearly manifest in sexual immorality and abortion and gives further evidence of the agency of the devil who “was a murderer from the beginning.” (Jn. 8:44)

Abortion is violatory and destructive in that it constitutes the killing or the murder of an innocent human being, sexual immorality in that it so often culminates in this form of killing particularly through the widespread use of abortifacient contraceptives (cf. ch. 7), and more generally in that it exerts a destructive influence on persons in their psychological and spiritual dimensions, for in failing to respect the inestimable worth of the person (cf. chapters 2 and 12) it abuses and maltreats the person, and in failing to respect man as made in the image and likeness of God it in fact amounts to the desecration of an icon (*eikon*: an image).

In these ways we can see the deceit and the destructive forces of the devil in combat against truth and the creative love of God. In former times the devil’s agency, which today is largely covert, was more manifest in the analogous evils of ritual fornication and human sacrifice.

We see, too, how the evils of adultery and abortion constitute a twofold attack of the devil on mankind: on the individual; on the family in opposing the two goods of marriage; and, since the family is the very cell of which society is comprised, on the whole of society as well (as has been shown in relation to contraception in the presentation of *Humanae Vitae* in ch. 5, divorce in ch. 4 part 1, and murder in ch. 8 part 1).

This attack is now being re-enforced on the political level by the demands of the European Union, as “money-changer of dead bodies,”¹⁷¹ for the corpses of our children, for our marriages, our faith, and ultimately our souls. It is not hard to discern who is at work here, although atheism is a specifically human form of crassness.

This same attack draws its strength not least from an attack yet more fundamental and deadly: an attack against the Church herself and conducted within her bosom, particularly in her doctrine¹⁷² and liturgy,¹⁷³ so that man, obstructed from attaining the Truth and from adoring God, turns away from him towards man, whose features he no longer recognizes (see ch. 12).

And so the fabric of civilization and Christendom is being steadily destroyed, so that people already talk of a post-Christian age (as though anything could exist after Christ who is “yesterday, today: and the same forever.” (Heb. 13:8) And yet this is no triumph of the devil over God, but God’s punishment of man, with which man collaborates with his free will and the devil with his malice: for God will destroy all nations that have turned away from him “like a potter’s vessel.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1. 437

¹⁷² See ch. 3. The Catholic intellectual Thomas Molnar sees the moral devastation treated in the present book as the consequence of the capitulation of men of the Church to the modern age. Cf. Thomas Molnar, *Du Mal moderne. Symptômes et antidotes. Cinq entretiens avec Jean Renaud* (Quebec: Editions du Beffroi, 1996), pg. 138–139.

¹⁷³ See the footnote on the Cult of Man at the beginning of this chapter. Under the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI signs of hope were being seen again, although at the time of writing many former certainties have ceased to be so.

¹⁷⁴ Ps. 2; Jer. 19:11; Apoc. 2:27.

3. The Remedy

We have seen how contempt of God leads to contempt of objective truth and good and to the consequent dominion of the passions, especially manifest in the hedonistic motivation for adultery and abortion. We have seen the irrational, confused, deceitful, and destructive nature of these sins. In order to remedy the malaise with which we find ourselves afflicted, it will be necessary to return along the path by which we came: to use reason to unmask the destructive deceits of the devil and discover the true purpose of sexuality and the true nature of abortion; to reflect on the inestimable dignity of the person; to open our eyes to objective truth, good, and meaning, both in reason and in faith, which is ultimately a vision of God himself; to have recourse to prayer to free us from the bondage of sin, and to Confession so that we may finally abandon the way of death and take the way of supernatural life, the way of the Catholic faith and of virtue: and this way is none other than Our Lord Jesus Christ, *Cui omnis honor, laus, et gloria in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*

Appendices

In the appendices we treat two themes of current interest. The first is the 'Theology of the Body,' that has touched the lives of millions of people, above all in America. The second is the attack on the doctrine of Limbo, that has found particular expression in a document of a Vatican theological commission. These two themes relate to the subject matter of the present book inasmuch as the first pertains to sexuality, and the second pertains to the fate of aborted infants. In particular, the first theme is a clear instance of personalism, and the second is a clear instance of the confusion of the natural and supernatural orders.

Appendix A

Theology Of The Body

Introduction

Theology of the Body is the title that Pope John Paul II gave to a series of discourses delivered between September 1979 and November 1984. When we evaluate this doctrine in the light of Tradition (according to the criteria set forth in ch. 3), we see that in its principal positions it does not represent a development of Catholic teaching (in the sense of a clarification or deepening of that teaching), but rather a rupture with it, that is to say something novel. For this reason it cannot be described as Catholic doctrine, but rather as a series of personal meditations by that Pope.

As our source for this chapter we take the book *Theology of the Body for Beginners* by Mr. Christopher West (Necedah: Ascension Press, 2004), which affords a useful summary of this theory. This lecturer and writer has done much to popularize this theory on the international level.

The following critique (made in the briefest possible outline) will consist in the main of the application to this theory of the philosophical and theological principles established in the present book. This will involve a certain repetition of material already discussed, in the interests of providing a brief synthesis and analysis of the theory both in detail and as a whole.

We proceed as follows: we evaluate this theory first as a personalist doctrine, then in its understanding of conjugal love in itself, and finally in its understanding of conjugal love in relation to God.

I Theology of the Body as a Personalist Doctrine

The Church teaches that marriage has three finalities: 1) the procreation and education of children; 2) the mutual assistance of the spouses; 3) the remedy of concupiscence (see *The Roman Catechism* expounded in ch. 10 above). The Church teaches further that the first finality is also the primary finality (see ch. 5 for the relevant declarations of the Magisterium, and for the arguments from scripture, patristics, and 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). We refer the reader to ch. 5 of the present book.

This modern view has been condemned by the Magisterium. A Declaration of the Holy See of March 1944 (AAS XXXVI, pg.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, we have seen (in the same ch. 5) how this modern view was reposed on the floor of the Second Vatican Council, how it 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 of the Catholic Church*, 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, West p. 25)

As for the particular understanding of conjugal love manifest in the 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 primary finality of the exercise of the marital right: “that the bodily union is 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.” In the following pages we shall see how these ideas are developed in Theology of the Body.

We proceed to offer a detailed critique of the Theology of the Body, first in regard to conjugal love considered in itself, and second in regard to conjugal love considered in relation to God.

II Conjugal Love Considered in Itself

1. Total Self-Giving Love

Now the foundation of the Theology of the Body is the proposition that the act of conjugal love consists in “the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife” (*Familiaris Consortio* 32, quoted in the the new catechism 2370) If this proposition is false, then the whole edifice of the Theology of the Body falls.

In ch. 4 of the present book we have argued to the falsity of this proposition: 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 total self-giving love is commanded (and indeed only possible) to God alone (Lk. 10:27), whereas man is commanded to love his neighbor to a lesser degree, and where conjugal relations are concerned, with modesty and moderation.¹⁷⁵ (cf. *The Roman*

¹⁷⁵ Moderation in the area of sexuality is equivalent to chastity; modesty is a virtue complementary to it (see ch. 1).

Catechism on the Use of Marriage) Indeed to love one's neighbor with a total love would be idolatry.¹⁷⁶

2. Redemption of the Body

In the Theology of the Body, at least as it is presented by Mr. West, grace enables men and women to live in the mutual and sincere gift of self, (cf. Papal Discourse Jan. 30th 1980, West, pg. 42) just as in the beginning man and woman were infused with grace. Through this grace, the Holy Spirit impregnates our sexual desires “with everything that is noble and beautiful,” and with “the supreme value which is love.” (Papal Discourse Oct. 29th 1980, West, pg. 43–44) Similarly purity “lets us perceive the human body—ours and our neighbor's—as a temple of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of the divine beauty.” (the new catechism 2519, West, pg. 47). There is a suggestion here that grace (albeit in conjunction with mortification, West, pg. 47) enables man to regain the state of his first parents.¹⁷⁷ And yet their state, that of elevated nature,

¹⁷⁶ At the beginning of this treatment it will be useful briefly to distinguish three basic forms of love which have been enumerated in detail in ch. 2. 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 that is elevated by supernatural grace. In the light of these distinctions, the act of conjugal union in its ideal form is to be understood 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.

¹⁷⁷ In this connection we refer to Pope John Paul II's concept of original innocence expressed in the address of Sept. 26, 1979, by which he perhaps intends to justify the possibility of a return to the state of our first parents, even if this concept lacks clarity. The Pope speaks of this real innocence of man as his original and fundamental state, as a dimension of his being created in the image of God. He says in addition that: “These situations (original innocence and original sin) have a specific dimension in man, in his inner self, in his knowledge, conscience, choice, and decision;” and that they are linked, for the state of sin that is part of historical man, plunges its roots, in every man without exception, in his own theological prehistory which is the state of original innocence. At another point he describes original sin as a state whereby man has lost his primitive innocence, and in the

has been irremediably lost by original sin, and moreover it differs from our state, that of fallen nature, not only in regard to grace, but also in regard to concupiscence, that is to say the dominion of the passions over the reason, which is one of the evils consequent on the fall to which all humankind is subject (with the exception, of course, of the Blessed Virgin Mary. See ch. 2 of the present book). The Theology of the Body, intent on presenting the positive side of conjugal love, largely neglects concupiscence,¹⁷⁸ hence giving an incomplete and unrealistic picture of this love. The Church, by contrast, had always recognized and taken seriously this objective disorder in human nature, and has indeed defined the third finality of marriage as the remedy of concupiscence.¹⁷⁹

3. The Nuptial Meaning of the Body

According to the Theology of the Body, the nuptial meaning of the body is the body's "capacity of expressing love: that love precisely in which the person becomes a gift..." (Papal Discourse Jan.16 1980, West, pg. 29). In other words the nuptial meaning of the body is the fact that it expresses total self-giving love. The Pope continues: "... and—by means of this gift—fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence." At another point in the same discourse he describes the nuptial meaning of the body as

address of Sept. 12, 1979 he says that the first account of man's creation is of a theological nature. This doctrine is unclear *inter alia* because it oscillates between a supernatural and a natural concept of original innocence. This concept has a supernatural color in so far as original innocence is presented as a property that man acquires in the theological account of creation, and that man loses by the fall. It has a natural color in so far as it derives from creation (in the traditional, Catholic understanding of creation), and in so far as it is presented as persisting as a state in man, indeed in all men.

¹⁷⁸ One of the criticisms of Mr. West's account made by Dr. Alice von Hildebrandt in her article comparing this account with her husband's work in the field, is that he underestimates the effects of original sin on the human condition.

¹⁷⁹ In fact, since it is the virtue of chastity that combats (carnal) concupiscence, those who pursue this virtue perfectly (through the vow of perfect chastity) resemble our first parents prior to the fall more closely than spouses.

“the fundamental element of human existence in the world.”¹⁸⁰ In a later discourse (April 28th 1982, West, pg. 74) he adds: “On the basis of the same nuptial meaning of (the) body...there can be formed the love that commits man to marriage for the whole duration of his life, but there can be formed also the love that amounts to a life of continence ‘for the sake of the Kingdom.’” Moreover, those who rise to eternal life will experience the absolute and eternal nuptial meaning of the glorified body in union with God himself (March 24, 1982, West, pg. 61.)

In reply, according to the natural law, the meaning of the body in the domain of sexuality is different from that which the Pope proposes, for according to the natural law (see the beginning of ch. 4), all that one can say of the human body in this domain is that 1) the sexual differentiation of man and woman is oriented towards sexual union; and 2) this sexual union has as its natural outcome the procreation of children.

In regard to the first fact, on the level of the body, that is to say on the purely natural level, the act of union is characterized not by giving, but rather by taking, by taking pleasure, as we noted above. In regard to the second fact, we recall that the Theology of the Body, like the personalism of which it is a part, with its insistence on the subjective realm, on the secondary and intermediate end of sexuality and marriage, which is love, neglects the objective realm; the primary and final end of sexuality and marriage, which is procreation.

As for the Pope’s assertion that the nuptial meaning of the body forms the basis both for marriage and for a life of perfect chastity, it must be said that if, as we have denied, the body expressed the orientation towards total self-giving love, it would not be on the basis of this fact about the body that man undertook a life of perfect chastity, but on the basis of the total self-giving love that it expressed; and that the life of perfect chastity does not involve a love characterized by the body, but rather by the renunciation of such a love.

¹⁸⁰ In a similar vein the Pope states that the Theology of the Body is... “essential and valid for the understanding of man in general: for the fundamental problem of understanding him and for the self-comprehension of his being in the world.” (Dec.15, 1982, West, pg. 2.)

As for the Pope's assertion that the nuptial meaning of the body will be experienced in Heaven, we recall that the conjugal union is a sign of Christ's union with his Church in virtue of the intimacy, benevolence, and holiness of marital love, and not in virtue of bodily union; indeed since the act of conjugal union is ordered towards procreation, it exists only for this world and not for the other, for which reason "in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married, but they will be as the angels of God in Heaven." (Mt. 22:30.)

Finally, the suggestion that the Theology of the Body in general, or the nuptial meaning of the body in particular, somehow reveals or constitutes the meaning of life, we reply as we have done in regard to perfect chastity above, that, even if, as we have denied, the body expressed an orientation towards total self-giving love, what reveals or constitutes the meaning of life is not the Theology of the Body, the nuptial meaning of the body, or indeed anything essentially connected to the body, but rather total self-giving love itself.

4. The Vocation to Marriage or Virginity/Celibacy

In *Familiaris Consortio 11* (West, pg. 65) the Pope writes: "Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person, in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy." The Pope again has total self-giving love in mind, here as the constitutive feature both of marriage and of virginity/celibacy. We observe that he does not specify here, as he does elsewhere, that this virginity/celibacy is for the Kingdom of Heaven, therefore amounting to the consecrated life. This omission opens his statement to a naturalizing interpretation.

In commentary, whereas the love of spouses cannot be termed total self-giving love, the love for God on the part of those who lead the consecrated life can be so termed, because it constitutes a love with undivided heart (1Cor. 7:33 as expounded by Pope Pius XII in *Sacra Virginitas* 15, 20, 24, 30–1. See ch. 4 of the present book). As far as vocation is concerned, the concept of vocation to marriage as an alternative to the vocation to the consecrated life is a further instance of naturalization, or, more fully, of the confusion between the natural and supernatural orders, for it involves placing something purely natural on the same level as something purely supernatural. We have analyzed this tendency

at the end of ch. 4, where we pointed out that vocation in the traditional, in the most obvious, and also in the deepest, sense of the term signifies: 1) a call, 2) from a person without, 3) *id est*: immediately from God, 4) in order absolutely to transcend the possibilities of human nature; whereas the propensity towards marriage is 1) an instinct, 2) that originates within human nature, 3) and therefore only mediately from God, 4) in order to realize a potential of that same human nature.

We may conclude with the following question: if both states of life involved total self-giving love and both were the object of vocation, in what sense would the life of virginity or celibacy be better and more blessed than the married life, as the Council of Trent dogmatically declares?¹⁸¹

III Conjugal Love Considered in Relation to God

Pope John Paul II relates the act of conjugal love to God in two ways: first to God's love for himself within the Most Blessed Trinity, and secondly to Christ's love for the Church.

A. Conjugal Love in Relation to the Most Blessed Trinity

The Pope states that God's mystery of love "becomes a visible reality through the union of the first man and woman." (Discourse Oct. 13, 1982, West, pg. 89). Mr. West, in his exposition of the Pope's theory, asserts that "marital union is meant to be an icon in some way of the inner life of the Trinity." (West pg. 25), and explains that "becoming one flesh" therefore refers not only to the joining of two bodies (as amongst animals), but is "a 'sacramental' expression which corresponds to the communion of persons." (Discourse June 25, 1980, West, pg. 25); and man images God "not only through his humanity, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning." (Nov. 14, 1979, West, pg. 25).

Here we have the theory, then, that the act of conjugal love is the expression, or sacramental sign, of the inner Trinitarian divine love. Now to say that one thing is the expression or the sacramental sign of another implies at least that: 1) it must be connected to

¹⁸¹ *"Si quis dixerit...non esse melius ac beatius manere in virginitate aut caelibatu quam iungi matrimonio...Anathema sit."* (S. 24 Can.10)

that other thing by a relation of direct causation, and 2) it must manifest that other thing. However this is not the case for the act of conjugal love, for 1) this act is not directly caused by the Holy Trinity, in the sense that there is an intervention of free human agency between the potency and the act; and 2) the act in question does not manifest inner Trinitarian love because (as we shall proceed to argue) it is too dissimilar to it.

The act of conjugal love is too unlike the inner Trinitarian divine love to be an expression of it, for, unlike divine love, a) the former love is a love between two human persons (rather than a love between two divine persons); b) the act does not necessarily participate in the love of God for himself, for one or both of the spouses may not be in the state of grace;¹⁸² c) the act of conjugal love is not an act of total self-giving love; d) the act is marred by concupiscence; e) the act is a means to an end, namely to procreation in this world.

Far from looking to the love between humans for the expression of inner Trinitarian love, the Church points us for this end to the Word of God, who is the expression of the Father: 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15), for as St. John says (1:18): "No man has seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." In short, all we can know about the inner Trinitarian love, the love between Father and Son, is what we can learn from the doctrine and the works of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Church's Tradition, the form of love on the part of man that comes the closest to the inner trinitarian love is man's love for God in the state of grace: that is to say charity, the perfection of which is sanctity. For it is by this love of charity for God that man imitates God's love for himself (just as by faith he imitates God's knowledge of himself. *Summa* I q.93 a.4 cf. the discussion of the natural and supernatural dignity of man in ch. 2 above). Indeed it is by reference to this form of love that the

¹⁸² It is true that this act of human love, if it is performed in the state of grace, also constitutes an act of charity, and hence also constitutes a certain imitation and participation in divine love; and yet the act of conjugal love is a radically sensible form of love, and is therefore characterized rather by this form of love rather than by charity. For this reason the act of conjugal love cannot, even in this case, be said to be an expression of divine love.

Fathers of the Church interpret the biblical phrase that “man is made in the...likeness of God.”

We conclude this section by comparing Pope John Paul II’s view of that love by which man imitates God’s love for himself with the traditional view, in other words by comparing his view of the act of conjugal love with the traditional view of charity.

The Pope presents the body as an image of God both in itself and in the relation of communion: it is a ‘sacrament,’¹⁸³ “capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine.” (Feb.20 1980, West, pg. 5); moreover “man becomes the image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion.” (Nov. 14, 1979, West, pg. 25). The Catholic tradition, by contrast, understands the soul as the image of God, both in itself and in the relation of communion: in the *Penny Catechism* (Charlotte: TAN Books 1982, ch. 1 q. 4) we read: “Is this likeness to God in your body or in your soul? This likeness to God is chiefly in my soul;” in the major catechism of St. Pius X (q. 55) we read: “Why do we say that man was created in the image and likeness of God? We say that man was made in the image and likeness of God, because the human soul is spiritual and rational, free in its workings, capable of knowing and loving God and of enjoying him forever: perfections which reflect in us a ray of the infinite greatness of the Lord.”

The former love is presented (erroneously, as we have argued) as total self-giving love; the latter love, in its highest form, that is as the perfection of charity which is sanctity, may in fact be described as such.

The former love is presented (again erroneously, as we have argued) as an expression of the inner trinitarian love; the latter love is understood (not as an expression, but) as an imitation and participation of that love.

If conjugal love is not the expression or sacramental sign of divine love, how is it related to it? According to Catholic Tradition, things are related to God in proportion to their imitation of him: the angels and men are related to him as his image and likeness;

¹⁸³ Both the term ‘sacrament’ for the body, as the term ‘Theology of the Body’ which denotes the theory which attributes sacramentality to the body, exemplify the tendency to confuse the natural and supernatural orders.

while the rest of creation is related to him as his vestige. Conjugal love, as we have said above, is characterized by the fact that it is a radically sensible form of love, which is only called 'love' by analogy with rational love. As such it can only be said to relate to the inner Trinitarian love in a remote manner, as a vestige of that love.

B. Conjugal Love in Relation to Christ and His Church

The Pope compares the union between Christ and his Church on one hand and conjugal love on the other on various different counts.

1. The Mutual Subjection of the Spouses

In his commentary on Eph. 5:21–2 that husbands and wives “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” and that “women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord,” the Pope asserts that mutual subjection means “a reciprocal donation of self, that the husband is simultaneously subject to the wife,” (Aug. 11 1982), and that this reverence “is none other than a spiritually mature form” of the mutual attraction of the sexes. (July 4th 1984, West, pg. 81).

In reply, the first verse may be understood in two distinct senses: first in relation to the conjugal act and second in relation to conjugal love. In the first sense it refers to the equal right of each spouse to the conjugal act; in the second sense it refers to conjugal love in general, the mutual assistance of the spouses—as the second finality of marriage. That there is a second sense here is confirmed by a similar sentiment expressed in Romans 12:10: *honore invicem servientes*: with honor serving each other.

The second verse refers to the wife's subjection to her husband in everything other than the marriage debt. To understand the nature of this subjection, we refer to St. Thomas who recalls (in *Summa* I q.96 a.4) that every society needs some form of authority in order to direct the activities of that society to its common good. And indeed Christian authority is not imperious or egoist but involves service and devotion in the example of the Son of man, who came not to be served but to serve (Mt. 20:25–8). As for the reverence for Christ, it expresses the spirit which should move the spouses to submit themselves to each other, a spirit far removed from servility.

In synthesis, the Pope passes over in silence the traditional interpretation of these Pauline verses concerning:

- i) the equal right of the spouses to the conjugal act;
- ii) the power of each over the other's body;
- iii) their mutual assistance;
- iv) the fact that the man is the head of the wife and the family.

Instead he introduces new doctrines concerning mutual sexual attraction, mutual self-gift, and mutual subjection.

His silence concerning (iv) in particular corresponds to that egalitarian vision of the spouses that we have referred to above in our discussion of the respective passages in *Familiaris Consortio*.

2. The Union in One Flesh

We turn now to the Pope's interpretation of the union 'in one flesh' (Eph. 5:31, Gen. 2:24, Mt. 19:5). He understands this phrase to refer to the act of sexual union as a sign of Christ's union with his Church. In his exposition, Mr. West writes: "Pure men and women...realize that the call to union inscribed in their sexuality is a great mystery that proclaims the union with Christ and his Church."

In commentary, we observe first that this interpretation is a further example of the confusion of the natural and supernatural orders: a purely natural phenomenon is taken as a sign of something purely supernatural; and second that the Council of Trent interprets the union in one flesh not as the act of sexual love, but as the unity which is the first property of marriage, just as it interprets the words spoken by Our Lord: (in the following verse in Mt. 19:6) "what God has joined together, may no man put asunder," as the indissolubility which is the second property of marriage. (Trent s. 24)

3. The Language of *Agape*

Continuing to supernaturalize sexual, or carnal love, The Pope calls it: "the language of *agape*," and asserts that it proclaims the love of Christ and the Church "by means of gestures and reactions, by means of the whole dynamism...of tension and

enjoyment.” (Aug. 22, 1984, West, pg. 91) He lists four points of comparison between the two forms of love: both forms are free, total, faithful, and fruitful.

In reply, all types of love are free by their very nature; all love which has man as its object is fruitful (as we have argued in ch. 2 in the section on the nature of love); it is true that both forms of love are faithful; Christ’s love for his Church is total, whereas we have argued that conjugal love is not so.

The Roman Catechism compares Christ’s love for his Church not so much with the act of conjugal love as with conjugal love in general: It compares Christ’s most intimate union with the Church, his immense benevolence towards us, and the divinity of the mystery with the fact that the marital union is the most intimate bond that exists between humans, that no love is stronger than it, and that this union is holy. In regard to the act of conjugal union in particular, *The Roman Catechism*, in its discussion of the second blessing of marriage, which is fidelity, speaks of a “special, holy, pure love...a love which is immense.” At the end of the section on Matrimony, it specifies that this love should be both moderate and modest.

4. The Most Profound Sign of *Agape*

“Nowhere do spouses signify God’s love more profoundly than when they become ‘one flesh’” explains Mr. West (on pg. 104), and adds later: “John Paul says that the essential element for marriage as a sacrament is the language of the body spoken in truth. This is how spouses ‘constitute’ the sacramental sign of marriage.” (Jan. 12, 1983)

Leaving aside the linguistic metaphor, we may reply that since God’s love is the love of charity, the spouses come closest to this love in their love of charity. The act of conjugal love can be an act of charity (as we have said above), but, when so, is an act characterized less by its charity than by its sensuality: an act characterized less as the love of charity than as sensible love. Clearly the greater the charity of one spouse to the other, the closer he comes to God’s charity. It follows, ironically, that if a spouse on a given occasion relinquishes his conjugal rights from motives of charity towards the other, then he will have come closer to God’s love than if he had made use of them.

In general, the greater the suffering that one person undergoes for another, the greater is his charity. This is ultimately true of the love of Christ for his Church, and so is also true of spousal love. In this context Jolivet (as quoted in ch. 4 above) speaks of “the hardest sacrifices demanded by faithfulness to duty.”

As for the act of conjugal union, it is considered in Tradition less as the paradigm of love than as a compensation for love. *The Catechism of Trent* states that the three goods or blessings of marriage: children, fidelity, and the sacrament, compensate for the ‘tribulations of the flesh’ referred to by St. Paul (1Cor.7:28). St. Thomas comments (in *Suppl. Q. 49*) that the blessing of fidelity compensates for the *sollicitudo molesta* of the spouses for each other and in regard to the child.

Conclusion

In fine, we see clearly that the Theology of the Body is a personalist, phenomenological system. As such it is concerned with the subjective realm, such as the person and love, and neglects the objective realm, be it Catholic dogma (as with the doctrine that the primary end of sexuality and marriage is procreation or as with the distinction between the natural and supernatural orders), or be it the perennial or scholastic theology, philosophy, or morality (as with the distinctions between the different forms of love). The outcome is a shift from the virtue of love to the passion of love, from supernatural love to natural love, and in the final analysis from sanctity to sexuality.

In this lack of catholicity, the Theology of the Body, although presented as the praise of Catholic conjugal love, becomes instead a paean to *Eros*,¹⁸⁴ with greater resonance for the world than for the Church. As such it certainly constitutes one of the more remarkable fruits of the much vaunted *rapprochement* or *aggiornamento* between the Church and the World.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ If one did not know that it was composed by the Pope himself, one might perhaps be excused for ascribing it to a personalist philosopher influenced by Christianity, such as Max Scheler.

¹⁸⁵ See ch. 6 of the present book. There we illustrate how sexual love is the main theme hymned by the world—although characteristically in the form of fornication.

Appendix B

Limbo Called Into Question

At the end of the second chapter we briefly expounded the Church's doctrine on Limbo. How, if at all, has this doctrine been affected by the document of the International Theological Commission issued in early 2007 entitled: *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Dying without Baptism?* The document was heralded by certain organs of the press as the abolition of limbo,¹⁸⁶ although the document does not in fact claim to be more than a work of speculative theology, (cf. Preface) and the Pope did no more than approve its publication. (cf. Preliminary Note) Its status should therefore be viewed rather as that of a theological opinion—which cannot of itself be said to supersede the traditional doctrine.

We proceed briefly to expound and evaluate this theological document.

Its guiding principle (leaving aside secondary arguments for the salvation of infants of Christian parentage, or those killed by abortion) seems to be that of God's desire for universal salvation, as expressed in the *dictum* of St. Paul (1Tim. 2:4, referred to in s. 4 of the document): "God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." The Commission seeks to apply this principle to the unborn, just as (according to the Commission) the Church has applied it in recent times to non-Catholics. In this regard it quotes Bl. Pius IX in his *Singulari quadam* (1854 s. 89) who, after declaring that the Catholic Church is "the sole ark of salvation," adds: "It may be supposed with certainty that those who suffer from ignorance of the true religion, if this ignorance is invincible,¹⁸⁷ are

¹⁸⁶ E.g. the *Corriere della Sera* that announced on May 3rd 2007: "11 Papa abolisce il Limbo".

¹⁸⁷ Editor's Note: For a substantive treatment of this question see *Catholicity and Baptism*, Loreto Publications 2012.

not guilty in the eyes of the Lord.” (s. 58 of the document) In a similar vein the Commission quotes from *Lumen Gentium* (13 in s. 60): “The Church is the universal sacrament of salvation...all men are called to this Catholic unity...in different ways to it belong or are related all the Catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and finally all mankind called by God’s grace to salvation.”

The Commission refers to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, that already envisages the possibility of the salvation of unbaptized children as in No. 1261 referring to Mk. 10:4: “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not.”

In the light of such declarations, the Commission sees its opinion as a development of Catholic doctrine, consonant, moreover, with liturgical changes—as in the new Funeral Mass for a Child who died before Baptism (s. 5)—and the *sensus fidelium*.

The basic thrust of the document is to give priority to the principle of universal salvation over what the Church has always taught as the necessary means of salvation, namely faith and baptism. This it does effectively by recourse to two further principles: that of the ‘hierarchy of truths’ as delineated in the Second Vatican Council (s. 7 of the document), and that enunciated by St. Thomas, which states that God in his omnipotence is able to produce the effects of a sacrament without the sacrament itself (*Summa* I-II, 64.7 etc. referred to in s. 82).

In evaluation of this document it should first be said that *prima facie* it runs counter to the faith, for it is an infallible dogma of the Church, in other words *de Fide*, that baptism is necessary for salvation (even if the document claims not to reject such dogmas, but only ‘interpret’ them (s. 7). The Council of Trent states (Session VII canon 5): *Si quis dixerit baptismum liberum esse, hoc est non necessarium ad salutem, Anathema Sit*: “If anyone were to say that baptism is free, that is not necessary for salvation, let him be Anathema.” This dogma is expressed in Jn. 3:5 in the Lord’s words to Nicodemus: “Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God;” and in Mk. 16:16 in the words: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned.”

Secondly, the document runs counter to the constant teaching of the Church on the fate of unbaptized infants (even if not all

theologians share the opinion of Cardinal Charles Journet and Fr. Adolphe Tanqueray that this teaching is *de Fide*—see Cardinal Journet’s *La volonté divine salvifique sur les petits enfants* (Paris: Desclée de Broué, 1958), and Fr. Tanqueray’s *De Fide, de Deo uno et trino, de Deo Créante et élevant* (Paris: Desclée de Broué, 1926, N. 913). The constant teaching of the Church may be exemplified in the following declarations: Innocent I states “that infants may be given the prize of eternal life even without the grace of baptism is great foolishness.” (Synod of Milevi AD 417); Innocent III writes in the letter *Maiores Ecclesiae causas* about the baptism of infants (AD 1207), and states that this sacrament secures entry into the Kingdom of Heaven, remitting original sin, the punishment of which is the deprivation of the beatific vision; the Council of Lyon (1264 session IV, repeated by Pope John XXII in the letter *Nequaquam sine dolore* and in the Council of Florence *Laetentur Caeli* of 1439) states that “the souls of those who die in mortal sin, or solely original sin, descend immediately into Hell, even if they are punished with different pains;” the Council of Trent declares that “Baptism is necessary for children to attain eternal life.”

In more recent times St. Pius X declares in his catechism (No. 100) that children dying without baptism go to Limbo. Pope Pius XII states in *Humani Generis* of 1952, s. 42, that “The state of grace at the moment of death is absolutely necessary for salvation.” He adds that “An act of love may suffice for an adult to attain sanctifying grace and make up for the lack of baptism, but for an unborn or newly-born child this path is not open.” In his *Allocution to the Midwives* (1951) he repeats that “there is no other way to communicate this (supernatural) life to the child who does not already have the use of reason.”

Thirdly, the document runs counter to the common patristic and theological tradition, culminating in the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas. He presents the beatitude of unbaptized children as a union of the intellect and the will with God in the enjoyment of all natural goods, a beatitude unmarred by the deprivation of the beatific vision of which they can have no knowledge. (*Quaest. Disput. de Malo* 5)

The Commission rather chooses to follow the minority position espoused by thinkers such as Pelagius, Origen, Cajetan, and Schell. The denial of Limbo, for Pelagius, was the consequence of his denial

of original sin; for Origen it was the consequence of his heresy of universal salvation; Cajetan's theories concerning Limbo were expunged from his works by St. Pius V, and Schell's were put on the index by St. Pius X.

Fourthly, the speculative theology contained in the document is at the least questionable. As far as the constant tradition of the Church is concerned, the principle of God's universal salvific will (as well as the principles of the hierarchy of truths and that of extra-sacramental salvation) have never before been applied to unbaptized infants.

St. Thomas applies the principle to non-Catholics, but not in such a way as to deny the necessity of faith or baptism, let alone to propose the possibility of a purely natural means of salvation. For he argues that a non-Catholic living in invincible ignorance who follows his conscience will be saved, though not immediately but mediately: by being brought by God to faith and baptism—at least to baptism by desire (*de Veritate* 14.11). The quotations from Bl. Pius IX and *Lumen Gentium* must be understood in this light.¹⁸⁸

The *prima facie* sense of the texts from *Lumen Gentium*, from the new catechism, and from the Funeral Mass for an unbaptized infant, that men may be saved without faith or baptism—whether by supernatural or natural means—cannot, in the light of the brief synthesis offered above, be described as a development of Catholic, but rather of non-catholic, doctrine (see the discussion of modern doctrines in the Magisterium in ch. 3). The term *sensus fidelium* in this connection is a misnomer.

Cardinal Journet notes that exceptions to a general law cannot be presumed, but must be demonstrated (in the article *Baptême* in *Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique*; (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1908) *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, (Madrid: Alcaná Libros, 1962) pg. 150). We conclude that the Commission has not demonstrated its case.

In fact the application of God's universal salvific will to all men regardless of Church teaching, whether dogmatic or simply traditional, manifests in the final analysis a form of naturalism, which involves ignorance of, or disregard for, the faith. In relation to the nature of Limbo in particular, it manifests, at least partially,

¹⁸⁸ Once again, for a substantive treatment of this question see *Catholicity and Baptism*, Loreto Publications 2012.

the attitude that Limbo is a destiny both unhappy and unjust. The Commission describes it (at least once) as “the exclusion from eternal beatitude” (s. 2), whereas (according at least to Tradition and to St. Thomas Aquinas) it does indeed consist of eternal beatitude (albeit of the natural order), where nothing due to such persons is lacking from this beatitude.

We conclude this section with an argument of speculative theology at variance with the position of the Commission. The salvation of all unbaptized infants would detract from the excellence of the economy of salvation, as it has been revealed to us. For to this excellence belongs the excellence of the sacramental order, where the sacred humanity of Christ encounters the human person at once on the spiritual and physical levels, and in the case of baptism, moreover, in a sacrament received, and thereby hallowed, by Christ himself. If, however, all unbaptized infants attain the beatific vision, then an important proportion of the elect, that is to say all infants who will have died between conception and the use of reason, whether by natural or violent means, whether to Christian or to non-Christian parents, and from the beginning to the end of time, will have been saved without partaking in the excellence of the sacramental order.

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