

Reflections on *Humanae Vitae* in the Light of *Fides et Ratio*

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IN A MOVIE called *Castaway*, Tom Hanks is marooned on a remote island in the South Pacific after a plane crash. With the help of the contents of a few FEDEX packages washed ashore with him, he builds a shelter and starts planning his escape. A reef against which the surf crashes prevents him from getting beyond the enclosed lagoon to the ocean. All the ingenuity he can muster will not allow him to surmount the wall of foam. His makeshift raft is continuously tossed back to the island. After four years, during which he comes to the point of suicidal despair, the sea gives up a large metal sheet from beyond the reef. At last he is able to build a raft using the metal sheet as a sail, which carries him over the reef. For four years the castaway had studied the seasons, the wind, and the waves. Armed with this knowledge, and a boundless faith in life itself, he sails out into the ocean and the whole wide world is once again open to him.

In the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II calls the preaching of Christ crucified and risen “the reef upon which the link between the faith and philosophy can break up, but it is also the reef beyond which the two can set forth upon the boundless ocean of truth. Here we see not only the border between reason and faith, but also the space where the two may meet.”¹ Man cannot escape the horizon of his own limited existence through reason alone. He needs the revelation that comes from beyond if he is to know “the boundless ocean of truth.” The key, as John Paul II says, is the preaching of Christ crucified.

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, §23.

Although *Fides et Ratio* was promulgated in 1998, thirty years after *Humanae Vitae*² and fourteen after John Paul II's own *Reflections on Humanae Vitae* in what is called the Catechesis on the Theology of the Body, it bears, it seems to me, a direct relation to both.³ Besides the task imposed on bishops to give witness to the truth, John Paul II gives the following reasons for promulgating *Fides et Ratio*:

In my encyclical letter *Veritatis Splendor*, I drew attention to "certain fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine which, in the present circumstances, risk being distorted or denied." In the present letter I wish to pursue that reflection on the theme of truth itself and on its foundation in relation to faith. (*FR*, §6)

Later in the same paragraph of *Veritatis Splendor* the pope states: "It is no longer a matter of limited and occasional dissent, but of an overall and systematic calling into question of traditional moral doctrine on the basis of certain anthropological and ethical presuppositions."⁴ The section goes on to say that the Church's magisterial teaching on moral matters and the natural law is simply rejected in favor of a private morality. At the heart of this dissent has been opposition to the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. It is well known that proportionalism and consequentialism were devised as

² Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (1968).

³ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006). It is interesting to note the close relationship in time of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical letter recommending the study of the metaphysics of Aquinas, *Aeterni Patris* (1879), and the encyclical on marriage, *Arcanum* (1880) without any intervening encyclical. Both occurred at the beginning of his pontificate at a time when contraception in the form of the condom first became widespread in industrial society thanks to the vulcanization of rubber in 1843, although John Noonan notes that Rome responded mostly to requests from French clergy for clarification on increasing use of "onanism" for birth control (John Noonan, *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986], 397). A secular author, Rudolph Binion, in an extensive review of European novelists of the period, reveals the antagonistic attitude toward the family, which both fueled contraception and was fueled by it. He concludes: "In Europe at large, contraception was felt to be a first decisive step away from the family" (Rudolph Binion, *Past Impersonal: Group Process in Human History* [DeKalb, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005], 30). The First Vatican Council issued only two documents, *Dei Filius* (1870) on revelation, faith, and the relation of faith and reason and the First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ (1870), concerned exclusively with the apostolic primacy of Peter and papal infallibility, which proved of inestimable importance in the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae* by Pope Paul VI in 1968.

⁴ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), §4.

moral arguments in order to undermine the reaffirmation by Paul VI of the Church's unbroken teaching on the proper regulation of births.⁵

In *Veritatis Splendor*, John Paul II takes up the question of the good and its relation to truth and freedom. Its primary focus is morality as it is related to the natural law and to Christian precepts. Its final chapter proposes the crucified Christ as revealing "the authentic meaning of freedom; he lives it fully in the total gift of himself and calls his disciples to share in his freedom" (VS, §85). Christ reveals that the open acceptance of truth is "the condition for authentic freedom" (VS, §87), and freedom which is rooted in the truth about man "is ultimately directed toward communion" (VS, §86). The encyclical then moves from a consideration of the nature of the good and its separation from truth to "the more serious and destructive dichotomy" which separates faith from morality (VS, §88).

It is in order to address this dichotomy of the separation of faith not only from morality but from truth itself that John Paul II pens the encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*.⁶ So I propose that there is a direct link between this encyclical and the challenge of responsible parenthood addressed in Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*. Dissent from that encyclical has struck at the foundations not only of Christian morality and the authority of the Magisterium but of truth itself, both philosophical and theological. This is not to mention an assault on Christian anthropology and the family, which John Paul II addressed in the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (1995) and in the apostolic exhortations, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) and *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1987).

In this essay I wish to focus on the methodology that John Paul II employs in his Catechesis on Human Love, a work that was particularly

⁵ William E. May traces the roots of the rejection of moral absolutes and the rise of a revisionist moral theology to arguments presented to justify contraception in the Majority Report of Pope Paul VI's Birth Control Commission set up during Vatican Council II to study the licitness of the hormonal pill for spacing births. Among the revisionist theologians, May includes Franz Bockle, Charles E. Curran, Josef Fuchs, Bernard Haring, Louis Janssens, Richard McCormick, Timothy E. O'Connell, Richard Gula, Franz Scholz, and Bruno Schuller. Among important arguments they used are the "preference" principle or principle of proportionate good, and the historicity of human existence principle. See William E. May, *An Introduction to Moral Theology* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994), 107–27. *Veritatis Splendor* critiques erroneous views of the relationship between law and freedom, natural law and freedom, conscience and the Magisterium, which have subverted the Church's teaching as found in *Humanae Vitae* (VS, §§54–83).

⁶ Livio Melina proposes that "*Fides et Ratio* can therefore be read inter alia as a particular development of the teaching of *Veritatis Splendor*" (Melina, "The 'Truth about the Good': Practical Reason, Philosophical Ethics, and Moral Theology," *Communio* 26 [1999]: 641).

designed to respond to the questions raised by *Humanae Vitae*, as he himself states in the last homily:

If I draw particular attention precisely to these final catecheses, I do so not only because the topic discussed by them is more closely connected with our present age, but first of all because *it is from this topic that the questions spring* that run in some way through the whole of our reflections. . . . In some sense, that part, which in the overall disposition is located at the end, is at the same time found at the beginning of that whole. This is important from the point of view of structure and method.⁷

After a consideration of the methodology the pope employs in the catechesis, I shall show how it is a demonstration, as it were, of the principles he recommends in *Fides et Ratio* for the correct relationship between faith and reason.⁸ In the conclusion I shall propose that the Church's teaching on sexual morality as expressed in *Humanae Vitae*, far from being a peripheral moral issue as the proponents of contraception maintain, is central to faith, life, and worship.

The Question of Method

Carl Anderson has said that *Humanae Vitae* is the last encyclical addressed to the modern engagement with reasoned argument.⁹ Paul VI, in referring to the inseparability of the unitive and procreative meanings of human sexuality, wrote: "We believe that the men of our day are particularly capa-

⁷ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §133:4 (November 28, 1984), original emphasis.

⁸ Charles Curran, a major dissenter from *Humanae Vitae*, fully understands the critical role played by methodology. In *The Moral Theology of John Paul II* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), he attacks John Paul II's theological suppositions to discredit his teaching especially on marriage, sexuality, gender, and family. He singles out the methodology of the catechesis on the theology of the body as a major source of his critique: 4, 5. For a critique of Curran's book on John Paul II's moral theology, see E. Christian Brugger and William E. May, "John Paul II's Moral Theology on Trial: A Reply to Charles E. Curran," *The Thomist* 69 (2005): 279–312. For a wide-ranging critique of Curran's moral theology see John McDermott, S.J., "Charles Curran's Moral Theology: Foundational Sexual Ethics," *Anthropotes: Rivista di Studi sulla Persona e la Famiglia* 23 (2007): 167–225.

⁹ Carl Anderson, "Political Reflections on *Humanae Vitae*," paper given at the Theological and Pastoral Congress on the 25th Anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, Pontifical Council on the Family, Rome, Italy, November 24–26, 1993. Anderson states: "The discourse of *Humanae Vitae* presupposes a certain social consensus which no longer exists. That former consensus included a confidence in human reason to find moral truths, an appreciation of procreation as a good of marriage and of marriage itself as a unique and stable institution" (15).

ble of seizing the deeply reasonable and human character of this fundamental principle.”¹⁰ The uproar of dissent both within the Church and secular society showed clearly that reason was no longer sufficient to convince contemporary man, who has lost faith in the very power of reason to arrive at truth. Clearly a different approach was needed.

In his Catechesis on Human Love, John Paul II gives primacy to revelation in discerning the truth and meaning of human sexuality. The first part of the catechesis is devoted to the words of Christ. Guided by the text of Genesis 1:1 to 4:1, John Paul II traces the way Adam comes to the truth about God, the world, and himself and demonstrates the critical relationship between objective and subjective truth, faith and reason.

There are two key Scripture passages through which John Paul II addresses the question of methodology in the Wednesday catechesis. The first is Jesus’ response to the Pharisees on the question of divorce, which Moses allowed: “Because of the hardness of your heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, *but from the beginning it was not so*” (Mt 19:3–8).¹¹ John Paul II comments that Christ wants to change the level of discussion from questions of casuistry to the meaning and purpose of the creation of man and woman, that is to say to marriage in the “beginning.”

The second passage, also quoting the words of Christ, occurs in the discussion of the resurrection. This time he is addressing the Sadducees, who deny the resurrection by proposing a fictitious scenario. Christ responds: “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Mt 22:9).¹² John Paul II comments:

Without any doubt, the Sadducees treat the question of the resurrection as a type of theory or hypothesis that can be refuted. Jesus first shows them a mistake in their method: *they do not know the Scriptures*; and then an error of substance: they do not accept what is revealed by the Scriptures—*since they do not know the power of God*—they do not believe in the one who revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush.¹³

In both cases Christ himself has pointed out the error in method, in the first place of giving a primacy to abstract reason over faith in the Word of God and in the second place of not believing in the Source itself of Scripture. John Paul II will follow Christ’s own methodology in both the Catechesis on Human Love and in *Fides et Ratio*. In the former he is seeking

¹⁰ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, §12.

¹¹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §2:2 (September 5, 1979).

¹² *Ibid.*, §65:1 (November 18, 1981).

¹³ *Ibid.*, §65:3 (November 18, 1981), original emphasis.

to discover the truth of God's plan for human sexuality, and in the latter he is setting forth the correct method for coming to truth both by faith and reason. In the catechesis he *demonstrates* the correct method for coming to truth; in *Fides et Ratio* he *articulates* its principles.

It is precisely the error in method that John Paul II addresses in *Fides et Ratio*, the relation between faith and reason. And it is precisely by addressing the questions raised by *Humanae Vitae* from the perspective of faith as well as reason in the Catechesis on Human Love that John Paul II shows how, far from being a restriction on human freedom, the Church's teaching opens up vistas beyond human reason to reveal man's exalted destiny to participate in divine Trinitarian life. At the beginning of *Fides et Ratio* John Paul II posits the link between faith, reason, and life by commenting that the answer to the questions on the meaning of life "decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives" (*FR*, §1). The encyclical answers the pressing need for "a foundation for personal and communal life" (*FR*, §6) of which marriage and family are the most common path. In other words the pope is saying that what a person believes has a profound effect on the way life is lived.

The Methodology of the Wednesday Catechesis on the Theology of the Body

Michael Waldstein, translator of the new English edition of the Wednesday catechesis, has given a comprehensive and helpful account of its structure and method.¹⁴ But here we are concerned with the nature of the relationship between reason and faith in addressing the questions raised by *Humanae Vitae*. By choosing to begin with the words of Christ, John Paul II gives primacy to knowledge through faith. At the same time he finds in the Genesis text the ultimate justification of the path to truth of both faith and reason. Both meet in the human person, and this is a critical concept that he will develop in *Fides et Ratio*, especially §32, which follows a general discussion on the way men come to truth, by abstract reason and also by trust in knowledge previously acquired since it is not possible to verify every truth personally. So the one who seeks truth is also the one who believes. And this truth comes by way of a personal relationship. It involves not simply the person's capacity to know but his capacity to entrust himself to another person.

From the beginning of his catechesis on Genesis, John Paul II makes use of philosophy to illuminate the text. This is immediately noticeable in the second catechesis which recounts the priestly account of the

¹⁴ See the introduction by Michael Waldstein, John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 105–28.

creation of man, made in the image of God. First of all he emphasizes that while the priestly account is “*theological* in character,” since it defines man as made in the image of God, it also has a “powerful metaphysical content.”¹⁵ Man is defined in a more metaphysical than physical way. John Paul II states that “this text of Genesis has become the source of the deepest inspirations for the thinkers who have sought to understand ‘being’ and ‘existing.’”¹⁶ We see here the emphasis on a metaphysics of being as fundamental to any philosophical account of the nature of man and the cosmos.¹⁷ The Genesis text also shows the convertibility of being and the good (*ens et bonum convertuntur*). Such convertibility is, he says, “an incontrovertible point of reference and solid basis of a metaphysics and also for an anthropology and an ethics.”¹⁸

Without understanding the grounding of the Wednesday catechesis on the primacy of objective reality, “free from any trace of subjectivism,”¹⁹ it is not possible to interpret correctly the pope’s emphasis on the subjective aspect of man’s experience in the Yahwist account of creation. Later in *Fides et Ratio* John Paul II makes it abundantly clear that any development in philosophical method must always build on the foundation of a metaphysics of being.²⁰

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §§2:4, 5 (September 12, 1979).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* §2:4.

¹⁷ In criticizing the English translation from the Polish of *The Acting Person* for obscuring the extent to which Karol Wojtyła’s ethics is steeped in the metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas, Kenneth Schmitz states that it is the view of Wojtyła himself that “the metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas, however accommodated to the present situation, is an indispensable ingredient in ethical analysis” (Kenneth Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama* [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993], 61).

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §2:5 (September 12, 1979). Kenneth Schmitz has shown how the philosopher Karol Wojtyła considered the relationship of being, truth, and goodness as the “most original teaching of Thomas.” The good is inextricably bound up with existence (Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama*, 52; see also 51).

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §2:4 (September 12, 1979). In *Fides et Ratio* John Paul II emphasizes that “metaphysics . . . plays an essential role of mediation in theological research. . . . If I insist so strongly on the metaphysical element, it is because I am convinced that it is the path to be taken in order to move beyond the crisis pervading large sectors of philosophy at the moment, and thus to correct certain mistaken modes of behavior now widespread in society” (*FR*, §83).

²⁰ The inadequate subjectivism of the phenomenology of Max Scheler is attributed by Karol Wojtyła to the absence of a metaphysics of being: see Wojtyła, “The Problem of the Separation of Experience from the Act in Ethics in the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Max Scheler,” in Wojtyła, *Person and Community*, trans. Theresa Sandok (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 23–44. For a superb account

John Paul II describes the Yahwist account as above all presenting man in the aspect of his subjectivity, a person who knows, wills, and acts. For John Paul II, being a subject includes the traditional philosophical definition of man as a rational animal.²¹ It also includes the dimension of consciousness. The text, he says, is “the first witness of human consciousness.”²² From the point of view of John Paul II’s methodology in uniting faith and reason, as well as knitting modern insights of interiority onto the traditional definition of man as a rational substance, the Yahwist text is extremely important.

Without going into great detail on his methodology—that has been dealt with elsewhere²³—in his philosophy he points out that the Boethian definition of man is the “metaphysical terrain”²⁴ in which human subjectivity is realized. Human action is conscious action. The human person is not only the one who acts but the one who knows and experiences himself as acting. Scholastics did not develop the unique significance of consciousness for subjectivity. The human being is not just a member of the genus “rational animal,” a human *suppositum*, but a unique individual. The dynamism of action helps us to understand human subjectivity since consciousness accompanies action.

The individual’s whole development . . . tends toward the emergence of the person and personal subjectivity in the human *suppositum*. In this way, somehow on the basis of this *suppositum*, the human self gradually both discloses itself and in disclosing itself constitutes itself—and it discloses itself also by constituting itself.²⁵

Consciousness is essential, says Wojtyla, for understanding the human self. The person not only knows that he knows and acts but *experiences* himself as knowing and acting. The *suppositum* must manifest itself as personal

of a contemporary account of the metaphysics of being, drawing primarily on Thomas Aquinas, see Kenneth Schmitz, “Human Nature and Human Culture,” unpublished paper given at Catholic University of America, March 2008.

²¹ See John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §5:5, note 10 (October 10, 1979).

²² *Ibid.*, §3:1 (September 19, 1979).

²³ See Mary Shivanandan, “Subjectivity and the Order of Love,” *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* 1 (2001): 251–71, esp. 253–59 and 262–64. Specific articles by Karol Wojtyla on subjectivity can be found in his *Person and Community*, namely “The Personal Structure of Self Determination,” 187–95; “Subjectivity and the Irreducibility in the Human Being,” 209–17; and “The Person: Subject and Community,” 219–61.

²⁴ Wojtyla, “Subjectivity and the Irreducible in the Human Being,” 212.

²⁵ Wojtyla, “The Person: Subject and Community,” 225.

subjectivity. Not only is the human being a person by nature, but subjectivity also belongs to him by nature.²⁶ It is in his interpretation of the Yahwist text that the full significance of John Paul II's philosophical investigations for theology, using phenomenology as a method but without in any way reducing the metaphysical content, becomes apparent.

Knowledge as Encounter

It is significant that he begins with the Yahwist phrase, "‘It is not good that man’ (male) ‘should be alone; I want to make him a help similar to himself’ (Gen 2:18)."²⁷ The starting point is one directly concerned with relationship or the lack thereof. It is within the context of relationship that man comes to knowledge of himself and the world. When the pope talks of man's consciousness, he rejects categorically the disembodied consciousness of an autonomous self. Knowledge comes through an encounter with objective reality, whether the cosmos, himself, or another human being.²⁸ It comes by way of experience, our ordinary human experiences. The appeal to experience is fundamental because man is a body. He goes so far as to say that "our experience is in some way a legitimate means for theological interpretation."²⁹ In a footnote he elaborates on the "surprising convergence" between "experience and revelation." Although faith and science are two distinct disciplines, they meet in the human person and his experience.

²⁶ The roots of consciousness are always in the *suppositum* not simply in "acts of consciousness" (ibid., 226). This assures the unity and integrity of body and soul.

²⁷ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §5:2 (October 10, 1979). In both the original Italian and the English translation, Pope John Paul II inserts the word "maschio" or "male" in reference to Gen 2:18 as well as in 2:7. This is a good example of the distinction he makes between humanity and subjectivity. Adam was created as a concrete male person but only became aware of his masculinity in the encounter with Eve. The separate creation of man and woman refers back, he says to their creation as male and female in the priestly text. See John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §3:2 (September 19, 1979).

²⁸ Angelo Scola has developed most fully the nature of knowledge as encounter in *The Nuptial Mystery*, trans. Michelle K. Borrás (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 224–27. He has coined the term "symbolic ontology" to capture the fact that being cannot be grasped directly by man. It does not mean that man cannot touch the real itself through intuition but the real communicates itself in a sign to form concepts. This encounter constitutes an event. Man must choose it in freedom, but the thing always remains other. This otherness or difference allows for relationship and encounter. Sexual difference is a primary form of otherness. See ibid., 225.

²⁹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §§4:4, 5, and §4:5, note 8 (September 26, 1979).

In the Genesis text the pope discerns three succeeding levels by which man comes to know and experience himself and his place in the world. First he discovers who he is as a person with intellect and will, different from the animals with the power to determine his own destiny. This is an existential solitude, prior to man's (male's) solitude vis-à-vis the woman (female) and common to man, male and female. It is specifically in an encounter with the physical world and his own body that he discovers his subjectivity and his contingency before God. The text, he says, "sketches man as a *person with the subjectivity characterizing the person*."³⁰ Secondly through an encounter with Eve he discovers himself as a male person ordered to a relationship of self-gift as spouse and thirdly he discovers the generative nature of his body when Eve conceives and bears a son. Indeed through the "knowledge" involved in the bodily union of the spouses the woman discovers a new dimension of her being, that of mother, while the man discovers the dimension of fatherhood.

The catecheses on knowledge and procreation are especially significant for our argument. The use of the verb "knew" for conjugal relations means that the biblical text raises the level of the act from the merely biological to the personal. There are then in the biblical understanding of "know" two aspects, intentionality and the reality of the union in one flesh. Both the husband and the wife know each other reciprocally and by doing so discover the depths of their own specific "I." Each is known as an "unrepeatable feminine or masculine 'I.'"³¹ This reciprocal knowledge, he says, "establishes a kind of personal archetype of human bodiliness and sexuality." He goes on to say that,

the "man" who for the first time "knows" the woman, his wife, in the act of conjugal union is in fact the same one who—in giving names, that is, also, by "knowing"—differentiated himself from the whole world of living beings or *animalia*, thus affirming himself as a person and a subject.³²

³⁰ Ibid., §6:1 (October 24, 1979), original emphasis. See ibid., §4:4 (September 26, 1979).

³¹ Ibid., §20:5 (March 5, 1980).

³² Ibid., §21:1 (March 12, 1980). Kenneth Schmitz has brought out well the relational dimension of knowledge, not just of one human being to another, but of things in themselves in a metaphysics of being. "Knowledge," he says, "is precisely the relation in and through which we come to know things as they are in their own being." By being intelligible to man, things are rendered explicit in themselves. This makes them available for a relationship in which they retain their own integrity. In giving themselves they also affirm their identity. See Schmitz, "Human Nature and Human Culture." According to David Schindler, "Knowing at root is but the distinctly cognitive manner of participating in the relations of love and beauty implicit in an ontology of creation" (David L. Schindler, "God

The Principles in *Fides et Ratio*

Whereas in the Wednesday catechesis John Paul II *demonstrates* the primacy of revelation in coming to know truth and the role of philosophy in illuminating faith on the one hand and reflecting on the cosmos on the other, in *Fides et Ratio* John Paul II *articulates* firstly the absolute primacy of faith, putting reason in its place as the handmaid of faith; secondly he brings out the nature of the person as the one who seeks truth; and thirdly he traces the path to truth by personal encounter, thus uniting objective and subjective truth.

Just as John Paul II begins the catechesis with the words of Christ, in *Fides et Ratio* he begins chapter one with Jesus as the revealer of the Father, an utterly gratuitous initiative on the part of God (*FR*, §7). With Christ eternity enters time. By his death and resurrection he bestows on man the divine life that Adam lost. "Through this revelation," says John Paul II, "men and women are offered the ultimate truth about their own life and about the goal of history" (*FR*, §12). The source of its credibility lies in the authority of the Revealer. It is through faith that we can penetrate the mystery. In the act of faith the person gives consummate expression to his freedom and through it "reaches the certainty of truth and chooses to live in that truth" (*FR*, §13).

In order to help reason understand, revelation presents signs, which urge reason to look beyond to deeper truths (*FR*, §13). Here John Paul II categorically states that revelation sets a point of reference not to be ignored if human life is to be understood. The reference point continually points back to God, fuller knowledge of whom can only be received by faith. Reason has the domain between these two reference points (*FR*, §14).³³

and the End of Intelligence: Knowledge as Relationship," *Communio* 26 [1999]: 527). He proposes that "knowledge is first and foremost a matter of relation, the order of which is disclosed in the creation of all things by and in the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ" (ibid., 528). In love the subject discovers the self in relation first to the Other who gives himself together with the gift of the world. The relationship with God is primary. Therefore there is a priority of the 'objective' as already given as a gift of God and the world. "What this means," says Schindler, "is that knowledge takes its first and most basic order from within relation or relationship defined by love and beauty, which originates in submission of the self to the other (God and all others in God)" (ibid., 536–37).

³³ Here John Paul II inserts a section on the relationship between life, reason, and faith. The truth of Christian revelation "enables all men and women to embrace the 'mystery' of their own life." It offers those who want to know the truth the possibility of "taking full and harmonious possession of their lives precisely by following the path of truth." This is the ultimate goal also of philosophy (*FR*, §15).

Sections 31 to 33 of *Fides et Ratio* are pivotal for John Paul II's close linking of reason and faith. Human beings, he argues, are not meant to live alone. More truths, even empirical truths, are believed not because they have been acquired by personal verification but on the credibility of others (*FR*, §31). Man entrusts himself to this knowledge and, he adds, it is often a richer truth since it is acquired in an interpersonal relationship. This is because it involves not just the capacity to know but a "deeper" capacity to entrust oneself to others and to enter an enduring relationship. One can think here of the relationship between student and a revered teacher. Such truth is not primarily empirical or philosophical. What is sought is the "truth of the person." "Human perfection, then," he sums up, "consists not simply in acquiring an abstract knowledge of truth, but in a dynamic relationship with others. It is in this faithful self-giving that a person finds a fullness of certainty and security" (*FR*, §32).

In section 33, John Paul II summarizes his argument. It is the nature of the human person to seek truth, not just partial truths from empirical or scientific evidence or the true good in individual acts of decision-making. They look for an ultimate truth which would explain the meaning of life. The search can only end in "reaching the absolute," as the ancient philosophers concluded. But the search for truth also needs trust and friendship, which was well accepted by these philosophers. Therefore, there is both "a search for truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust themselves." Christian faith offers Jesus Christ, both true God and true man. Through the order of grace Christ offers participation in divine mysteries and coherent knowledge of the Triune God. Through his humanity, the goodness of the order of creation is confirmed. There can be no contradiction between the order of faith and the order of reason, both of which are united in the person of Christ.³⁴ In entrusting themselves to the Person of Jesus, believers find a *fullness* of truth not available to reason alone (*FR*, §33).

The Relationship between the Language of the Body and Truth

Since entrustment to another is such an integral part of arriving at truth, whatever might hinder self-giving to another will also inhibit the path to truth. Here we find the close link between life, reason, and faith. Reason reflects on experience to form concepts. It also uses those concepts to shed light on the truths of revelation. As we have seen, John Paul II con-

³⁴ The principle of non-contradiction is cited as the first of five principles forming the core of philosophic thought in *FR*, §4.

siders experience a valid path to understanding revelation.³⁵ The experience itself must be an objectively true experience.

As John Paul II recognizes the biblical use of the verb “know” both for conjugal intercourse and knowledge as “intentionality,” reflects a deep truth about the human person, for the spousal union is the deepest self-giving union of human persons in creation, a paradigm for all others. Angelo Scola, drawing on the insights of John Paul II, identifies the concrete experience of the man–woman relationship as the base of what he terms the “nuptial mystery,” in his view the *analogatum princeps* for all reality. On the one hand, the expression “nuptial mystery,” he states, “refers to the organic unity of sexual difference, love (objective relationship to the other) and fruitfulness. On the other hand, it refers objectively, through the principle of analogy to the various forms of love that characterize both the man–woman relationship and all its derivatives (fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood, and sisterhood, etc.) and God’s relationship with man in the sacrament, the Church and Jesus Christ, all the way to the Trinity itself.”³⁶

If the nuptial mystery is disturbed in any way, the unity of the human person dictates that the integrity of the act of knowledge will also be disturbed. And indeed as a result of original sin, the human mind was darkened.³⁷ Here we can see a connection with the truths expressed in *Humanae Vitae*. John Paul II affirms that the dignity of the *communio personarum* demands that the language of the body in the conjugal act be expressed in the truth of total mutual self-giving. If it is artificially deprived of this truth, “such a violation of the inner order of conjugal communion, a communion that plunges its roots into the very order of the person,

³⁵ In a footnote to his reflections on the first chapters of Genesis, John Paul II speaks of the relationship between “experience” and “revelation.” Although many would draw a line between the two, he cites Rom 8:23 “We therefore have a right to speak about the relationship between experience and revelation; in fact we have the right to raise the issue of their relationship to each other” (*Man and Woman He Created Them*, §4:5 note 8, [September 26, 1979]).

³⁶ Angelo Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery*, trans. Michelle K. Borrás (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005) 213–14.

³⁷ John Paul II notes that before sin man was designed to have ready access to God through metaphysical enquiry. Original sin wounded all men’s path to God through reason. Reason became a “prisoner of itself.” The Incarnation freed reason from its weakness (*FR*, §22). For an insightful discussion of the relationship of language to “ontology” or “the translation of encountered existence in the language of being, giving primacy not to being but to the modality of *logos*,” see Kenneth L. Schmitz, “The Language of Conversion and the Conversion of Language,” *Communio* 21 (1994): 745.

constitutes the essential evil of the contraceptive act.”³⁸ When a couple makes use of contraception in marriage, they alter the objective truth of the language of the body. Its objective meaning of total self-gift, which includes the gift of procreation, is changed. Any reflection on the experience will also necessarily be flawed. A dualism has been introduced, separating the conjugal act from its true meaning, expressed in the body.

It is significant that John Paul II speaks of “rereading the language of the body in *truth*” (emphasis added), which is related to a cognitive act. Is it surprising, then, that in order to justify falsifying the language of the body through contraception, theologians and ethicists have altered the very foundations of truth acquired both by reason and faith? These theologians do not understand that, as John Paul II says,

If the human being—male and female—in marriage (and indirectly in all spheres of life together) *gives to his behavior a meaning in conformity with the fundamental truth of the language of the body*, then he too “*is in truth*.” In the opposite case, he commits lies and falsifies the language of the body.³⁹

This falsification reaches to the very person of Jesus, since he is “the way, the life and the truth” (Jn 14:6).⁴⁰ The unity of truth and love is the core of revelation. Where one is not lived the other is also warped and even destroyed.

³⁸ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §123:7 (August 22, 1984). William E. May and others, including Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*, point out that the traditional view of the contraceptive act as anti-life still pertains. It seems to me that John Paul II has in mind the wider implications of falsifying the language of the body.

³⁹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §106:3 (January 26, 1983), original emphasis. By using the phrase “is in truth,” John Paul II calls to mind the first letter of John on the link between truth and behavior. Ignace de la Potterie gives a detailed commentary on the use of the two different words for “knowing truth” in 1 John: “The word *ginowskein* is used in a more external sense and *idenai* in a more internal. (The word *idenai* means to know with certainty as a result of firm faith). The two words complement one another. For example the Christian knows by faith (invisible—*idein*—the word is linked to the ideas in Plato); he acts morally (visible) which is how we know (*ginoskein*) if someone is in the truth; and finally we conclude from this external behavior that the Christian has communion with God (invisible).” See Mary Shivanandan, “The Anthropological Background of *Fides et Ratio*,” *Anthropotes* 17 (2001): 139.

⁴⁰ In commenting on this Scripture passage, Ignace de la Potterie states that Jesus identifies himself with the truth and is the revelation of the Father. It is because Jesus “is the truth that he is for us the life and then also the way; the mediation of truth is ordered to the mediation of communion; Jesus is the truth in order to give us life” (Ignace de la Potterie, “Je suis la Voie, la Vérité et la Vie” [Jn 14:6], *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 88 [1966]: 930–37).

Erroneous Methodologies

There are many contemporary examples of erroneous philosophical and theological methodologies. Mention has already been made of proportionalism and consequentialism, faulty ethical systems that were initiated in order to justify contraception. Before discussing other erroneous methodologies, it is appropriate to review Charles Curran's critique of John Paul II's methodology in his 2005 book *The Moral Theology of John Paul II*.⁴¹ Curran attacks John Paul II's theological methodology because of its implications for reaffirming and extending the Church's magisterial teaching on marriage, family, gender, and sexuality. Curran admits as much in the introduction: "In the past, I have on occasion disagreed with some aspects of his moral theology and continue to do so. I have tried to be fair in my analysis, but obviously my own position colors my approach."⁴² It is noteworthy that in the chapter on marriage and sexuality his most significance source is the Wednesday catechesis on the theology of the body. Curran ascribes to them "little or no importance from the viewpoint of authoritative teaching,"⁴³ effectively dismissing both their theological method and import. Yet in the process he undermines the authority of other papal documents, such as *Mulieris Dignitatem*, and *Letter to Families*, which rely heavily on the theology of the body. For Curran they are just one theologian's approach to these fundamental issues.⁴⁴

In this brief essay it is only possible to touch on a few salient points of Curran's critique. Curran's approach approximates the very approach that Jesus challenges in the Gospel of Matthew on divorce and the resurrection. Curran wants less emphasis on universal moral norms and instead a return to casuistry.⁴⁵ The nub of his argument is that John Paul II maintains a

⁴¹ Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of John Paul II* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

⁴² Ibid., 6. See also p. 160 where he directly links the two. Curran clarifies the position of the revisionist theologians by saying that "for the good of the person or the good of the marital relation, one can interfere with the physical structure of the sexual act in order to prevent procreation" (ibid., 111). He asserts that John Paul II's theology of the body does not refer to all bodies. Since it does not do so, "he also would have to prove that heterosexual morality is the only meaning for sexuality for all human beings" (ibid., 168).

⁴³ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 160, 164, 165. See also Waldstein, introduction, in John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 16, 17.

⁴⁵ Curran, *The Moral Theology of John Paul II*, 33. "The Catholic tradition has often used casuistry as a way of trying to deal with specific moral issues, thus showing how important it is to consider all the details of the situation" (ibid.). Curran commends casuistry over "the unchangeable and universal moral norm on abortion found in *Evangelium vitae*." He also links the condemnation of direct abortion

dichotomy between faith and reason, between the social encyclicals and those on faith.⁴⁶ It would seem that the opposite is the case. Curran asks a key question: "Do we find moral theology and Christian moral teaching only in Scripture, in Jesus Christ, and in Christian tradition? Or do we share some moral wisdom and knowledge with all humankind?"⁴⁷ His very formulation of the question would seem to make the two sources of wisdom equal, where John Paul II sees a hierarchy. Curran in fact introduces a dichotomy in a way that Vatican Council II, which John Paul II follows, does not.⁴⁸ Curran seeks to find sufficient human wisdom and the meaning of life in a totally human way through natural law outside the Church, as in the condemnation of slavery (even though such condemnation is intrinsic to man made in the image of God).⁴⁹ His error is acceptance of the view of an "autonomous" ethic and rejection of what John Paul II called a "participated theonomy" (*VS*, §41) or true understanding of natural law as the participation in the eternal law by the rational creature. On Curran's view the Church must therefore be open to such "wisdom" even on the fundamental issues of life, marriage, and gender in such a way as to give more credibility to human hypotheses than to the wisdom of faith.⁵⁰

Curran consistently gives greater weight to contemporary findings rooted exclusively in historical exegetical studies, the social sciences, and other "human wisdom," than he does to Scripture itself as understood theologically in the Church, making appropriate use of the historical-critical method and its interpretation according to the mind of the Church or to the Magisterium of the Church. He is critical of John Paul II's neglect of the modern historical method, charging that he uses Scrip-

to "a particular philosophic view . . . far removed from the core of faith and from more general ethical norms, such as respect due to all life including nascent life" (*ibid.*, 31).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁸ See *Gaudium et Spes*, §22: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnation does the mystery of man take on light. . . . Christ, the final Adam by the revelation of the Father and his love fully reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear."

⁴⁹ Curran's understanding of natural law itself is dualistic, criticizing John Paul II for accepting the Thomistic view of the inclinations shared with animals as intrinsic to human nature as a union of body and soul (*ibid.*, 114).

⁵⁰ It is as if he is saying that it is possible to escape the island through human ingenuity alone instead of making use of human reason both to understand through experience the resources of the island and to interpret the assistance that comes from beyond, the view that John Paul II takes in *Fides et Ratio*. The pope specifically condemns Fideism (*FR*, §55).

ture as a proof text. John Paul II generally follows *Dei Verbum's* principles which give a clearly defined but subordinate role to the historical-critical method.⁵¹ His *discrimen* or interpretive key is "wholeness" or unity between the Old Testament and the New, between the Bible, theology, spirituality, and life.⁵² This allows new theological insights to emerge from the texts themselves.⁵³

The paucity of Curran's approach and the richness of John Paul II's can be seen in their respective treatment of Ephesians 5:21–33. Curran applauds the pope's new emphasis on the equal dignity of the sexes which he, himself, regards as in opposition to "official Catholic teaching less than fifty years ago."⁵⁴ He goes on to say, however, that drawing the equality of husband and wife from Ephesians 5:21–33 is an egregious example of John Paul II's "lack of historicity and historical consciousness," by expanding the meaning of the text beyond a first-century understanding of the household code.⁵⁵ By contrast, John Paul II sees in the text "the wisdom and the power of God." In his *Letter to Families* he calls it a *summa* of the Church's

⁵¹ This essay is too brief to mount a response to Curran on this point. *Dei Verbum* gives two main criteria for scriptural interpretation: (1) it must be in agreement with tradition, and (2) it must be mindful of biblical scholarship, that is, the meaning the authors intended, what God wanted to manifest given the literary form and cultural context in which it was composed. The footnote to the September 29, 1979 catechesis is a good example of John Paul II's fidelity to *Dei Verbum* principles on the *proto evangelium* of Genesis 3:15. First of all he cites the Septuagint interpretation, then Irenaeus and other Church Fathers followed by modern conflicting interpretations. He then interprets the Old Testament in light of the New.

⁵² Two articles provide useful commentaries on John Paul II's use of Scripture: J. Michael Miller, "Interior Intelligibility: The Use of Scripture in Papal and Conciliar Documents," *The Canadian Catholic Review* (September 1993): 9–18; and S. J. Prendergast, "'A Vision of Wholeness': A Reflection on the Use of Scripture in a Cross-Section of Papal Writings," in *The Thought of John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, ed. John M. McDermott, S.J. (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1993), 69–91.

⁵³ See David S. Yeago, "The New Testament and The Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of Theological Exegesis," *Pro Ecclesia* 3 (1994): 152–64, for a useful discussion of the emergence of the dogma of the Incarnation from scriptural texts.

⁵⁴ Curran, *Moral Theology of John Paul II*, 188. Curran himself relies "heavily on feminist thought" (*ibid.*, 190).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 199. John Paul II avers that analyses of the passage "must begin with the preliminary *understanding of the text in itself*; they must then lead us, so to speak, beyond the limits of the text, in order that we may understand if possible 'to the very depths' what wealth of truth revealed by God is contained within the scope of that stupendous page." See John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §87:6 (July 28, 1982).

teaching on man and woman, marriage and creation: "St. Paul's magnificent synthesis concerning the great mystery appears as the compendium or *summa*, in some sense, of the teaching about God and man, which was brought to fulfillment in Christ."⁵⁶ Through Christ's reference to "the beginning" in Genesis, the historical state of sin, redemption, and the fulfillment of the "mystery" of Ephesians 1:3–10, John Paul II sees the whole of salvation history encompassed in the text and the definitive understanding of masculinity, femininity, and the sacramentality of marriage in creation and grace.⁵⁷ At the center is Christ and his self-gift on the Cross.

Demonstration of Erroneous Methodologies

A comprehensive undermining of the theological foundations of the Church's teaching on sexuality pervades a study commissioned in 1972 by the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA), and published in 1977 as *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*.⁵⁸ This study, which circulated widely in and outside of seminaries for nearly twenty years, clearly illustrates the impact of an incorrect relation between faith and reason and the resulting effect of erroneous views on sexuality. One might say that as a *demonstration* of an incorrect method applied to marriage and sexuality, it stands in relation to Curran's *articulation* of erroneous theological principles in the same way as John Paul II's *Catechesis on Human Love* stands in relation to *Fides et Ratio*. In other words, it shows the interrelationship between a distorted philosophy and theology and the subversion of the truths on sexuality and procreation proclaimed in *Humanae Vitae*.

Let us begin with the pastoral guidelines recommended by the CTSA theologians. With regard to marital sexuality, they argue that no physical sexual expression can be judged intrinsically wrong or perverse. The justification for such an assertion is empirical studies (that is, reason in a limited sense) which show that the diversity of sexual expression depends on culture, temperament, and education. The objective truth of the act itself is immaterial as long as it fosters the values of "self-liberation, other-enrichment, honesty, fidelity, life service, social responsibility and joyousness."⁵⁹ There can be no blanket "no" to premarital sex⁶⁰ and extreme caution

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Letter to Families*, §19.

⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §93:1 (September 8, 1982).

⁵⁸ Anthony Kosnik et al., *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought: A Study Commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

should be exercised in condemning variant marriage patterns, such as cohabitation, communal living and extramarital sex or adultery. They should not be ruled out, since “the empirical data does not as yet warrant any solid conclusions on the effects of such behavior, particularly from the long-range view.”⁶¹

All methods of contraception are recommended—they equate natural family planning (NFP) with contraception—with the main criteria for acceptability being medical, psychological, or personal considerations. Religious considerations are treated last. Reasons given to reject the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* are listed as “the person-centered approach to moral judgment”⁶² (prescinding from the objective nature of the act itself), a renewed (or revisionist) understanding of natural law, scientific and medical advances, insights from the psychological and behavioral sciences—all on the side of reason. A brief reference to biblical exegesis and teaching on moral matters points out that *Humanae Vitae* did not cite any scriptural evidence, a lack amply remedied by John Paul II in his Catechesis on Human Love.⁶³ Confessors are advised to present both the Church teaching on *Humanae Vitae* as well as information on contraception and leave the choice up to the conscience of the penitent.⁶⁴

These guidelines follow the methodological part of the study, beginning with the “Bible and Human Sexuality” and “Christian Tradition and Human Sexuality.” There is heavy reliance on the historical-critical method. The conclusions of the CTSA study:

No single text or collection of texts constitutes anything like a coherent biblical theology of human sexuality. Scripture is not even concerned with sexuality as such, regarding it as one aspect of life, properly viewed only within the context of the whole person and the whole of human life with all its relationships and responsibilities.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid., 145–49. The negative effects of divorce on children were documented as early as 1989 by Judith S. Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee in their *Second Chances: Men, Women, and Children a Decade after Divorce* (New York: Cicknor & Fields, 1989).

⁶² Kosnik et al., *Human Sexuality*, 123.

⁶³ Ibid., 114–25.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 127. They argue that use or nonuse of contraception cannot provide a basis of judgment on the morality or immorality of a person’s conjugal life.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 29, 30. See also their remark, “Critical biblical scholarship finds it impossible on the basis of empirical data to approve or reject categorically any particular sexual act outside of its contextual circumstances and intention” (31). Contrast this with a Jewish view: “The Halakhah (Jewish Law) has a great deal to say about the sexual conduct of married couples. . . . Over one-sixth of the Talmud itself, one whole ‘Order’ is devoted to such matters as marriage, divorce,

Some recognition is given to a greater pastoral sensitivity on the part of the Church to sexual matters but the study finds its approach to “specific issues (premarital sex, homosexuality and masturbation) . . . exaggeratedly absolute and legalistic.”⁶⁶ A chapter on empirical sciences and human sexuality relies heavily on Alfred Kinsey’s flawed data on masturbation, premarital sex, and the prevalence of homosexuality. While not claiming such data is conclusive, the study warns against assuming that human experience confirms any particular moral position but then argues in favor of its own position.

It is in the development of a new “theology of sexuality,” that the influence of social science theory, particularly that of sociologist Ira Reiss, is most evident. Instead of procreative and unitive, these theologians propose as a criterion that “wholesome human sexuality . . . fosters a *creative growth toward integration*.”⁶⁷ The morality of any particular sex act is judged on whether it is self-liberating, other-enriching, honest, faithful, socially responsible, life-serving, and joyous.⁶⁸ It adds that “these values are not expressed in terms of concrete, physical actions.”⁶⁹ This constitutes in practice a revised moral evaluation of sexual conduct, dependent more on social science theory and data than on Christian revelation and the reflection of the Church on revelation.

The Language of Deception

A major argument of the revisionist theologians is that the Church’s traditional teaching on gender, sexuality, and marriage does not accord with contemporary experience. For example, the common thread running through feminist theology is that the feminist experience should determine the relevance of particular doctrines for feminists.⁷⁰ The same position is

and women’s rights” (Norman Lamm, *A Hedge of Roses: Jewish Insights into Marriage and Married Life* [New York: Philipp Feldham, Inc., 1966], 32, 33). A good critique of their Scripture interpretation is also given by Manuel Miguens, “Biblical Thoughts on Human Sexuality,” a chapter from *Human Sexuality in Our Time*, ed. George A. Kelly (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1979).

⁶⁶ Kosnik et al., *Human Sexuality*, 52.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 86.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 92–95.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 96.

⁷⁰ Sallie McFague considers the appropriate question not which doctrine is true or false but “which is a better portrait of Christian faith *for our day*” (*Models of God, Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], xiii). Rosemary Radford Ruether posits “human experience as the starting point and the ending point of the hermeneutical circle” (*Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a*

taken with regard to various sexual practices including contraception. The experience of couples is cited as the most convincing arguments for endorsing divergent theological views.⁷¹ Statistics are given on how many Catholics are not obeying the Church's teaching, with the implication that it does not accord either with their experience or understanding.⁷²

Lutheran theologian George Lindbeck challenges the widespread theological assumption that experiences are the leading partner in the exchange between doctrines and experience. He proposes a rule theory of doctrines as a more satisfactory method of explaining the link between experience and belief. In the experiential-expressive model, "The experience is the source and norm of objectifications."⁷³ Lindbeck holds on the contrary that "a religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought."⁷⁴ It functions a priori like an *idiom*. Although it is influenced by the inner experience of the believer, the idiom is the leading partner in the exchange. "Religions," according to Lindbeck's approach, "are seen as comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualized, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world."⁷⁵

Feminist Theology [Boston: Beacon Press, 1983], 12). See also Kosnik et al., *Human Sexuality*, 174.

⁷¹ Kosnik et al. *Human Sexuality*, 122.

⁷² Thomas Martin states that "contrary to the norms of most mainstream Christian positions, many experience genital sexuality outside of marriage." See Thomas M. Martin, *The Challenge of Christian Marriage: Marriage in Scripture, History and Contemporary Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 135, 146, 147. The experiences of couples in a survey conducted by Pat and Patty Crowley, members of the 1966 Birth Control Commission summoned by Paul VI to consider the licitness of the anovulant pill as a method of birth, are cited as a prime reason in the majority report for changing the Church's teaching on contraception. See Robert McClory, *Turning Point: The Inside Story of the Papal Birth Control Commission, and How Humanae vitae Changed the Life of Patty Crowley and the Future of the Church* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1995), 86–95, 107. A reinterpretation of the data of this survey does not support all its conclusions on the negative effect of the so-called Rhythm Method on the couple's relation. As much as 64 percent of those interviewed stated that in some way "rhythm" was helpful to their marriage. See Richard J. Fehring and Elizabeth McGraw, "Spiritual Responses to the Regulation of Births (A Historical Comparison)," in *Life and Learning*, vol. 12, *Proceedings of the Twelfth University Faculty for Life Conference*, ed. Joseph W. Koterski, S.J. (Washington, DC: University Faculty for Life, 2003), 265–83.

⁷³ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine, Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 31.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 32. In classical terms it is perhaps best expressed as *lex orandi, lex credendi*.

This differs from the cognitivist or propositional approach, which is also external, by allowing for the importance of the interiorization of beliefs.⁷⁶ Lindbeck holds, however, that this rule theory of doctrines does not choose between propositionally formulated truths and inner experiences. Instead “it is the framework or medium in which Christians experience rather than what they experience or think they know that retains continuity and unity through change.”⁷⁷ While the *experience* of love, for example, of one individual changes as a result of cultural factors, it can only be called Christian love if it is shaped by the Christian story. And this Christian experience is significant only when it arises within the context of a Christian worldview or cultural-linguistic framework. Another cultural-linguistic framework will produce very different experiences, even among those who call themselves Christian.⁷⁸

Lindbeck gives great importance to language. “Language . . . shapes domains of human existence and action that are preexperiential.”⁷⁹ This sets in perspective the change in language for discussing sexuality, which was devised in specific contrast to the Judeo-Christian worldview.⁸⁰ Although the sociologist Ira Reiss is not the architect of the “secular humanist” view of sexuality, he has played a major role in redefining the language used both to advance it and to oppose the Judeo-Christian approach.⁸¹ The terms

⁷⁶ Ibid. The cultural-linguistic approach emphasizes that practice and training are essential for learning “how to feel, act, and think in conformity with a religious tradition. . . . The primary knowledge is not *about* the religion, not *that* the religion teaches such and such, but rather *how* to be religious in such and such ways” (ibid., 35). The stress is on the code rather than on encoded propositions. Religion is not so much a set of beliefs to choose but a set of skills to practice. Ritual, prayer, and example are more important, in his view, than explicitly formulated statements. The experiential-expressive is oriented towards *private* experience, while “all symbol systems have their origins in interpersonal relations and social interactions” (ibid., 38). See also ibid., 33–38, 83.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 83.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 37. A feminist has pointed out the unconsciously negative way of speaking about fertility and conception in medical journals within a contraceptive framework. A comparison with natural family planning instruction manuals reveals the opposite. All the terms for fertility and conception speak of union and gift. See Mary Shivanandan, “Body Narratives: Language of Truth?” *Logos* 3 (2000): 166–93.

⁸⁰ Anthropologist Margaret Mead is quoted as saying that since Kinsey, “the language of tables and variables . . . has replaced Latin as the acceptable language for the discussion of sex.” Cited in Letitia Anne Peplau, Zick Rubin, and Charles T. Hill, “Sexual Intimacy in Dating Relationships,” *Journal of Social Issues* 33 (1977): 86.

⁸¹ Paul Kurtz, editor of *The Humanist*, in his preface to a collection of essays originally published in *The Humanist* and titled “The New Sexual Revolution,” sums up this view: “A revolution is occurring and a new morality is emerging. This

“premarital” and “extramarital” have a sociological not a biblical source. Reiss has stated that social scientists have developed these terms explicitly to avoid the moral bias of “fornication” and “adultery.”⁸² Reiss’s views are evident throughout the CTSA Report, including the term “person-centered” sexuality that he coined.⁸³

Reiss has defined ideologies as “firmly held doctrines of particular philosophical groups,”⁸⁴ and concludes that “our ideology determines what we see as the ‘crucial’ issues in any social situation involving sexuality.”⁸⁵ He identifies a “traditional-romantic” ideology that he describes as supporting gender-role distinction with male dominance, female fear of the body and sexual emotions, emphasis on coitus in sexual expression, and love as a redeemer of sexual guilt. In the “modern-naturalistic” view, that he chooses, gender roles are similar and egalitarian; person-centered sexuality is valued more than body-centered; sexual emotions are manageable; physical pleasure and psychological intimacy in a variety of sexual acts are the major goals of sexuality for both genders; and, finally, “a wide range of sexuality should be accepted without guilt by both genders providing it does not involve force or fraud.”⁸⁶

Reiss’s main work was in the area of what he terms “premarital sexuality.” He conducted, in his own words, “the first systematic sociological study of a national probability sample in the area of premarital sexual attitudes.”⁸⁷ One of the first major theorists in the field, he was influential in promoting his preferred standard of “permissiveness with affection”

morality demands liberation and freedom for the individual to realize his own potentialities and satisfy his own needs, desires, and tastes as he sees fit, with a minimum of intolerant social rules and regulations. This is basically a *humanist revolution*. . . . Sexual liberation insists that we be emancipated from the puritan-Catholic theology of repression.” Cited in *The New Sexual Revolution*, ed. Lester A. Kirkendall and Robert N. Whitehurst (New York: Donald W. Brown Inc., 1971), ix, x. See also Leonard V. Ramer, *Your Sexual Bill of Rights: An Analysis of the Harmful Effects of Sexual Prohibitions* (New York: Exposition Press, 1973).

⁸² Ira L. Reiss, *Journey into Sexuality: An Exploratory Voyage* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1986), 239.

⁸³ Ira L. Reiss, *Premarital Standards in America: A Sociological Investigation of the Relative Social and Cultural Integration of American Sexual Standards* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), 83–85.

⁸⁴ Ira L. Reiss, “Some Observations on Ideology and Sexuality in America,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 43 (1981): 271.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁸⁶ Ira L. Reiss, “Some Observations on Ideology and Sexuality in America,” 279–80.

⁸⁷ Ira L. Reiss, *The Social Context of Premarital Sexual Permissiveness* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), vii. Reiss, “Some Observations on Ideology,” 280. See also Reiss, *Premarital Sexual Standards in America*, 133, 144.

and calling it “person-centered” behavior.⁸⁸ It is not hard to see the influence of Reiss’s work on the authors of the CTSA Report. In discussing sex outside of marriage they use the term “non-marital sexuality” and discuss fornication within a context of changing the Tradition of the Church. They distinguish five approaches to “premarital” sexuality which correspond closely to Reiss’s categories. They favor the approach that “premarital intercourse is wrong but pre-ceremonial intercourse may be moral.” Empirical studies of current sexual activity are cited to support this position.⁸⁹

Conclusion

While the authors of the CTSA report continually nod towards the traditional teaching of the Church in giving pastoral advice, there can be no doubt that such teaching takes second place to contemporary theories of sexuality and empirical studies. These are precisely the errors of method that Christ pointed out in the Gospel, placing human reason above the word of God and not believing in its power. They are also the errors that John Paul II enumerated in *Fides et Ratio*. Particularly noticeable in the study commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America is the place of Jesus and his teaching in the text. After a brief section on the Old Testament in the first chapter, a few pages are given to the New Testament and Jesus, distinguishing between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of post-Easter faith. This is in telling contrast to John Paul II’s teaching from the first words of the first encyclical of his pontificate, *Redemptor Hominis*: “The Redeemer of man, Jesus Christ, is the center of the universe and of history.”

In *Fides et Ratio* Jesus Christ crucified is the stumbling block but also the path to the restoration of man’s dignity and communion with the Triune God. Through him, life and faith are reunited. Reason, which passes between the two, can now correctly interpret the visible world in

⁸⁸ Ibid., 192. The standard states that two people who have built up a stable affectionate relationship may engage in full sexual relations.

⁸⁹ Kosnik et al., *Human Sexuality*, 152, 153, 158–65. Social science methods that observe human behavior can and do reveal useful but partial insights. Indeed contemporary studies on human sexuality and marriage are vindicating the truth of Catholic teaching. See W. Bradford Wilcox, “Social Science and the Vindication of Catholic Moral Teaching,” in *The Church, Marriage & Family: Proceedings from the 27th Annual Convention of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars, September 24–26, 2004, Pittsburgh, PA*, ed. Kenneth D. Whitehead (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2007), 330–40. See also W. Bradford Wilcox et al., *Why Marriage Matters Second Edition: Twenty-Six Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2007).

the light of faith and illumine faith itself to guide man on his path to his eternal destiny. Jesus Christ's total self-gift even unto death becomes the key to interpreting man and the cosmos. Whatever distorts the meaning of this total self-gift, of which conjugal union is the prime earthly analogy, obscures the truth about God, man, and the cosmos.

The acceptance or rejection of the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, which reaffirms and extends the true meaning of conjugal love as total self-gift, has far wider implications than simply its impact on the sphere of conjugal relations. All these false or partial methodologies obscure the *full* truth of the *humanum*. In an article published the year of his election to the See of Peter, Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II himself writes: "It might even appear strange that the response to a concrete question in the field of conjugal morality can have such strong anthropological implications, that it can become the field of this struggle for the value and meaning of humanity itself."⁹⁰ One can go further. Since man is made in the image of God, it ultimately affects what we believe about the Trinity and Jesus Christ, how we worship as well as the integrity of reason as a path to truth. References have been given in the footnotes to show how those who redefine sexuality also redefine such dogmas as the Virgin Birth and the Trinity and vice versa.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Karol Wojtyła, "The Anthropological Vision of *Humanae Vitae*," trans. William E. May, *Lateranum* 44 (1978): 6.

⁹¹ See Donald Goergen, *The Sexual Celibate* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974). Goergen does not come down in any definitive way against genital activity on the part of celibates (*ibid.*, 103, 183). He asserts that Mary's physical virginity is not a defined doctrine of the Magisterium and it is not necessary to maintain her virginal conception to hold that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit. "She was not celibate; she may not have been a virgin" as Goergen defines it but "the significance of her chastity still remains." See *ibid.*, 126, 128, 129. With regard to homosexuality, he states that "the so-called Christian attitude towards homosexuality is beginning to change" (here he footnotes a long list of articles in support). He claims that the traditional condemnation of homosexuality stems from a misinterpretation of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. "We no longer," he concludes, "have sufficient theological grounds for perpetuating a destructive attitude" (*ibid.*, 195). The feminists have undertaken a more radical realignment of thinking on the Trinity and the Incarnation, linked to both contraception and abortion. Sally McFague, in *Models of God*, seeks to view the world as God's body and to replace Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with God as lover, mother, and friend. The metaphor of God as mother, giver of life, does not mean being anti-abortion, since she says God is on the side of all species not simply the human species. Population control is one way to assure the survival of all species (see *ibid.*, 103, 104). Her theology makes no room for the Trinity, finding God as immanent and transcendent sufficient. Jesus Christ is not the Incarnate Son of

Through his study of the person and human sexuality, especially as a result of the dissent on *Humanae Vitae*, John Paul II came to a profound understanding of the fundamental importance of foundations, both theological and philosophical. What he articulated in *Fides et Ratio*, he had already put into practice in his catechesis on the theology of the body. In the process he has both restored and extended the Church's understanding of human sexuality as well as the indissoluble link between faith and reason. N V

God himself in the world; rather Jesus of Nazareth is one of the paradigmatic manifestations of the divine in the world (ibid., 183). Another feminist, Mary Elizabeth Hunt, co-founder and co-director of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual and Board member of Catholics for a Free Choice, argues for friendship, not conjugal union, as the criterion for marriage so that lesbian/gay relationships become "in fact, the relational equivalent of marriage." "Problems heat up," she says, "when the divine or God is likened not to Father, Mother, or even Parent, but to Friend." See Mary E. Hunt, "Friends and Family Values: An Old Song," in *The Changing Face of Friendship*, ed. Leroy S. Romer (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 173, 175.