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"But let your speech be, 'Yes, yes,' 'No, no,' and whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one. (Mt. 5:37)"

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“New Theology” Destroys the Doctrine of Original Sin

With just a few words in § 13 of his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), Pope John Paul II changed the perennial Catholic teaching on the nature of man and his relation to the Creator.

When we penetrate by means of the continually and rapidly increasing experience of the human family into the mystery of Jesus Christ, we understand with greater clarity that there is at the basis of all these ways that the Church of our time must follow, in accordance with the wisdom of Pope Paul VI, one single way: it is the way that has stood the test of centuries and it is also the way of the future. Christ the Lord indicated this way especially, when, as the Council teaches, “by His Incarnation, He, the Son of God, in a certain way *united himself with each man* [emphasis in original]... We are dealing with “each” man, for each one is included in the mystery of the Redemption and with each one Christ has united Himself for ever through this mystery. Every man comes into the world through being conceived in his mother’s womb and being born of his mother, and precisely on account of the mystery of the Redemption is entrusted to the solicitude of the Church. Her solicitude is about the whole man and is focused on Him in an altogether special manner. The object of her care is man in his unique unrepeatable human reality, *which keeps intact the image and likeness of God Himself*! [emphasis is mine].

This is not a casual insertion. On the contrary, the encyclical coherently develops the consequences of this claim, which the Pope articulates with no uncertainty. But where is the change, if it is undeniable that man was created in the image and likeness of God? The innovation consists in the implicit negation of the principal consequence of original sin, that is, the hereditary corruption of human nature by which man has lost his resemblance to God.

To clarify this point let us cite a text written just before the Second Vatican Council:

The Christian conception holds that God, in creating man and end beyond his own nature. This end is the beatitude of the vision of God, which is superior to all knowledge. In order to attain this end, God, as assigned man, gave man the supernatural vision of grace. From the time when Adam lost this gift through original sin, all his descendants enter the world lacking this grace: they find themselves in the state of original sin. Following on the loss of man’s lofty, supernatural end arose a confusion in the hierarchical order of the various faculties of the soul, the intelligence and the will, natural appetite and sensibility, which, now morally degenerated, tend to their own particular ends and subject man to an internal division in his nature. It is true that baptism cancels original sin, but the tendency to disorder (concupiscence) is not thus removed, just as the inclination to evil remains an object of moral struggle, through which the Christian must show himself a *miles Christi*, a soldier of Christ. With the help of the supernatural gift of grace it is possible to attain a state of complete moral order, even if only a very few—the saints in their perfection—attain this state. In this struggle the “old man” must be crucified with Christ, so as to die to sin, to be resurrected as a new man, a new creature.¹

If the image and likeness to God remained intact in man still today, human nature would not be corrupted and disposed towards sin—the intervention of grace would not be indispensable. The human will would be sufficiently strong by itself to conquer temptations and sanctify man, leading him to Paradise.²

The novelty introduced into the theological Tradition by the Pope contradicts a fundamental premise of the Faith, that is, the fragility of human nature and its tendency towards sin, which is confronted by the entire history of mankind and everyone’s individual experience. The Catholic Church considers man as he is, and not as he would like to be. It is therefore impossible that this sinful man could have conserved intact in himself his “likeness” to God, which would make fallen man akin to God. Furthermore, if sinful man were still like unto God, then God would also resemble fallen man and sin would be in God as in man. And thus, since God is the first cause and origin of everything, evil would have to be eternal in the nature of God. One might then deduce a Manichean dualism of good and evil within the divinity.

The book of Genesis, however, gives no support to this interpretation. Adam and Eve disobey an explicit command of God, and the sin of the progenitors begets sinful humanity. Yahweh-Elohim had warned Adam: “You may eat of all the trees of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you must not eat, because on the day when you shall eat of it, you will surely die.” In acquiring knowledge of good and evil man wanted to make himself autonomous of his Creator, and “to determine, by virtue of his own nature, what is good and bad” (St. Thomas). This sin of “ethical autonomy” is at the origin of all future sins and errors, because man, apart from being subject to temptations of the flesh and the spirit, is not omniscient and learns only a little and with great effort. As St. Augustine says, “we try to find, but we find only the possibility of searching without end.” It is not necessary that one be a Catholic in order to recognize the consequences of an absolute humanism, in which man is a “principle in himself” and considers himself the infallible source of law. However, the punishment of our ancestors was to leave them to the consequences of their free choice. Having chosen ethical autonomy, they are independent of God and cannot remain in His company in the garden of Eden.

Why did Yahweh, knowing that man would disobey him, leave him free to choose? Because He had created man in His image and likeness, that is to say free and responsible. Not, however, *autonomous: man* would have to show that he deserved liberty, making good use of it by obeying the Father, who is the Good in Himself, the perfect Good. In so doing man would never have erred. But, despite the warning and the prohibition of Yahweh, man chose his freedom.

Judaism Is Resolute in Its Error of Denying Original Sin

Judaism lacks full comprehension of the problem and limits itself to a literal interpretation of the words of Yahweh on the punishment of the progenitors. Evicted from the earthly Paradise and cast into a world into which death has entered because of their sin, Adam was obliged to win his bread with the sweat of his brow while Eve gave birth with hardship and was subject to her husband. In recompense, in view of the errors of all humanity, Yahweh gave Moses an eternal law, valid and obligatory for everyone. According to the Jews, the just man, by scrupulously following the Torah, will receive his recompense in this life and beyond. In other words, the just man finds sufficient strength in his own nature to obey the Law and to save himself. Grace is not indispensable, and thus the mystery of the Redemption in its Catholic sense is inconceivable for the Jews.

Thus Jewish anthropology is optimistic with regard to the nature of man: sin has not corrupted the nature of Yahweh’s creature, and the Law saves. After 19 centuries of Catholic theology, the “New Theology” of Pope John Paul II has made an about-face and has in fact aligned itself with the Jews, without any concern about the consequences deriving from renouncing the position of the story of humanity. The Jews, on the contrary, renounce nothing. They remain decided to follow the Torah and not to follow Christ, whose necessity they do not recognize. For them the covenant between Yahweh and Israel—the one and only people of God—is still valid, because nothing has changed. They notice with satisfaction that the Catholic Church, by contrast, has “changed,” and has now embraced their point of view.

Judaism thus maintains its internal coherence by rejecting Jesus Christ. “Christian interpreters, allying themselves with the literal sense of the story of the garden of Eden,” as Ben Zion Bokser writes,

generally find there a doctrine indicative of a fatalistic depravation. The sin of Adam in eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge is understood as a contamination of the entire human race after him, for all generations to follow. This fatalism is absent from the Jewish view... Man has the strength to fight and conquer temptation and to become always more acceptable to God... According to the biblical narration, the sin of Adam does not derive from a substantial impulse of the human nature, but from accidental causes, from a conspiracy against him on the part of an eternal tempter. As Rabbi Kook explains, “It is in accord with reason that a mistake caused by accidental circumstances be susceptible of reparation, by virtue of which man can definitively re-attain his elevated position.” The story of the fall of Adam expresses in allegorical form the constant necessity that man be vigilant against temptation.³

And further:

Since the crucifixion of Jesus happened at the same time as the destruction of the Temple, Christian theologians slowly elaborated the theory that Jesus was the new and most perfect sacrifice, capable of obtaining the grace of God. This interpretation found its most radical expression in the Catholic Mass, the central meaning of which is the renewal of the sacrifice of Jesus. The priest offers the body and the blood of Jesus, miraculously transformed from water and wine: this sacrifice is repeated daily and represents the one and only means by which man can attain the grace of God.⁴

According to Ben Zion Bokser and every Jew, the Catholic faith in the God-Man is particularly repugnant from the point of view of someone who believes in a single God, and the death of Jesus Christ cannot be invoked or offered as an expiatory sacrifice for attaining the salvation of humanity. It is rather evidence of a failure of nerve among many Jews—principally the disciples of Jesus—after the destruction of the Temple. In his introduction to Ben Zion Bokser’s book, Paul Sacchi notes that, according to the Catholic interpretation which, he says, “must have originated in some Jewish circle,” by his sin Adam corrupted his own nature and, in his own, the nature of all his descendants, who thus are collectively damned. Judaism rejected this interpretation since the first centuries after Christ. The problem was probably never posed with precision before the Christian position was taken.⁵

A Judaizing Church?

The Jewish awareness of the importance of the consequences of original sin is of great importance. If human nature is uncorrupted and the Law saves, no further extraordinary intervention of Yahweh in history is necessary—the Incarnation, the Passion, the Church, the daily renewal of the unique sacrifice of Christ, sanctifying grace, all are superfluous, and, today as yesterday, there is no need of a pope. Ben Zion Bokser understands the necessary and unchangeable logic of the Catholic belief in the corruption of human nature because of original sin. How can a pope excuse himself from this logic of the Faith which even the Jews understand perfectly? Has the Church somehow been converted to Judaism? Are the Jews thus “our elder brothers” (the title the Pope applies to them) in the specific sense that their election remains efficacious, placing them in a position of superiority and responsibility before God for the guidance of all humanity? Let us examine the encyclical to determine whether and how this brief but weighty passage is theologically justified.

In fact, Pope John Paul II does not explicitly deny that original sin has corrupted human nature, making the Incarnation of the Word indispensable. Rather he announces a new action of the mystery of the Redemption, although the Pope, at the same time, denies the Scriptural foundation, and even less founded on Catholic theology. The encyclical cites only Genesis 1:28, which promises to Adam and Eve before the Fall. St. Paul is not cited and the “authoritative” source for John Paul II is the Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* [i.e., henceforth *GS*].

Pope John Paul II in Line with the Council

The Pope does in fact rely on the Second Vatican Council in order to develop its premises in his own peculiar conception of the Redemption which, changing the relationship between man and God, alters the meaning of history.⁶ In § 13 of *Redemptor Hominis* [henceforth *RH*] he cites §22 of *GS*: “For, by his incarnation, he, the son of God, has in a certain way *united himself with each man*”

[Emphasis is in original of *RH*; though not in *GS-Ed*] It is noteworthy that the Council expressed itself without dogmatic precision, introducing a factor of indeterminacy and uncertainty. The union was achieved “in a certain way,” but in what way and with what consequences? It is precisely this indeterminacy which permitted Pope John Paul II to define his personal conception of the Redemption in these terms, which we transcribe in their entirety:

We are dealing with “each” man, for each one is included in the mystery of the Redemption and with each one Christ has united Himself for ever through this mystery. Every man comes into the world through being conceived in his mother’s womb and being born of his mother, and precisely on account of the mystery of the Redemption is entrusted to the solicitude of the Church. Her solicitude is about the whole man and is focused on him in an altogether special manner. The object of her care is *man in his unique unrepeatable human reality, which keeps intact the image and likeness of God Himself* [emphasis mine]. The Council points out this very fact when, speaking of that likeness, it recalls that “man is the only creature on earth that God has willed for itself”⁷ [i.e., not for *Himself-Ed*].

According to the Council, therefore, God desired that this exceptional creature—man—have his reason for being not in the Creator, but in himself. God created man not only free, but autonomous.

The statement is manifestly absurd and incompatible with the very notion of a divine creation out of nothing, which is a dogma of the Faith. It contains a patent theological error, since God has created all things, as it has always been taught, for Himself, for His own glory, and not because of some value that His creation would possess intrinsically and thus independently of the God who created it.⁸

In keeping with the Council, for which man is a creature having his end in himself and not in God, Pope John Paul II affirms that man remains in the image and likeness of God. Indeed, if man has been created for himself, why should he not act in accord with his own nature and make himself autonomous, determining for himself what is good and what is evil? From this perspective the serpent did not deceive Adam and Eve when he tempted them, saying, “Elohim knows that on the day when you shall eat of it, your eyes will then be opened and you will become like Elohim, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). The eating of the forbidden fruit, in fact, would correspond to the finality and the possibility of the creature, and could not have constituted a perversion of its nature. In conclusion, the consequences of sin for the nature of the human race would be insubstantial.

The Absurdity of an Unconscious Redemption

Following the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John Paul II can safely proceed to clarify in his own way that there is no contradiction between the Christian conception of hereditary original sin and the affirmation of its non-existence in the man of today:

Man as “willed” by God, as “chosen” by Him from eternity and called, destined for grace and glory; this is “each” man, “the most concrete” man, “the most real”; this is man in all the fullness of the mystery of which he has become a sharer in Jesus Christ, the mystery in which each one of the four thousand million human beings living on our planet has become a sharer from the moment he is conceived...⁹

The following Section 14, titled “For the Church All Ways Lead to Man,” reaches the climactic conclusion:

This man is the way for the Church—a way that, in a sense, is the basis of all other ways that the Church must walk—because man—every man without any exception whatever—has been redeemed by Christ, and because with man—with each man without any exception whatever—Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it: “Christ, who died and was raised up for all, provides man”—each man and every man—“with the light and strength to measure up to his supreme calling.”

This seems to be a condensation of the meaning of an encyclical which subverts the logic of Catholicism and dissolves the meaning of the Catholic Church.

Diverse concepts follow one another, become entangled and confused in these few words:

- 1) the man of today is man as he was originally willed by God, original sin notwithstanding;
- 2) this is possible because every man, without any exception, has been redeemed by Christ;
- 3) the Redemption took place because Christ has united himself “in a certain way” to every man;
- 4) every man is redeemed from the moment of conception, even when he is unconscious of this fact.

With this chain of statements (without reference to Sacred Scripture, Tradition, dogma, doctrine, or common sense) Pope John Paul II supposes that he has explained why it is that the image and likeness with God Himself has remained intact in man.

The redemption of every man is thus accomplished from the moment of his conception, even when man is not conscious of it because Christ has united himself and continues to unite himself “in a certain way” to every man. This general statement does not in fact explain the manner of union between Jesus Christ and man, and thus it does not explain the Redemption. What does “redeemed” mean for the “Holy Father”? The word is synonymous for “saved”; thus every man is guaranteed eternal salvation and the beatific vision of God in Paradise already from the moment of his conception, for the sole merit of having been conceived. Man is conceived and redeemed at the same time, without any participation of his own.

Given the indeterminacy of the concepts of His Holiness, it is difficult to understand what he means by “redemption” and the “certain way” of union between the Son of God and man. The only possible explanation of the Pope’s thinking is that Christ unites himself to every man and redeems him because with the Incarnation He received a human nature from the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and that this event, making Him enter into human history, united all humanity to Him until the end of time. No other interpretation seems possible.⁹

If this is the fundamental presupposition of the Pope’s thinking (and other hypotheses seem impossible), it runs into insurmountable logical difficulties. While the conception of a man is a natural fact, the conception of Jesus of Nazareth was supernatural. The Word assumed flesh through a woman, the Virgin Mary, and became a true man through the work of the Holy Ghost. Joseph was the putative father, God the Father the true father. The Word entered history as the son of Mary, a Hebrew descended from David, all the while remaining the *natural* Son of God. In order for man to become, in his turn, the *adoptive* son of God, he undergoes a second, supernatural birth through baptism.

Jesus answered, and said to him: Amen, amen I want to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith to him: How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born again? Jesus answered: Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (Jn. 3:3-5)

Furthermore, the Incarnation, which is the abasement and the humiliation of the Word in flesh, does not automatically entail universal redemption. It was further necessary that He accept death on the Cross at the hands of men.

Even as the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a redemption for many. (Mt. 20:28; Denzinger §790)

Likewise we shall not rise with Christ if we do not accept to suffer with Christ.

And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ; yet so, if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him. (Rom. 8:17)

Finally, universality applies to *objective* redemption, not to *subjective* redemption. The Redemption, which cannot be reduced to the Incarnation alone, is indeed by itself sufficient to save all men, but for each individual man to be saved [i.e., subjective efficacy—*Ed*], it is necessary that he cooperate with grace. St. Augustine says: “Although God made you without your knowledge, he does not save you against your will” (*Serm.* 169.3).

If the union of Christ with men had come about on the natural level, it would have determined a generic link of biological parenthood, in the same way that one can say that all men are brothers by nature and make up a single family. Even in the so-called “human family,” natural union *alone* is not sufficient to make fraternal communion possible because no individual man is the human species itself. Though it is the materialistic presupposition of modern democracies, men *are not* a product of the material evolution of the human species [i.e., that is why they are *not* equal as individuals]. On the contrary, living humanity is fractured into billions of individuals who do not make up a collective nature nor naturally unite among themselves, but who have associated with one another throughout history on the basis of values, principles, and mutual interests in states, civil societies, religions, etc. History records as many conflicts as fraternal collaborations. Every individual of the human species is a fractionary unity, and a part that cannot be the whole. Man does not find unity simply in the flesh, least of all in the Church. *Union with Jesus Christ and with the other members of the Catholic Church is a supernatural communion of divine life and a commonality of supernatural goods*. The mission of the Catholic Church is to conduct all men in the way of conversion and communion in God. To presume that every man—just because he is human—has already been redeemed, without his awareness, without grace and without the Catholic Church, is to deny the Catholic Church’s reason for being. It is to desire the suicide of the Church.

The Orthodox Doctrine of the Church

The Incarnation, that is, the association to divine nature of an individual human nature in the unique Person of the Word, does not determine the automatic communion of every human nature with that divine nature. No man is redeemed by virtue of mere biological parentage. To the abasement and humiliation of the Son of God in the flesh should correspond each man’s voluntary ascent to God through following of Christ. The Incarnation was only the beginning of a process [the life and death of Jesus Christ—*Ed*] which permits every man through conscious docility to grace to divinize himself through participation in baptism, taking up his own cross, and following Christ. The Catholic Church is a community of baptized persons. She re-presents every day the Eucharistic sacrifice through which each baptized grows in union with Christ, eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood, to daily remEDIATE the consequences of original sin. This was the Catholic belief until the *Novus Ordo Missae* of Pope Paul VI decreed that “the celebration of the Lord, or the Mass, is the holy assembly or meeting of the people of God under the presidency of the priest in order to celebrate the memorial of the Lord.” The Mass of the Second Vatican Council, therefore, according to its definition in §7 [of the original Instruction], does not renew the sacrifice of the Lord, but limits itself to celebrating its memory. Was it intended to signify the uselessness of the renewal of the sacrifice of the Lord in the face of the universal redemption already taken place?

From Bad Theology to a New Ecumenism

The “New Theology” of Pope John Paul II has determined his political action in the contemporary world. The unity of the human race can no longer be attained merely through the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, because a greater, natural unity exists: that of the human race, in which are present the *semina Verbi* [i.e., the seeds of the Word] which fertilize all religions and make them valid instruments of salvation. *RH* [§12] opportunely recalls that

[t]hanks to this unity we can together come close to the magnificent heritage of the human spirit that has been manifested in all religions, as the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration *Nostra Aetate* says.

Baptism is no longer a necessary condition for eliminating the blot of original sin, because Jesus Christ has achieved the redemption of every man *a priori*, already from conception in the womb. Whence arises the “faith” in dialogue, through which all Christians—even those who may be anonymous Christians—know and recognize themselves, and all are saved.¹⁰ This confusing, universalistic dream brings to mind the Tower of Babel. More simply put, this is the *aggiornamento* or updating of the Church, “renewed” by the humanitarian philanthropy shared by Illuminism, Masonry, Wilson’s League of Nations, the United Nations.¹¹ This is the spirit of the age. To renew and “update” herself, the Catholic Church has plunged into the past, the worst of the past, the most bygone past.

Dalmatius

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¹ From *La Religione Cristiana*, edited by Oskar Simmel, Encyclopaedia Feltrinelli Fischer (1962), under the heading “*Uoma*” [“Man”], p.377.
² The error of Pelagius is of a similar character.
³ Ben Zion Bokser, *Il Giudaismo* (Ed. II Mulino, 1969), pp. 167-68.
⁴ *Ibid.*, p.233.
⁵ *Ibid.*, p.xv.
⁶ Likewise in the declaration *Dominus Jesus* of 2001, Pope John Paul II relies on a conciliar text in order to deviate from the correct teaching on original sin and to uphold the heterodox teaching of “universal redemption,” as Fr. Johannes Dornmann explains in *SiSiNoNo* (Italian edition, p.4) of March 15, 2001:
The text of Vatican II alluded as support for the *Declaration* (GS §22) does not teach Catholic doctrine. The text is cited as follows: the Second Vatican Council affirms that Christ, the “new Adam,” “image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15) “is the perfect man, who has restored to the sons of Adam that likeness to God that was made deformed already in the beginning because of sin.” Now, according to the doctrine of the Incarnation, the supernatural likeness of Adam to God was not “made deformed” by the first sin but was lost to the descendants of Adam because of original sin. If, on the contrary, this resemblance with God was not lost after the first sin, but was merely “made deformed,” then the likeness with God would have remained in man even after original sin, albeit in a diminished manner. But this doctrine is not Catholic; it is merely a variant of the heterodox theory by which grace is given *a priori* to all men.
⁷ *Gaudium et Spes* (§24). In this encyclical the Pope in fact gives the authentic interpretation of the conciliar statement.
⁸ Paolo Pasqualucci, *Politico e Religione* (Rome: Antonio Pellicani Editore, 2001), p.59. See also Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum* (Italian edition, Milan: Napoli, 1987), pp.205-7.
⁹ Fr. Johannes Dornmann has analyzed the axiom of universal redemption, which is the foundation of the theology and political action of Pope John Paul II. He cites §14 of *Redemptor Hominis* in his study of that encyclical: “This man is the first road that the Church must cross in the completion of her mission, a path traced out by Christ himself, a path that immediately passes through the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Redemption.” Since the Holy Father had previously affirmed that “Jesus Christ is the principal way of the Church,” Fr. Dornmann asks which is the unique way of the Church—Christ or man? The solution is in the union of the two ways through the effect of the union of the Son of God with every man, without specifying the relation of the two passages through the Incarnation. Fr. Dornmann writes that, for the Pope,
this union is the *a priori* revelation by which every man possesses “existence *a priori*” and *a priori* together with his specific and integral humanity. This is so because the redeemed man is “the first road and the fundamental road of the Church,” and the foundation of all her activity. To this *a priori* revelation corresponds *the a posteriori* historical revelation in Christ. This consists in the fact that Christ “fully reveals man to himself,” which is to say that he makes him conscious of his true and redeemed humanity. “He does it through the fundamental road of the Father and of his love.”
¹⁰ Paolo Pasqualucci, *op cit.* p.56:
The first article of *Lumen Gentium* attributes to the “Church of Christ” the universal mission of being a “sign and instrument of the intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.” The Church can make its own contribution to the process of [exterior] unification of the world, considered in the course of its actuation, by helping the world attain “full unity in Christ” (see GS §42: promotion of the unity of the human race “corresponds to the intimate mission of the Church”).
¹¹ The radical attack on Christianity begins in fact with Rousseau, who denied the depravity of man. For him human nature was fundamentally good, and had been corrupted only by civilization, which removed man from an original state of natural plenitude. Pope John Paul II and the post-conciliar Church are influenced by the false and sentimental humanitarian philosophy of Jean Jacques Rousseau.