

## FAILURE OF THE EXECUTIVE POWER

*I bend my knee to the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its name.*

*Ephesians 3:14-15*

It belongs to the father of a household to exercise discipline in his family. This is true not only of the family, but of the household of the Church. The Pope and each of the bishops of the Church, indeed, each priest, is a father in charge of a household. Each has duties to rule and govern his household with authority given him by God. If he fails in those duties the harm that results is as extensive as is the reach of his authority.

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On 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1962, in his Opening Speech to the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII said—

*In the daily exercise of our pastoral office, we sometimes have to listen, much to our regret, to voices of persons who, though burning with zeal, are not endowed with too much sense of discretion or measure. In these modern times they can see nothing but prevarication and ruin. They say that our era, in comparison with past eras, is getting worse, and they behave as though they had learned nothing from history, which is, none the less, the teacher of life... We feel we must disagree with those prophets of gloom, who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand.*

Almost forty three years later this declaration makes embarrassing reading. For the era *did* get worse. And those prophets of gloom who foresaw ruin and disaster lived to see many of their prophecies come true. One statistic alone is telling: in the twenty years following the close of the Council 46,000 priests throughout the world abandoned their ministry<sup>1</sup>

### ***Two Influences***

It is close on two generations since these words were uttered and in that period the greatest harm in the Catholic Church has been wrought by two causes, two influences, working in tandem. One of those influences came from outside the Church. It was not the greater of the two but it had the greater effect because the other influence from within disposed members of the Church to accept it.

The influence from outside the Church was Feminism, the ideology which seeks to reduce men and women to a common level. A corollary of Marxism, many of whose marks it bears; disposed for by the disorders wrought in society by two world wars;

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<sup>1</sup> Figure quoted by George Weigel in *The Courage to be Catholic*, New York, 2002, p.27. It would seem to understate the position. Romano Amerio says that a comparison of figures published by the Secretary of State for 1969 and 1976 shows the number of priests fell in those seven years alone by 70,000: Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum, A Study of Changes in the Catholic Church in the XXth Century*, Sarto House, transl. from 2<sup>nd</sup> Italian Edition by Fr John P. Parsons, Kansas City, 1996, p.182.

preached by the evil Sartre and his mistress, de Beauvoir, in the cafés of Paris; fed by that lack of sense of any values transcending the material which is the dowry of modern philosophy; adopted by the irreligious; vaunted as the new wisdom hidden from all previous ages: this simplistic ideology took hold of modern thought and came at last to infect the priests and bishops of the Catholic Church. But it would not have done so without the influence from within the Church which disposed many to accept its simplistic arguments.

This second influence was the loss of the sense of discipline in the Church which began with remarks of Pope John XXIII made in the speech quoted above, the Opening Speech to the Second Vatican Council. The Pope said—

*We see... as one age succeeds another that the opinions of men follow one another and exclude each other. And often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun. The Church has always opposed these errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays however, the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than the arms of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations. Not, certainly, that there is a lack of fallacious teaching, opinions, and dangerous concepts to be guarded against and dissipated. But these are so obviously in contrast with the right norm of honesty, and have produced such lethal fruits that by now it would seem that men of themselves are inclined to condemn them, particularly those ways of life which despise God and His law or place excessive confidence in technical progress and a well-being based exclusively on the comforts of life. They are ever more deeply convinced of the paramount dignity of the human person and of his perfection as well as of the duties which that implies. Even more important, experience has taught men that violence inflicted on others, the might of arms, and political domination, are of no help at all in finding a happy solution to the grave problems which afflict them.*

This paper will first consider these words of the Pope and the influence they contain. It will then consider the influence of Feminism and show how the two influences coalesced to produce the harm in the Church that has resulted.

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### ***The Abdication Of Authority—Analysis Of The Speech Of John XXIII<sup>2</sup>***

When, in the words quoted above, the Pope addresses error he uses the figure of speech called metonymy. The evil, ‘error’, stands for *the people affected by the evil*. When the Pope refers to *the arms of severity*, he is referring, metonymically again, to *discipline* of which severity is a quality. He refers to mercy. Mercy is sorrow at another’s misfortune accompanied by a desire to help him<sup>3</sup>. The condemnation of error is itself a work of mercy since, by exposing it for what it is, those labouring under it are corrected and others are preserved from falling into it. The first thing to

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<sup>2</sup> I have adopted in large measure the studied analysis of John XXIII’s speech by Italian theologian Romano Amerio in his *Iota Unum*, op. cit., pp. 79-82.

<sup>3</sup> St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q.30, a.1.

be said then, of this part of the Pope's speech, is that it makes no sense to juxtapose discipline to mercy when discipline is itself a part of mercy.

Whatever the weakness in his reasoning, the Pope's words amounted to this: that the Church would not bother in future to exercise discipline to correct those in error. Instead she would simply rely upon the proclamation of the validity of her teaching. The effects of this were threefold: first, it narrowed the whole duty of the Church towards those in error to the mere presentation of the truth; next it signalled that the Church would refuse thenceforth to exercise part of her authority; and finally, it amounted to a proclamation *that she would refuse to act so as to enforce that authority*.

After this, as if to justify this proclamation, the Pope went on to assert something novel in the history of the Catholic Church, namely, that the men of the present age enjoyed a wisdom that former ages had not enjoyed. For he said—*Nowadays... fallacious teaching, opinions, and dangerous concepts are so obviously in contrast with the right norm of honesty... that... it would seem that men of themselves are inclined to condemn them, particularly those ways of life which despise God and His law... They are ever more deeply convinced of the paramount dignity of the human person and of his perfection as well as of the duties which that implies*.

This was a remarkable claim when one considers the constant teaching of the Catholic Church on the effects of Original Sin in the powers of the human soul, the wounds of ignorance, malice, weakness and desire<sup>4</sup>, wounds which St Thomas teaches, are compounded by other sins. The Pope seemed almost to be denying the efficacy of that teaching. Almighty God formed the Catholic Church, a Divine thing in the midst of the mundane, precisely to deal with those wounds, to provide inspiration, to heal, to direct, to bring peace and to lead to heaven.

Experience has given the lie to the Pope's claim. Indeed, *history... the teacher of life* ought to have warned him, if Catholic doctrine had not, that the claim was ill founded and naïve. Less than eight months later he was dead. But his legacy has lived on to work its harm in the lives of the Catholic faithful ever since.

Italian theologian, Romano Amerio, provides this analysis of the late Pope's proclamation—

*The general effect of renunciation of authority is to bring authority into disrepute and to lead it to be ignored by those who are subject to it, since a subject cannot hold a higher view of authority than authority holds of itself.*<sup>5</sup>

Once the Pope failed to act up to his name *il Papa*—the father—other fathers, bishops, priests and laymen, would fail in sympathy. And this bad example would carry over to the world outside the Church.

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<sup>4</sup> St Thomas, *S.T. I-II*, q.85, a.3.

<sup>5</sup> *Iota Unum*, op. cit. p.147

Pope John XXIII has had two effective successors, Paul VI and John Paul II. We will consider later how each adhered, in his own way, to this principle of abdication of the Church's authority enunciated by John XXIII.

### *The Influence Of Feminism*<sup>6</sup>

Feminism is founded on the assertion of a simple equality between men and women, on the face of things an attractive proposition. It says that men and women have equal rights; that they are equally talented in every respect, whether at the material level or the spiritual, at the physical level or the psychological. Women have hitherto been oppressed by men, it is asserted, and their rights suppressed. This is why they have been unable to achieve the same status as men in the fields of work and in social and public life. Women must, so the argument goes, struggle to throw off this oppression imposed on them for so long by men. So does Feminism manifest its characteristic antipathy.

The Feminist movement is a materialist ideology. It ignores essential distinctions as does Marxism from which it draws its energy. It sees success only materially. It sees the achievements written on the pages of history as the only desiderata and the things done behind the scenes as beneath dignity. It exalts pride: it derides humility. The only ends worth pursuing are those which men have arrogated to themselves. Women, the thesis proceeds, have been conditioned to believe that they are incapable of performing the activities, of achieving the ends, that men achieve. They must put aside that conditioning. A paradox follows. Feminists are loud in their call for 'women's rights'. But they are not seeking 'women's rights' at all but 'men's rights', that is, the right to conduct themselves as if they were men.

From its insistence on this one idea, simple equality between the sexes, the ideology of Feminism spreads its influence throughout society. It begins with the woman, but because she is at the heart of mankind, its effects are far reaching for the man; it affects her husband and, even more profoundly, her children. It brings a revolution in the way men and women regard each other, and a revolution in the family.

The answer to the Feminist assertion is that it is wrong. While men and women are equal, *they are also unequal*.<sup>7</sup> They are equal in this—that they are persons with all the rights and duties that attach to the person; they are unequal in this—that the ordination of each differs fundamentally. The equality between them is not a simple but a *proportional equality*. *Woman, taken in relation to the rights and duties that attach to her womanhood, is equal to man taken in relation to the rights and duties which attach to his manhood.*

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<sup>6</sup> The writer has written elsewhere on the ideology of Feminism and its destructive effects on society. See the paper *Feminism* at <http://superflumina.org/feminism.html>. Much of what follows is taken from that paper.

<sup>7</sup> Although he was not addressing the claims of Feminism, which was still in the stages of gestation in his day, Pope Leo XIII spoke to the point when, in *Humanum Genus*, he wrote: *[N]o one doubts that all men are equal one to another so far as regards their common origin and nature; or the last end which each one has to attain; or the rights and duties which are thence derived. But as the abilities of all are not equal, as one differs from another in powers of mind or body, and as there are very many dissimilarities of manner, disposition and character, it is most repugnant to reason to endeavour to confine all within the same measure, and to extend complete equality to the institutions of civil life.* [n. 26]

There is an ordination distinctive to man, and another ordination distinctive to woman which determines the relationship of man to woman, and of woman to man. Ordination signifies 'end'. That is, there is an end proper to the man; there is another, not identical, end proper to the woman. This difference in ordination is placed in them by their author. Separate the man from the ordination placed in him, separate the woman from the ordination placed in her, and you do violence to each—and you do violence to society of which they constitute the elements.

Because it denies this necessary distinction, Feminism denies the rights and duties proper to each. This leads to errors about what constitutes masculinity and femininity and so introduces confusion into the lives of all. Feminism denies to the man the authority given him to guide, to govern, to be a provider, to protect, to be the head. Order and direction come from the intellect which the head signifies. As the mother is the heart, so the father is the head of the family. Feminism denies the rights of the father. It denies that he is the head of his household in flat contradiction of the nature of the family and of Divine revelation<sup>8</sup>. It denies his authority over his wife. It denies his authority over his children. It denies the duties that attach to his authority to exercise discipline for the good of those under his care.

Perhaps the greatest evil wrought by Feminism in men is the inclination to decline from the virtue proper to manhood of *fortitude*—the courage to cope with the demands of a hard life, to exercise his true vocation of leader and father of a family, to shoulder the responsibilities of his state. The demands of marriage and of the family are great. It takes courage to face them and accept them. Just as Feminism has moved many women to adopt the mindset and the habits of men, it has moved many men to adopt those of women—to become effeminate.

Feminism attacks Christ and his Church by attacking the subordination between man and woman. The relationship between them is exemplified by the relationship between a man and his wife. St Paul teaches in *Ephesians 5: 23-24*—

*Wives should regard their husbands as they regard the Lord, since as Christ is the head of the Church and saves the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife; and as the Church submits to Christ, so should wives to their husbands, in everything.*

Since Feminism denies that the husband is the head of his wife, it follows necessarily that it denies that the Church is subject to Christ. This is the reality behind the Feminist complaints that the Church is 'paternalistic' and that it represses women. The attack on Christ and on the Church encompasses an attack on the hierarchical nature of the Church: on the Pope, as the Holy Father of all the people of God; on bishops as fathers in their dioceses; and on priests as fathers in their parishes. It fits precisely in the gap left by Pope John's abdication of authority reinforcing, with its pallid theory, that failure.

The simplistic ideas and arguments of Feminism have penetrated to every level of society. They could have been countered effectively if the wisdom to do so had been exercised as it should. The fount of this wisdom, since it is of God, lies within the

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Ephesians 5:22*; *1 Corinthians 11:3*; *Colossians 3:18*; *1 Timothy 2:12*; *Titus 2:4, 5*

Catholic Church. It is a matter of great regret that the authorities in the Church have never seen fit to address the follies of Feminism, much less to take resolute action to isolate and condemn them. Instead, large numbers of her bishops and cardinals have appeared to embrace them. The late Pope John Paul II himself endorsed them, only excepting from his endorsement the logical consequences that flow from their principles—contraception, abortion, and the inclination to effeminacy which manifests itself in the practices of homosexuality.

### ***Combination Of The Two Influences***

To the failure by the Pope to exercise his proper authority as father of all the faithful, then, in a sort of malevolent fortuitousness, was added Feminism's attack on manliness and on the rights and duties of the father in his household. Little wonder, then, that many priests and bishops came to refuse to exercise in their own households the duties proper to their state; came to decline from the virtues proper to fatherhood of manliness, courage and authority; became effete in the exercise of their office, ceding to women the conduct of certain of their priestly functions; and, finally, came to argue for bestowing, if it were possible, the priesthood of Jesus Christ on women.

The result of the combination is an executive paralysis afflicting all levels of the Church's hierarchy.

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We are dealing here with instrumental causes. There are more profound and principal causes of the failures within the Catholic Church, notably, the influences of masonry, marxism and modernism and the cooperation of these *inter se*—*Freemasonry* among bishops and clergy (those who are themselves masons and those who, having been compromised in some way, are subject to masonic control); *Marxism* in theories of education and the missionary activities of the Church—part of those 'errors of Russia' of which Our Lady spoke at Fatima—and *Modernism* which works to destroy belief in anything transcendent.

Undoubtedly those subject to one or other of these three pernicious influences have in the past used, and will continue to use, these two errors to work their harm in the Church. We will address these *principal* causes of harm on another occasion. This paper will confine itself to these two *instrumental* causes of the harm.

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### ***The Effects***

The consequences of the executive paralysis we have referred to have manifested themselves at each level of the Church hierarchy, papal (including the Vatican dicasteries), episcopal and clerical, for more than forty years. They have been felt most strongly at the parish level where the perception of the priest as father of his people has largely been lost. There are few priests who know and understand that despite the negligences of the Catholic hierarchy the priest is the father of his parish and has the rights and duties of that office. Even fewer of them realise how they must juggle the exercise of their rightful authority with the knowledge that they will not be supported in the exercise of it by their bishop—and that in this matter they must *be as wise as serpents yet as harmless as doves*.

There is a terror amongst the Catholic episcopacy of being seen to be acting with authority. Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz of Lincoln, Nebraska, in the United States, stands out among the bishops of the western world because he acts executively. He is treated as a pariah by many of his fellow bishops in consequence<sup>9</sup>. As a general rule, the Catholic faithful throughout the world—those who not only profess all the truths of the Catholic faith but also live them out in practice<sup>10</sup>—live in a state of perpetual exasperation over the negligence of their bishops. They look to them for leadership, but in vain. They look to them to act to uphold the teachings and practice of the faith, again in vain.

The current scandals in the Church over episcopal failures to act on sexual abuses carried out by members of their clergy are merely the fruit of this negligence in one area, a notable area, of morality.

But the problems began at the top. The abdication of authority mandated by John XXIII flourished under Paul VI.

### ***Paul VI***

In what follows it must be remembered, in fairness, that we have from Pope Paul VI two great encyclicals, *Mysterium Fidei* (3.9.1965) on the Eucharist, and *Humanae Vitae* (25.7.1968) on marriage.

In his recent book, *The Courage to be Catholic*<sup>11</sup>, George Weigel addresses the failures of the American bishops over the systematic neglect of their duties. He deals with the problems of the 1960s and 1970s following on the Second Vatican Council, *problems he says, exacerbated by what often seemed to be uncertain papal leadership during the fifteen year pontificate of Pope Paul VI (1963-1978)*.<sup>12</sup> In three of his actions, in particular, does the abdication of authority by the Pope appear forcefully.

The first was his failure after the receipt by him in mid 1966 of a report from the *Pontifical Commission for the Study of Population, the Family and Birth*, to rein in false expectations growing among the faithful throughout the world of an imminent change in the Church's teaching on contraception.

Two years were to pass before the Pope finally addressed the issues definitively in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Those false hopes were fuelled by the irresponsible actions of certain theologians associated with the Commission in leaking one of the Commission papers favourable to change in April 1967, simultaneously, to *Le Monde* in France, *The Tablet* in Great Britain, and the *National Catholic Reporter* in the United States. There never was any doubt as to how the Pope would rule on this issue. Eminent American moral theologian, Fr John C. Ford S.J., expressed it trenchantly when he remarked that if the Pope had ruled in any other way than he had, he, Fr Ford, would have had to leave the Church. The failure of the Pope to warn the

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<sup>9</sup> Witness the disavowal of his Mandate to the members of his diocese dated 19<sup>th</sup> March 1996 by American Cardinals Bernardin, Mahoney and Law.

<sup>10</sup> The distinction is between *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxis*. Many proclaim their orthodoxy, but fail when it comes to living out their alleged faith in practice.

<sup>11</sup> *The Courage to be Catholic*, Perseus Books, New York, 2002

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p.67

faithful of the falsity of these hopes—to act as a true father—caused untold harm in the Church when, at last, the encyclical was issued.

The second turned on the procurement by the emissary of Paul VI (Archbishop Casaroli) of the withdrawal from the American embassy in Budapest of József Cardinal Mindszenty, the Primate of Hungary. After his imprisonment by the Communist authorities and condemnation in a show trial repudiated by the whole free world, the Cardinal took the opportunity presented by the 1956 Hungarian uprising to take refuge in the American embassy. He remained there for 14 years, a thorn in the sides of the Communist regime and of Communist fellow travellers in the Vatican.

Paul VI was prevailed upon to seek his removal from Hungary. In the course of negotiations between Casaroli and Cardinal Mindszenty it was hidden from the Cardinal that one of the terms to which the Vatican had agreed with the Communists in securing his removal was that it would ensure that he would do or say nothing that could possibly displease the Hungarian Communist government. On his arrival in Rome on 29<sup>th</sup> September, 1971, Paul VI assured him: *You are and remain Archbishop of Esztergom and primate of Hungary. Continue working, and if you have difficulties, always turn trustfully to us.* The Cardinal's endeavours to exercise his authority were hindered by Vatican authorities. When he learned subsequently of the secret undertaking Mindszenty remarked: *Had I known about any guarantee of this sort, I would have... asked the Holy Father to rescind all the arrangements that had been made in conjunction with my departure from Hungary.*

The third was the failure of Paul VI over what came to be known as 'the Washington Case'. The details are set forth in *The Courage to be Catholic*<sup>13</sup>. Priests of the Archdiocese of Washington joined the public dissent against *Humanae Vitae*. With commendable application Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle issued a number of warnings, and subsequently disciplined, nineteen of his priests over the issue. He suspended several of them. The priests publicised their cases and appealed to the authorities in Rome. After intervention by the head of the Congregation for the Clergy, John Cardinal Wright, Cardinal O'Boyle was persuaded to lift the sanctions against such of the priests who would agree to certain findings of a report by the Congregation. Those findings did not require the priests to repudiate their dissent or to affirm the teachings in *Humanae Vitae*. Weigel remarks—

*According to the recollections of some who were present, everyone involved understood that Pope Paul VI wanted the 'Washington Case' settled without a public retraction from the dissidents because the Pope feared that insisting on such a retraction would lead to schism.*<sup>14</sup>

This failure in exercise of authority had the most scandalous effect in the Church throughout the world, as Weigel goes on to explain—

*Theologians, priests and nuns who publicly dissented from Humanae Vitae... were encouraged by the Truce of 1968 to continue, even amplify, their dissent...*

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid pp. 68-72

<sup>14</sup> Ibid pp.69-70



*The bishops of the United States learned some things, too. Bishops who wanted to protect the authoritative teaching of the Church by using sanctions approved by canon law against dissenters learned that they'd better not do so if imposing those penalties involved major public controversy. Why? Because Rome wouldn't encourage such sanctions under those circumstances... Whatever its intent, the Truce of 1968 taught the Catholic bishops of the United States that the Vatican would not support them in maintaining discipline among priests and doctrinal integrity among theologians...*

*Catholic lay people also learned something from the Truce of 1968, even if they never heard of it. The tacit vindication of the culture of dissent during the *Humanae Vitae* controversy taught two generations of Catholics that virtually everything in the Church was questionable: doctrine, morals, the priesthood, the episcopate, the lot.<sup>15</sup>*

An instance, from the other side of the world, will illustrate how critical it was for the Church that the rebellion of the priests in Washington should have been handled with rigour.

*At a clergy conference in Hobart on November 6, 1968, a senior priest from the North West coast moved that the priests send an assurance of their acceptance of the Encyclical and their complete obedience to the Pope. During heated discussion which followed, [Archbishop Guildford] Young was accused of lack of leadership. In an emotional speech he summarised statements from world hierarchies on freedom of conscience and claimed he had saved Australia from the 'Alice in Wonderland' situation which had arisen in the Washington (U.S.A.) Archdiocese of Cardinal O'Boyle. 'One day,' he said, 'the full story would be told.' He refused to accept the motion<sup>16</sup>.*

A former priest of the Hobart Archdiocese who had known Archbishop Young well told this commentator and others in a private meeting that the Archbishop suffered great anguish when in the last years of his life he came to realise the error of his views on conscience with respect to *Humanae Vitae*.

### ***John Paul II***

Karol Wojtyla, who became on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1978 Pope John Paul II, was a stronger character than Giovanni Battista Montini, Paul VI. He brought to the office of Pope an unbounded admiration for his predecessors. In an early paragraph of his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (4.3.1979), he said—

*I chose the same names that were chosen by my beloved Predecessor John Paul I... I wish like him to express my love for the unique inheritance left to the Church by Popes John XXIII and Paul VI and my personal readiness to develop that inheritance with God's help... John XXIII and Paul VI are a stage to which I wish to refer directly, as to a threshold, from which I intend,*

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid pp.70-2

<sup>16</sup> *The Wisdom of Guildford Young*, W.T. Southerwood, Stella Maris Books, George Town, Tasmania, 1989, p. 419.

*in company with John Paul I, so to speak, to continue the march towards the future.*

Regrettably, the inheritance he derived from them included the inclination to refrain from executive action. There are any number of instances of this throughout the twenty six and a half years of his pontificate. What follows is a sample.

\* Swiss theologian, Hans Küng, denied, and continues to deny, 1) the divinity of Christ, 2) the bodily Resurrection of Christ, 3) that Christ founded an institutional Church, 4) that the Mass is the re-presentation of the sacrifice of Calvary. He has called for a revision of Church teaching on papal infallibility, on contraception, on mandatory celibacy for priests and against the ordination of women. The Vatican put up with 15 years of his recalcitrance before it took any action against him. On 18<sup>th</sup> December 1979 the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith withdrew Küng's *missio canonica*, stating that he could *no longer be considered a Catholic theologian nor function as such in a teaching role*. Küng was not suspended; he was not excommunicated. He continued to be free to celebrate Mass, to hear confessions, to preach and to advise. He was cited publicly as 'a priest in good standing'. He remained an ongoing source of scandal for the faithful throughout the world. No action other than that cited above was ever taken against him.

\* In 1982 the French bishops issued a new catechism without the approval of the Holy See, in breach of the canonical norms. They accompanied this with a ban on the use of all other catechisms. The new catechism was a Modernist exercise seeking to gut the Catholic faith of all objectivity. Cardinal Ratzinger, then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, intervened to criticise the new catechism in January 1983. He spoke in Paris and Lyons. His critique ran to twenty pages. Within two months, however, he had withdrawn his criticisms and the French bishops were able to say publicly that he had intended *to deal with the overall catechetical situation, not to repudiate catechetical work done in France*. The bishops' words were not repudiated by either Cardinal or Pope.

\* Richard P. McBrien, Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, was another described as 'a priest in good standing', a priest of the Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut. He was responsible for detailed and consistent dissent from the teachings of the Catholic Church over more than 20 years. His misnamed book *Catholicism* is in its third edition. The work was theologically defective in 1980. It remains so. Among other things he teaches that 1) Christ did not found the Catholic Church; 2) though He was God, Christ could have sinned; 3) Christ's death was not a sacrifice but a peace offering; 4) Christ was ignorant of who He was. He casts doubts on the perpetual virginity of Our Blessed Lady. He teaches that papal judgments in matters of faith and morals (if not infallibly proclaimed) do not bind the consciences of the faithful and that the sinfulness of contraception and homosexual acts are to be left up to the supremacy of the individual conscience. He was not corrected in 1980, nor has he ever been corrected, suspended or excommunicated.

\* American priest, Charles Curran, was permitted to teach error for close on 20 years. The following extract from his curriculum vitae is taken from an

advertisement placed in the *Rochester Democrat-Chronicle* by a group of concerned Catholics of the American Diocese of Rochester in 1986—

*Since his 1968 dissent from *Humanae Vitae*, Fr. Curran has repeatedly undermined Catholic teaching on faith and morals, giving scandal to faithful Catholics in this Diocese and throughout the world. In his writings and lectures, he has contradicted Catholic doctrine on premarital sex, masturbation, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, divorce, euthanasia, and in vitro fertilization.*

\* Peter Leo Gerety was appointed Archbishop of Newark, New Jersey, in June 1974. He sponsored the Call To Action movement which supports birth control, homosexuality and lesbianism, rejected papal infallibility and encouraged Charles Curran to teach in his Archdiocese. His conduct was an open scandal in the Church in the United States.

\* In July 1983, Cardinal Silvio Oddi, then Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, addressed a public meeting in Arlington, Virginia, in the USA. He was pressed as to why the Holy See did not remove people such as Curran and did not correct and disavow bishops such as Gerety. The Cardinal replied with words which reflected precisely John XXIII's abdication of authority—

*The Church no longer imposes punishments. She hopes instead to persuade those who err... The Church believes it is better to tolerate certain errors in the hope that when certain difficulties have been overcome, the person in error will reject his error and return to the Church.*

The advertisement in the *Rochester Democrat-Chronicle* quoted above was placed there on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1986. The Catholics of the Diocese of Rochester were doubtless voicing their frustration at the inaction of authorities of the Church when they added to what is set out above—

*It has been an intolerable situation that Fr. Curran has been allowed to teach in the name of the Catholic Church while denying its teachings.*

Their efforts eventually bore fruit. In July of the same year the Vatican acted by stripping Curran of his status as a theologian. It had taken them seven years to move Rome to act. In the same year the Vatican forced Archbishop Gerety to withdraw his *Imprimatur* from a questionable catechetical text called *Christ Among Us*. Gerety did so but tendered his resignation from the Archdiocese of Newark with effect from June 1986, two years before he was due to resign.

\* The Church suffered persistent problems with the German bishops in the 1990s. In 1993 three of them gave permission for divorced and remarried Catholics to receive Holy Communion as long as they believed in conscience that their first marriage was invalid. Here was another instance of the plague that has afflicted the Church since Karl Rahner first exalted conscience above the authority of the Church

in 1968 in his commentary on *Humanae Vitae*.<sup>17</sup> It took a year of negotiation with the Vatican before these bishops would agree to cease giving this permission.

In 1998 the Vatican had to take the German bishops to task again. According to German law no woman may submit herself for an abortion unless she has a certificate indicating that she has attended for counselling. The German bishops were providing such certificates and, in doing so, giving proximate, material (that is, culpable), cooperation to the killing of the unborn. Again the issue was settled, not by a peremptory directive from Rome backed by the threat of sanction, but by negotiation!

\* Throughout the course of John Paul II's pontificate, of the many who might have been, only one theologian was ever excommunicated, Fr Tissa Balasuriya OMI, in Sri Lanka in January, 1997. The excommunication was lifted a little over a year later, not on the terms laid down by the Vatican, but on terms insisted upon by the offender and accepted by the Vatican. Fr Balasuriya is reported to have said subsequently that he had not taken anything back.

There were any number of admirable directives from Rome during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II: amongst them—

- the instruction *Inaestimabile Donum* (17.4.1980) concerning worship of the Eucharist within and outside Mass;
- the apostolic letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (22.5.1994) reserving priestly ordination to men alone;
- the reply to a *Dubium* concerning the teaching in this apostolic letter affirming that the teaching belonged to the deposit of faith (28.10.1995);
- the instruction regarding collaboration by the laity in the sacred ministry of priests (15.8.1997);
- the motu proprio *Ad Tuendam Fidem* (28.5.1998) strengthening the force of certain provisions in the Code of Canon Law;
- the declaration *Dominus Jesus* (6.8.2000) reaffirming the unicity and universal salvific effect of Jesus Christ and His Church in the face of theories seeking to justify religious pluralism;
- the motu proprio *Misericordia Dei* (7.4.2002) addressing abuses of the Sacrament of Penance particularly ceremonies of so called 'general absolution'.

Yet these directives were rarely enforced by any exercise of executive power<sup>18</sup>. The result was that the despite their words, and the words in many other documents issued by the late Pope and the Vatican dicasteries, the abuses they addressed continued more or less unabated.

All the words in the world achieve nothing unless they are borne out by action. The wise father does not waste his time speaking to his disobedient child. He acts.

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<sup>17</sup> Rahner's assertion of the primacy of conscience over the teaching of the Church is nothing more than a restatement of the assertion of Martin Luther. It is fundamentally Protestant.

<sup>18</sup> An exception was the excommunication on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2002 of seven women who had undergone a purported 'ordination' in June 2002. The excommunication was confirmed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2002.

The extent of the executive paralysis in the Vatican is manifested most tellingly, perhaps, in the following admission by Msgr Camille Perl, Secretary of the Pontifical *Ecclesia Dei* Commission, to a member of the Lefebvrist faithful reported by the Lefebvrist bishop, Bernard Fellay, in an address he gave in Kansas City, Missouri on 7 January 1999, to members of the Society of St Pius X—

*One of our faithful in France wrote a letter to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger describing the scandalous behaviour of a particular French bishop. On behalf of the Cardinal, Msgr. Perl answered, “Yes, you’re right. The situation in the Church is anarchy. If you expect that an order from Rome regarding the above will solve the situation, you are in total illusion.”*

The so-called theologians, Küng, Curran, McBrien and their ilk, continued to spread their errors without condemnation. What they have taught, what they continue to teach, is not Catholicism but some religion of their own devising; yet they have been allowed to continue to mislead the faithful. Any suspension of the ability of one or other of them to teach in Catholic institutions achieves little without explicit condemnation accompanied with either suspension *a divinis* or excommunication. The faithful are infected with the illegality of the age and, in the absence of action by the leaders of the Church to enforce her authority, they see no danger to their immortal souls in continuing to favour false teachers like these.

### ***John Paul II and Feminism***

Pope John Paul II brought with him to the office of the papacy also a philosophical inheritance which inclined him to defend the ideology of Feminism and seemed to blind him to the evil effects which are its inevitable accompaniment. The late Pope not only defended, he adopted, the tenets of Feminism<sup>19</sup>. He went further: he endeavoured to use them as part of a platform on which to attempt a radical re-interpretation of sacred scripture.

Before proceeding to an assessment of this aspect of the late Pope’s teachings, we should address the concerns of those who might be scandalised at an assertion that a Pope might have erred in his teaching. Every Pope is human; he can, and often will, commit error. The definition of the First Vatican Council, in setting out the precise circumstances in which a pronouncement of the Pope bears the character of infallibility<sup>20</sup>, concedes implicitly *that apart from these circumstances he may err*. Pope Benedict XVI confirmed this when, in the course of an impromptu address to the priests of Aosta on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2005, he said: *The Pope is not an oracle; he is infallible in very rare situations...* There is a quotation in George Weigel’s biography of Pope John Paul II from a Dominican theologian to the Fathers of the Council of Trent which summarises the position well—

*Peter has no need of our lies or flattery. Those who blindly and indiscriminately defend every decision of the supreme Pontiff are the very*

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Message for Celebration of World Day of Peace*, 1.1.1995; *Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday*, 25.5.1995; *Message to Mrs Gertrude Mongella, Secretary General of U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women*, 26.5.1995; *Letter to Women*, 29.6.1995.

<sup>20</sup> ‘...when in discharge of the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church...’ D. 1839.

*ones who do most to undermine the authority of the Holy See—they destroy instead of strengthening its foundations.*<sup>21</sup>

The Pope is not a law unto himself. He cannot depart from the constant teaching of Christ's Church at will. He may not, for instance, infer in his teaching that baptism is no longer necessary for salvation; or that Adam was not created by God before Eve; or deny that Eve was formed from Adam's body. He may not reformulate the Church's teaching so as to make it conform with some subjective preoccupation of his own if by doing so he departs from the Church's constant teaching. If it should appear that some statement of his conflicts with the Church's constant teaching, such a statement *by definition* cannot emanate from the Pope's authentic teaching authority<sup>22</sup>. It proceeds not from the Church, but from himself.

#### *Teaching from Wednesday Audiences—on Genesis*

There are in the Book of Genesis two accounts of creation, one each in Chapters 1 and 2. In the course of his Wednesday audiences Pope John Paul II compared the two accounts. He said—*the first account... the one held to be chronologically later, is much more mature both as regards the image of God, and as regards the formulation of the essential truths about man.* [Original Unity of Man and Woman—Catechesis on the Book of Genesis, 1981, p.22]<sup>23</sup> This first account, he maintained, *is concise, and free from any trace whatsoever of subjectivism.* [ibid p.23] In the first account there was not, what he called, *the problem of solitude.* In the first account, he said—*man is created in one act as 'male and female'.* [p.45]<sup>24</sup>

In contrast was his assessment of the description of the creation of man in the second chapter of Genesis. Here, he said—*The woman is made 'with the rib' that God-Yahweh had taken from the man. Considering the archaic, metaphorical and figurative way of expressing the thought, we can establish that it is a question here of homogeneity of the whole being of both.* [p.65]<sup>25</sup>. His conclusion of the comparative study of these two accounts of creation was that after God cast a deep sleep over him, *the first man, awakens from his sleep as 'male and female'* [p.65]<sup>26</sup>. Or, to express it in terms which he said accorded with the first chapter of Genesis—*man, in fact, is 'male and female' right from the beginning.* [p.61]<sup>27</sup>

The late Pope went on to say later in his catechesis: *[M]an became the 'image and likeness' of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning... Man becomes the*

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<sup>21</sup> Melchior Cano, quoted in *Witness to Hope, The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, George Weigel, New York, 2001, p.15.

<sup>22</sup> The material in *Lumen Gentium* n.25 which follows the statement of principle—*in such wise... that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect and that one sincerely adhere to decisions made by him conformably with his manifest mind and intention which is made known principally either by the character of the documents in question or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated*—cannot operate to compel the faithful to accept some teaching of the Pope which conflicts with the Church's constant teaching.

<sup>23</sup> General Audience 12.9.1979. Also at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/jp2tb2.htm>

<sup>24</sup> General Audience 10.10.1979. Also at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/jp2tb5.htm>

<sup>25</sup> General Audience 7.11.1979. Also at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/jp2tb8.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

*image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion...* [pp. 73, 74]<sup>28</sup>

This teaching of Pope John Paul reveals an apparent lack of conformity with Catholic doctrine that the first man, Adam, was first created by God and the body of the first woman, Eve, was formed from his body.

*Teaching in Mulieris Dignitatem—on Genesis*

In August, 1988, in the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the late Pope built upon the foundation of this teaching that the image and likeness of God was created in man through what he called *the communion of persons*. He dealt in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, *inter alia*, with the consequences of the Fall.

Original Sin brought with it dramatic consequences for the woman, Eve, including what is contained in the words: *Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you* [Gen.3:16]. In n.10 of *Mulieris Dignitatem* the Pope wrote: *These words of Genesis refer directly to marriage, but indirectly they concern the different spheres of social life: the situations in which the woman remains disadvantaged or discriminated against by the fact of being a woman*. He went on in the next paragraph to endorse what he called *the rightful opposition of women to what is expressed in the biblical words 'He shall rule over you...'* Elsewhere in the same section of his Apostolic Letter, he described this subordination, ordained by God, as indicating *the disturbance and loss of the stability of that fundamental equality which the man and the woman possess in the 'unity of the two'*.

This development of the late Pope's thought continued the apparent discordance with the Church's constant teaching. But now the discordance touched on the effects of Original Sin and it became more apparent that what he was endeavouring was the intermingling with Catholic theology of the categories of Feminist ideology.

What he said seems to contradict explicitly what the Church has to say about the nature of woman. For the Church teaches that woman was not created equal to man—in the sense of a *simple* equality—but that she was created to be his helper and companion, as is seen, for instance, in the following texts—

*Genesis 2:18—It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.*

*Tobit 8:6—You made Adam and you gave him his wife Eve to be his help and support...*

*Ecclesiasticus 17:5 (in the Vulgate)—Out of (Adam) he created a helper similar to him.*

*1 Corinthians 11:9—... it was not man that was created for woman's sake but woman for man's.*

*Teaching in Mulieris Dignitatem—on Ephesians Ch 5*

The late Pope then turned to Chapter 5 of St Paul's *Letter to the Ephesians*. In n.24 of *Mulieris Dignitatem*, of St Paul's admonition in *Ephesians 5:22-23: Let women be*

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<sup>28</sup> Also at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/jp2tb9.htm>

*subject to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife..., he said—*

*The author knows that this way of speaking, so profoundly rooted in the customs and religious tradition of the time, is to be understood and carried out in a new way: as a 'mutual subjection out of reverence for Christ'...*

St Paul does not say that there is to be mutual subjection of husband and wife. His words are quite clear: *Let women be subject to their husbands...* The submission of this text to the words in *Ephesians* 5:21 is unwarranted. In the first place verse 21 is adjectival to the previous paragraph which deals with admonitions to the Ephesians generally. This is the way the sentence is grouped in the old Latin Vulgate, the only edition of Sacred Scripture which the Church has ever declared to be authentic<sup>29</sup>. Additionally, the Council of Trent ruled that no one should dare to interpret Sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which is held by Holy Mother Church<sup>30</sup>. The sense in which this passage has been consistently interpreted by the Church appears, for example, in the following extract from the Catechism of Council of Trent—

Part II, Ch. VIII *On the Sacraments in General*,  
Q. XXVI *The Chief Duties of a Husband*

*It is the duty of the husband to treat his wife generously and honourably. It should not be forgotten that Eve was called by Adam his companion. The woman, he says, whom you gave me as a companion. (Gen.3:12). Hence it was, according to the opinion of some of the holy Fathers, that she was formed not from the feet but from the side of man; as, on the other hand, she was, not formed from his head, in order to give her to understand that it was not hers to command but to obey her husband...*

Q. XXVII *What the Duty of a Wife requires*

*On the other hand, the duties of a wife are thus summed up by the Prince of the Apostles: 'Let wives be subject to their husbands ... For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord' (1 Peter. 3:1 ff)... Let wives never forget that next to God they are to love their husbands, to esteem them above all others, yielding to them in all things not inconsistent with Christian piety, a willing and ready obedience.*

This sense is to be found also in the works of—

- St John Chrysostom (*Homily 20, On Ephesians 5:22-33*);
- St Augustine (*De Moribus Ecclesiae* 1, Ch.30, n.63);
- St Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* I, Q.93, Art.4, ad 1);

and in the encyclicals, or addresses, of—

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<sup>29</sup> Council of Trent, Session iv, April 8, 1546; D. 785. The verbs in verses 19, 20 and 21 of *Ephesians* 5 in the original Greek are all in the present imperative participle—*Speaking to yourselves... singing and making melody in your hearts... Giving thanks always... Being subject to one another in the fear of Christ*. In contrast, the verb in verse 22 is in the present subjunctive—*Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord*. Clearly, there is a change of direction.

<sup>30</sup> Session iv, April 8, 1546; D.786



- Pope Leo XIII (*Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*—On Christian Marriage [10.2.1880] nn.11, 16; *Diuturnum Illud*—On the Origin of Civil Power [29.6.1881] n.11; *Immortale Dei*—On the Christian Constitution of States [1.11.1885] nn. 19, 20;);
- Pope Benedict XV (*Natalis trecentesimi*—to the Superior General of the Ursulines [27.12.1917]);
- Pope Pius XI (*Casti Connubii*—On Christian Marriage [31.12.1930] nn. 4, 26, 27, 74 to 77); and of
- Pope Pius XII (*Address to Married Couples*, 10 September, 1941; *Address to Women of Catholic Action*, 21 October, 1945).

More than this, Pope Leo XIII teaches that an interpretation of Sacred Scripture is to be rejected *as senseless and false which (would make) inspired authors in some manner quarrel amongst themselves*<sup>31</sup>. But the interpretation posed in *Mulieris Dignitatem* would make St Paul's teaching here quarrel with his teaching in similar terms—

- in 1 *Corinthians* 11:3—*The head to which a wife is united is her husband, just as the head to which every man is united is Christ;*
- in *Colossians* 3:18—*Wives must be submissive to their husbands as the service of the Lord demands;*
- in 1 *Timothy* 2:12—*a woman shall have no leave from me to teach or to issue commands to her husband;*
- and, in *Titus* 2:4, 5—*the younger women must learn... how to be... submissive to their own husbands.*

Moreover, it would make it quarrel with the teaching of St Peter in 1 *Peter* 3:1 and in 1 *Peter* 3:6—*You too, who are wives must be submissive to your husband... Think how obedient Sara was to Abraham, how she called him her lord...*

Accordingly, the late Pope's teaching on Chapter 5 of St Paul's *Letter to the Ephesians* appeared to compound the discordance of his doctrine with the Church's constant teaching by seeking to import the principles of Feminism into that teaching.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Providentissimus Deus*, D.1943

<sup>32</sup> This analysis has had only one purpose: to show how the late Pope's teaching supported the Feminist line. We do not say that that teaching *is* discordant with the Church's constant teaching, we say *it appears to be* discordant with it. It is for theologians to address the question how that teaching is to be read consistently with the Church's teaching. Fr Brian Harrison, for instance, deals with the issue as an objection to his exposition of the Church's constant teaching on the formation of Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam in his *Did Woman Evolve From The Beasts?* which may be seen on the rtf website at <http://www.rtforum.org/It/It97.html> and <http://www.rtforum.org/It/It98.html>. He argues there that it would be unwarranted to conclude from the late Pope's remarks that he was necessarily implying a negation of the traditional doctrine. The Pope, he says, was not addressing the historicity of the accounts in *Genesis* of how the first human bodies were formed. Moreover, it could not be argued that he intended to require the assent of the faithful to the exegetical observations expressed in those comments as if this were in itself a teaching of faith or morals. [Note: the two papers of Dr Harrison are difficult of access. One should open the article numbered 96 on the rtf website, *Who Are The Mormons Part II*, scroll to the bottom of the page and open 'Next Issue'. The process should be repeated at the end of the first paper to gain access to the second.]

Pope John Paul's position on Feminism added to the dilemma for priests, bishops and fathers of families who wished to exercise the authority over those committed to their care given them by God. Not only had they to face the fact that dissenters within the Church would not be corrected or punished, and that their own endeavours to exercise their God given authority would not be supported by their bishop, but any argument they might put at an intellectual level to ground their rightful claims to authority *was undermined by the Pope's public support for this contrary position.*

### ***Conclusion***

It must be assumed that, at all times, each of the Popes we have referred to in this paper has acted in what he regarded as the best interests of the Church. The criticisms that have been offered should not be taken as an adverse reflection on the personal integrity of any one of them for we have dealt here with matters in the external, not the internal, forum.

Pope John XXIII is a Blessed of the Catholic Church. It may be that both Popes Paul VI and John Paul II will be raised to the altars of the Church, too. *But, it is possible for a saint to err.* Were it otherwise, every saint would be a doctor of the Church, yet the Church has bestowed the honour of *Doctor Ecclesiae* on very few saints—thirty three only.

Yet we insist that each of these Popes has played a part in the abdication of the Church's authority, an authority which must be restored if the Church is to exercise to the full her sanctifying role in the world.

The solution lies in the resumption by Pope Benedict XVI, and his successors, of the full powers of the office given them by Christ to be Father of all the faithful and to exercise those powers with vigour. They must visit with the sanctions at their command—suspension, removal, interdict, excommunication—those theologians, bishops, priests and lay people who persist in denying the Church's teaching or in proclaiming as true some departure from that teaching.

They ought, moreover, to expose systematically the evils of Feminism for what they are, and prudently, but firmly, move to extirpate those evils from the Church—from top to bottom.

Michael Baker

24<sup>th</sup> August 2005—*St Bartholomew*