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## CUPRINS

PS Enrico DAL COVOLO

*La teologia: una sfida per le „scienze altre”  
in un’Europa secolarizzata? . . . . . 5*

Matteo CRIMELLA

*«I doni e la chiamata di Dio sono irrevocabili» (Rm 11,29). . . . . 13*

Iulian Gabriel ROBU

*The Logic of the “Adequate” Anthropology in Man and Woman  
He Created Them: A Theology of the Body by John Paul II  
and reintroduced in Amoris Laetitia by Pope Francis . . . . . 21*

Iosif ENĂȘOAE

*Christian Parents, Children’s First Educators  
according to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council . . . . . 42*



## LA TEOLOGIA: UNA SFIDA PER LE “SCIENZE ALTRE” IN UN’EUROPA SECOLARIZZATA?

† Enrico DAL COVOLO\*

**Abstract:** Lo studio parte dalla domanda generica “Che cos’è la teologia (cristiana)?”. Per rispondere a questa domanda è indispensabile una precisazione sulla teologia stessa come scienza e sul proprio metodo. Dopo aver precisato le note essenziali della teologia come scienza e le questioni riguardanti il suo metodo, si lancia un confronto con le altre scienze sullo sfondo della secolarizzazione. Nel panorama delle scienze, la teologia rimane la scienza che può spiegare all’uomo di oggi la sua identità, il mistero del mondo e della vita.

**Keywords:** teologia, scienza, secolarizzazione, metodo, Europa.

### 1. *La sacra doctrina:* questioni essenziali di scienza e di metodo

Il dibattito sul tema e la relativa bibliografia sono pressoché sconfinati. Da parte mia, sarebbe ingenuo e presuntuoso il tentativo di liquidare la questione in poche battute.

Di solito, con gli studenti mi limito a evocare l’immagine del “treppiede”. La *sacra doctrina* – dico a loro – è come un tavolino, che per stare in piedi ha bisogno almeno di tre gambe (che poi possono diventare quattro, a seconda di come si vedono le cose): il primo piede è la rivelazione biblica, il secondo è la tradizione, il terzo è il magistero della Chiesa, al quale rimane intimamente connesso l’eventuale quarto piede, cioè le sollecitazioni di ogni genere (culturali, filosofiche, sociali, morali...), che vengono dal momento presente.

Quando uno solo di questi elementi costitutivi fosse trascurato, allora non si dovrebbe più parlare di teologia autentica. “Sarà un’altra cosa, magari anche validissima”, mi affretto subito ad aggiungere, “ma non si tratta certo di teologia della Chiesa”.

Nel contesto impegnativo di questo contributo – che si colloca nell’area degli ulteriori approfondimenti offerti dalle varie relazioni di questo Simposio: area complessa e problematica, quanto urgente e attuale –, mi pare opportuno aggiungere qualche cosa di più.

Gli studi recenti, diciamo da cinquant’anni a questa parte, che si occupano dello statuto della teologia, fanno riferimento più o meno esplicito al n. 16 del

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Decreto *Optatam Totius* (d'ora in poi, *OT*) del Concilio Vaticano II, là dove i Padri conciliari auspicavano che le discipline teologiche fossero “rinnovate per mezzo di un contatto più vivo col mistero di Cristo e con la storia della salvezza”.

Proprio da qui, da *OT* 16, ho ricavato l'immagine del “treppiede”.

Di fatto, in questo denso paragrafo è delineato un approccio scientifico al dato di fede articolato in tre momenti fra loro distinti, ma ermeneuticamente complementari. Possiamo riepilgarli così, in maniera estremamente sintetica, rielaborando appena un poco l'immagine del “treppiede”.

C'è anzitutto il momento fondante della Scrittura, *universae theologiae veluti anima*.<sup>1</sup>

C'è poi il momento normante della tradizione ecclesiale, che comprende sia il contributo privilegiato della patristica orientale e occidentale – per cui spesso questo passaggio viene riduttivamente denominato “momento patristico” –, sia i pronunciamenti conciliari e magisteriali, nonché le elaborazioni teologiche particolarmente esemplari.

C'è, infine, il momento sistematico dell'organizzazione e della sistemazione del dato di fede, da comunicare in modo sempre più appropriato nel momento presente.

I primi due momenti rappresentano l'*auditus fidei*, che include così il vaglio del dato biblico e quello della tradizione ecclesiale. Il terzo momento rappresenta invece l'*intellectus fidei*, cioè la riflessione sapienziale e l'organizzazione sistematica degli elementi essenziali del dato rivelato, come rianuncio sempre attualizzato della fede.<sup>2</sup>

Stando così le cose, è evidente che la teologia è scienza solo ad alcune condizioni.

Se la scienza è uno *scire iuxta principia propria*, ebbene: la teologia non è affatto scienza in questo senso, poiché i principi, da cui essa procede, appartengono all'*auditus fidei*. Sono principi rivelati, che – in ultima analisi – provengono da Dio stesso. “La ricerca teologica”, recita in modo perentorio la Costituzione conciliare *Gaudium et Spes*, “prosegue nella conoscenza profonda della verità rivelata”.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CONCILIO VATICANO II, *OT* 16. Ma vedi anche BENEDETTO XVI, *Verbum Domini* 31 (“L'anima della sacra Teologia”): “Sia lo studio delle Sacre Pagine come l'anima della Sacra Teologia: questa espressione della Costituzione dogmatica *Dei Verbum*”, scrive il Papa citando il n. 24 della Costituzione, “ci è diventata in questi anni sempre più familiare”.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. E. DAL COVOLO, *Metodo teologico e studio dei Padri della Chiesa oggi*, in M. SODI (cur.), *Il metodo teologico: tradizione, innovazione, comunione in Cristo* (= Pontificia Academia Theologica. Itineraria, 1), Città del Vaticano 2008, pp. 229-242. Vedi ancora M. SODI (cur.), *Theo-loghía. Risorsa dell'Universitas scientiarum* (= Collana strumenti, 12), Città del Vaticano 2011.

<sup>3</sup> CONCILIO VATICANO II, *Gaudium et Spes* 62,7. Cfr. *ivi* 44,2; *Dei Verbum* 23-24; *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4.

Se invece si considera l'*intellectus fidei*, allora si può dire che la teologia, fornita di contenuti e di metodo peculiari, è scienza a piena diritto, e sempre di più si è costituita e affermata come tale, lungo i secoli della sua storia.<sup>4</sup>

Ho riletto la nuova edizione ampliata delle *Memorie e digressioni* di Giacomo Biffi, arcivescovo emerito di Bologna, recentemente scomparso.

Il cardinale – un ottimo teologo – si poneva la nostra stessa domanda: “Che cos’è la teologia?”.

E subito rispondeva:

E’, come dice il nome, *scientia Dei*, nel senso che il suo oggetto proprio è Dio in quanto si è rivelato ed è principio e fine della comunicazione della sua vita; e nel senso che essa è una certa partecipazione al conoscere divino: *quaedam impressio divinae scientiae* (*Summa Theologiae* I, q.1, a.3, ad 2um). Poi è *scientia Christi*, dal momento che ogni effusione *ad extra* della vita trinitaria e ogni rivelazione avviene per mezzo di Cristo, e dal momento che “piacque a Dio di far abitare in lui ogni pienezza” (*Col* 1,19). Anzi, la comprensione che Gesù ha del disegno salvifico e della realtà intera (da noi partecipata nell’atto di fede) è il principio soggettivo del teologare: egli è il primo, il massimo e l’unico vero ed esauriente “teologo”, al quale il cultore della *sacra doctrina* cerca di assimilarsi (per quel che gli riesce). Infine è *scientia Ecclesiae*.

In definitiva, “la teologia è autocoscienza del *Christus totus*, che va crescendo sotto l’influsso dello Spirito Santo e mediante il lavoro di indagine, di penetrazione, di contemplazione ammirata da parte dei credenti che pensano”.<sup>5</sup>

Qualche anno fa – durante la consegna dei riconoscimenti ai tre vincitori della prima edizione del “Premio Ratzinger” – Benedetto XVI ha ripreso in maniera essenziale i termini della questione.

Il Papa emerito si chiedeva che cosa fosse veramente la teologia, poiché, “se la teologia è scienza della fede..., sorge subito la domanda: è davvero possibile questo? O non è in sé una contraddizione? Scienza non è forse il contrario di fede? Non cessa la fede di essere fede, quando diventa scienza? E non cessa la scienza di essere scienza, quando è ordinata o subordinata alla fede?”.

Come si vede, la domanda sulla teologia come scienza rimane sempre attuale: “Tali questioni”, riconosceva infatti Benedetto, “che già per la teologia medievale rappresentavano un serio problema, con il moderno concetto

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<sup>4</sup> Su questo, vedi più ampiamente E. DAL COVOLO, *Storia della Teologia*, 1. *Dalle origini a Bernardo di Chiaravalle*, Bologna-Roma 1995, soprattutto le pp. 517-523 (seconda edizione, Bologna 2015).

<sup>5</sup> G. BIFFI, *Memorie e digressioni di un italiano cardinale*, Nuova Edizione, Siena 2010, p. 377.

di scienza sono diventate ancora più impellenti, a prima vista addirittura senza soluzione”.

Al di là delle argomentazioni successive – che il Papa emerito sviluppava da pari suo –, a noi qui interessa soprattutto la conclusione del discorso, là dove si legge: “Sono ben consapevole che con tutto ciò non è stata data una risposta alla questione circa la possibilità e il compito della retta teologia, ma è soltanto stata messa in luce la grandezza della sfida insita nella natura della teologia. Tuttavia è proprio di questa sfida che l’uomo ha bisogno, perché essa ci spinge ad aprire la nostra ragione interrogandoci circa la verità stessa, circa il volto di Dio”.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. La sfida della teologia in un’Europa secolarizzata, che rischia di smarrire l’idea autentica di *Universitas studiorum***

In effetti, dalle sue peculiari (e per certi aspetti paradossali) caratteristiche epistemologiche la teologia ricava la propria forza di provocazione e di sfida nei confronti delle altre scienze – che appaiono oggi sempre più specializzate nel metodo e nei contenuti, quanto più frammentate nell’universo del sapere –.

Il fatto che la teologia non proceda *iuxta principia propria*, ma dalla Parola rivelata, la spinge – con motivazioni e risorse che non appartengono alle “scienze altre” – verso quella mèta ultima e complessiva di verità, a cui essa anela.

Certo, a questa stessa mèta concorrono in vario modo tutte le scienze, nella misura in cui esse sono – come dovrebbero essere – *ministrae veritatis*. Ma la teologia – se è vera teologia, cioè fedele alla sua epistemologia autentica – possiede un’istanza veritativa ulteriore, trasversale alle altre scienze, e ultimativa nel suo traguardo proprio.

Questo appare evidente, quando si considera che l’oggetto primario e onnicomprensivo della teologia non è una serie di enunciati o di “noumeni” astratti, bensì la *Res*, alla quale essa punta.

“L’atto di fede”, scriveva già san Tommaso, “non ha come punto di riferimento ciò che può essere enunciato, ma la *Res*”, la Cosa in se stessa (IIa-IIae q.1, a.2, ad 2um). Proprio questo realismo della fede guida la ricerca teologica verso la Verità tutta intera.

La teologia, infatti, è ben consapevole che la Cosa a cui puntare è in definitiva la partecipazione di grazia alla *conoscenza* che il Figlio incarnato, crocifisso e risorto, ha del Padre suo, nella comunione dello Spirito Santo.

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<sup>6</sup> BENEDETTO XVI, *La ragione che segue la fede risponde alla sua vocazione*, “Osservatore Romano”, 30 giugno – 1° luglio 2011, p. 6.



Ti benedico, o Padre, Signore del cielo e della terra, prorompe Gesù Cristo stesso nel suo *Magnificat*, perché hai tenuto nascoste queste cose ai sapienti e agli intelligenti e le hai rivelate ai piccoli. Sì, o Padre, perché così è piaciuto a te. Tutto mi è stato dato dal Padre mio; nessuno conosce il Figlio se non il Padre, e nessuno conosce il Padre se non il Figlio, e colui al quale il Figlio lo voglia rivelare (*Matteo* 11,25-27).

Nella tradizione della Chiesa, la teologia, quale *fides quaerens intellectum*, pur nella pluralità delle sue espressioni storiche,<sup>7</sup> si configura come quell'esercizio dell'intelligenza che nasce dall'esperienza della fede, di essa si nutre e all'accrescimento di essa è destinato. “Ho desiderato di vedere con l'intelligenza ciò che ho creduto per fede”, afferma sant'Agostino a proposito del mistero centrale della Rivelazione, la santissima Trinità (*La Trinità* 15,28,51).

La visione, a cui anela il desiderio che mette in moto l'intelligenza del mistero rivelato, è una penetrazione sempre più piena e una partecipazione sempre più viva a quella Verità, che è Cristo stesso (cfr. *Giovanni* 14,6). La fede vi aderisce intimamente, nella certa speranza del suo compimento eccedente e inesauribile nel Regno dei cieli: “Ora conosco in modo imperfetto, ma allora conoscerò perfettamente, come anch'io sono conosciuto” (*1Corinti* 13,12).

Da questa intima natura della teologia deriva la forma peculiare della sua scientificità. La teologia, infatti, è *scientia* precisamente nel senso che è misurata rigorosamente, nella sua intenzionalità e nel suo esercizio, dall'Oggetto che le è offerto dalla Rivelazione: Dio in Cristo.

In quell'“aureo libretto”, che è stato tradotto dal tedesco con il titolo di *Piccola guida per i cristiani*, Hans Urs von Balthasar scriveva:

Non c'è scienza che possa dirsi libera nei confronti del proprio oggetto; solo grazie all'oggetto essa è una disciplina ben determinata, che si affianca a pieno diritto alle altre. Una disciplina è anzi scientifica solo se il suo metodo d'indagine corrisponde alla particolare natura dell'oggetto. Oggetto della teologia in quanto scienza è la fede cristiana, con tutte le particolarità che ineriscono alla sua natura. La fede ha la sua origine nella storia, ma nel medesimo tempo essa avanza 'la pretesa' di svelare il senso onnicomprensivo della storia, dal suo inizio alla sua fine.

L'Agnello dell'Apocalisse spezza i sette sigilli della storia universale.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Sulla questione, vedi *supra*, nota 4.

<sup>8</sup> H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Piccola guida per i cristiani* (= Già e non ancora, pocket 77), Milano 1986 (ed. tedesca, Einsiedeln 1980), p. 53. Adotto, con qualche lieve modifica, la traduzione di L. Tosti.

Conviene riprendere a questo punto la celebre massima di san Tommaso: la teologia è *scientia* “in quanto procede da principi noti con il lume di una scienza superiore, che è la scienza di Dio e dei beati” (I, q.1, a.2).

In tal modo, l’Aquinata collega organicamente il procedimento argomentativo della teologia scolastica, in quanto *scientia*, con la prospettiva neotestamentaria e patristica che vede nella fede e nella *conoscenza*, che da essa procede, la partecipazione di grazia alla conoscenza del Padre: ne gode anzitutto, per natura, il Verbo incarnato, ed essa si compie per gli uomini nella *visio beatifica* dei santi. In definitiva, la teologia è *scientia* solo in quanto sviluppo della *scientia Dei*, cioè della *conoscenza* (non si dimentichi il senso biblico, e in definitiva mistico del verbo *conoscere*) che Dio ha di sé, e che egli stesso ha ritenuto partecipare (rivelare) a noi.

Scriveva nel 1988 il cardinale Joseph Ratzinger:

La teologia non vede né prova la sua ragione ultima. È come sospesa alla ‘scienza dei santi’, alla loro visione, che è il punto di riferimento del pensiero teologico e ne garantisce la legittimità... Senza il realismo dei santi, senza il loro contatto con la realtà in questione, la teologia diventa un gioco intellettuale vuoto e perde pure il suo carattere scientifico.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Conclusione

Dentro a queste prospettive epistemologiche (e solo quando esse sono realmente salvate) la teologia conserva il suo valore di sfida di fronte alle “scienze altre”, non soltanto per il credente, ma anche per il non credente.

E’ illuminante, a questo riguardo, un’altra riflessione di Joseph Ratzinger, all’epoca professore di Teologia dogmatica nell’Università di Tubinga, quando – all’indomani del Concilio Vaticano II – l’Europa era percorsa dai venti scomposti della contestazione, che sembravano scuotere le fondamenta stesse della verità.

“La forma in cui l’uomo è tenuto ad affrontare la verità dell’essere”, scriveva nel 1968 il futuro Pontefice in *Introduzione al cristianesimo*, un libro oggi più che mai attuale; la forma, dunque, “non è *la scienza*, bensì la *comprensione*, il comprendere il senso della realtà... Penso sia precisamente questo l’esatto significato dell’idea che ci facciamo del *comprendere*: che noi impariamo ad afferrare il terreno su cui ci siamo posti, intendendolo come *senso* della realtà e della verità”.

Ebbene, “la scienza che si propone di rendere funzionale il mondo”, concludeva Ratzinger, “come ci viene oggi pomposamente comunicata dal pensiero tecnico-scientifico, non accorda ancora alcuna vera comprensione

<sup>9</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Credere, cioè vedere*, “Trentagiorni” 1988/12; cfr. E. DAL COVOLO, *La lettura della vita dei santi come formazione*, “Rivista di Ascetica e Mistica” 30 (2005), pp. 679-696.

del mondo e dell’essere. La teologia, pertanto, intesa come discorso comprensivo, logico (= *rationale*, intellettuale-razionale) vertente su Dio, sarà sempre un compito originario e precipuo della fede cristiana.

Sì, perché il *comprendere* scaturisce solo dalla fede”.<sup>10</sup>

In maniera coerente, la teologia – precisamente in quanto *fides quaerens intellectum* – si propone come “il luogo” della sintesi veritativa tra le scienze umane e la “scienza di Dio”, a fronte della frammentarietà dei saperi.

Ed ecco – in ultima analisi – la grande sfida della teologia dinanzi alle “scienze altre” e alla secolarizzazione (non solo dell’Europa): essa consiste nel coordinare, in maniera plausibile, la ragione e la fede.

Da parte sua, il Papa emerito non ha mai cessato di introdurre nella riflessione ecclesiale e nel dibattito scientifico stimoli efficaci per rinnovare in questa stessa direzione la teologia e il suo insegnamento, e in definitiva per favorire quella sintesi, di cui stiamo parlando.

In particolare, dovremmo rileggere e meditare alcuni suoi interventi che orientano il dialogo fra la teologia e la cultura contemporanea, come per esempio la celebre *lezione di Regensburg* del 2006; il *Discorso al Collège des Bernardins* del 2008; il *Discorso non pronunciato* per l’Università romana della Sapienza; la *Commemorazione*, indirizzata alla Pontificia Università Lateranense, nel decimo anniversario di *Fides et Ratio*; fino alla serie importante di *Discorsi* pronunciati in occasione della sua visita in Gran Bretagna e della beatificazione del cardinale John Henry Newman. Ma non possiamo certo dimenticare le tre Encicliche del Pontificato; il disegno sistematico e unitario delle catechesi del mercoledì; e neppure opere fondamentali, come i tre volumi sul *Gesù di Nazaret*.

Si tratta di una messe abbondante, di cui la teologia deve far tesoro, se vuole essere “teologia autentica nell’oggi della Chiesa”: cioè una teologia capace di confrontarsi con le sfide del momento presente, a partire dalla bibbia, dalla tradizione e dal magistero della Chiesa.

In varie occasioni ho avuto modo di illustrare alcuni capitoli fondamentali di questo urgente “rinnovamento teologico” proposto dal Papa emerito, e coerentemente proseguito dal magistero di Papa Francesco (da *Lumen fidei* fino ad *Amoris laetitia*): per esempio, l’allargamento della ragione alle dimensioni della fede e dell’amore; il realismo della fede; più in generale – appunto – l’urgenza di una nuova sintesi di pensiero, di fronte alle divaricazioni secolarizzanti tra religione e ragione; tra teologia, filosofia e altri

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<sup>10</sup> Riprendo con qualche lieve modifica la traduzione di E. Martinelli in J. RATZINGER, *Introduzione al cristianesimo. Lezioni sul simbolo apostolico* (= Biblioteca di teologia contemporanea, 5), Brescia 1969 (più volte riedito), pp. 44-45.

saperi; tra teologia razionale e dimensione contemplativa; tra esegesi cosiddetta accademica e *lectio divina*; tra ortodossia e ortoprassi...

Un simile rinnovamento – ne sono certo – renderà sempre più propositiva e feconda la sfida della teologia nei confronti delle altre scienze, dinanzi al fenomeno pressoché globalizzato della secolarizzazione, nell'Europa e nel mondo.

**«I DONI E LA CHIAMATA DI DIO  
SONO IRREVOCABILI» (Rm 11,29)  
La relazione ebraico-cristiana  
a partire dalla riflessione di Paolo in Rm 9-11**

*don Matteo CRIMELLA\**

**Abstract:** Il mistero, taciuto ma rivelato in Cristo, è l'evangelizzazione sia per i giudei che per i pagani. Anche se Romani ha spesso prestato il terreno per una duplice concezione dell'elezione al bene e al male, secondo la quale sin da principio alcuni si salvano e altri si perdono, da una comprensione globale e contestuale delle affermazioni paoline emerge un'unica elezione positiva e non negativa, quella realizzata in Cristo mediante la sua morte e la sua risurrezione. Se ci poniamo sul versante della comunità di Roma, come di ogni comunità che riceve questa lettera, Paolo esorta i cristiani di origine giudaica a non vantarsi dei propri privilegi donati da Dio nella storia della salvezza, e quelli di origine pagana a non esaltarsi di fronte all'incredulità di buona parte d'Israele: «Dio infatti ha rinchiuso tutti nella disobbedienza, per essere misericordioso verso tutti!» (Rm 11,32). Dall'universale misericordia di Dio viene la salvezza per tutti.

**Keywords:** chiamata, Lettera ai Romani, doni, Israele, cristiani, salvezza.

## 1. La lettera ai Romani

Se non prendiamo in considerazione le sezioni propriamente epistolografiche, ossia riscontrabili in quasi tutte le lettere paoline e neotestamentarie, quali l'indirizzo (cfr. Rm 1,1-7), l'esordio (cfr. Rm 1,8-15), la sezione paracletica o esortativa (cfr. Rm 12,1-15,13) e i saluti finali (cfr. Rm 16,1-23), la lettera ai Romani si compone di tre dimostrazioni fondamentali, attraverso le quali Paolo si propone di presentare il proprio vangelo, introdotto in Rm 1,16-17.

Uno sguardo globale alle dimostrazioni paoline in Rm 1,18-11,36 consente di rilevare una disposizione circolare, del tipo  $a, b, a^1$ : in  $a$  e in  $a^1$ , ossia in Rm 1,18-4,25 e in Rm 9,1-11,36 non solo domina la relazione tra i pagani e i giudei circa la salvezza ma risultano diffuse anche le citazioni dell'Antico Testamento. Possiamo definire queste sezioni come propriamente «storico-salvifiche», in quanto sono segnate dalle dimensioni del passato, del presente e del futuro dell'azione divina in Cristo. Invece in  $b$

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scompare il binomio «giudei e pagani» e vi sono allusioni all'Antico Testamento. Queste differenze sono dovute soprattutto al cambiamento di argomentazione in *Rm* 5,1-8,39: qui Paolo tratta della vita in Cristo, a prescindere dall'identità giudaica o greca, con le sue attuali relazioni rispetto al vangelo o alla vita nuova nello Spirito.

Tuttavia, è bene non separare nettamente queste parti dimostrative di Romani: ad esempio, in *Rm* 5,1-21 vi sono delle riprese terminologiche di *Rm* 3,21-4,25, come quelle riguardanti la «Legge», la «giustificazione» e la «fede in Cristo», al punto che alcuni preferiscono collegare questa sezione più a quanto precede che a quanto segue. Senza pervenire a una tale conclusione, queste connessioni dimostrano che la relazione tra i giudei e i pagani, rispetto alla fede in Cristo, emerge come problema in *Rm* 1,18-4,25 (a) e perviene alla sua soluzione in *Rm* 9-11 (a<sup>1</sup>) soltanto mediante *Rm* 5-8 (b) che, nell'economia della lettera, non costituisce un masso erratico o fuori posto, bensì la chiave di volta della sua composizione e delle relative tematiche.

Poiché la seconda dimostrazione di *Rm* 5,1-8,39 rappresenta il cuore della lettera che nella vita in Cristo trova il suo fondamento, è bene tener presente questa centralità dello stesso Gesù Cristo, quando si tratta di analizzare le diverse asserzioni di Romani. Ad esempio, in *Rm* 1,18-3,20 Paolo non si propone di delineare un'asettica concezione dell'uomo che, per altro, si rivela profondamente pessimistica, dato che colloca «tutti» gli uomini e «tutto» l'uomo sotto la condanna dell'ira divina; l'apostolo si prefigge piuttosto di preparare la svolta positiva della salvezza realizzata in Cristo, dimostrata dal punto di vista storico in *Rm* 3,21-4,25 e soprattutto con una prospettiva universalistica, in *Rm* 5,1-8,39. Lo stesso vale per il problema della Legge e per quello dell'elezione divina nei confronti d'Israele (cfr. *Rm* 9,1-11,36): Paolo affronta queste problematiche per rileggerle a partire dalla fede in Cristo, altrimenti risulta quanto mai complesso, se non impossibile, venirne a capo. Dunque, anche per Romani vale il principio coniato da E.P. Sanders: «la soluzione precede il problema», ossia si va dalla soluzione cristologia alla tragica situazione dell'uomo rispetto alla Legge e alla sua condizione di peccatore e non l'inverso.

## 2. Lo sfondo

Torniamo alla tesi principale della lettera: in *Rm* 1,16 Paolo specifica chi sono i destinatari della salvezza: «tanto del giudeo prima quanto del greco». Purtroppo in molte traduzioni il testo greco non è reso bene, soprattutto rispetto al «tanto... quanto...»; invece la consistenza di questa eguaglianza va presa in considerazione, altrimenti si rischia di oscurare la tesi fondamentale del vangelo paolino in Romani, consistente nell'universalità della salvezza.

Tuttavia, per quanto Paolo possa sostenere e dimostrare questa universale salvezza in Cristo, non può ignorare il «prima» presente nello stesso v. 16, riferito al giudeo e non al greco. Innanzitutto è bene precisare che il «greco» in questa tesi rappresenta tutti i pagani, ossia coloro che «non sono Israele», che non gli appartengono e che ora sono diventati destinatari della salvezza.

A prima vista la presenza di quel «prima» potrebbe indurre a pensare a una priorità salvifica dei giudei rispetto al vangelo. Soltanto in una seconda fase i pagani, rappresentati dai «greci», sarebbero diventati destinatari della salvezza. In realtà si tratta di una priorità storica e non etica o religiosa, causata dall'originaria elezione d'Israele, che non solo permette, ma costringe lo stesso Paolo a riconoscere la priorità dei giudei rispetto ai pagani. In *Rm* 3,29 dirà esplicitamente: «Forse Dio è Dio soltanto dei Giudei? Non lo è anche delle genti? Certo, anche delle genti!».

La relazione tra Israele e i pagani, riguardo alla salvezza, viene sviluppata particolarmente nella terza dimostrazione di *Rm* 9,1-11,36. Non è in gioco soltanto la comprensione dell'identità d'Israele in relazione all'evento Cristo, ma prima di tutto la «fedeltà di Dio alle sue promesse», come dimostra la tesi secondaria di *Rm* 9,6a: «La parola di Dio non è venula meno». Per Paolo, il mistero d'Israele non dipende soltanto dalla sua responsabilità nei confronti del Messia «inviato e rigettato», ma appartiene allo stesso disegno della Parola di Dio che rimane per sempre.

La fedeltà della Parola include l'irrevocabilità e la permanenza dei doni di Dio al suo popolo: «Essi sono Israeliti e hanno l'adozione a figli, la gloria, le alleanze, la legislazione, il culto, le promesse; a loro appartengono i patriarchi e da loro proviene Cristo secondo la carne» (*Rm* 9,4-5). Riguardo a questo elenco è necessario rilevare la presenza dei verbi al presente: essi «hanno» ancora e non «avevano», per cui sia lecito pensare che i privilegi d'Israele con la venuta di Cristo sono passati alla Chiesa. Al contrario questi doni dimostrano la fedeltà di Dio alle sue promesse, anche in una situazione di rifiuto da parte d'Israele nei confronti dell'inviato, Gesù Cristo. La comprensione di queste pagine di Romani assume un'importanza considerevole per lo stesso dialogo ecumenico contemporaneo tra ebraismo e cristianesimo.

### 3. Il mistero d'Israele

Se mettiamo da parte l'inizio introduttivo (cfr. *Rm* 9,1-5) e l'epilogo, rappresentato dall'inno alla sapienza di Dio (cfr. *Rm* 11,33-36), in *Rm* 9,6-11,32 si possono rilevare tre parti fondamentali:

a) *Rm* 9,6-29 riguarda l'identità d'Israele, introdotta dalla tesi di *Rm* 9,6b: «Non tutti i discendenti d'Israele sono Israele»;

b) *Rm* 9,30-10,21 con la tesi di *Rm* 10,4a: «Fine stesso della Legge è Cristo»;

a<sup>1</sup>) *Rm* 11,1-32 con la tesi di *Rm* 11,2: «Dio non ha ripudiato il suo popolo, che aveva scelto fin dall'inizio».

In questa dimostrazione si riscontra lo schema tripartito circolare, nel quale *a* (cfr. *Rm* 9,6-29) si risolve in *a*<sup>1</sup> (cfr. *Rm* 11,1-32) mediante *b* (cfr. *Rm* 9,30-10,21). La base di comprensione della fedeltà della Parola di Dio si trova nel suo centro che per Paolo è Gesù Cristo, e non nell'identità d'Israele che dipende da questo primario disegno di Dio realizzato in Cristo. Questo significa che il problema d'Israele non va affrontato in quanto tale, ma in relazione al disegno di Dio incentrato sulla fedeltà della sua Parola.

Soltanto in questa prospettiva diventano comprensibili le difficili affermazioni di *Rm* 9,6-29, in cui Paolo sembra addirittura negare qualsiasi libertà umana per affermare quella di Dio: «Quindi non dipende dalla volontà né dagli sforzi dell'uomo, ma da Dio che ha misericordia» (*Rm* 9,16). Per conferire priorità alla scelta di Dio, Paolo adduce persino l'esempio del faraone e del suo cuore indurito: «Dice infatti la Scrittura al faraone: *Ti ho fatto sorgere per manifestare in te la mia potenza e perché il mio nome sia proclamato in tutta la terra*» (*Rm* 9,17). Se queste affermazioni vengono estrapolate dal proprio contesto argomentativo risultano assurde se non inconcepibili per l'uomo e per la sua libertà. In realtà la prospettiva paolina di *Rm* 9,6-29 non è a partire dall'uomo, ossia Paolo non si pone il problema della consistenza della libertà umana di fronte a Dio; la prospettiva non è neppure semplicemente a partire da Dio, per cui è necessario conferire la priorità alla sua infinita libertà. Piuttosto, in *Rm* 9,6-29 Paolo focalizza tutta la propria argomentazione sull'elezione divina, descritta nella storia della salvezza e pervenuta alla sua massima espressione con l'elezione del Cristo, considerato «fine della Legge». In altri termini, la categoria centrale dell'elezione, espressa in *Rm* 9, non fa che preparare la soluzione cristologica dell'elezione in Cristo, dimostrata in *Rm* 10: Paolo sembra dire che se tutto dipende dall'elezione e se questa si realizza pienamente in Cristo, non si può credere all'elezione d'Israele se non si accetta anche quella di Cristo. Per questo egli non esita a porre in discussione la stessa identità d'Israele, fondata sull'elezione divina e non sui propri diritti, anche se questi sono stati accampati nella storia della salvezza in base ai privilegi donati da Dio stesso.

Nella parte centrale (cfr. *Rm* 9,30-10,21) della dimostrazione Paolo si sofferma su Cristo, considerato come «fine della Legge» (*Rm* 10,4). A ben vedere, la formulazione paolina di per sé non è chiara, in quanto il termine *télos* può essere inteso sia come «la fine», e quindi può riferirsi all'abrogazione



della Legge, sia come «il fine», considerando Cristo come il punto di arrivo o il culmine della Legge stessa.

Fermo restando che quando Paolo tratta della Legge si riferisce sempre e soltanto alla «Torah» giudaica e non a qualsiasi legge, naturale o civile che sia e di qualsiasi altro popolo, è bene tener presente che la relazione tra Cristo e la Legge si pone dopo le argomentazioni di *Rm* 2,1-3,20; 5,12-21; 7,1-25, in cui nonostante la Legge faccia crescere nell'uomo la coscienza del peccato, al punto da sancirne la condanna, non solo viene definita come «santa» (*Rm* 7,12) e come «spirituale» (*Rm* 7,14) ma non è mai considerata abrogata.

Contro ogni abrogazione della Legge, Paolo non ha esitato a sostenere: «Togliamo dunque ogni valore alla Legge mediante la fede? Nient'affatto, anzi confermiamo la Legge» (*Rm* 3,31). Sembra che, per quanto la Legge possa essere considerata negativamente – processo riscontrabile più in Galati che in Romani a causa dei relativi destinatari che pretendevano di pervenire a un perfezionamento nella salvezza mediante la circoncisione – dallo stesso Paolo non viene mai abrogata, in quanto rimane comunque di origine divina! Sarebbe bene ricordare che tra i doni permanenti di Dio a Israele rimane anche quello della Legge, secondo *Rm* 9,4. Per questo, quando la stessa Legge viene considerata nella sua giusta prospettiva, come qualcosa che, pur essendo dono di Dio, non ha mai avuto la pretesa di conferire la salvezza, allora essa stessa perviene al suo «fine» che è Cristo.

Dalla funzione positiva della Legge rispetto a Cristo dipende l'inescusabilità dei giudei nei confronti del vangelo, che trova il suo centro in Cristo: adesso la fedele parola di Dio (*Rm* 9,6a) diventa la «parola di Cristo» (*Rm* 10,17), per cui tutti hanno ascoltato e non possono accampare nessun fraintendimento o alibi di fronte alla predicazione di Cristo.

Forse, secondo un nostro modo di vedere, la conseguenza naturale della disobbedienza d'Israele dovrebbe essere rappresentata dalla sua condanna e dal rifiuto definitivo da parte di Dio. Invece Paolo rivede con profondità maggiore e lacerazione drammatica il «mistero d'Israele» (cfr. *Rm* 11,1-36).

Di fatto, nonostante la logica finale debba sembrare quella del rifiuto, «Dio non ha ripudiato il suo popolo» (*Rm* 11,2), come annuncia la nuova tesi secondaria di *Rm* 11,1-36. Questa sconvolgente asserzione viene dimostrata in primo luogo con la presenza di un «resto» di cui fa parte lo stesso Paolo (cfr. *Rm* 11,1-10): non tutto Israele è ripudiato perché di fatto non tutto Israele ha rifiutato il vangelo. Di questo «resto» fanno parte le comunità giudeo-cristiane e i giudei delle comunità «miste», come quella di Roma, nelle quali convivono con gli etnico-cristiani. Dunque, la categoria profetica del «resto» rappresenta la fondamentale garanzia per la quale Dio non intende mai rigettare il popolo eletto.

D'altro canto, è necessario riconoscere che il rifiuto di buona parte d'Israele nei confronti del vangelo ha significato l'ingresso dei pagani nel popolo dell'alleanza: questa motivazione, spiegata in *Rm* 11,11-15, trova le sue origini in una prospettiva più ampia della storia della salvezza che non riguarda più soltanto Israele ma il mondo riconciliato con Dio (cfr. *Rm* 11,14).

Da queste due ragioni fondamentali – in base alle quali da una parte permane un «resto» d'Israele e dall'altra il rifiuto d'Israele ha significato l'ingresso e la salvezza dei pagani – scaturisce l'esempio dell'olivo e dell'olivastro (cfr. *Rm* 11,16-24). Adattandolo alla propria argomentazione, in quanto non l'olivastro dovrebbe essere innestato sull'olivo ma il contrario, Paolo paragona l'olivo a Israele e i pagani che hanno aderito a Cristo all'olivastro. La radice rimane Israele mentre i rami innestati sono i pagani, per cui nessun etnico-cristiano può accampare dei motivi di vanto o di superiorità di fronte all'incredulità di una parte d'Israele.

Questa metafora tratta dall'agricoltura contrasta con la concezione diffusa nelle stesse comunità cristiane, secondo la quale al «vecchio Israele» è subentrato il «nuovo Israele» della Chiesa. A ben vedere, questo modello non solo non trova alcun fondamento nella teologia di Romani ma fraintende interamente il pensiero paolino. Le radici della Chiesa non si trovano soltanto in Cristo ma anche nel popolo del quale egli fa parte «secondo la carne» e nelle comunità giudaico-cristiane che per prime lo hanno riconosciuto come il Signore. Dunque la negazione d'Israele significa anche la negazione della Chiesa, perché suppone l'inconcepibile esistenza di un albero senza radici. Non a caso una delle prime divisioni cristiane è rappresentata dal «marcionismo», ossia dal rifiuto dell'Antico Testamento rispetto all'esclusiva affermazione del Nuovo Testamento: la Chiesa delle origini ha dovuto scegliere, per la propria stessa sopravvivenza, l'unità fra l'uno e l'altro Testamento.

L'ultimo livello argomentativo di *Rm* 9,1-11,36 sposta l'attenzione sul futuro definitivo del disegno di Dio: «Allora tutto Israele sarà salvato» (*Rm* 11,26). Per Paolo, questa salvezza finale d'Israele si realizzerà quando tutti i pagani saranno entrati a far parte del popolo dell'alleanza.

La prospettiva finale della salvezza per Israele non deve indurre a un facile e superficiale dialogo con l'ebraismo contemporaneo, secondo il quale al popolo ebraico è riservato, in definitiva, un percorso alternativo di salvezza che non sia quello di Cristo. Così, da una parte ci sarebbe la via della salvezza in Cristo e dall'altra quella per i giudei, come la via per coloro che non hanno potuto conoscere il vangelo ma che, comunque, continuano a vivere la propria relazione con Dio o con il Trascendente con animo retto.

Non v'è dubbio che, oltre alla figliolanza divina che passa attraverso Cristo (cfr. *Rm* 8,14-17; cfr. anche *Gal* 4,4-6; *Ef* 1,5), vi è una misteriosa

figliolanza d'Israele che permane, nonostante il suo rifiuto nei confronti di Cristo. Tra i doni irrevocabili e permanenti di Dio a Israele si trova anche quello della «figliolanza» (cfr. *Rm* 9,4).

Tuttavia, per quanto si possa delineare un percorso salvifico autonomo per Israele o per coloro che non credono, in buona fede, in Cristo, questo non significa che per Paolo vi siano due vie di salvezza: ancora una volta, egli ne conosce soltanto una e di questa si fa predicatore di fronte sia ai giudei che ai pagani: è la via che passa attraverso Cristo. L'altra via non va né negata, con forme di ostracismo e di integralismo estranee al pensiero di Paolo, né affermata con atteggiamenti di inutili gratulazioni, dettati più da una coscienza colpevolizzata, dopo il drammatico sterminio del popolo giudaico durante la II guerra mondiale, che dal rispetto della visione paolina. In definitiva non si può far risaltare *Rm* 11,25-32 dimenticando che la sua soluzione passa attraverso la «parola di Cristo», dimostrata in *Rm* 10.

L'alleanza «mai revocata», nei confronti del popolo giudaico, non significa che per esso non sia necessario essere posto di fronte al vangelo di Cristo, tanto alla fine della storia sarà comunque salvato! Tutt'altro, di fronte a tutti permane il disegno dell'elezione definitiva realizzata in Cristo, giudei o pagani che siano. Per questo, contro una concezione che pensa a un duplice percorso di salvezza, uno valido per i «cristiani» e l'altro per i «giudei», e contro chi ritiene che ci sia un'esclusiva via di giustificazione, sostenuta soltanto per coloro che tra giudei e pagani credono in Cristo, sembra che in *Rm* 9,1-11,36 venga delineato un percorso affermativo, quello di Cristo, e uno che viene lasciato nel mistero, in quanto appartenente soltanto al disegno futuro di Dio.

Per Paolo, come per ogni cristiano, è necessario fermarsi e non andare oltre il «mistero, avvolto nel silenzio per secoli eterni, ma ora manifestato mediante le scritture dei Profeti, per ordine dell'eterno Dio, annunciato a tutte le genti perché giungano all'obbedienza della fede» (*Rm* 16,25-26). Per questo la drammatica sezione di *Rm* 9,1-11,36 non si chiude con l'affermazione di due vie chiare e distinte di salvezza, una per la Chiesa e l'altra per Israele, ammesso che Paolo distingua così nettamente queste due entità, ma da una parte con l'attestazione del vangelo (cfr. *Rm* 11,28) e dall'altra con il riconoscimento di quanto ancora rimane da comprendere del mistero elettivo di Dio: «O profondità della ricchezza, della sapienza e della conoscenza di Dio! Quanto insondabili sono i suoi giudizi e inaccessibili le sue vie!» (*Rm* 11,33).

#### 4. Conclusione

Anche se la lettera ai Romani non rappresenta una *summa theologica* ordinata e sistematica, non si può negare che vi si riscontrano gli elementi più importanti del pensiero di Paolo: il vangelo, la giustizia, la grazia, la libertà, la figliolanza e l'agape.

In questa lettera la relazione tra Dio e l'uomo, se parte da una situazione d'incomunicabilità, anzi di vera e propria accusa reciproca, in base alla quale Dio rimane «imparziale» e l'uomo sotto l'incombente ira divina, perviene a una riconciliazione definitiva e totale in Cristo. In lui si manifesta pienamente l'amore di Dio per noi, proprio quando tutto sembra compromesso. Questo fa parte del mistero «avvolto nel silenzio per secoli eterni, ma ora manifestato mediante le scritture dei Profeti, per ordine dell'eterno Dio, annunciato a tutte le genti perché giungano all'obbedienza della fede», secondo l'inno conclusivo di *Rm* 16,25-27.

Di questo mistero, taciuto ma rivelato in Cristo, Paolo è l'evangelizzatore sia per i giudei che per i pagani. In tal senso, il termine «mistero» non corrisponde al nostro «destino» ineluttabile che bisogna accettare con rassegnazione, bensì al «disegno» benevolo di salvezza di Dio per ogni uomo. Anche se Romani ha spesso prestato il terreno per una duplice concezione dell'elezione al bene e al male, secondo la quale sin da principio alcuni si salvano e altri si perdono, da una comprensione globale e contestuale delle affermazioni paoline emerge un'unica elezione positiva e non negativa, quella realizzata in Cristo mediante la sua morte e la sua risurrezione.

Se ci poniamo sul versante della comunità di Roma, come di ogni comunità che riceve questa lettera, Paolo esorta i cristiani di origine giudaica a non vantarsi dei propri privilegi donati da Dio nella storia della salvezza, e quelli di origine pagana a non esaltarsi di fronte all'incredulità di buona parte d'Israele: «Dio infatti ha rinchiuso tutti nella disobbedienza, per essere misericordioso verso tutti!» (*Rm* 11,32). Dall'universale misericordia di Dio viene la salvezza per tutti.

**THE LOGIC OF THE “ADEQUATE” ANTHROPOLOGY  
IN MAN AND WOMAN HE CREATED THEM:  
A THEOLOGY OF THE BODY BY JOHN PAUL II  
AND REINTRODUCED IN AMORIS LAETITIA  
BY POPE FRANCIS**

*Iulian Gabriel ROBU\**

**Abstract:** This article presents a general introduction to the anthropology of the Pope John Paul II treaty of *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, describing the ecclesial context, the author, its philosophical and cultural formation, the method and content of the treaty, and in the second part the fundamental concepts of the “adequate” anthropology of the Pope as well as the function of the protology for anthropology in general, and for theology of the body in particular. A special place is dedicated both for indicating the implications of the theology of the body and to illustrate its relationship with the Pope’s “adequate anthropology”, and for showing how, like Saint John Paul II, Pope Francis connects the protology with eschatology in a Christological key. Christ is the way to understand both the beginning of mankind and his end. For both popes, Christ is the full man and he is the way that shows man how he/she can truly find personal and mutual fulfillment in married life.

**Keywords:** anthropology, man, woman, creation, Christ, John Paul II.

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the topic of the family has often been present on the agenda of Western European politicians. The traditional family is faced with solid disapprovals and is attacked at the core of its existence, that is why it is going through a crisis that are causing suffering and agonising questions. “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (*Gaudium et spes* 1), that is why this essential theme has been sited at the heart of several recent Magisterium documents.

The Post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis *Amoris Laetitia*<sup>1</sup> speaks of the gift of family, defends the institution of marriage, makes

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<sup>1</sup> POPE FRANCIS, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (19 March 2016): AAS 108 (2016) 1-325. I shall abbreviate it *AL*.

an analysis of the current situation of families throughout the world. It provides solutions for the pastoral care of families in crisis by proposing the teaching of Sacred Scripture with regard to the family. The reference to that *in principio* (*Genesis* 1) and to the family as it is presented by the Holy Scriptures has guided the Church as a beacon of light for centuries, appears in the very first lines of the first chapter of the apostolic exhortation mentioned above: “The Bible is full of families, births, love stories and family crises. This is true from its very first page, with the appearance of Adam and Eve’s family with all its burden of violence but also its enduring strength (cf. *Gen* 4) to its very last page, where we behold the wedding feast of the Bride and the Lamb (*Rev* 21:2, 9). Jesus’ description of the two houses, one built on rock and the other on sand (cf. *Mt* 7:24-27), symbolizes any number of family situations shaped by the exercise of their members’ freedom (*AL* 8)<sup>2</sup>”.

What surprised me most in these lines is the triple reference to 1) *the beginning* of mankind, 2) to her end, which the wedding of the Lamb. Central to all this is 3) Christ in whom everything was created and who reveals the fulfillment of man and creation. This triple reference to protology, eschatology, and focused on Christology can also be seen in the catecheses about the theology of body that John Paul II delivered at the general audiences on Wednesdays during the first four years of his pontificate. Starting with these close connections, we can find many other similarities and common ideas in *Amoris Laetitia* and in the catechesis of John Paul II. Pope Francis repeatedly quotes texts of this catechesis and shows his thoughtful appreciation for John Paul II, for his teachings and the support he offered to families:

Saint John Paul II devoted special attention to the family in his catechesis on human love, in his Letter to Families *Gratissimam Sane* and particularly in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*. In these documents, the Pope defined the family as ‘the way of the Church’. He also offered a general vision of the vocation of men and women to love, and proposed basic guidelines for the pastoral care of the family and for the role of the family in society. In particular, by treating conjugal love, he described how spouses, in their mutual love, receive the gift of the Spirit of Christ and live their call to holiness (*AL* 69).

Noticing these clear connections between the teachings of these popes, in a series of three articles: 1) “The Logic of the *Adequate* Anthropology in

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<sup>2</sup> “Sacra Biblia familiis, generationibus, amoris familiarisque discriminis narrationibus inde a prima pagina replentur, quam Adam Evaeque familia occupat, violentiae suum exhibens onus ac vim pariter vitae quae producitur (cfr *Gn* 4), usque ad postremam paginam ubi Sponsae et Agni nuptiae demonstrantur (cfr *Apc* 21, 2.9). Duae domus, quas commemorat Iesus, supra petram aedificatas aut supra arenam (cfr *Mt* 7, 24-27) tot familiares condiciones manifestare possunt, quas illarum incolae libertate fruentes ferunt”.

*Man and Woman He created them: A Theology of the Body* by John Paul II, and reintroduced in *Amoris Laetitia* by Pope Francis”, 2) “The interpretation of the *status naturae integrae* (Gen 1-2) within the Adequate Anthropology of John Paul II”, and 3) “The *status of naturae lapsae simul et redemptae* (Gen 3) in *Man and Woman He created them: A Theology of the Body* by John Paul II”, I intend to highlight the role that *Genesis* 1-3 plays in the *adequate* anthropology of John Paul II and how his teaching is reintroduced and developed with a new language and in a new style by Pope Francis. Illuminated by the teachings of these two popes, the Church looks with confidence at the future of the family, at the World Meeting of Families in Ireland, Dublin (21-26 August 2018). Its theme, chosen by Pope Francis, is: “The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World”. This title points to the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, the document which guides the preparation for this World Meeting of Families and offers the ideas which will be articulate during the different moments of this assembly.

The teachings of Pope John Paul II, which are reintroduced in *Amoris Laetitia* by Pope Francis, are always relevant to contemporary man who is affected by many crises that baffle him, where he finds it difficult to define his relationship with creation, with his fellow men and with God. Within this context and following the teachings of these two popes, we need to go back to “the beginning” (*Mt* 19:4), to understand man as God created him. Our guides in this article are the Post-synodal Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* and the book *Uomo e donna lo creò: catechesi sull’amore umano*<sup>3</sup> by John Paul II, translated into English as *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*. The book contains 133 catecheses that John Paul II pronounced starting on Wednesday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1979, at his general audience.

My motivations for addressing this issue (in a series of three articles) are many. First of all, I intend to pay simple homage to John Paul II, who loved Romania so much, that he tenderly named it the “Garden of the Virgin Mary”. It is because of this that I will put forth several arguments of the theological contributions of some Romanian authors. Then, there is a theological and anthropological motivation, because I aspire to know more clearly God’s plan for man, in order to be able to respond to the current challenges and objections regarding the dignity and integrity of the human person. Finally, there is a pastoral motivation, in the sense that I aim to identify the current doctrine given by Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis for an efficient and correct pastoral care in the service of the contemporary man.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò: catechesi sull’amore umano*, Città Nuova, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 1987<sup>2</sup>.

The method I have used in this article is specific to dogmatic theology. It is guided by faith and reason, inspired by the revelation and by the current teaching of the Church's Magisterium and the postulates of John Paul II's personalism, the article intends to present some aspects of the theology of the body found in the above-mentioned work, and in particular, the contribution of the biblical protology to the development of the theological anthropology. That is why in my research it is my intention to use the discoveries of biblical and anthropological sciences to show the discoveries that Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis exposed in their works.

### **1. *Man and Woman He Created Them:* *A Theology of the Body. General presentation***

The book of John Paul II contains a profound and enduring theology. In order to understand it, it is necessary to know the context of the catechesis, as well as the challenges they responded to, and the method and purpose for which they were written.

#### *1.1. The ecclesial context*

The profound mutations in society and the Church during the controversial year of 1968 called for a response from the Church's Magisterium. This answer came in that year from Pope Paul VI through the Encyclical Letter *Humanae vitae*<sup>4</sup>. This document sparked heated and challenging discussions among Catholics<sup>5</sup>, as Paul VI himself had predicted<sup>6</sup>. Many saw in it a "cold shower" given to the Catholic world, which, after Vatican Council II, was believed to have closed its accounts with modernity<sup>7</sup>. Some Catholics, infected by a "culture of absolute subjectivity"<sup>8</sup>, rejected this

<sup>4</sup> Cf. PAUL AL VI-LEA, The Encyclical Letter *Humanae vitae* (25 iulie 1968): *EncVat* 3/587-617.

<sup>5</sup> Paul VI had long analyzed the issue of *Humanae vitae*: "I trembled before the dilemma of a slight acceptance of current opinions, or of a hard-line sentence to be borne by today's society". PAUL AL VI-LEA, "La premessa, i motivi, le finalità dell'Enciclica *Humanae vitae*", in *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, VI, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, Vatican 1968, 871.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Humanae Vitae* 18; D. MIETH, "*Humanae vitae* compie quarant'anni", *Concilium* 1 (2008) 161; I. ENĂȘOAE, "Spiritul creștin și profetic al Enciclicei *Humanae vitae*", in *Humanae vitae. Între actualitate și provocare: un răspuns modern la o întrebare multiseclară*, ed. I. Enășoae, Sapientia, Iași 2009, 57; I. CHINEZ, "Paternitatea responsabilă în *Humanae vitae*", in *Humanae vitae. Între actualitate și provocare: un răspuns modern la o întrebare multiseclară*, ed. I. Enășoae, Sapientia, Iași 2009, 55.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. E. DUMEA, "Evoluția istorică a învățăturii creștine din enciclica *Humanae vitae*", in *Humanae vitae. Între actualitate și provocare: un răspuns modern la o întrebare multiseclară*, ed. I. Enășoae, Sapientia, Iași 2009, 37.

<sup>8</sup> F. CHOMALI, "*Humanae vitae*: la respuesta a graves problemas", *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 1 (2009) 82.



message of Paul VI, considering that “the council and the encyclical letter do not really take account of the difficulties present in life today”<sup>9</sup>, and from that year on whatever the Church said about morality was held by these people with suspicion or even hostility<sup>10</sup>.

In this tempestuous context and after all these events, in 1979, Pope John Paul II began a series of 133 catechesis of Wednesdays dedicated to the theology of the body<sup>11</sup>. The last 21 catecheses in this series are a conclusion of the entire work, but also an explicit commentary of *Humanae vitae*<sup>12</sup>. Gradually the encyclical of Paul VI was recognized more and more as prophetic by many people. The Synod of Bishops of 1980, the episcopates, the movements in favour of life and the researchers from different regions of the world<sup>13</sup> also sustain its prophetic logic. John Paul II himself proposes to reread *Humanae vitae*<sup>14</sup>, “this significant document”, in light of the divine plan and Christ’s teaching, to show that this doctrine can also answer the questions of people today<sup>15</sup>. In addition, his catecheses also aims to accompany closely the preparatory work of the 1980 Synod, not directly touching its subject, but directing its attention to the deeply anthropological roots of its themes<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 460.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. C. CAFFARRA, “*Humanae vitae*, quarant’anni dopo: abbozzo di una riflessione”, *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 1 (2008) 63.

<sup>11</sup> At the general audiences on Wednesday, Paul VI usually held a homily, which he carefully prepared. John Paul II resumed this tradition and renewed it, developing a single theme in 133 catechesis. Cf. Aa. Vv., “Avertissement”, in *À l’image de Dieu homme et femme*, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris 1980, 7-8.

<sup>12</sup> In his catecheses, the Pope gave also an anthropological explanation about how the contraception violates the truth of the body language. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 453-496; A. MATTHEEWS, “De la Bible à *Humanae vitae*. Les catéchèses de Jean Paul II”, *Nouvelle revue théologique* 111 (1989) 228-229; R.L.G. VALENZOLA, “Christian Family – Gift and hope”, *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 3 (2006) – 1 (2007) 303.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. A. PERCĂ, “Actualitatea enciclicei *Humanae vitae*”, in *Humanae vitae. Între actualitate și provocare: un răspuns modern la o întrebare multiseclară*, ed. I. ENĂȘOAE, Sapienția, Iași 2009, 21-22.

<sup>14</sup> Cardinal Wojtila himself had been summoned for the major commission responsible for drafting the document on responsible paternity, but he could not attend the meetings. However, the young Polish Cardinal might have influenced the way in which Paul VI presented his teaching. Cf. G.B. RE, “Paolo VI e l’*Humanae vitae*”, *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 1 (2009) 27-28; P.J. ELIOT, “*Humanae vitae*: Personal recollections”, *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 1 (2009) 112.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 453-459.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 31-32-496.

### 1.2. Author and topic

John Paul II was the 263th successor of St. Peter. One of the unifying aspects of his magisterium was the truth of man, man's mystery that is fully manifested in the light of the incarnate Word<sup>17</sup>, the one who entered singularly, uniquely and unrepeatably into the mystery of man and into his heart<sup>18</sup>. With his experience as a shepherd of Krakow and his vast accumulation of knowledge, he was well prepared to interact with different cultures. These gifts coupled with his openness to the truth of man inspired hope, not only through the abundance of his writings, but also through his "personal potentialities"<sup>19</sup> and his physical presence<sup>20</sup>. His pastoral testimony and care gave a new impetus to the Church in this vital field of anthropology<sup>21</sup>.

For four years in his general audiences, the Pope developed the theme he had first proposed in *Love and Responsibility*<sup>22</sup>: namely, that human sexual love holds a profoundly religious sense<sup>23</sup>, it being an image of the intimate life of the Triune God<sup>24</sup>. His catechesis also refers to another of his works, *Person and act*<sup>25</sup>. It is the apogee of the entire Wojtyła's philosophical

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et spes* 22: *EncVat* 1/1385-1390.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, The Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis* (4 March 1979) 8: AAS 4 (1979) 270.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. H. JEGOU, "Le charisme médiatique de Jean Paul II. Comment mettre Dieu dans la circulation de pensée du monde", *Lumière et vie* 257 (2003) 7.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. A. SOFRI, "All'appuntamento con Papa Wojtyła", *Nuntium* 9 (1999) 85.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. A. TRUJILLO, "La familia en el Pontificado de Juan Pablo II", *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 2 (2005) 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Iubire și responsabilitate*, ed. C. Geambașu, M.C., București 1999. The purpose of this work, which transpires in *Uomo e donna lo creò*, is to discover and explain how it is possible to relate sexually to another person without instrumentalizing neither him/her nor the sexuality itself. Cf. J.E. SMITH, "Responsible Parenthood as conscious Parenthood", *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 1 (2009) 146.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. G. WEIGEL, *Witness to hope*, Harpers Collins Publishers, New York 1999; translated into Romanian, *Un martor al speranței*, tr. R. Vasile, Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu Lăpuș, București 2007, 391; K. WOJTYŁA, *Iubire și responsabilitate*, 38-39.

<sup>24</sup> For Pope Francis, as for John Paul II, family is a mirror and an icon of the Holy Trinity. The unity between man and woman provides a testimony to the intimate life of the Holy Trinity and of the unity of the Three Divine Persons. *Amoris Laetitia* 11, quoting John Paul II, states: "Saint John Paul II shed light on this when he said, *Our God in his deepest mystery is not solitude, but a family, for he has within himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love. That love, in the divine family, is the Holy Spirit*. The family is thus not unrelated to God's very being". And AL 29: "With a gaze of faith and love, grace and fidelity, we have contemplated the relationship between human families and the divine Trinity. The word of God tells us that the family is entrusted to a man, a woman and their children, so that they may become a communion of persons in the image of the union of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Begetting and raising children, for its part, mirrors God's creative work".

<sup>25</sup> Cf. K. WOJTYŁA, *Persona e atto*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 1982.

creation<sup>26</sup>, which echoes the philosophical foundations of Vatican II’s teachings, as well as his own Thomistic formation and his attention to the phenomenological method, especially to Scheler’s philosophy<sup>27</sup> and the moral theology<sup>28</sup>. In the whole of John Paul II’s personalism, we actually discover a veiled theology<sup>29</sup>, which tries to give an answer to the challenge of the Hegelian totalitarianism in Poland, as well as to the danger of Nietzschean ideology (national-socialism) and Marxist thought (Lenin-Communism)<sup>30</sup>.

The Pope’s catecheses are not easy to understand when reading or listening to them. It will take a long time for the Church and the world to assimilate the theology of the body exposed in these catecheses. This theology represents the decisive *momentum* for the exorcism of the Manichaeian demon that haunts some contemporary moral assessments<sup>31</sup>. That is why his work is a kind of a “theological time bomb”, whose explosion can produce many consequences in the third millennium<sup>32</sup>.

The doctrine contained in these catecheses is so vast and complete that it constitutes a doctrinal corpus comparable to *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas of Aquinas<sup>33</sup>. Only that, for Thomas the concept of *bonum commune* plays an axial role, for Pope John Paul II this role is taken over in this book by the concept of “gift”<sup>34</sup>. But, going beyond these comparisons,

<sup>26</sup> Cf. C. TĂMAȘ, “Introducere”, in T. ROSTWOROWSKI, *Din gândirea filosofică a Papei John Paul II*, Ars Longa, Iași 1994, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. K. WOJTIŁA, “Prefazione dell’autore all’edizione anglo-americana di *Persona e atto* nella serie *Analecta Husserliana*”, in K. WOJTIŁA, *Persona e atto*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 1982, 13-14; J. RATZINGER, “La filosofia di Karol Wojtila”, in *La famiglia cristiana nell’insegnamento di Giovanni Paolo II*, Famiglia cristiana, Milano 1988, 188.

<sup>28</sup> A. RIGOBELLO, “Introduzione all’edizione italiana”, in JOHN PAUL II, *Persona e atto*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 1982, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Consistent with his vision of the human person, the Pope sustained “man’s faith is profoundly anthropological, radicated into co-existence, in communion with the eternal You”. E. FERENȚ, “Crainicul misterului lui Hristos în lumea de astăzi”, *Altarul Banatului* 1-3 (1997) 172. For the Pope, a coherent personalism can not be atheist. The value of the human person is derived from the fact that he is the image of God. And “if God is to be loved *propter se ipsum*, then it follows that his image and likeness, man-person *est afirmanda propter se ipsam*”. E. KOWALSKI, “Fondamento della norma morale dell’atto coniugale nell’*Humanae vitae*”. Rilettura ed approfondimento dell’Enciclica secondo Giovanni Paolo II”, *Studii franciscane* 8 (2008) 87.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. T.D. WILLIAMS, “What is Thomistic Personalism?”, *Alpha Omega* 2 (2004) 172.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 60, footnote 2; 184-187.307-308.322.331.

<sup>32</sup> E. FERENȚ, *Frumusețea vieții creștine*, Sapientia, Iași 2009, 402.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. J.M. CASTELLVÍ, “El papel de los médicos católicos en la aplicación de la *Humanae vitae*”, *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 1 (2009) 206.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 71-73.77.80.84-86.316.319.420-423; M. WALDSTEIN, “The Common Good in St. Thomas and John Paul II”, *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 1-2 (2004) 188; P. FEDORYKA, “The concept of Gift as hermeneutical key to the Dignity of Human Person”, *Logos* 11 (2008) 49-69. Reading the catechesis of Pope John Paul II and the exhortation of Pope Francis, one can

we must sadly acknowledge that the pope's teachings did not receive the audience they deserved or appropriate feed-back from the media. The weekly rhythm probably dispersed the attention of some of the direct listeners who did not notice the value and compactness of this condensed text<sup>35</sup>.

### 1.3. Method and content

The Pope's method of catechesis is one of dogmatic theology: *fides quaerens intellectum*. The theoretical course of this method takes into account the extraordinary richness of the brilliant theology of the Old and New

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observe the continuity and harmony between the teachings of both Popes regarding the institution of the family. It is worth noting that the concept of "self-giving" occupies an important place both in the adequate anthropology of Pope John Paul II and in Pope Francis's doctrine on the family. The term *self-giving*, that appears nine times in *Amoris Laetitia*, is a key concept for possibly reading the whole document in light of the hermeneutics of gift. We also find the term "gift", in both the singular and plural form, appear 55 times throughout the exhortation. Life is a gift (AL 178), love is always a gift of God (AL 228), freedom is itself a great gift (AL 262), the law is a gift of God which points out the way, a gift for everyone without exception (AL 295). "The marital union is thus evoked not only in its sexual and corporal dimension, but also in its voluntary self-giving in love. The result of this union is that the two *become one flesh*, both physically and in the union of their hearts and lives, and, eventually, in a child, who will share not only genetically but also spiritually in the *flesh* of both parents" (AL 13). For an integral and generous gift of self that will be expressed, following a public commitment, in the gift of their bodies. Sexual union in marriage will thus appear as a sign of an all-inclusive commitment (AL 283). For Pope Francis, family is a gift for the Church (AL 5); from this standpoint, reflecting on the interplay between the family and the Church will prove a precious gift for the Church in our time (AL 87). Children are a gift for the parents and society. Each one is unique and irreplaceable (AL 14, AL 170) that why it is important to accept that child as a gift from God (AL 166), for "he or she is not something owed to one, but is a gift" (AL 81), a wonderful gift from God (AL 222). Marriage is "a gift" from the Lord (1 Cor 7:7) and this divine gift includes sexuality (AL 61). All this brings us to the sexual dimension of marriage. God himself created sexuality, which is a marvellous gift to his creatures. If this gift needs to be cultivated and directed, it is to prevent the "impoverishment of an authentic value" (AL 150). Through love the human person becomes a gift (AL 151) and the spouses, in their mutual love, receive the gift of the Spirit of Christ and live their call to holiness" (AL 69). Marriage is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses (AL 72), who, by manifesting their consent and expressing it physically, receive a great gift. Their consent and their bodily union are the divinely appointed means whereby they become "one flesh" (AL 75). The beauty of this mutual, gratuitous gift, the joy which comes from a life that is born and the loving care of all family members – from toddlers to seniors – are just a few of the fruits which make the response to the vocation of the family unique and irreplaceable", both for the Church and for society as a whole (AL 88). The gift of God's love poured out upon the spouses is also a summons to constant growth in grace (AL 134). Within family, masculinity is a gift, (AL 177), adoption is a gift (AL 179). People with disabilities are a gift for the family and an opportunity to grow in love, mutual aid and unity (AL 47).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. A. VINGT-TROIS, "Un Pape philosophe et théologien", *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 2 (2005) 61.

Testaments<sup>36</sup>. His theological and narrative approach, supported by a solid exegetical and symbolic reasoning, has also philosophical consequences, thus exceeding the classical course of theology courses where, for some scholars, philosophy – *ancilla theologiae* was used as a propaedeutic instrument<sup>37</sup>. By analyzing the biblical aspects<sup>38</sup>, it is indicated how to base the doctrine of revelation proclaimed by the contemporary Church. This biblical foundation<sup>39</sup> is open to the questions raised by man today and therefore serves as an instrument of modern science and contemporary culture. In this sector, the intense development of philosophical (and moral) anthropology in a personalistic key met with queries from theological ethics<sup>40</sup>.

This method avoids the risk of immanentism, the risk of reducing faith to reason, due to the two points that prevent this fall. The first is the gnoseological realism (the Pope had been formed according to the thomistic method)<sup>41</sup>, which impedes the reductivist definition of the experience (contrapositionism) and the deduction of the transcendence of truth based only on the conformity with human thinking (against historicist and relativistic idealism). The second point is fidelity to the revealed Scriptures, the humility to be available to the truth: the Pope is free in truth because he is its servant. Although the Pope always refers to objective truth, anthropology removes the risk of extrinsicism due to the starting point: which is the essentially human experience<sup>42</sup>. As one can notice, Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis do not regard the family as abstract and separate from the current situation in which people live. Both popes make an analysis of the situation of the family of today, not just about who a family should be, but also about the wounds of the family, the presence of concupiscence and sin in families, about divorce and the desire to possess the other.

Like John Paul II, Pope Francis is aware of anthropological and cultural changes that influence family life. Any form of theology wishing to reach peoples' lives must be attentive to the cultural and social conditions in which they live and where they can encounter God.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 31.39.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. P.R. SINDONI, “Simbolica dell’umano ed ermeneutica del femminile. Il contributo di Karol Wojtila all’antropologia filosofica”, *Communio* 190-191 (2003) 42.

<sup>38</sup> The Pope easily reconciled philosophy to the Bible, because for him metaphysics must be encouraged precisely on the basis of the faith in creation. Cf. J. RATZINGER, “Le 14 Encicliche di Giovanni Paolo II”, *Communio* 190-191 (2003) 14.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. C. CAFFARRA, “Introduzione generale”, in JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò: catechesi sull’amore umano*, Città Nuova, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 1987<sup>2</sup>, 11.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 495-496.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. M. MAGAGNA, “*Homo Veritatem perscrutatur*. La dignità dell’esperienza umana nelle riflessioni di Giovanni Paolo II”, *Rivista teologica di Lugano* 3 (2006) 505-518.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 42-43, footnote 2; C. CAFFARRA, “Introduzione generale”, 12

Yet another challenge is posed by the various forms of an ideology of gender that “denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family (*Amoris Laetitia*, 56).

New forms of ideologies, which have recently taken place in contemporary society, attack the family in the essential points that define it. “Anthropological and cultural changes in our times influence all aspects of life and call for an analytic and diversified approach” (*Amoris Laetitia* 32), and the principal tendencies in anthropological-cultural changes” are leading individuals, in personal and family life, to obtain less and less support from social structures than in the past.

The “catechesis” of John Paul II belong to a literary genre different from that of apostolic Exhortation. We say the same about their purpose and authority. However, their depth does not cease to surprise and manifest the same care of the Universal Shepherd<sup>43</sup>. These 113 catecheses are extremely dense theological and philosophical meditations, on the body theology, Christian celibacy, and marriage<sup>44</sup>. The first catechism cycle, “Il principio”, contains 23 catechesis held between 23.09.1979 – 2.06.1980. Here, “the beginning” is individualized by the commentary on *Mt* 19:3-10 by means of the Genesis creation. The second cycle, “La redenzione del cuore”, comprises 40 catecheses and is a commentary on the words of Jesus in *Mt* 5:27-28. These catecheses were delivered between 6.04.1986-06.05.1981. The series of catecheses was interrupted by the 13.05.1981 attack. The third catechism series, “La risurrezione della carne”, is a commentary on Jesus’ answer to the Sadducees who asked him about the resurrection of the body (cf *Mt* 22:24-30). It includes 9 catechesis, delivered between 11.11.1981-10.02.1982. The fourth series, “La verginità cristiana”, analyses the evangelical text of Jesus’ dialogue with the Pharisees (*Mt* 19:1-10). These catecheses were delivered between 10.03.1982-21.07.1982. The fifth catechism cycle, “Il matrimonio Cristiano”, deepens the doctrine of the marriage sacrifice of *Eph* 5. The catechesis was delivered 28.07.1982-09.02.1983. The sixth cycle, “Amore e fecondità”, is an ample commentary on *Humanae vitae*<sup>45</sup> and includes the catecheses from 23.05.1984 to 28.11.1984. The central

<sup>43</sup> Cf. A. MATTHEEUWS, “De la Bible à *Humanae vitae*. Les catéchèses de Jean Paul II”, 246.

<sup>44</sup> With the help of the theology of the body, following the trajectory of the Council, John Paul II researches the theme of vocation to the mutual sanctification of spouses within the Christian family. Cf. R. MARX, “Lebensschutz als Einsatz für die Menschenwürde”, *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 1 (2009) 39.

<sup>45</sup> The Pope’s reflection is inspired by this encyclical and so developed his thought of making a philosophical demonstration of genitorial ethics. Thanks to the philosophical basis, it is easier to understand that man, male and female, can become a creative and moral subject of procreation. Cf. *Gaudium et spes* 51: *EncVat* 1/1481-1484; J. BAGDA, “Una Enciclica

theme that goes through all these catechetical cycles is the theological anthropology. In the following section, my intention is to present some aspects of this systematic anthropology.

## 2. The theological or “adequate” anthropology

Christian anthropology is the domain of dogmatic theology that studies what we are in the light of Jesus Christ, the revealer of God<sup>46</sup>. This discipline, developed and proposed in a personal key, John Paul II named “adequate anthropology”.

### 2.1. What is “adequate” anthropology?

The adequate anthropology is the understanding and interpretation of man in what is essentially human. This discipline that starts from the essential human experience is opposed to the naturalistic reductionism influenced by evolutionary theory about the origin of man. The biblical texts contain the essential elements of such anthropology, which develops on human pre-history<sup>47</sup>, especially on the basis of the truth of the anthropological dignity of being in the “image of God”. This concept comprises the root of the understanding about man, revealed by Christ through that “beginning” of *Mt* 19:3-9, as presented in the account of human’s creation as man and woman.

The adequate theology presents the features of a personalist metaphysics, based, on the one hand, on the concept of the person’s integrity<sup>48</sup> and, on the other hand, on the need to weld consciousness and being human. Integrity involves the existence of a unifying centre, the human ontological status that makes its transcendence transparent in relation to the act<sup>49</sup>. So, such an anthropological conception is based on metaphysics, that is, on a philosophy that integrates the contributions of the classical philosophy<sup>50</sup>. There are important statements for this anthropology: it postulates the existence of a human experience called “essentially human experience”<sup>51</sup>.

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in difesa dell’uomo”, *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 1 (2009) 209-222.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. L.F. LADARIA, *Antropologia teologica*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1992, 11-13.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 77, footnote 1.

<sup>48</sup> If the classical theological approach intended to distinguish between what is legitimate or morally illicit, the new approach of the Pope is focused on highlighting the decisive points for the harmony and integrity of the human person. Cf. C. DE MARCELLUS DE VOLLMER, “Sex education 1994-2004. Problems and Progress”, *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 1-2 (2004) 179.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Persona e atto*, 217-993.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. G. PIANA, “De la phénoménologie à métaphisique. La pensée philosophique de Jean Paul II”, *Lumière et vie* 257 (2003) 41-42.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 68,77,198.

From this comes the adequate anthropology. Then, the principle of “reduction,” fundamental to its comprehension, does not just mean “not to confuse,” but behaving as a paradox opposes totally the reductionist process<sup>52</sup>. All these terms will be explained later.

## 2.2. “A theology of the body”?

The current state of Western reflection on the body theology, not exclusively Christian, is of unprecedented extent<sup>53</sup>. However, if we think of a science that studies the human body, we certainly would not consider theology. We would think of anatomy, psychology, medicine, but not theology. “Theology” is the science of God, and God is spirit, so he does not have body or flesh. So, for many, the body is not only a theological feature, but even an *anti*-theological aspect, especially if it misrepresents the text of *Gal 5:16-24*<sup>54</sup>:

Instead, I tell you, be guided by the Spirit, and you will no longer yield to self-indulgence. The desires of self-indulgence are always in opposition to the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are in opposition to self-indulgence: they are opposites, one against the other; that is how you are prevented from doing the things that you want to. But when you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality, the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonisms and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things. And about these, I tell you now as I have told you in the past, that people who behave in these ways will not inherit the kingdom of God. On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control; no law can touch such things as these. All who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified self with all its passions and its desires.

Then how can we talk about a theology of the body?

The theology of the body is grounded on the creation of man in the image and likeness of God. The classical theology postulates that *imago Dei* refers to human reason<sup>55</sup>. John Paul II postulates that this is not the whole truth. Our resemblance to God does not refer exclusively to the non-bodily part,

<sup>52</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 72.118, footnote 1.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. F.L. SEBASTIANI, *Morale personale*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1991, 105.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. T.D. WILLIAMS, “Theology of the Body and *Humanæ vitæ*”, *Alpha Omega* 3 (2008) 366-367.

<sup>55</sup> St. Thomas wrote “Ad secundum dicendum quod homo dicitur esse ad imaginem Dei, non secundum corpus, sed secundum id quo homo excellit alia animalia, unde, Gen. I, postquam dictum est, faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram, subditur, ut praesit piscibus maris, et cetera. Excellit autem homo omnia animalia quantum ad rationem et intellectum. Unde secundum intellectum et rationem, quae sunt incorporea, homo est ad imaginem Dei”. THOMAS OF AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 3,1, ad 2.



to the soul<sup>56</sup>, because a soul-body dualism would not justify the goodness of God’s creation, denied by contemporary Manichaeism<sup>57</sup>. For Pope John Paul II, the whole man is the result of an explicit act of God’s will. The whole man is a window to God. And if there are many biblical images in which the attributes of God are anthropomorphic, this is because this is the way we can think of God. The cause is therefore deeper: not that God is anthropomorphic, but we are theomorphic<sup>58</sup>. It can be objected that God is a pure spirit and that is why the body has no theological importance. The human body does not indicate that God would have ten fingers in his hands. Although it seems strange, we learn more about God from our sexual nature than from other systems of our organism. Human sexuality is a language<sup>59</sup> of communion<sup>60</sup>; through it, the human person manifests the creative and unifying qualities of God<sup>61</sup>.

Pope Francis also speaks of the gift of sexuality. The body of man and his sexuality, with which God has endowed it, is not a negative aspect or parts of his individuality that must cause him to feel ashamed. Man is body, and the body is a gift. Sin has brought concupiscence into the body of man, and its painful effects, but Christ assumed the body of man in order to redeem the whole man, including his body. Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis oppose a negative view of the human body, which shows the body, its desires and passions as obstacles on the way to salvation, and elements that harm man from which he must be freed. *Amoris Laetitia* 150, quoting John Paul II, states:

God himself created sexuality, which is a marvelous gift to his creatures. If this gift needs to be cultivated and directed, it is to prevent the *impoverishment of an authentic value*. Saint John Paul II rejected the claim that the Church’s teaching is a *negation of the value of human sexuality*, or that the Church simply tolerates sexuality *because it is necessary for procreation*. Sexual desire is not something to be looked down upon, and *there can be no attempt whatsoever to call into question its necessity*.

Quoting again the catechesis of John Paul II, *Amoris Laetitia* states:

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 34-35.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. T.D. WILLIAMS, “Theology of the Body and *Humanae vitae*”, 369; *CBC* 364; *Gaudium et spes* 14; *EncVat* 1/1363-1364.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor* (6 August 1993) 48: AAS 12 (1993) 1171-1172.

<sup>59</sup> The idea that sexuality can be considered a “language” had already been proposed by other authors, for example by P. RICOEUR, “Wonder, Eroticism and Enigma”, *Cross Currents* 14 (1964) 133-141, and A. GUINDON, *The sexual language. An essay in Moral Theology*, University of Ottawa, Ottawa 1976.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 58-61.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. T.D. WILLIAMS, “Theology of the Body and *Humanae vitae*”, 371.

In his catecheses on the theology of the body, Saint John Paul II taught that sexual differentiation not only is *a source of fruitfulness and procreation*, but also possesses *the capacity of expressing love: that love precisely in which the human person becomes a gift* (AL 151).

That is why “a healthy sexual desire, albeit closely joined to a pursuit of pleasure, always involves a sense of wonder, and for that very reason can humanize the impulses” (AL 153).

For both popes, the body is a value and not an object. In their teachings, the other person can never be reduced to an object of consumption or a tool of pleasure. Because man is created in the image and likeness of God and has been saved by Christ the incarnate Word, he must never use another as an object of desires.

Theology of the body is based on one of the fundamental truths expressed by *Gaudium et Spes* 24<sup>62</sup>: the image of man as a gift is the reflection of the perichoretic life of the Holy Trinity, the source of self-giving and the perfect reception of love<sup>63</sup>. From this perspective, the human person, man and woman, represents the primordial sacrament understood as a sign that transmits life<sup>64</sup> and the effective instrument of the mystery of love between Christ and his Church, love which, in turn, is the reflection of the mystery hidden in God Trinity-Communion of persons. The unity of man and woman reflects this mystery of holiness, truth, and love. With the creation of the human person, this mystery shines in the world, and so the mystery of the human comes from the divine sphere of holiness and is ordained for holiness<sup>65</sup>.

Perhaps the novelty of the theology of body proposed by John Paul II is present more in form than in substance. Many of its potentials are actually anticipated by the doctrine of *Gaudium et spes* 49<sup>66</sup>. Since the cultural situation after the Council has changed, it was necessary for John Paul II to propose this doctrine more recently<sup>67</sup>.

### 2.3. *The Key Concepts of John Paul II's Adequate Anthropology*

The fundamental category of the adequate anthropology is “the principle of reduction” because it is the foundation that establishes that way of thinking through which is attained the vision of the integrity of the human

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et spes* 24: *EncVat* 1/1395.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 59.306; E. FERENT, *Frumusețea vieții creștine*, 7.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. S. DZIWIŚ, “Juan Pablo II, el Papa de la familia y de la vida”, *Famiglia e vita. Rivista quadrimestrale di Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia* 3 (2006) – 1 (2007) 108.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 91.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et spes* 49: *EncVat* 1/1475-1477.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. S. SPINSATI, *Il corpo nella cultura contemporanea*, Queriniana, Brescia 1983, 118.

person. Usually reduction is a key category that designates a process in which the richness or plurality of the dimension of an object, of a reality, is, consciously or not, diminished, limited, or eventually denied<sup>68</sup>. But, in order to define positively this cognitive process, it is necessary to use the concept of induction with which it is correlated. The process of induction is the procedure by which the intellect receives, intuits the substantial identity and unity that is signified in the multiplicity and complexity of experienced phenomena. Induction is not an impoverishment of experience, but its unification; it is enrichment, because what was just given before in multiplicity is now understood in its identity. To suggest this idea, the Pope uses the expression "consolidation of the experience". That is, the object of the experience does not remain vague, dispersed in the ocean of multiplicity and complexity, but becomes fixed in its permanent identity.

Induction opens the gate of the true and useful reduction<sup>69</sup>. Experience can only lead us to the plurality of facts<sup>70</sup>. However, the complexity of experience, once we enter its intrinsic unity, urges the intellect to understand and explain this unity, to comprehend that it is necessary to return to the cause, to the appropriate foundations, to realize the presence of the one whose experience I have, which in its substantial identity is suggested to me by induction<sup>71</sup>. The induction asks to become reduction, in the sense that only through the process of reduction there is an adequate vision of the object, that is, a perspective of its identity by taking over all the aspects related to the object, all the fundamental and essential structures, in their unity, and thus I realize the centre of what I'm really experiencing. After all, reduction is an "exploration of the experience"<sup>72</sup>. Its application palette is the *humanum*: the integrity of the human person<sup>73</sup>.

Reduction, therefore, does not mean either diminution or limitation, but orientation to valid reasons and foundations, to clarify the acts of experience, to interpret its complexity, to reveal its internal unity<sup>74</sup>, and ultimately to assert the "irreducible transcendence of the human person"<sup>75</sup>.

The harmony between this "adequate" anthropology and the theology of the body is created by the closeness to the texts of *Genesis*, which presents the essential characteristics of personal existence in the theological

<sup>68</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Persona e atto*, 33-37.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. C. CAFFARRA, "Introduzione generale", 7.

<sup>70</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Persona e atto*, 33-34.

<sup>71</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Persona e atto*, 36.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 34.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. C. CAFFARRA, "Introduzione generale", 8.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. A. RIGOBELLO, "Introduzione all'edizione italiana", 7.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. A.T. TYMIENIECKA, "Introduzione redazionale all'edizione anglo-americana", in JOHN PAUL II, *Persona e atto*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 1982, 18.

prehistory of man. Although the return “at the beginning” might encounter resistance from the evolutionist mentality, it would be erroneous to ignore the fact that the *Book of Genesis* mirrors not only the primary original dimension of man’s existence, but also the exemplary one<sup>76</sup>.

### 3. The place of protology in anthropology

For John Paul II, the texts of Genesis do have a theological character and contain a dense metaphysical weight. Rather than answering the question: “Historically and chronologically, where is man coming from?”, the biblical text wants to answer another: “What is the significance of man’s existence within the created reality?”<sup>77</sup>

#### 3.1. A possible definition of protology

Protology is the doctrine of the origin of the world and of man. This branch of theology is correlated with Christology and Eschatology, since the beginning of God’s project is enlightened by its finality<sup>78</sup>. In the logic of the salvific economy, there is a strong connection between all the aspects. Therefore, protology also involves etiology, that is, a search for causes, starting from the present realities. Thus, the first three chapters of the *Book of Genesis* can be considered a retrospective prophecy, because they make the protology up to Gen 11 understandable, but also show the whole path of salvation begun with Abraham and fulfilled in Christ, the new Adam<sup>79</sup>, and the present condition of man. The purpose of *Genesis* is not a historic or archaeological one, but a theological and soteriological one: these are the ways to formulate fundamental truths about man’s origin and his dignity as God’s image<sup>80</sup>.

The same ideas are underlined several times by Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*.

Natural marriage, therefore, is fully understood in the light of its fulfillment in the sacrament of Matrimony: *only in contemplating Christ* does a person come to know the deepest truth about human relationships. “Only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light... Christ, the new

<sup>76</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 77, footnote 1.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. G. RAVASI, *Questioni di fede. 150 risposte ai perché di chi crede e di chi non crede*, Arnoldo Mondadori, Milano 2010; translated into Romanian, *Întrebări privitoare la credință*, Humanitas, București 2011, 184.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. G. O’COLLINS – E. G. FARRUGIA, “Protologia”, in *Dizionario sintetico di teologia*, ed. G. O’COLLINS – E. G. FARRUGIA, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 1995, 239.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 373-382.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. G. MONDIN, “Protologia”, in *Dizionario enciclopedico di filosofia, teologia e morale*, Massimo, Milano 1989, 603-604.

Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). It is particularly helpful to understand in a *Christocentric key*... the good of the spouses (*bonum coniugum*) (*AL* 77).

Jesus, who reconciled all things in himself and redeemed us from sin, not only returned marriage and the family to their original form, but also raised marriage to the sacramental sign of his love for the Church (*AL* 71).

In conclusion, for the both Popes, the theological themes in *Gen* 1-3 form a unit, but they are only part of anthropology. The other part develops in the light of incarnation, forgiveness and soteriology, because a complete theology about man comprises also the theme of salvation<sup>81</sup>.

In contemporary theology, Karl Rahner pointed out the relevance of protology in the search of theology to find a deeper understanding of man, showing that protology is possible only with Christ and from Christ. In different terms, in the catechetical explanations of John Paul II, a true *Defensor hominis*, we find this theme of *the beginning* as a hermeneutical key for an authentic comprehensibility of God’s original plan, always present in man’s history<sup>82</sup> and his most genuine truth<sup>83</sup>. The resonances of this teaching are found in *Redemptoris Mater* (1987)<sup>84</sup> and *Mulieris dignitatem* (1988)<sup>85</sup>.

### 3.2. *The relevance of the body for the protology*

The text of Genesis is the starting point for the theology of the body. On the other hand, the fact that theology is interested in the human body does not have to irritate any of those who are aware of the implications of the mystery of Incarnation. By the fact that the Word became flesh, the body entered the gate of theology, the science that studies divinity. Although contemporary bio-anatomy can provide much information about the human body, the source of the full truth about is to be found in the Word of God, which leads our attention to the truth of the beginning, *in principio* (cf *Mt* 19:3)<sup>86</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. K. RAHNER, “Protologia”, in *Herders Theologisches Taschenlexikon*, VI, ed. K. Rahner, Herderbücherei, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1973, 109-111.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 32.65.107.373-379; A. LOBATO, “La familia cristiana: identidad y misión”, in PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO PER LA FAMIGLIA, *La famiglia: Dono e impegno speranza dell’umanità*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 1998, 327.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. E.C. RAVA, “Protologia”, in *Lexicon. Dizionario teologico enciclopedico*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1993, 840-842.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* (25 March 1987): AAS 4 (1987) 361-433.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris dignitatem* (15 August 1988): AAS 13 (1988) 1653-1729.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 107.

Protology presents man who, through the consciousness of his own body, distinguishes himself from the animal and separates from it. Paradoxically, the body, although it resembles itself visibly and externally with the animal, becomes a factor bearer of the transcendent and the personal subjectivity of man<sup>87</sup>. The body assumes a double meaning: it expresses the person, it reveals Adam, the “Man” being understood in the biblical language as *pars pro toto*<sup>88</sup>, and, on the other hand, the person can communicate and express themselves through the body. Man agrees that the body speaks “for him” and “on behalf of him”<sup>89</sup>. The language of the body becomes the prophecy of the body<sup>90</sup>, and in this context, we are talking about the objective and the subjective sense of body language, respectively<sup>91</sup>.

The protological revealed truth offers ways of understanding the human being. It is an *interior intimo meo* truth because it is *superior superiori meo*. Between God’s revelation and man’s knowledge and self-consciousness there is no juxtaposition, no identification, but integration. Integration is a process in which the essentially human experience is correlated to the truth of faith, and, by this respectful relationship, fully discloses its objective content.

The theology of the body contained in *Genesis* 1-3, though it is concise and punctuated, however, expresses essential, primary and definitive contents<sup>92</sup>. The human experiences of *Genesis* belong to the prehistory of man and his theological archaeology, but they always remain at the root of any human experience. Therefore, the protological experiences are lived also in daily events, in our daily activities and inner states of mind, even though they are not found to be extraordinary. Only what we initially called the “body revelation” helps us to discover the extraordinary aspects in daily life. This is possible because the revelation considers precisely these primordial experiences, in which the absolute originality of the human being appears in the quasi-complete way<sup>93</sup>.

### 3.3. *The Importance of Protology for the Theological Anthropology*

The protological state is the original status understood as the theological prehistory of each historic man. The theological content, constitutive of

<sup>87</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 49-50.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 60.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 406.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. M. SERRETTI, “Indice dei concetti principale”, in JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò: catechesi sull’amore umano*, Città Nuova, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican 1987<sup>2</sup>, 510.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 401.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 97.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 65.

this original state, is analysed and ordered in terms of the development of a theology of the body in its original state. The *principium*, the protology has a particular incidence on the anthropological theology, especially on the theology of the body in general<sup>94</sup>. In other words, the historical man is rooted in the theological prehistory narrated by the first three chapters of Genesis<sup>95</sup>.

By basing his research on the Bible sources (*Genesis*), Pope John Paul II responded personally to the invitation of the Council to return to origins and to develop a useful model to overcome the overflowing rationalism in the pre-conciliar theology<sup>96</sup>. By analysing the biblical texts, his theology reaches a point where anthropology can be called theology of the body<sup>97</sup>. Promoting it, the Pope is aware of the advances made by biophysiology and biomedicine, but notes that such science, by itself, does not develop explicitly the knowledge of the body as a sign of the person<sup>98</sup>, as a manifestation of the spirit, and may slip to harmful manipulations for present day man<sup>99</sup>. The answer Christ gave to the Pharisees (cf. *Mt* 19:3) and also gives to the people of our time: *ite ad fontes*. Christ makes the appeal to the biblical “beginning” of protology, especially since the contemporary man’s situation seems to have forgotten the biblical image of the beginnings of *Genesis*.

The same idea is underlined by Pope Francis when he states: Adam and Eve

embody the primordial divine plan clearly spoken of by Christ himself: *Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female? (Mt 19:4)*. We hear an echo of the command found in the Book of Genesis: *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Gen 2:24) (AL 9)*.

Together with the two Popes, we affirm that it is necessary to review the mystery of the “beginning” to elucidate current behaviours<sup>100</sup>. For example, understanding the fundamental meanings revealed by the creation act is essential today for the human *ethos*<sup>101</sup>. Even today, in the perspective

<sup>94</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 35. 32, footnote 1.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. J. NORIEGA, *Destinul erosului: perspective de morală sexuală*, Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu-Lăpuș 2011, 47.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. T.D. WILLIAMS, “Theology of the Body and *Humanae vitae*”, 385.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. N. MARTIN – R. MARTIN, “Einleitung”, in JOHN PAUL II, *Die menschliche Liebe*, Patris Verlag, Vallendat-Schönstatt 1985, 35.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. R.L. LUCAS, “Cuerpo humano y visión integral del hombre”, *Gregorianum* 1 (1995) 125-146.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 235-236.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 79.88.107.373-382; JOHN PAUL II, *Scrisoarea către familia Gratissimam sane* (2 februarie 1994) 7: AAS 86 (1994) 874-875.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Uomo e donna lo creò*, 88.

of one's own history, the human, male and female, can recognize the nuptial significance of his own body. Although this significance has suffered multiple discussions and litigations especially in the Western society, it is kept at its most profound level and requires its manifestation in its simplicity and purity as a sign of the "image of God".

At the same time, the words of Jesus referring "in the beginning" allow us to find in man a continuity and connection between the two primal states of the human being: *status naturae integrae* and *status naturae lapsae simul et redemptae*. The state of sin is part of the reality of the historical man, to which Mt 19 refers, that is the life of the potential current or future interlocutor of Jesus. This state, present in every person, remembers the "theological prehistory" and the state of the original innocence. *Gen 2-3*, the creation, the fall, and the promise of the Saviour, not only presents the *historia dramatis personae* of the first two people Adam and Eva, but also the entire course of human existence.

### Conclusion

In this study, I intended to illustrate that in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* and *Amoris Laetitia*, protology, although etymologically referred only to the first chapters in the *Book of Genesis*, is intrinsically related to Christology and Eschatology. These connections have a theological foundation, that is, the reality of man's creation bears the mark of his eternal choice in Christ, who through his incarnation, has enlightened a new dignity for the human body, while also directing it to the eschatological fullness of the redeemed human person. The theological themes in *Gen 1-3* form a unit but they are only a part of anthropology. The other part develops itself in the light of incarnation, forgiveness and soteriology, because a complete theology about man also comprises the theme of salvation. Protology is possible only with Christ and thanks to Christ.

The theme of the beginning is a hermeneutical key for an authentic comprehensibility of God's original plan, always present in man's history, and of his most genuine truth. In this perspective, the history of salvation, leading to the final fulfillment in the *eschaton*, is the assumption of the beginning: creation, sin, and the complete and definitive restoration in Christ. The relationship between creation and falling has a strong rapport with the contemporary man, it contains the doctrine of the situation of the present world, the world being the human environment and the argument that makes the history of salvation possible, including the restoration of man in Christ.



John Paul II's theological anthropology reflects his philosophical and cultural formation, but also his loyalty to the truth of man revealed by Holy Scripture and reaffirmed by the Tradition of the Church. All these elements generate a balanced vision of man, freed from dual-body soul, man-woman duality, and one in accordance with God's "in the beginning" plan described by *Genesis* 1-3. Reading the catechesis of Pope John Paul II and the exhortation of Pope Francis, one can observe the continuity and harmony between the teachings of both Popes regarding the institution of the family. For Pope Francis, as for John Paul II, family is a mirror and an icon of the Holy Trinity. The unity between man and woman provides a testimony to the intimate life of the Holy Trinity and of the unity of the Three Divine Persons. John Paul II and Pope Francis speak of the gift of sexuality. The body of man and his sexuality, with which God has endowed it, is not a negative aspect or parts of his individuality that must cause him to feel ashamed. Man is body, and the body is a gift. Sin has brought concupiscence into the body of man, and its painful effects, but Christ assumed the body of man in order to redeem the whole man, including his body. Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis oppose a negative view of the human body, which shows the body and man's desires and passions as obstacles on the way to salvation, and elements that harm man from which he must be freed.

What then is our idea about the life of the Church? What is our idea about the Magisterium of the Church? Is it a museum or an exhibition of fossilized teachings, now presented in a new form? Or it is the living breath of the Holy Spirit? The Magisterium of the Catholic Church is a living organism, animated by the Holy Spirit that address as a fresh and authentic message to the contemporary family. Magisterium and the Church cannot be separated, the documents of the Magisterium and the life of today's Church are intimately linked. Pope Francis, in his teachings, reintroduces and develops both the catechesis of John Paul II present in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* and his other teachings about families. Certainly, we encounter an innovative look in Pope Francis' teachings and a new style of teaching this message<sup>102</sup>. Nevertheless, in the teaching of the two popes we must note the harmony and uninterrupted vitality of the same Spirit that constantly blows into the Church of Christ.

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<sup>102</sup> For example, Severino Dianich speaks about the ongoing life of the Magisterium. Cf. S. DIANICH, *Magistero in movimento. Il caso papa Francesco*, EDB, Bologna 2016.

# CHRISTIAN PARENTS, CHILDREN'S FIRST EDUCATORS ACCORDING TO THE DOCUMENTS OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

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**Abstract:** The first and irreplaceable mission of the Christian parents is to be real educators for their children. Having called their children to the banquet of life, Christian parents have the foremost and specific right and, at the same time the, duty to be involved in a total and responsible manner in children's growth and the whole education process. Aware of the fact that each of their children has the same human dignity as their parents' dignity, such parents have the duty to educate and train children so that the latter can fully live their vocation, in accordance with human dignity, while promoting personal and common good.

According to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council, the education children have to receive from their parents is complex and shall include all aspects of human life: physical, psychological, religious, moral, social and vocational. To adequately fulfil their mission, parents will make responsible choices in choosing the kindergarten, primary and secondary school and high school for their children; such institutions shall support children and help them in their pedagogical itinerary. From Christian perspective, the most important commitment made by spouses when receiving the sacrament of Matrimony is to transmit faith to their children by Baptism, and to preserve and develop this gift received through catechesis, prayer and personal example. The current education crisis – the result of erroneous ideologies – often encountered also in our families, can be overcome by changing this wrong mentality. This mentality refuses to accept the fact that children are a gift God makes to human family and society, while arguing that children are rather obstacles for the development of their parents or a right owed to such parents. The teaching of the Second Vatican Council is the most appropriate guide for Christian parents called to fulfil their mission of providing their children with a genuine human and Christian education.

**Key words:** parents, education, duty, right, document, education crisis, the Vatican Council.

## **Introduction**

The Christian family, having its roots in the natural monogamous family transformed through the sacrament of Matrimony and aware of the

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divine teaching on its role as fundamental group unit of society and of the Church, the cell capable to heal the human beings affected by the original sin, is called to be actively involved in the promotion and protection of the human and Christian values. The quasi-generalized current crisis affecting the moral, religious, social and material values has its main origin in the family crisis. It is imperative that the Christian family rediscover its own intrinsic value in order to consistently promote the values neglected or lost by current society. The values to be constantly rediscovered and promoted by Christian parents include: truth, freedom, justice and charity. Without this educational activity entrusted by God to Christian parents, neither families nor the human society can overcome the current crisis with its multiple facets, so as to increase the value of all mankind. Parents, the first and main educators of their children, enrich the universal heritage of humanity and contribute to the common good of humanity. Christian spouses, upon becoming parents through conception and birth of children and bringing to life unique, unrepeatable and invaluable human beings, as well as being involved in their development, become the source and the means for the spiritual, material and economic potential of humanity.

The natural, monogamous family is undoubtedly the only essential reality at the basis of the entire human society, both as regards its existence and the perpetuation. No human society can last without the family, nor can it grow in observance of the dignity of the human being. If mankind exists and continues to exist, this is due to the existence of the family, generator and guardian of life, as well as transmitter of the values necessary for the preservation and development of natural human relations, all this being achieved through the education process within the family.

Unfortunately, we witness some current anthropological trends that appear and threaten and endanger the stability of the family, the fundamental group unit of society. These erroneous ideological trends, while discredit the family with its perennial values and its inherent mission as educator, lead to a real crisis with profound ramifications, undermining the very vital structures of society, having potential negative, unpredictable and incalculable consequences in a nearer or more distant future.

If we acknowledge the importance of the family for the authentic good of every human person and the genuine good of the society as a whole, it is necessary for society to defend family, to promote and support it in its role as generator and educator in view of promotion of the authentic values for the good of mankind and the fulfillment of our deepest human aspirations.

In fulfilling its role as educator for the future generations, the natural and Christian family has the task of presenting the real truth, the objective one and not a substitute for truth, a biased truth invented and developed

by certain erroneous philosophical and anthropological views, either older or more recent ones, or by a majority manipulated by certain political or materials interests. It is only the real truth that sets humans free from stressing anxiety and uncertainty, providing the opportunity to reach total balance and fulfilment. Nowadays, the right to full exercise of freedom is more and more mentioned by most of the people. However, there are a large number of people who misunderstand the exercise of personal freedom, defining it as discretionary autonomy, as possibility to perform any action without considering the rights of the others. Justice is another value very sensitive in our society and which needs to be patiently and consistently defended and promoted by the family. Family has to defend the fundamental right to life of every human being, as well as the right to a dignified life and to a natural and dignified end of life, according to human dignity. In order to be able to properly perform this role, family needs to be supported by Christian love expressed by solidary charity. Love or Christian charity, lived and promoted by responsible parents as educators, which must inspire, support and promote social justice, has to be patient and kind, free from pride and envy, capable to believe all, endure all, bear all and hope for all. The promotion of these values emphasizes the nobility and the crucial importance of education children receive from their parents, as skilled educators, both for the good of every person and for the good of the entire human society.

### **1. Children's Right to Education and Parents' Duty as Educators**

Immanuel Kant, the famous philosopher, stated that man can only become man through education. Every human being, coming into this world as an unfulfilled yet perfectible person, has the inherent need to receive education and to educate itself throughout its entire life. It is important to note that there is a difference between teaching and educating.

Teaching means transmitting knowledge relating to a science, an art, a technique or supporting someone in acquiring a range of skills in order to perform an activity more easily and accurately.

Educating is getting involved in helping the "educated one", the person receiving education, in completing its itinerary for full development of all its human capabilities: physical, intellectual and moral. Teaching always implies educating, yet educating does not necessarily mean teaching!

The human education process is extremely complex. It includes a consistent process to be completed in view of ultimate fulfilment as human being. Only those who master the art of pedagogy are true educators. True

educators take the educated person by the hand and guide it in all competence and perseverance from childhood to maturity; from ignorance to science; from instinctual and impulsive actions to informed and responsible actions; from the selfish instinct of preservation to dedication for the good of the other; from indifference and passive attitude towards others to openness to the good and fulfilment of the other; from exaggerated selfish love of self to selfless, generous and kind love for the other; from simple emotions and superficial feelings of love to the human and Christian virtue of charity. It is only such a long-lasting, consistent and complex education process that can truly lead to fulfilment of the human person, i.e., to move from possibility to action. Education aims at gradually leading the human being from the status as intelligent and free being, inherent to human nature, to the status allowing it to act in a free and intelligent manner. There is a long distance between being born a human being and acting as conscious and responsible person. Such distance can be overcome by humans if constantly supported and encouraged by educators during childhood and adolescence, being then continued for the entire life through self-education, as the education process reaches its end when leaving this life for the eternal realities.

The most important objective of education is to render the educated person capable of facing, especially through culture, either alone or together with other people, the challenges that will arise in its personal or collective existence, as well as to support such person in choosing the genuine good for itself and for the society it is a member of, in order to reach the ultimate goal, that is the eternal life with God, the highest Good.

The right to education is emphasized by the Magisterium of the Church, being stipulated in the official Documents of the civilized world. On behalf of the States defending the right to education, the United Nations mentions the «the right to education» in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Each person is entitled to education. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups [1].

This right is also recognized in articles 10, 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Article 10 mentions as follows:

The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establishment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children [2].

Following article 10 which refers to family as «the natural and fundamental group unit of society» having the responsibility «to care and educate the dependent children», article 13 indicates the objectives of education represented by the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, so as to make it “participate effectively in a free society”, promoting “understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations” [3], thus contributing to world peace.

The same ideas are present in articles 23, 28, 29 and 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Thus, article 28 states as follows: “States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity” [4].

Article 29 provides:

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
  - a) the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
  - b) the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
  - c) the development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
  - d) the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
  - e) the development of respect for the natural environment.

If we believe that education is the transmission of values and knowledge, the connection with religion is quite obvious and natural, as religion teaches and transmits: dogmas, sacred books and liturgy. Religion calls for respect for the human person, for its assets, as well as for protection of nature. Even nowadays, when in certain social environments religious values are no longer regarded as core values, such religious values still inspire many projects of the faithful and of the human society.

Education crisis has led to other crises in our society. I believe we can say that we are dealing with two fundamental crises: the intelligence crisis and the crisis regarding the transmission of the cultural heritage.

Nowadays, as we over-informed, we could ask ourselves: do we still know how to think, to clearly evaluate things and reach the correct conclusions?

The continuous movement, the constant noise, the tremendous number of virtual messages subjects us to a real stress. We encounter a great number of people unable to structure their knowledge. It seems that the dominating rule is: "everything and immediately" to the point that what is called "inner life" has become a rarity.

The second crisis is the crisis regarding the transmission of the cultural heritage between generations. Family values, moral and religious values are no longer a granted patrimony for everyone. Religious ignorance seems to be a predominant in our secularized society. Being influenced up to the point of being determined to accept "forbidden to forbid", the famous slogan painted on the walls of Sorbonne in 1968, we transformed our society into a boat adrift. Given the current context, when our world is presented as a globalized space, and all cultures containing the religious component are questioned, one cannot neglect the key element for the understanding of the human society, namely religion: without religion, one cannot understand the consciousness of humanity, human history and universal brotherhood.

Unfortunately, nowadays we meet many young heirs with no heritage, and many people with no project allowing them to accurately and in a sustainable manner build their life and the society of the generations to come.

Under the pressure of these two crises and of other social factors, we witness a return of the religious and mystical component unpredictable some time ago.

Over decades, it is possible for man to master even to a greater extent the inert component and even to conquer greater sidereal spaces. We know that the seizure of living matter by human intelligence, supported by the highly advanced technology, is in continuous progress.

When almost all problems will have found a solution and when we will have had the most sophisticated tools and we will think on the manner to use them, there will still be a problem to solve, namely the mystery called man. In close connection to this mystery, there will still be evil, suffering and death that threaten human life and happiness, and to which man will have to find a satisfactory answer. With no exceptions, sooner or later we all question the meaning of our existence and, whether we want it or not, the «sacred» appears as essential component of the human soul.

The first Christian schools emerged around European monasteries proposed both intellectual education and moral training.

Christian education was also intended to be comprehensive, with a view to convey all human knowledge. Christians have always focused on the desire to reconcile reason with faith: "understanding to believe and believing to understand", as Saint Augustine said.

Education aims at developing the intellectual capacity to know, to analyze things, to put concepts in order, to have a coherent thinking in order to make decisions in accordance with the known truth. According to Pascal, “all human unhappiness comes from one thing: that it does not know how to stay still in a room”. Man is the intelligent creature who asks itself and the others, being the only creature that seeks “the meaning of meaning”. Man appears as a mystery to itself: the mystery relating to what lies in itself, its possibilities, its place in the universe, and its ultimate goal. It is due to this mystery that the religious dimension inevitably appears on the horizon of its life.

It is necessary for education to provide certain rules of conduct, such as:

- respect for the person seeking the truth regarding the enigma of what is human;
- critical sense which allows to differentiate between truth and falsehood;
- humanist education providing adequate answers to questions regarding man, world and God;
- promotion and dissemination of cultural traditions open to transcendence, expressing our aspiration to freedom and truth.

Education allows us to share:

- our human and Christian beliefs;
- solidarity that leads to involvement to the benefit of the poor, marginalized and excluded;
- responsibility reminding us that we owe explanations to God for what we have done or failed to do for justice and peace;
- freedom which implies a clear conscience and faith supported by reason;
- spirituality that reveals the religious dimension of man and illuminates his adventure;
- thirst for knowledge that makes us focus on what man, endowed with intelligence and conscience, achieves, whether good or bad;
- plurality that urges us to consider ourselves different, yet equal.

Education should not be reluctant and limited when it comes to the religious dimension of the human being. In the recent decades, scientific and technical education has developed in exponential manner. Meanwhile, human sciences, philosophy, history, literature and theology, have been pushed to the margins when it comes to transmission of culture, despite the fact that along the centuries, the peoples of the world have accumulated an artistic, literary and theological heritage common to all mankind and which has always expressed human spirit open to the values of the religious faith.



We, as Christians, believe and confess that God wanted to reveal himself to man through Jesus, the true God and true man.

## **2. Erroneous Ideologies Generate Education Crisis**

We note, without too much effort, that nowadays we are facing a great education crisis. We notice how, at general level, the average education level has been drastically reduced, and this causes serious difficulties in the training of young generations. We see that, in many places, both children and young people learn always less. Teachers tend to enjoy reduced authority, whereas young people, in their apparent full physical energy, express a deep sense of loneliness and disorientation.

This is all happening right now, in our times, when pedagogy reached unprecedented levels of development. Never before have there been so many people who have studied this science as a result of so many pedagogical theories. What is very curious and interesting is that this crisis is present and acquires greater dimension in a time of increased material development, even in a welfare society. If we have so many competent people in the field of education and material resources sufficient to achieve an adequate education for our times, we inevitably ask ourselves: what is the real cause that generates such a profound education crisis? I think it is reasonable to take a closer look at the manner in which current culture looks at and treats children, as education primarily regards them.

The dominant culture has the ability to influence parents as to how way perceive, receive and treat children. Do we not see a profound change in the way children are perceived and treated nowadays, as compared to how they were perceived and treated decades ago?

Until the middle of last century, there was a clear idea on children. They were considered a gift from God, a gift offered to parents, to be looked after with attention and affection, as well as with great responsibility. Fatherhood and motherhood were considered a special contribution to God's creative power. Consequently, children were treated with respect, while life was received with joy and generosity.

This attitude was the result of the way of thinking and living of the people of the time, characterized by the Judeo-Christian teachings. The model observed was Eva's, the first mother in the world who confesses that "I have gotten a man from the Lord!" (Genesis 4:1), and of other women of the Bible, such as Hannah (see 1Samuel 1), a sterile woman who asked God several times for a son. God fulfilled the wish expressed by faithful prayers, and Hannah went every year to the temple to thank the Lord for the gift received. Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel, was

fully convinced that human life comes from God, that it must return to him and that nothing is impossible to God.

Sigmund Freud dreamed that someday procreation of children would be separated from the family structure. This idea has gradually started to develop in society, being frequently and strongly presented at the moment of the cultural revolution of 1968. This new culture has totally abandoned and refused the biblical view on human dignity and on the meaning of human existence. As of that moment, the mind of young people was penetrated by the idea that children are an obstacle for their parents' personal development and a limitation to parents' freedom. Thus, children started to be considered a threat one must escape from, while pregnancy is considered a kind of disease to be avoided at all costs.

Currently, another idea is being suggested and disseminated. People who have reached a certain age and can no longer have children are inoculated with the idea that children are a "right", and that they have the right to have children, no matter the means.

However, Catholic doctrine is very clear on this: "Children are not something owed, they are a gift. «The greatest gift of marriage» is a human person. Children cannot be considered a property item, which would lead to acknowledgement of an alleged «right to children»" [5].

These theories which promote such a view on children, namely in a specific situation as being a "threat", while in another context they are a "right", influence the way in which parents deal with their children's education. Furthermore, parents' attitude as regards the education of children results in the low education level of the current generations of children, teenagers and young people and will undoubtedly be obvious in the cultural level of tomorrow's society. Is it not this that causes the very serious problems that society is now facing?

According to the latest data of the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, in the U.S. 15,000,000 children (one in three) grow up without a father, while 5,000,000 children grow up without a mother. On the other hand, in the U.K, in 2012, to have a father was one of the ten most important gifts children asked from Santa Claus. In Italy, there are over 2,800,000 children in single-parent families: other approx. 2,400,000 children do not have a father, while 400,000 children do not have a mother [6].

A great current risk is that adults consider their children "merchandise", a consumer dream to come true in a specific moment. Children are more and more the result of calculations made by parents and not the fruit of parents' available and generous love. Most often, this attitude leaves its mark in children's heart, causing great suffering in the future.

A significant step towards family and education destruction is especially the failure to see children as a gift from God, but rather as a result of human or medical techniques.

It often happens that parents, paradoxically, are over-protective as regards their children, in the intent to protect them from any danger, effort or suffering while, at the same time, they do not show a clear willingness to find time for the difficult duty of educating children. Children are sent to school without parents ever being involved in transmitting certain family values, thus teachers being forced to compensate for what was neglected by parents.

We also notice another serious danger: adults want to have children so as to have children's approval on their conduct rather than to transmit their children their total, gratuitous and unconditional love. Often, families witness almost unimaginable, if not grotesque situations: parents end up behaving like children, complaining about their own childhood, while children end up behaving like adults, forced by the attitude of their parents [7].

When such situation occurs, nobody takes family responsibility, and this is obvious in children's behavior and performance at school, as well as in young people's performance at the university.

With regard to family responsibility, I think that we should take a close look at the Gospel, the Book that shaped Western civilization and strongly influenced the civilization of all mankind. The Gospel presents Jesus' adolescence and "his education process". When Jesus was 12 years old, he went with his parents, Mary and Joseph, to the temple to attend the Passover (Luke 2). While the family was on its way home, the adult Jesus, without his parents knowing it, remained at the temple talking to the teachers. Finding him after three days of search, Mary, his mother, asks him, although being aware she was talking to the Son of God who became man: "Son, why have you done this? Behold, your father and I have sought thee with concern". Jesus, after having manifested full consciousness of his divine identity, said: "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" and returned home with his parents, being «obedient to them» (see Luke 2:41-51).

Truly impressive! Mary and Joseph do not run from their responsibilities, even though they are fully aware that the teenager Jesus standing before them is the Son of God. Jesus, the Son of God who became man, returns home with his family, is obedient to his parents and stays in Nazareth until the age of 30.

We see, therefore, that nobody runs from responsibility in the family of Nazareth. They all stay united in true love expressed by authority, humility and service, not authoritarianism or indifference.

Consequently, it is necessary to recover the meaning of true education in order to face the serious education crisis and to help families consider children as God's gift and, therefore, treat them with care and love, without delegating the responsibility on education to strangers or exclusively to public institutions.

This task is urgent and can be fully achieved only in the light of faith which has illuminated human society for centuries. In essence, we must follow the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth, going beyond the conflicting parameters of a «revolution» which only led to exaltation of selfishness, irresponsibility and greater suffering for the weak and the small ones.

### **3. Education, Exigency and Urgent and Crucial Challenge**

It is possible that some of us have already heard the saying: "It is difficult for man to become man!" This saying reflecting true human wisdom rotted in the experience of the previous generations indicates that the education and training process of each generation is difficult and, therefore, has to be encouraged and supported by patient and persevering love. The passage from the status as human due to rational human nature to the status as person able to express oneself in a mature, conscious and responsible manner represents this very process of continuous and responsible education and training process performed first by parents and other education stakeholders, and then ensured through self-education.

The introduction to the *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration reads as follows: "Attempts are being made everywhere to promote more education. The rights of men to an education, particularly the primary rights of children and parents, are being proclaimed and recognized in public documents" [8].

*Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution states under No. 7:

"Parents and educators experience greater difficulties day by day in discharging their tasks" because "a change in attitudes and in human structures frequently calls accepted values into question, especially among young people, who have grown impatient on more than one occasion, and indeed become rebels in their distress. Aware of their own influence in the life of society, they want a part in it sooner" [9].

God's gift of fatherhood and motherhood to Adam and Eve, the first human family, when blessing them by saying: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it!" (Genesis 1:28), and applicable to all men and women called to start a family, becomes the foundation of the parents' mission to be educators for their children.

Gaudium et Spes Pastoral Constitution states under No. 50: "Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents" [10].

The dignity of the spouses as parents gives them the right and duty to be the first and main educators for their children.

Gaudium et Spes Pastoral Constitution states under No. 3:

Parents, because they gave life to their children, have a very serious obligation to educate them and, therefore, should be considered first and their main educators. This educational function is so important that, where there is little, can hardly be refilled. Indeed, it is the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere animated by love and piety towards God and respect for people, to foster integral education, personal and social development of children. The duty to give education is primarily family's duty [11].

The same document mentions under No. 7: "Parents, having the foremost and inalienable duty and right to educate their children, must enjoy real freedom in choosing the school" [12].

The education parents should give to children is complex and should cover all aspects of the human being.

Gravissimum Educationis Declaration states under No. 1:

All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education that is in keeping with their ultimate goal (...). For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share [13].

It is imperative that the education parents will give to their children be comprehensive, covering all aspects specific to the human being as a whole; both the aspects relating to the body and to the human and Christian ones. To this end, education to be given to children shall include:

### *3.1. Physical Education*

Physical education aims at the harmonious development of children's entire body, the preservation and promotion of health through healthy, varied and balanced food, reasonable sports and spare time activities, in compliance to Christian ethics.

Gravissimum Educationis Declaration emphasized this idea under No. 1, stating that "children and young people must be helped to develop harmoniously their physical endowments" [14].

### 3.2. *Intellectual Education*

This type of education is intended to develop the mental capacities specific to human beings and to ensure the educational and vocational training of children.

Gravissimum Educationis Declaration states under No. 1:

Children and young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility [15].

### 3.3. *Moral Education*

This education allows for the development of will and of the human and Christian virtues.

The same document mentions as follows:

Children and young people must be helped to develop harmoniously their moral endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy [16].

This sacred synod likewise declares that children and young people have a right to be motivated to appraise moral values with a right conscience, to embrace them with a personal adherence, together with a deeper knowledge and love of God [17].

The Inter Mirifica Decree on the Media of Social Communications reads under No. 10:

Parents should remember that they have a most serious duty to guard carefully lest shows, publications and other things of this sort, which may be morally harmful, enter their homes or affect their children under other circumstances [18].

Parents will have to help their children, teenagers and young people that they

accustom themselves to moderation and self-control in their regard. They should, moreover, endeavor to deepen their understanding of what they see, hear or read. They should discuss these matters with their teachers and experts, and learn to pass sound judgments on them [19].

The Dignitatis Humanae Declaration on Religious Freedom states under No. 8:

Wherefore this Vatican Council urges everyone, especially those who are charged with the task of educating others, to do their utmost to form men who,

on the one hand, will respect the moral order and be obedient to lawful authority, and on the other hand, will be lovers of true freedom-men, in other words, who will come to decisions on their own judgment and in the light of truth, govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, and strive after what is true and right, willing always to join with others in cooperative effort [20].

### *3.4. Emotional Education*

This education develops and ordines inclinations towards affection through proper education of feelings and of sexuality.

As sexuality is closely connected to affectivity, Gravissimum Educationis Declaration states under No. 1 that “as children and young people advance in years, they should be given a positive and prudent sexual education” [21].

Parents and teachers should “give due consideration to the difference of sex and the proper ends Divine Providence assigns to each sex in the family and in society” [22], as stated under No. 8 of the same document.

No. 1 of the same document mentions:

All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education that is in keeping with their ultimate goal, their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country [23].

### *3.5. Christian Religious Education*

This education develops and educates on human and Christian faith, allowing for spiritual development in the light of Christian teachings.

The Lumen Gentium Dogmatic Constitution mentions under No. 11: “The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children” [24].

Gravissimum Educationis Declaration states under No. 3 that

it is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor. Here, too, they find their first experience of a wholesome human society and of the Church [25].

Under No. 48, the Gaudium et Spes Pastoral Constitution mentions parents' mission of being the religious educators of the children: “Graced with the dignity and office of fatherhood and motherhood, parents will energetically acquit themselves of a duty which devolves primarily on them, namely education and especially religious education” [26].

Parents have the duty of being children's first catechetical instructors, according to No. 4 of the *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration.

Foremost among these is catechetical instruction, which enlightens and strengthens the faith, nourishes life according to the spirit of Christ, leads to intelligent and active participation in the liturgical mystery and gives motivation for apostolic activity [27].

The same Declaration provides under No. 2:

Since all Christians have become by rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit a new creature so that they should be called and should be children of God, they have a right to a Christian education. A Christian education does not merely strive for the maturing of a human person (...), but has as its principal purpose that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of Faith they have received, and that they learn in addition how to worship God the Father in spirit and truth (see John 4:23) especially in liturgical action, and be conformed in their personal lives according to the new man created in justice and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:22-24); also that they develop into perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (see Eph. 4:13) and strive for the growth of the Mystical Body. (...) but also to help in the Christian formation of the world that takes place when natural powers viewed in the full consideration of man redeemed by Christ contribute to the good of the whole society [28].

### *3.6. Vocational Education*

Another Decree of the Second Vatican Council, namely *Perfectae Caritatis* states under No. 24 that "parents, too, should nurture and protect religious vocations in their children by instilling Christian virtue in their hearts" [29].

The *Lumen Gentium* Dogmatic Constitution mentions under No. 11: "Parents should (...) be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state" [30].

Parents' duty in guiding children to freely discover and follow their vocation is also emphasized in the *Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution, under No. 52:

Children should be so educated that as adults they can follow their vocation, including a religious one, with a mature sense of responsibility and can choose their state of life; if they marry, they can thereby establish their family in favorable moral, social and economic conditions. Parents or guardians should by prudent advice provide guidance to their young with respect to founding a family, and the young ought to listen gladly. At the same time no pressure, direct or indirect, should be put on the young to make them enter marriage or choose a specific partner [31].



The same document mentions under No. 49:

Especially in the heart of their own families, young people should be instructed in the dignity, duty and work of married love. Trained thus in the cultivation of chastity, they will be able at a suitable age to enter a marriage of their own after an honorable courtship [32].

Presbyterorum Ordinis indicates under No. 11 the mission of Christian teachers in teaching children and young people to accept the divine call to apostolic life:

Parents and teachers and all who are engaged in any way in the education of boys and young men should so prepare them that they will recognize the solicitude of our Lord for his flock, will consider the needs of the Church, and will be prepared to respond generously to our Lord when he calls, saying: "Here I am Lord, send me!" (Is 6:8) [33].

### *3.7. Social Education*

This education is as important as the other types of education, as they all prepare future generations for mature commitment and involvement in community and social life.

"Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs" [34], as provided by the Gravissimum Educationis Declaration under No. 3.

The Declaration further notes: "By the family, children are gradually inserted in the life of the civil society" [35].

The same Declaration states under No. 1: "For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share" [36].

Children should be so trained to take their part in social life that properly instructed in the necessary and opportune skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, open to discourse with others and willing to do their best to promote the common good.

## **Conclusion**

The aspects analyzed on the mission and foremost duty of the parents, that of being educators for their children, emphasize the complex character of education and the high level of preparation required from the current and future parents in order to perform their duty in an adequate and responsible manner. The documents of the Second Vatican Council reveal the pastoral concern of the Church for its specific mission on proposing Christian

truth to man and on making parents who received this mission from God to fulfil it with Christian love and in a responsible manner. Parents' involvement in fulfilling this mission and their duty of being the first and main educators for their children, in a responsible Christian spirit, lead to increase in the value of human society and in the number of those who feel the need to work with parents and with the other structures involved in education.

## References

- [1] United Nations, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 26.
- [2] United Nations, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Art. 10.
- [3] United Nations, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Art. 13.
- [4] United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 28.
- [5] The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2378.
- [6] See [http://www.agensir.it/pls/sir/v3\\_s2doc\\_b.rss?id\\_oggetto=252815](http://www.agensir.it/pls/sir/v3_s2doc_b.rss?id_oggetto=252815).
- [7] See G. Cucci, La scomparsa degli adulti, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, II, 220-232, 3885, 5/5/2012.
- [8] Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration on Christian Education, Introduction.
- [9] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution, No. 7.
- [10] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution, No. 50.
- [11] Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration on Christian Education, No. 3.
- [12] Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration on Christian Education, No. 7.
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- [23] Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration on Christian Education, No. 1.

- [24] Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* Dogmatic Constitution, No. 11.
- [25] Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration on Christian Education, No. 3.
- [26] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution, No. 48.
- [27] Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration on Christian Education, No. 4.
- [28] Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration on Christian Education, No. 2.
- [29] Second Vatican Council, *Prefectae Caritatis* Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, No. 24.
- [30] Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* Dogmatic Constitution, No. 11.
- [31] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution, No. 52.
- [32] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution, No. 49.
- [33] Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, No. 11.
- [34] Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis* Declaration on Christian Education, No. 3.
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