



Bruised Apples

By William A. Borst, Ph.D.

Part of the aftermath of Vatican II 1963-65 was a deep misunderstanding of the concept of *freedom of conscience*. Many mistakenly regarded it as a subjective license to do whatever they wanted. In the past 40 years since the Council, private morality has become a marshy miasma of inconsistency and anomaly that borders on moral anarchy.

As in the sporting world when a situation gets disorderly, it is often worthwhile to return to the basics. This works well in the spiritual realm, especially in times of grave cultural conflict. While the Bible is the best source of spiritual refreshment, a relatively untapped source is the papal encyclicals. Many of these papal writings have whistled and chimed with wise pronouncements, analyses, and even predictions about world evils.

One such 19th century encyclical vehemently warned of the dangers of unchecked secularism, or what Pope Pius X called *modernism*. Pius X's 1907 encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* recognized how dangerous modernism was to the Catholic Church.

The Synthesis of All Heresies

Modernism is an enlightened way of thinking with regard to God, creation, and human life. It is a deliberate attempt to liberate mankind from the confining restrictions of religious dogma, clerical authority, and moral principle. Since it assumes the divinity of man, the only being worthy of study is man. It is no surprise that the major controversies, namely abortion, contraception, euthanasia, in vitro fertilization, and embryonic stem cell research hover around God's creative gifts.

Modernism has substituted the social sciences, psychology, psychiatry, and anthropology for religion and theology. While modernism promotes and encourages all kinds of multicultural gods, it will not admit the mere presence of the Christian God. This has led to the incremental secularization of American culture.

Modernism is a secular religious faith that elevates the individual

free will to near godlike status. Pius X defined modernism as *the synthesis of all heresies*. From its basic core it unleashes the worst instincts in human beings under the false rubric of freedom of conscience. It relies heavily on moral relativism and religious indifferentism, creating a moral uncertainty as to what is right or wrong. Its slippery tentacles have cleverly permeated the very fiber and core of the major institutions in America.

Modernists, who rely heavily on the French Enlightenment, believe that all religious faith must be subjected to the judgments of science and secular thought. The Enlightenment was an attempt to replace the mystery and majesty of God and His creative powers with the rational and scientific prowess of mankind. Religion was relegated to the status of a superstition that could not compete with the deified presence of man's superego and technological prowess.

The modernists have always held that there is a fundamental conflict between Faith and Reason. Pope John Paul II thoroughly shattered this erroneous contention in his 1998 encyclical, *Fides et Ratio*. The Pope stressed the need to return to *the profound unity of faith and reason, which allows them to stand in harmony with nature without compromising their mutual autonomy*. Without their natural union, it is too easy for mankind to be sidetracked from its ultimate goal of eternal salvation. The challenge for the church in the 21st century rests in the City of Man's relentless quest to turn the world into a secular habitat for humanity.

Ideological Branches

Over the last two centuries modernism sprouted several branches on its ideological family tree. One of its most pernicious relatives has been liberalism, which has enjoyed an historical kinship with modernist thinking that transcends their semantic differences. Several popes, especially Pius IX and Pope Leo XIII, singled out liberalism as the *greatest evil* facing the Catholic Church. It was Pius IX who appended his highly controversial *Syllabus of Errors* to his

encyclical, *Quanta Cura* in 1864. According to Charles R. Morris' comprehensive study of the church, *American Catholic*, Pius IX's long papacy (1846-1878) *was in furtherance of his total war against liberalism*. Pope Leo regarded liberalism as one of the maladies affecting modern society in his 1878 encyclical *Inscrutable Dei Consilio*.

The dire warnings of several popes have sadly failed to take root. The United States, including millions of Catholics, pays lip service to the Golden Rule and the 10 Commandments while swimming in a cultural sewer. Over the last 40 years liberal cultural poison has filtered into the daily drinking water of entertainment, news, and education, especially in the universities and many of the Christian churches. Liberal arguments of choice, tolerance, and separation of church and state have been so pervasive that many of Christianity's most fervent believers have been cajoled to submit to secular peer pressure.

Social Nudity

If any one individual were responsible for modernism and its ideological sister liberalism it would have to be Jean Jacques Rousseau, one of the French *Philosophes* whose writings led to the bloody end of royal rule in 18th century France. Born in Geneva, Switzerland in 1712, Rousseau was deserted by his family at age ten. Though a Catholic convert, he had no qualms about engaging in several romantic affairs, which produced five children whom he quickly assigned to various foundling hospitals. His promiscuity led Rousseau to believe that while man was born free, the responsibilities of family and social institutions created the situation that *everywhere man was in chains*. Rousseau dedicated his life to cutting the chains of family, church, and social convention.

Rousseau denied original sin and the fall of man. He believed that human nature was essentially good and pure. Rousseau declared that it has been Nature that has made man happy and virtuous, while it is society that rendered him *miserable and depraved*. It was only social institutions, such as the church, state, and private property that conspired to keep a man a slave. His most influential book, *Emile*, written in 1762, depicted the fictional account of *noble savage*, whose human purity is marred only by societal constraints and unnecessary social conventions. This thinking is still viable in every teachers' college that adheres to the educational pedagogy of John Dewey.

Rousseau believed that the social contract between citizens and the throne was not working and should be dashed *like a barrow of apples at the Saturday market*. His institutional iconoclasm betrayed no concern about how the *bruised and kicked apples* would be replaced. His thinking inevitably forged a generation of revolutionaries that forever changed the nature of government.

Rousseau wrote in his *Discours* in 1750, *the more we are muffled up in social conventions the more we occasionally long for a whimsical return to nudity*. He longed to *strip the clothing off from civilization*.

In his *Essay on Walt Whitman*, social critic Sir Edmund Gosse stressed that what Rousseau advocated was *social nudity* in that he wanted the world *to divest the body politic of all its robes*. In cutting *chains* and removing the *robes* of society, what Rousseau wanted to do was remove the social and moral protections that societies offer their citizens. Much of America's cultural and moral chaos has its origins in his writings, nearly three hundred years ago.

An Enlightened Hand

The enlightened hand of Rousseau is clearly evident in the abortion issue. To the moral observer, the legality of abortion contradicts its own inner logic. The United States is a nation that for two centuries has proudly boasted that it was the land of the free where all men were created equal. This rhetoric does not resonate well with the nearly 40 million abortions in the United States since 1973. Slavery provided the same moral conundrum, nearly 150 years ago.

The abortion movement has expressed more different justifications than any other divisive issue. First it was a woman's control over her own body. Then it was a separation of church and state, followed by the hostile dictum of *don't force your morality on me*. A National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) bumper sticker reads, *against abortion? Don't have one!* Substitute *slave* for *abortion* and one can follow the reprehensible logic of this especially destructive slogan.

The veiled ambiguity of the word *choice* with its emphasis on private autonomy has provided abortion proponents with their most prolific marketing success. Everyone believes in free choice. It is the staple fact of living in a free country, especially one steeped in a steady diet of moral relativity.

Abortionists have refined it to a high level of existential theology. Existentialism derives from the writings of 19th century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, which stressed the individual's unique role as a self-determining being in a meaningless world largely devoid of any divine being. Choice is what makes people human. It is the essential ingredient in American existence. It is the way people actualize their personality. No one on the left ever raises the question of *what are the choices?*

A Moral Straitjacket

Since nature abhors a vacuum, after the left has destroyed the rules of traditional morality, they will have to fill the moral void by substituting some *reform* standards. This creates a major problem

because most leftists blanch at any suggestion of objective morality. They fear being put in a religious straitjacket, embroidered with the Ten Commandments.

The essential ingredient in the left's moral formula is the enlightened principle that man is the measure of all things. Of course the public has to be constantly reminded that the French Enlightenment was fueled by a violent wave of anti-clericalism that resulted in several revolutions, persecutions, and martyrdom of thousands of priests, nuns, and faithful. The Catholic Church has been in their crosshairs ever since.

The liberal credo is not one of logic and objective morality, but a mindset of feelings and popular psychology. Inconsistency and volatility seem to be their only absolutes. Their worldly inspired tenets allow for the death penalty for unwanted babies *in utero*, without due process, while they openly harbor a sympathetic respect for the most depraved of mass murderers and all the other denizens of death row.

The left has only the deepest scorn for environmental offenders, smokers, junk food eaters, alcoholics, and other participants in the culinary delights of America's hurried culture. Public displays of religious faith, such as those of President George W. Bush, precipitate an *omenic* wail of satanic indignation. In the liberal catechism, these *evildoers* must suffer the full consequence of whatever laws they can foist on an unsuspecting public. They demonize entire groups, such as the Religious Right or the Boy Scouts, and individuals such as Newt Gingrich, Ken Starr, Judge Roy Moore and even Martha Stewart. Yet the left often provides cauldrons of leniency for their own *children of the corn*, such as Bill and Hillary Clinton.

No Prisoners

Modernists or liberals have an obvious discomfiture with religious principles, devotions, and public expressions of faith. Like their French progenitors, they have done everything in the left-wing handbook to muddy the waters of religious belief in America. Their harsh Pavlovian attack on Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is illustrative of their conditioned response to religious issues. This is reminiscent of the 1976 movie, *The Omen*, starring Gregory Peck as the *stepfather* of *Damien* the Devil's child. Every time the young boy neared a church he broke out into a frenzy of fear and loathing, much like the left, which wants to strip society of all religious influence under the phony guise of separation of church and state. To undermine religion, many on the left have lent their undying support to abortionists, pornographers, *and doctors of death*, homosexuals, and other social pathologists.

Catholic essayist G. K. Chesterton wrote about modern man's morbid tendency of always sacrificing the normal for the abnormal.

Abnormality flushes tradition into the backwater of irrelevancy and obscurity. The latest arrow in the left's quiver has been the question: *should sodomy become a sacrament?* It is a moral iconoclasm that accepts no boundaries and takes no prisoners.

Public Garments

Inconsistent with its subjective nature, the liberal conscience has surprisingly adorned itself with the secular garments of a public orthodoxy. Secular absolutism has become *the most potent religious force in America*, observed the *Wall Street Journal*. It has effectively replaced Christianity as the most important force in establishing public morality and cultural development. Just ask the Boy Scouts and Catholic Charities in California. The Scouts attempted to ban gay scoutmasters and Catholic Charities refused to include contraceptives in their health care plan for their employees. Both groups fell on the south side of secular orthodoxy and were tried and convicted in the secular courts of public opinion. The message is clear, either conform to the *secular wisdom* or go out of business. It will not be long before secular absolutists, given their allies in the media and the judiciary, will force-feed American society abortion rights, euthanasia and even pederasty to the extent that it could be a crime not to support such cultural abominations.

The forces of modernism, liberalism and secularism have putatively created their own version of an established religion that is more deeply embedded than any Catholic and other Christian churches ever was in America. In doing this descendants of Rousseau have felt no compunction, nor exercised any restraint in kicking, bruising and even pulverizing the apples of American religious and republican traditions into an unrecognizable Waldorf Salad of moral mush. The American people are experiencing the dire results of over a hundred years of intellectual subterfuge and ideological misbehavior, about which several Popes: Pius IX, Pius X, Pius XI, consistently warned.

But, as the late President Reagan said in one of his inaugural addresses, America is "hopeful, big-hearted, idealistic, daring, decent and fair." As we celebrated his life and mourned his death in June 2004, President Reagan reminded us of our noble heritage, and once again Americans stood proud and the Eagle soared.

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News & Notes

A SAINTLY FATHER'S SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT TO HIS SON

Born in 1214, King of France at 22 years, married, father of eleven children, Louis IX excelled in penance, prayer and in his love for the poor.

Following is a spiritual testament by St. Louis to his son.

My dearest son, my first instruction is that you should love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your strength. Without this there is no salvation. Keep yourself, my son, from everything that you know displeases God, that is to say, from every mortal sin. You should permit yourself to be tormented by every kind of martyrdom before you would allow yourself to commit a mortal sin.

If the Lord has permitted you to have some trial, bear it willingly and with gratitude, considering that it has happened for your good and that perhaps you well deserved it. If the Lord bestows upon you any kind of prosperity, thank him humbly and see that you become no worse for it, either through vain pride or anything else, because you ought not to oppose God or offend him in the matter of his gifts...

Be kindhearted to the poor, the unfortunate and the afflicted. Give them as much help and consolation as you can. Thank God for all the benefits he has bestowed upon you, that you may be worthy to receive the greater... Be devout and obedient to our mother the Church of Rome and the Supreme Pontiff as your spiritual father. Work to remove all sin from your land, particularly blasphemies and heresies.

In conclusion, dearest son, I give you every blessing that a loving father can give a son. May the three Persons of the Holy Trinity and all the saints protect you from every evil. And may the Lord give you the grace to do his will so that he may be served and honored through you, that in the next life we may together come to see him, love him and praise him unceasingly. Amen.

St. Louis IX's Feast Day is celebrated on August 25th.

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