

Los Pequeños Pepper

Newsletter of Los Pequeños de Cristo
February 2011 Volume 13, Number 2

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The Catholic Church in the Obama Era

By Charles E. Rice

....[I]t is a time of great opportunity for us, as Catholics, to be in the United States. That opportunity arises from the economic, political, and cultural meltdown that is all around us. President Obama, elected with 54% of the Catholic vote, is substituting for the free economy and limited government a centralized command system along Marxist lines of potentially unlimited power without regard to the Constitution and the will of the American people. At last count, Obama has appointed at least 30 “czars” who claim the right to rule large portions of the economy by decree.

The Obama Regime has nationalized major parts of the private sector; imposed ruinous taxation and debt; expended treasure and lives on dubious, if not aimless, wars; used the servile media to tailor the information available to the public; promoted abortion at home and abroad; abdicated its duty to defend the border against illegal entry; etc., etc. The regime is one vote short of iron control of the Supreme Court. That would lead, among other things, to a judicial mandate that sodomite unions be recognized as marriages.

It is, unfortunately, credible to say that Catholics played a major role in putting the Obama Regime in power. Highly visible Catholic academics, Catholic politicians who obey their own magisterium, and Catholic clerics and publicists paved the way for Catholic voters and others to fall for “hope and change.”

Sadly, there is precedent. For a comparable example of the rapid concentration of executive power by a legally installed regime, we have to look to Germany in 1933. Adolf Hitler was named chancellor on January 30. He consolidated his power over the next few weeks. The decisive event was the Reichstag’s approval of the Enabling Act on March 23, 1933, by which it ceded full and irrevocable powers to Hitler. That was the point of no return. The Enabling Act received the needed two-thirds vote only because it was supported by the Catholic party, the Centre Party. Obamacare, enacted with the decisive support of Catholic members of Congress, is the Enabling Act of our time in the wide-ranging control it cedes to government over the lives of the people, including the takeover of student aid. Why are student loans in the health care bill? The common denominator is control. No student can now get a federally guaranteed educational loan without the consent of a federal bureaucrat. This can make political loyalty a test for educational advancement, as it was in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

Obamacare, which took over one-sixth of the American economy, not only funds elective abortion and endangers the elderly and conscience rights. It was enacted by a display of bribery, coercion, and deception that was as brazen as it was unprecedented. If the government pays for your health care, it can dictate how you live, what you eat, etc., so as to reduce those costs. Such a concentration of power violates the principle of subsidiarity under which decisions on such matters ought to be made by the people and local governments, rather than by federal bureaucrats. Congress approved Obamacare, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), in reliance on an executive order by the President that was fraudulently claimed to prevent federal funding of elective abortion. Executive orders cannot overrule an act of Congress and Obama’s “antiabortion” executive order even said that it “shall be implemented consistent with applicable law.”

After its enactment, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) described Obamacare as “an important step toward ensuring access to health coverage for all Americans” but criticized it as “profoundly flawed in its treatment of abortion, conscience rights, and fairness to immigrants.” But the USCCB had played the role of an enabler here, preserving its objections on abortion, conscience, euthanasia, and immigrants while cloaking that disastrous bill, which very few in Congress had actually read, in misleading platitudes about health care for all, etc. The USCCB abysmally failed to condemn Obamacare for its violation of subsidiarity. Some bishops, to their credit, did so, raising the obvious problems of centralization, control, and costs.

....Relativistic secularism is the de facto official religion of the United States and other Western nations. Thirteen days after 9/11, in 2001, Pope John Paul II, in Kazakhstan, warned the leaders of that Islamic republic against a “slavish conformity” to Western culture which is in a “deepening human, spiritual, and moral impoverishment” caused by “the fatal attempt to secure the good of humanity by eliminating God, the Supreme Good.”

The answer to secularism and relativism is truth. But Truth, with a capital T, is a person, Jesus Christ, who is not some lawyer or community organizer. He is God. The Catholic faith is not merely a set of doctrines. It is a lived encounter with Christ who, as Pope Paul VI put it, “lives in the Church, and through her teaches, governs, and sanctifies.” Through the grace of God, we, as Catholics, have that Truth that America needs. But we have

failed to deliver it. Among the reasons for that failure is the failure of the American Catholic Church, over the past five decades, to transmit that truth to the young.

With John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the Church has seen a rebirth of faith among young people. But their catechetical training has been pathetic, focused more on banners and collages than on content. The bishops are making progress in trying to fix that problem. But: “One cannot escape the fact,” said John Paul II in 2002, “that more than in any other historical period, there is a breakdown in the process of handing on moral and religious values between generations.”

This is no time for recriminations. Rather, the cultural meltdown offers us an opportunity to fix that breakdown by telling the American people, including Catholics, the truth about the unmentionable issue that caused that culture to unravel. That issue is contraception.

In American culture, the intentional infliction of death upon the innocent is widely seen as an optional problem-solving technique. The shootings at Columbine High School are no longer unique. Legalized abortion is a prime example of disposal of the innocent as a solution to a problem. So is euthanasia. The execution of Terri Schiavo is replicated every day, without notice, whenever the parents and caregivers agree that the incompetent patient would prefer what the Nazis used to call “a merciful release.”

The intentional killing of the innocent is foremost among the five issues generally described as nonnegotiable in terms of Catholic principle. Those issues are: abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem-cell research, human cloning, and same-sex marriage. All five of those “nonnegotiable” evils are predictable results of the dominance of the contraceptive ethic. When an objective history of this period is written, the practical abandonment by the American Catholic Church of the theretofore unbroken Christian teaching on contraception will be seen as not only astonishing and craven but also frivolous.

....Why is contraception wrong? First, it breaks, in the words of Pope Paul VI, “the . . . connection — which is willed by God and which man cannot lawfully break on his own initiative — between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive and the procreative.” Second, by so changing the nature of the conjugal act, the man and woman make themselves the arbiters of whether and when life shall begin. They confer on themselves, as Pope John Paul II put it, “a power which belongs solely to God: the power to decide, in a final analysis, the coming into existence of a human person.” And, third, in contraception, instead of what John Paul II called the “total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife,” there is a withholding: I give you myself except my fertility, I will accept you only if you are altered to cancel your fertility.

In his 1994 *Letter to Families*, John Paul II explained that God, who is love, “wills” that each human person ought to come into existence through a loving act of self-gift between spouses united in a “communion of persons” modeled on the self-giving relation of the persons of the Trinity. Contraception also implies that there is such a thing as a human life not worth living — the life of the child whose existence the contraceptors choose to prevent.

If man makes himself the arbiter of whether and when life shall begin, he will make himself the arbiter of when it shall end as in abortion, euthanasia, etc. John Paul II, in *Evangelium Vitae*, described abortion and contraception as “fruits of the same tree.” “[T]he pro-abortion culture,” he said, “is especially strong . . . where the Church’s teaching on contraception is rejected.” The contraceptive society needs abortion as a backup. Nor can it say that homosexual activity is wrong without condemning its own premise that man is the arbiter of whether and when sex will have any relation to procreation.

As Paul VI predicted, the acceptance of contraception puts “a dangerous weapon . . . in the hands of . . . public authorities” to reduce births among minorities. Promiscuity, divorce, and cloning also follow from the contraceptive ethic. The growth of pornography, too, validates Paul VI’s warning that contraception would cause women to be viewed as objects. “Contraception,” said John Paul II, “is so profoundly unlawful as never to be, for any reason, justified. To think or to say the contrary is equal to maintaining that in human life situations may arise in which it is lawful not to recognize God as God.”

The decisive legal issue in the United States will be same-sex marriage. Courts in several states have mandated recognition of same-sex unions as marriages. Those rulings appear to be consistent with the Supreme Court’s 2003 decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*. In striking down a Texas criminalization of consensual sodomy, the court effectively ruled out morality as an independent basis for law.

.... In the *Wall Street Journal* in 2004, Pastor Donald Sensing, of Trinity United Methodist Church in Franklin, Tenn., said the general acceptance of the Pill made same-sex marriage inevitable: “Opponents of legalized same-sex marriage say they’re trying to protect a beleaguered institution, but they’re a little late. The walls of traditional marriage were breached 40 years ago; what we are witnessing now is the storming of the last bastion. . . . Sex, child-bearing, and marriage now have no necessary connection to one another, because the biological connection between sex and childbearing is controllable. The fundamental basis for marriage has thus been technologically obvi-

ated. . . . There's little left to save." Pastor Sensing is right. Unfortunately, Catholics practice contraception at the same rate as everyone else. One reason is that they have not been adequately informed. Since Pope Paul VI issued *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, the American Catholic Church has failed in its duty to inform the faithful on the prophetic teaching of that encyclical and similar teachings of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. One reason for the closure or consolidation of many Catholic schools and parishes is precisely that failure of the bishops and priests to educate their people as to the evil of contraception and the entire positive teaching of the Church on marriage and the transmission of life. When, if ever, have you heard a homily in your parish church on that subject? Why do they not teach the full truth?

In his recent address to Human Life International in Rome, Archbishop (and Cardinal Designate) Raymond Burke, Prefect of the Apostolic Signatura, called on bishops to uphold the moral law and to be "obedient to the Magisterium." The attack on unborn life, he said, arises from "an erroneous view of human sexuality which attempts to eliminate by mechanical or chemical means the essentially procreative nature of the conjugal act. The so-called contraceptive mentality is anti-life and the manipulation of the conjugal act, as Pope Paul VI prophetically observed, has led to many forms of violence in marriage and family life." He noted the "devastation which is daily wrought on our world by the multimillion-dollar industry of pornography."

The answer, he said, is the advancement of the culture of life through the "proclamation of the truth of the conjugal union in its fullness and the correction of the contraceptive thinking which fears life, which fears procreation."

.... "The effective separation of sex from procreation," said R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2005, "may be one of the most important defining marks of our age — and one of the most ominous. This awareness is spreading among American evangelicals and it threatens to set loose a firestorm.... A growing number of evangelicals are rethinking the issue of birth control — and facing the hard questions posed by reproductive technologies."

We need to raise *Humanae Vitae* and its truth on contraception to a new level of awareness it has never had in the United States. That teaching on contraception is a game-changer because it challenges, to borrow Dr. Codevilla's phrase, the "intellectual and moral core" of the secularist, relativist, and individualist religion of America's ruling class. The nobility of that teaching can have a surprising impact on young people. But they need to hear the entire truth. If we speak the truth, we will have an impact beyond what we know.

.... To recover, America needs the Truth, as taught by the Catholic Church. It is time for all of us, regardless of creed, to turn to the Mother of God, who is also our Mother. She leads us to her Son in whom we put our trust. At the Battle of Lepanto on October 7, 1571, Mary and her rosary sank ships and saved Christian civilization. She can take care of our problems. We have nothing to fear. We know we are on the winning side. ✠

Dr. Rice, a professor emeritus of Notre Dame Law School, delivered this address to the national meeting of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists, Holy Cross College, Notre Dame, Ind., October 22, 2010. It can be read in its entirety in the 11-4-10 issue of The Wanderer.

- i. Eliot Barculo Wheaton, *The Nazi Revolution: 1933-35* (1969), pp. 286-293; William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1959), pp. 88, 276-279.
- ii. Letter to Congress from Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, May 20, 2010.
- iii. *Humanae Vitae*, n. 12.
- iv. Discourse, September 12, 1983.
- v. *Letter to Families*, n. 8.
- vi. Discourse, September 12, 1983.
- vii. *Wall Street Journal*, Opinion Journal, March 15, 2004.
- viii. ZENIT News Agency, October 14, 2010.
- ix. Russell Shorto, "Contra-Contraception," *New York Times Magazine*, May 7, 2006, pp. 48, 50.

The Deception of Charter Schools

By Mary Thompson

Charter Schools have become the topic of the day among parents, think tanks, political candidates, school districts, states, and the Federal Department of Education. They are generally defined as publicly financed schools that are independently run and free to experiment. They are seen differently by different interests:

- 1) Frustrated parents see them as an answer to dumbed-down regular schools.
- 2) Many political conservatives see them as an option, euphemistically called “school choice,” which they think will create competition.
- 3) Constitutional conservatives see them as “taxation without representation.”
- 4) Global corporate entities and non-government organizations (NGO) see them as a vehicle to further workforce training to create a global work force to serve the ends of a global society.

Rather than addressing the specifics of charter school models, and even before discussing any facet of education, a basic premise needs to be recognized. It has become obvious to all but the very blinded to reality that government schools have become a disaster, regardless of which end of the political spectrum one finds oneself. It isn't that “schools have failed,” however, but that this failure was planned, orchestrated during at least the last half century. This deliberate educational “dumbing-down” sets the stage for restructuring what we've known as public schools.

Rand Corporation, one of the players in the process, had a name for it: “the unfreezing of the system.” Since mid 1960s and the implementation of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), federal dollars have funded this restructuring process. Elite planners at national and international levels, working with and through think tanks, NGOs, the National Education Association, and state governments lusting after federal dollars, assumed authority over state and local control of education to implement their agenda.

There's nothing secretive about this. The intent to nationalize – and eventually internationalize – education was openly displayed with the release of the Common Core Standards Initiative from the National Governors Association Center in 2009. That initiative calls for “internationally benchmarked” standards “so that ALL students are prepared to succeed in our GLOBAL economy and SOCIETY.” (Emphasis added) Therefore, every thread of government financed education must be seen in context of the total picture of national and international planning to create global citizens for an international workforce.

Nearly everyone, including concerned conservatives, parents, teachers, legislators who haven't done their homework (which includes just about everyone except the elite planners), continue to see the ever changing parade of innovations, ideas, curricula, classroom whim, etc. as separate entities to be assessed, on their own merits. However all of the above facets of education “reform” need to be examined in context of their being integral parts of a closed system of education planning originated and put into motion by national/international planners. It's been going on for decades including agreements signed between U.S. Department of Education with Soviet Union during President Reagan's Administration, and the recent agreement with China signed by Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education and former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown (US-PPC Education Agreement). (For more information, visit www.deliberatedumbingdown.com.)

An appropriate metaphor for the emerging education system might be the Banyan – a variety of fig tree that has the ability to spread out laterally by putting out aerial shoots that grow down into surrounding soil, forming additional trunks that are able to do the same and eventually form a maze of what appear to be separate entities but is, in reality, a complex, single organism, connected to its original trunk.

What does all that have to do with charter schools? Since charter schools are not autonomous private schools, but are public schools funded with public money, they must be considered as a component of the original “parent” trunk of the Education Banyan Tree.

Frustrated parents and many proponents of charter schools need to consider that charter schools are not a new idea. The idea has been around for centuries, but can be traced to the 60s and 70s “when innovative schools were established in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, [and] St. Paul.” (League of Women's Voters, “Charter School Movement,” March 2000). Keep in mind it was in the 60s when ESEA began the planned “unfreezing” of the existing traditional school systems. The Charter School Movement did not originate from parents looking for an escape from existing public schools. It originated from government planners, in collaboration with think tanks, NGOs and global corporate interests. The question not asked by charter school proponents today is: “How do charter schools fit into the Banyan Tree's original trunk and why are top level education officials such

as Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, leading the parade for charter schools unless charter schools have a role in the bigger picture to internationalize education?"

Arne Duncan, addressing a club of billionaires, was quoted as pledging "to combine your ideas with our dollars from the Federal government. What you have created is a real movement." (Trip Gabriel, "Despite Push, Success & Charter Schools is Mixed," *New York Times*, 5-1-10) NGOs and foundations play a big part in the agenda for restructured public education. Bill and Melinda Gates, for example, met with a little known gathering of selected state governors in Pennsylvania during planning of what led to the Race to the Top agenda which calls for charter schools.

Conservatives are on the bandwagon, too, frequently seeing charter schools as school choice (that is, a catalyst for creating competition). However, government is not going to create competitive entities with itself. By its very nature and its authority to tax, it restricts authentically competitive options. So parents and other proponents of charter schools must be willing to jettison the idea that the public school system is genuinely providing an escape from the schools that these very same forces have destroyed... unless charter schools fill a purpose that one can discover in the published documents laying out the plans for ALL students.

By creating a classification of schools that are exempt from the mandates and regulations for most government schools, the traditional lines of jurisdiction of ELECTED school officials are diminished. UNELECTED overseers of charter schools operate under their own authority but receive funding from taxpayers who elected the local school boards to be accountable for those tax dollars. The more charter schools, the more the concept of elected representation is weakened until local district lines can be eliminated altogether. This gradually accomplishes the transformation of local public schools (including charter schools) to state, regional, national then international – in that order – oversight. The question needs to be addressed in context of the Banyan Tree metaphor. Are the many branches touching ground to form a global umbrella controlling schools and our children's minds? Are desperate parents and conservatives not seeing the whole tree but only the shoots that may be designed to throw off the scent those who are most concerned about the dumbing-down of schools? Could those most concerned inadvertently be being used to break down the concept of elected representation responsible to an electorate?

Publicly-funded private schools are an oxymoron. Charter schools play on the idea that parents can have something resembling private schools but with government paying for it. The short-term carrot of charter schools may appear sweet until one finds that local jurisdictions are destroyed. Then the long-term goals of education reform will manifest themselves...and are already surfacing, such as the annual summit of Silicon Valley tech leaders that called for an education czar to "redo existing regulations." (Panel from Silicon Valley Leadership Group's Annual Business Climate Summit," held on 4-19-10, *San Jose Mercury* 5/16/10) So much for "independent" charter schools.

Some proponents of charter schools see them as the antidote to teacher unions – which adamantly oppose charter schools – but that is falling into the trap of promoting something because the political opposition opposes it. Unions have contributed to the "unfreezing" of the public education system but they are not the originators or the major elements of the Banyan Tree's root. If unions can't beat 'em, they will join 'em. Talk of unionizing charter schools in New York City are already beginning.

Charter schools – along with many of the "Distance Learning" cyber-schools – seem to be part of a planned transitional stage between traditional brick-and-mortar classrooms and the transformational models that will train the global workforce. Students (pre K-12) will eventually be assessed and provided a curriculum tailor-made for their assessed abilities. The curriculum will be provided via Direct Instruction, with each child sitting in front of a computer, either alone or in groups, receiving training from instructors from around the world. Remember the agreement recently signed by the Secretary of Education with China? Technology lends itself to the instant changing of information and misinformation. Who will program the cyber curriculum designed for each child or monitor the monitors?

One observer said it well. "The origin of choice in education is not grassroots America but the Department of Education and various public and private entities. They are using school choice as the catalyst to restructure the education environment." [Kathy Thomsen, "The Trojan Horse of 'Choice,'" *Idaho Observer*, April, 2010] Will charter schools empower parents? No! What government funds, government ultimately controls. There will be strings attached. Government will control both the public and charter systems, for government funds both systems.

Legislators and candidates for office who mistakenly promote charter schools as "choice" should work toward abolishing the Federal Department of Education, the tap root of the education Banyan Tree. Then its offshoots, rooted in the interest of nationalizing and internationalizing education, will be exposed for what they are. ☞

Mary Thompson is an education researcher who has been writing about public school "reform efforts" since the early 1970s.

An Examination of *JustFaith*

By Phyllis A. Sower

I had already heard a little about the *JustFaith* program and some concerns regarding it just prior to the time that two members of our parish came to me to share their concerns. One of them had enrolled in the course and brought to me the full set of materials she purchased for the course requesting that I review it. I submit herein the results of my review in a spirit of fraternal correction and concern and to assist pastors and lay persons who lack time to read all the materials; a close examination of the program by the competent ecclesiastical authority is warranted to determine the advisability of its continued use.

In short, the program is a product of liberation theology and promotes the ordination of women, recognition of homosexual marriage, the feminization of God, extreme pacifism and environmentalism, using non-Catholic and Catholic dissenters to present "Catholic Social Teaching."

The *JustFaith* program is a partnership effort of Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Charities USA and Catholic Relief Services. It is billed as a ministry of the Church, "an invitation to a rich spiritual journey into compassion," to "look more closely at the troubling issues of our times through the lens of compassion and Catholic social teaching." According to page two of the Notes to participants, week 2, the program sets out to teach the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching. However, there is little reference to the encyclicals, Catechism, conciliar documents or the *Summa Theologica* where the Church's authentic social teaching is to be found. (Nota Bene: one of my sons is taking a course on Catholic Social Teaching at a Catholic University; the curriculum consists of: *Rerum Novarum*, *Mater et Magistra*, *Quadragesimo Anno*, *Pacem in Terris*, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Popularum Progressio*, *Octogesima Adviens*, *Laborens Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, *Finitissimus Annus*, section 10 of the 5th Lateran Council, and sections of the *Summa* on Justice and Cheating/Usury).

The very opening sessions of the *JustFaith* program are problematic. For example, in week 2, the opening prayer invokes 21 "witnesses of hope," including Mohandes Gandhi—"great soul of peace," Flannery O'Connor (note: from my acquaintance with the life and writings of this great American writer, I submit that she would strenuously object to *JustFaith* and being prayed to for she was a devout Catholic), Thomas Merton (much of his later work was heterodox), Martin Luther King, Jr., Joseph Bernardin, Albert Schweitzer, concluding with, "All you holy men and women, salt and light for our world, Pray for us."

Attachment B of the same week lists discussion and dialogue goals, including search for the best "view," incorporate varied perspectives, etc. There is no reference to seeking, teaching, or understanding the truth as taught by the Church. As Pope Benedict has reiterated, "real education is not possible without the light of truth."

There are 4 books in the program: *Cloud of Witnesses* by Wallis and Hollyday, *Compassion* by Nouwen, et al, *The Challenge and Spirituality of Catholic Teaching*, by Mich, and *Amazing Grace* by Kozol. None of them has a Nihil Obstat or Imprimatur despite the pretensions of this course to present the "rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching." An examination of the content of the texts reveals significant reasons there is not and should not be an official stamp of the Church's stamp of approval on any of these books or the program.

The *Cloud of Witnesses* book is most revealing of the agenda of this program and of content contrary to the authentic social teaching of the Catholic Church. It is clearly stated that, "The articles and interviews in this book have been adapted from material originally published in *Sojourners* magazine." The author, Jim Wallis, was founder and executive director of *Sojourners*. He has written in favor of gay "marriage." The author, Joyce Hollyday, is a minister in the United Church of Christ. *Sojourners* is described as non-denominational according to its website, but includes left wing Catholic peace activists and dissenters, a Masonic veterans group, favors gay/lesbian partnerships, has a policy statement in favor of recognition and legal protection for the same, including gay "marriage," and favors ordination of women, claiming five female ordinations and female bishops. This background should constitute sufficient cause to question inclusion of the book as a source of authentic Catholic Social teaching.

In addition, out of 35 articles, only 11 appear to be about known Catholics. I say "known" because the faith of some was not identifiable. For certain, most were not Catholic at all and included a Living Waters pastor, Georgia minister, Episcopal minister, Martin Luther King, Jr., Sojourner Truth, a Presbyterian pastor, a Quaker, three Baptists, one now non-denominational former Methodist then Presbyterian, a Dutch Reformed preacher and a number of others not Catholic but whose denomination was not mentioned. Among the persons featured were a draft dodger, proponent of the ordination of women in the Episcopal Church, one pastor and his wife imprisoned for non-payment of taxes, one whose "consciousness" came from liberation theology and another who said the truth was

not the captive of any enterprise or religion.

Among the Catholics featured in the book were many known dissenters such as Father Daniel Berrigan, Sister Joan Chittister, Father Pedro Arrupe and others who criticize the Church rather than advance her authentic teachings. Some examples will suffice:

- Joan Chittister’s unabashed advancement of the ordination of women is championed. She said, “There’s either something wrong with the present theology of ministry, or there is something wrong with *the present theology of all the sacraments*. If women qualify for baptism, confirmation, salvation, and redemption, how can they be denied the sacrament of ministry?” (Emphasis added). Her arguments that women are ignored in church language and for the feminization of God are given ample play in the text.
- Jesuit superior general Pedro Arrupe openly rejected *Humanae Vitae* and his “restructuring” of the Jesuits did much harm to the Order; the circumstances of his removal are unclear to me, but Pope John Paul II passed over Arrupe’s designated successor for another.
- Father Miguel D’Escoto is not permitted to celebrate the Eucharist in public or private
- Father Elias Chacour, a Catholic priest and pacifist in Israel, attacked the wealth of the Church and described his despair of the institutional Church and its hierarchy.
- Archbishop Dom Camara, who certainly sacrificed for the poor of his native Brazil, was a devotee of Gandhi and criticized the Church for its programs and priorities; at the closing session of Vatican II, he proposed that all the bishops surrender their crosses of precious metals for meltdown and distribution of the proceeds to the poor.
- Father George Zabelka is an extreme pacifist who misconstrues the Gospels to suit his objections to Nagasaki and accuses Christianity of seventeen hundred years of terror and slaughter
- Journalist Penny Lernoux had distanced herself from the Church but returned in the “awakening” of Vatican II, which she described as “set to turn the Church on its head,” while she was herself under the inspiration of liberation theology.

The magisterial authority of the Church was not recognized in this book. There was a nice article on St. Francis of Assisi, who was called the “greatest saint.” This book would be perfectly suited to a study of liberation theology, which, of course, has been soundly refuted by the Church beginning with *Divini Redemptoris*. Pope Pius XI stated that the Church could not cooperate with Marxists. Liberation theology would divert the Church from her mission of salvation to one of social welfare agency.

One of the authors of *Compassion* was Henri Nouwen, who was described in *Cloud of Witnesses* as a Dutch priest and contributing editor to *Sojourners*. His funeral Mass was described in the book as a “carnival atmosphere” where actors and actresses “breathed life into the gospel reading.” In the Preface, the tone of the book is set with a quote from theologian, Gail O’Day, “Just as it is false to the richness of the Christian tradition to use father language as generic language for God, it” This book does more to diminish than to advance the true faith, for example:

- The authors assert that the Gospels support reference to the “womb” of God (pp. 14-16)
- They say we should see compassion not in moralistic terms (emphasis added; the implication is that we should disregard sin, p. 28)
- They wrote that choosing to suffer as “an obedient response to our loving God” is, for Christians, a “false belief that in so doing they were following the way of Jesus Christ.”
- The section on the breaking of bread omits all reference to sacrifice and the Holy Eucharist as the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, the real presence; the sole emphasis is on community and eating bread and drinking wine as a memorial, where we become intimately connected “to the compassionate life of Christ.” (p. 111). Our “bread connections” are a “call to action.” He writes that when people eat bread and drink wine in his (Christ’s) memory, smiles appear on strained faces (p. 132).
- This book is rife with misconstruction and non sequitur too numerous to fully set forth; other examples include pp. 48 (top), 49 (top), 126-7.

The Mich book has some good quotes, including some references to encyclicals and Saints, but they are interlaced with error. For example, St. Boniface’s challenge to the god Thor inspired conversions but led to the unintended consequence of “diminished awe for the sacredness of nature.” (p. 34). We are instructed that every

creature, animate and inanimate, can be a “sacrament.” Life issues are discussed with no reference to the evil of contraception.

We are told that there was an early Catholic attitude, still present, that saw humans as the apex of creation and this too often led to exploitation of nature (p. 41). Quoting Sister Elizabeth Johnson, the author explains that “previous theologies would have human beings with their rational souls as superior to the natural world.” Such a ranking, he writes, easily “gives rise to arrogance, one root of the present ecological crisis.” We are told that we need ‘species humility’ (p. 43). I read this and wondered whatever happened to Genesis: man is made in the image and likeness of God and has dominion.?

On pages 43-44, we read that we must “reimagine our place in creation” with these questions, each of which is directly or by implication in conflict with the truth:

- How to preach salvation as healing and rescue for the whole world rather than as solely an individual relationship with God?
- How to let go of contempt for matter, contempt for the body and sexuality, and how to revalue them as good and blessed?
- How to interpret human beings as primarily “earthlings” rather than as pilgrims or tourists whose real home is elsewhere?
- How to recognize the sacraments as symbols of divine graciousness in a universe that is itself a sacrament?
- What kinds of new spiritualities will emerge as we become creation-centered?

The author references *Familiaris Consortio*, then trashes it and exposes his real agenda:

Today, Catholic theology and spirituality does not view the love of another human being as distracting from our love of God. In fact, love of a spouse and child is viewed as participation in divine love.

Sexuality is viewed in more positive terms as a gift of God to be enjoyed and celebrated within committed love and not only tolerated for the sake of procreation. These positive themes provide the starting points for a **reinterpretation of marriage and family** within the Catholic tradition. This revisioning is only in beginning stages. Catholicism and other Christian denominations are still working on understanding the role of women in the church and society and the meaning of **committed homosexual relationships**. (p. 81, emphasis added)

No sugar coating can cover the bitter taste of this poisonous error!

The Kozol book contains wrenching stories from the author’s experiences in South Bronx, significantly centered around St. Ann’s Episcopal Church with its pastor, Rev. Martha Overall, who “confesses” the children. What this book contributes to an understanding of *Catholic* Social Teaching is a mystery. The book is interesting private reading, although the heralding of it by Marian Wright Edelman of the Children’s Defense Fund would have otherwise steered me clear of it.

Interestingly, both of the parishioners who brought to my attention that *Just Faith* was in progress at our church are converts. They are actively engaged in learning the Catholic Faith. One said to me, “Something about this (*Just Faith*) material is really bothering me. I don’t know why, but I am disturbed and irritated when reading it.” She wants to deepen her understanding of the true Faith; most of this material does just the opposite, leads away from it. The disturbance of the spirit is easily understandable.

We possess the truth in all its beauty, richness and wonder; we possess the authentic Magisterium. Why not use it? As the Holy Father has reminded us, real education is grounded in truth.☞

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Challenge Set, Challenge Met: From the Surface to the Depths

By Marie P. Loehr

*God created man in his image. In the image of God he created him.
Male and female he created them. – Genesis 1:27*

How did the Church come to such a pass that a cardinal could call for a deeper definition, not of Trinity or Incarnation or Eucharist, but of Matrimony—and human incarnation, its sexuality and the nature of sex itself? Surely the Church had been blessing marriages for 2000 years. Surely its teaching was adequate to the reality of marriage and procreation.

In fact, it was not.

The roots of the problem go back far beyond Vatican II, and the secular sexual revolution. The roots of the problem begin in the Temptation itself, the Fall, and its consequences. This does not let us off the hook, however!

The essence of Lucifer's temptation was deeper than superficial disobedience. It was an ultimate disobedience. Lucifer's denial of God's plan, the refusal of incarnation on man's part, the overturning of the order of Creation make up this destructive intent. The order of Creation, as God intended it, as Scripture and Tradition present it, is precisely this: Man is the bridge between created matter and created spirit. God wills material creation. He wills human being to be a fusion of body and spirit – spirit revealing spiritual reality to body, body revealing material reality to spirit, and wedding them in a two-in-one-flesh union: body-spirit, each vital to the other.

The Fall turned all that inside out, upside down, and backwards.

Worse, it nurtured that seed of Lucifer's Gnosticism, his envy and contempt for the body. It strengthened the will to be "pure" spirit, in man's soul and psychology. Whether in the secular world or in the ecclesiastical mind, a subtle pervasive attitude of contempt for the body distorts man's understanding of incarnation, sexuality, marriage, sex and procreation. As a result, this also distorts our attitude to priesthood, celibacy, religious chastity and asceticism.

That is the primary root of this ongoing problem that has plagued the Church from its beginning. It erupted in the modern era in forms of license not seen in such public totality since pagan Rome, perhaps.

From that root springs another navigable shoot – a consequence of this subliminal contempt for body, even among churchmen. It has colored Church teaching ever since.

This related problem was centuries of shallow, legalistic teaching. Its effects during and after Vatican II were made visible for the first time for the world to see, clearly rather than "through a glass, darkly."

What followed Vatican II, and its apparent shattering of windows, walls, all boundaries in the false spirit of Vatican II, was an equally superficial licentious teaching.

Even in the Church, those teaching in seminaries and universities, religious or lay, followed the situation ethics of the modern world. If it felt good, do it. The overarching justification for almost anything was "love." Is it loving? Then it's ok. Those with especially fertile minds could even twist Paul's definition and description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 to suit this interpretation. After all, love is patient, kind, never fails, right? It does believe all things, hope all things, bear all things. It's blind. Shakespeare said so, before he was also jettisoned with the bath water.

Benedict XVI notes, addressing Vatican officials 20 December 2010, that "it was maintained [in the 1970s] – even within the realm of Catholic theology – that there is no such thing as evil in itself or good in itself. There is only a 'better than' and a 'worse than.' Nothing is good or bad in itself."

This viewpoint is due to a false understanding of man's origins. It can't all be blamed on Darwin, Freud, and Dewey, as some try to do.

But if man is viewed as merely an animal, if the spiritual dimension is denied, dismissed, distorted, then all that matters is "the pursuit of happiness." whatever that means to each individual. Everything is relative. Everything is discrete, as in separate, bits and pieces. There is no puzzle to put together. There is no overall pattern or purpose. The ultimate shallows . . .

The motto of the age has been the motto of François Rabelais' Abbey of Thélème in his 16th century novel, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Rabelais was first a Franciscan, later a Benedictine. His idea of a utopia was a religious abbey whose motto was "do what you will." This, of course, parodies Augustine's "Love God, and do what

you will.” But it leaves out that crucial first premise – love God. In this 16th century utopia, as in so many real world dreams of commune and community, especially in the 1960s and after, the point was to be “free,” and achieve whatever pleasure a participant or inhabitant desired.

This would appear to have no relationship to Gnostic contempt for the body, and its attempt to discipline or deny the body out of existence.

Yet, this is an abuse and misuse of the body and its faculties, especially sexuality, which reveals an ultimate contempt for the body, as God intended it. It is spitting in the face of God’s love for incarnate being, and for his Son’s incarnation in human flesh, making our flesh his tent and tabernacle.

Finally, this distorted attitude and teaching is compounded by a subtle clericalism.

There is a thread of contempt for marriage in clerical history and its teaching. Understandably, the vowed celibate or chaste religious will struggle with the stirrings of the flesh on occasion. There has always been a tendency to view that struggle as a consequence of the flesh as “bad.” There is almost certainly an unconscious resentment of the laity’s freedom to indulge in the pleasures of the flesh, licitly, in marriage. A certain unreality prevailed in this illusion, prior to Vatican II, despite the revelations of the confessional. Marriage, from the outside, appeared to permit a continual license to daily orgiastic freedom.

The actual realities of family life and work and struggle somehow barely made it to the surface of the ascetics’ envious fantasies, if we may believe in anecdotal evidence and novelistic fancies. This may be an exaggeration, but not by much. Those who doubt should look carefully at the aftermath of the exodus from the priesthood and religious life following Vatican II.

There was also a longstanding presentation of marriage as inferior to Orders and religious vows, the “active” life as inferior to the “contemplative.”

Marriage, in short, was not viewed as a specifically religious vocation in itself. It was some divine concession to the flesh, again that pesky flesh. St. Paul says, “It is better to marry than to burn,” after all. He does not specify whether this is the burning of hell due to unreported sin, or the burning of lust and concupiscence in each individual.

In any case, marriage’s own proper contemplative nature was not examined, much less discussed. It was the lesser vocation. It was for those who had not the stamina to be “up close and personal” with God 24/7.

What happens when we combine a subliminal Gnostic – puritan or Jansenist – attitudes to human incarnation with superficial legalistic teaching on marriage and sexuality? What you would expect. Plodding despair festers and eventually culminates in its dissolution into unfettered license!

Dietrich von Hildebrand observes in the first paragraph of the introduction to his short, but pointed, work, *Man and Woman*, first published in 1966:

Although we hear that sex is overemphasized today, that is not correct. Rather we live in a time when sexuality is no longer understood in its true nature. People today are generally as blind to its true meaning as are persons who completely lack sensuality.”

In Poland Karol Wojtyla, as he moved from priest to bishop to cardinal, interacting closely with his people, was diagnosing the problem. From the viewpoint of poet, dramatist, actor, priest, teacher, and theologian, he brought to bear a wealth of questions and insights. Many were drawn from observation from his life under different political rules, including Nazi and Communist. Many were drawn from his immediate personal life. Many were gathered from his interaction with friends, students, parishioners.

Informed by his experience, he saw the challenge. He understood the need to return to the depths of Scriptural and mystical tradition in the Church to explicate incarnation in general, sexuality in particular, and thus both marriage and priesthood. But he understood something deeper – the need to confront the Gnostic undercurrents that had deformed Church teaching for too long and the superficial legalisms and negativity that had too often warped marriage preparation. The average couple was thus presented with a preparation that was merely a foundation of sand, instead of rock, when it came to marriage in practice.

He saw that all those long-entrenched corruptions of the truth and love of marriage, and thus, priesthood as well, had to be replaced with the fullness of Christ’s intention and example.

If Cardinal Wright saw the challenge of the age, and posed it, Cardinal Wojtyla, John Paul II, met the challenge. Shortly after his consecration as pope, he began presenting his answer to that challenge.

Soon titled “The Theology of the Body,” his answer goes straight to the heart of being, to the Trinity itself, where it belongs. His questions, conclusions, insights provide the proper balance between intellect and will, truth and love, reason and emotion. He presents a Trinitarian view of reality, and man’s place in Creation.

Gnosticism has no place in this theology. The superficial or legalistic is relegated to a footnote. The licentious is reduced to the vanishing point by the Trinitarian understanding of incarnation and the deepest meanings of “two-in-one-flesh.”

The challenge we face now is learning, teaching, and living this rich and deeply nuptial understanding of the Trinity, man, and our relation to one another.☞