

CONFERENCE: THE FOUNDATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTIONS, PART II: ARTICLE: DEVELOPING THE SEMINAL THEOLOGY OF POPE PAUL VI: TOWARD A CIVILIZATION OF LOVE IN THE CONFIDENT HOPE OF THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

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Text

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In his Regina Coeli Address for Pentecost Sunday, May 17, 1970, Pope Paul VI introduced the world to the phrase "civilization of love," grounding that image in the mystery of the day's feast. ¹ Though this Address is quite short, it represents a kernel of theological reflection that has formed the foundation of later considerations. It builds, clearly, upon an already well-defined trajectory of thought, both magisterial and merely theological, so that while what Pope Paul VI says, in this brief and largely forgotten Address, is not altogether new, his words had their own far-reaching effects. Under Pope John Paul II, Pope Paul VI's reflection on Pentecost 1970 would lead to the concept of "The Gospel of Life," which would frame the language of the Church's moral teaching and her understanding of human rights for the foreseeable future.

It would be impossible to treat all the documents within which the phrase "civilization of love" appears in magisterial writings, so thoroughly infused has the magisterial tradition become with Pope Paul VI's insight. ² The very factor,

¹ Pope Paul VI, Regina Coeli Address for Pentecost Sunday P 2 (May 17, 1970), available at http://www.civilizationoflove.net/19700517_Summary.htm [hereinafter Regina Coeli] (translated by Ivan Kauffman).

² See Ivan J. Kauffman, A Chronological List of Papal Documents Containing the Phrase "Civilization of Love," Civilizationoflove.net, http://www.civilizationoflove.net/Papal_List.htm (last visited Aug. 7, 2012) (providing a list of papal documents containing the phrase "civilization of love" with corresponding hyperlinks). Kauffman follows the history of this phrase from its first use by Pope Paul VI through 2003, when Pope John Paul II employed it in his message for the forthcoming World Day of Peace. Id. Furthermore, Kauffman notes twenty-three published texts in which the phrase appears under the name of Pope Paul VI, and two-hundred and eight under the name of Pope John Paul II. Id. Pope Benedict XVI has also used the phrase with some notable frequency. See, e.g., Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate [Encyclical Letter on Charity in Truth] P 33

however, that would render such a [*50] project impossible also renders it unnecessary, since the phrase has become so much a part of the Church's patrimony as to find itself repeatedly on the lips of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. We do not need to demonstrate the influence of Pope Paul VI's phrase, but we would be served by an examination of its theological content and the historical context within which it first came to be used. Doing so would serve an important hermeneutical purpose, helping us to recall with greater clarity, and perhaps simplicity, what the pastors of the Church, in recent magisterial interventions, have sought to accomplish. Without going into details, we can frame the whole context of the Church's teaching in the terms of an anthropological datum, rooted in the promise of the eschaton.

It is significant that Pope Paul VI's Address was given on Pentecost Sunday, a day that commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit in the upper room. From a typological point of view - a view Pope Paul VI acknowledges in his Address - this scene represents an inversion of the story of the Tower of Babel.³ Indeed, the Roman [*51] Lectionary juxtaposes these two passages on the day's feast. An alternative account of the Fall, the story of Babel describes an attempt on the part of humanity to appropriate the divine Life - the life of grace - which can only come to us as a gift.⁴ Grace is an effect of Love, and Love cannot be appropriated. It is a gift to be received by the beloved, and can be acquired in no other way. The story of Babel reminds us that the turn toward an appropriative engagement with the divine necessarily means a corresponding turn toward an appropriative engagement with other human beings. It is a movement away from communion and into alienation, because it is a referencing of the Other to the Self, rather than a referencing of the Self to the Other. So, as the Tower collapses - as we necessarily fail in our attempt to appropriate the divine Life - the world's common language, culture, and communion, is reduced to ruins, and each withdraws into himself, alone, and abandoned, leading to a history of intercultural and international conflict.

By contrast, the story of Pentecost shows the Holy Spirit - the "Lord and giver of Life"⁵ - descending of his own accord upon a people open to his initiative and ready to receive. They have introduced no preconceived expectations to bar the way to God's initiative, and have stepped outside of themselves to make room for God's

(2009); see also Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Assembly for the Conclusion of the Diocesan Pastoral Visit to Aquileia and Venice P 13 (May 8, 2011).

³ Acts 2:1-41 (depicting the descent of the Holy Spirit); Genesis 11:1-9 (depicting the confusion of languages upon the destruction of the Tower of Babel). Note that, at the time of the Babel event, "the whole earth had been speaking one language and one speech." Id. (author's translation). This rough translation is an attempt to illustrate the implicit condition presupposed in the narrative as it would have existed prior to its canonical placement in the Bible. The narrative employs two distinct words for "language" ([SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL]) (author's translation) and "speech" ([SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL]) (author's translation). There are many possible approaches to the Hebrew in this passage, but this option brings out the implicit presumption of unity in the human community. We spoke the same language, and said the same thing - that is, we confessed the same faith. In its canonical placement, the narrative appears following a genealogical discourse accounting for the distinction in the nations of the earth while affirming a primordial unity of descent, and thus, a common human family that longs to reassert itself in unity in spite of its present divisions. The Tower of Babel story is employed to explain how radical alienation reasserted itself even after the Noahic restoration following the Flood. Whatever its original context, the story clearly presupposes a primordial unity and a dissolution into radical alienation. The account of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost moves in the opposite direction. It begins with the alienation of persons on account of the diversity of languages. This diversity impedes their communication and reflects a division in cultures that had even divided Israel itself in the growing diaspora. The dispersion could be regarded as an exacerbating factor in the emergence of factionalism and infighting within Judaism since the immediate post-Maccabean period, leading to an intra-covenantal war that would result in Rome's decision to destroy the Temple in a.d. 70, and end the disquiet by rendering their conflicts moot. The story in Acts moves from the point of alienation to the point of communion, wherein each hears in his own language and enters into the one Baptism in Jesus Christ, which enlivens them in the unity of the Holy Spirit, establishing a single communion, ([SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL]), out of which emerges a common prayer to the one God. See Acts 2:41-42 (author's translation).

⁴ A mere glance at the controversy over Pelagianism makes this point clear. In rejecting Pelagianism, it was precisely this truth about what the life of grace really means, rather than a particular line of metaphysical argumentation, that the Church saw to be at stake.

⁵ This familiar wording is taken from the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.

presence within them. ⁶ Now, the purifying fire of God's love alights upon **[*52]** them as upon the bush on Mt. Horeb, ⁷ setting the disciples ablaze with the divine Life, and leaving them unharmed. ⁸ It is in this context that the apostles are able to bridge the gap of alienation forged at Babel, when they speak in their own tongue and communicate across cultural and linguistic barriers. ⁹

The basis of this mystery, as Pope Paul VI rightly points out, is that the Apostles are communicating to the crowds in the language of Love - the language of giving and receiving, which alone allows for communion between persons. Pope Paul VI is concerned, here, with much more than merely secular matters, even as he insists that these matters bear upon the secular world. Indeed, there can be no question of reducing this passage to a mere allegory in which the only real issue is the horizontal relations between human beings, because the whole reference of the story is the foundational relationship between the human person and God. At Babel, it was the closing of the human heart to God's love that led to the dissolution of the human family; and in the story of Pentecost, it is the opening of the human heart to God's love that restores the human family. The apostolic circle, moreover, is bound together, again, precisely by the gift of the divine Love. They are Twelve because, in them, the sons of Israel - the twelve tribes of Jacob - are restored to oneness. Twelve, in other words, is the number of universality or, to use later terminology, "catholicity" - and it has these qualities precisely because it represents the love that lies at the root of the promise of covenantal inheritance. ¹⁰

[*53] It is against this background of meaning that Pope Paul VI speaks on Pentecost, 1970. "Although to some it may seem strange," he says:

Pentecost is an event that also involves the secular world. For it gave rise to a new sociology - one which penetrates the values of the spirit, which forms our hierarchy of values, and which confronts us with the truth, and with the ultimate destiny of humanity. It is this which has given us our belief in the dignity of the human person, and

⁶ The divestiture of preconceived expectation is a continuous thread running through the first chapter of Acts up to the point of the Pentecost pneumatophany in the second chapter. They are reminded to live their covenantal lives in the present, and not to press God for chronological specifics. See Acts 1:6-8. After the ascension, they are reminded that their expectation for Christ's return is not something to be understood according to any preconceived categories. See id. 1:9-11. They follow Christ's instruction to wait for the outpouring of the Spirit in the upper room. Id. 1:4-5, 12-14. They recognize Christ's choice to indicate the universality of the New Israel in a group of twelve original disciples as a choice Judas' betrayal could not undo, and they saw Judas' betrayal as a refusal to receive from Christ what he had intended to hand down, so they called for another to "receive his episcopacy with enthusiasm." Id. 1:20 (author's translation). The Greek reads [SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL], or "his episcopacy let another enthusiastically receive." (author's translation). The Greek [SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL] (lambano) does not mean, "I take," in the sense of, "I appropriate," but something more akin to, "I embrace." (author's translation). So, also in the spirit of reception and a divestiture of preconceived expectations, the apostles draw straws to select from among those who had always been with them, and accepted Matthias as chosen by God because, by what appeared on the level of human planning to be pure chance and not the work of human intervention, he drew the odd straw. Id. 1:21-26.

⁷ Cf. Exodus 3:1-22 (depicting God speaking through the bush that burns without being consumed). Moses received divine instruction from a theophany or pneumatophany with a locus external to himself. But in Acts 2:1-41, divine instruction comes from a pneumatophany with an interior locus. The apostles themselves are aflame with the fire that burns but does not destroy, and the words of prophecy are uttered from their own lips. Acts 2:1-41.

⁸ Compare Daniel 3:1-30 (entering of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace, wherefrom they emerge utterly unharmed), with 1 Corinthians 3:10-17 (Pope Paul VI's discourse on purgation). In both instances we are presented with an option to create something other than what God provides, and cautioned that this attempt is utterly futile. Rather, it is in willingness to receive what God gives and to be totally conformed to him in the process, that the real work of love comes to fruition, and we come to live a life immune to the power of death.

⁹ Acts 2:4-11.

¹⁰ See Romans 6:1-11. Note that Pope Paul VI's discourse on Baptism draws a connection between entrance into Baptism and entrance into Christ's own sonship, thereby sharing in Christ's inheritance of the Father's eternal kingdom. See id. 8:17-39 (revisiting the concept of divine inheritance).

our civil customs, and which above all leads us to resolutely rise above all divisions and conflicts between humans, and to form humanity into a single family of the children of God, free and fraternal. We recall the symbolism at the beginning of this amazing story, of the miracle of many different languages being made comprehensible to everyone by the Spirit. It is the civilization of love and of peace which Pentecost has inaugurated - and we are all aware how much today the world still needs love and peace! ¹¹

Pope Paul VI had assumed the chair of Peter in the midst of the Second Vatican Council - a council convened at a time when the Second World War was still fresh in everyone's mind, and Europe was still recovering from its devastation. The first half of the twentieth century had been among the most violent periods of human history, and the continuing presence, and expansion, of totalitarian regimes offered no reprieve from the threat of war. At the root of the unspeakable violence that framed the twentieth century experience lay a conception of the human person that left God out of account, or attempted to co-opt him in the service of a purely secular agenda. ¹² Pope Paul VI understood this fact, and attempted to offer the solution by reminding the world of the meaning of Pentecost. It was the task of the Church, he thought, to lead the way to peace in the world, not **[*54]** by overpowering all enemies through the use of force or the coercive power of civil laws, but by the exercise of her own most fundamental charism - the preaching of the Gospel.

Two years prior to Pope Paul VI's Address, Joseph Ratzinger, who had been a peritus at the Second Vatican Council, had published his ground-breaking book, *Introduction to Christianity*. ¹³ In that text, he explicated in detail the theological foundations of Pope Paul VI's later Pentecost Address. It is not enough, according to Ratzinger, merely to assert that Christ leads the cosmos to its end; we must insist, instead, that in and through Christ, the cosmos does what the cosmos is intended to do - it becomes what it is intended to become. Ratzinger explicitly credits Teilhard de Chardin with, a fundamentally correct reading of St. Paul, even if a bit overly biological in its emphasis. ¹⁴ According to this view, Christ is understood, not as a mere superaddition to a cosmos understandable on purely natural terms, but as the one in whom the cosmos finally reaches its true goal. Those familiar with the bitter conflict between Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. and Henri de Lubac, S.J. ¹⁵ will **[*55]** recognize, immediately, on which side of this divide Ratzinger stands. "In the last analysis," he writes:

¹¹ See Regina Coeli, supra note 1, P 2.

¹² The first of these dispositions toward the divine represents the Marxist-communist option, according to which the divine is seen as a tool of oppression employed as "opium of the people." Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"* 131 (Joseph O'Malley ed., Annette Jolin & Joseph O'Malley trans., Cambridge Univ. Press 1970). The second represents the fascist socialism of Germany and Italy during the period leading up to and including the Second World War. Both positions are broadly "socialist," and, as such, place their hopes in secular solutions to the problems of the secular order. The second position, however, was more closely aligned with classically pagan religionizing of secular concerns, while the first was (and, as a still-advocated position, is) explicitly atheistic.

¹³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (J. R. Foster trans., Ignatius Press 1990) (1969).

¹⁴ Id. at 177.

¹⁵ For an extensive account of this matter from the point of view of de Lubac, himself, see generally Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned His Writings* (Anne Elizabeth Englund trans., Ignatius Press 1993) (1989). The conflict between Henri de Lubac and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange amounted to a profound disagreement over the conceptualization of grace in relation to the human person, and thus, over the human person as such. Lagrange was a strict Thomist of the "classical" variety, whose views could be reduced, for all intents and purposes, to those of Domingo Banez (1528-1604), who sought to follow St. Thomas in every detail of his thought, and promoted a thesis of "pure nature," according to which human beings could be understood sufficiently without reference to grace. Lagrange held the same view, with all its far-reaching consequences, including a rather strong predestinarianism according to which the human population is divided, from eternity, into the "elect" and the "reprobate," and the "reprobate" exist for the sake of the "elect." For Lagrange's position, see generally FR. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Predestination* (Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B. trans., B. Herder Book Co. 1944). The so-called "new theologians" of the ressourcement tended to hold a different view of grace, and thus, of the human person. In the former view held by the classical Thomists, human beings were made for the sake of the cosmic perfection, but in the latter view, held by the ressourcement theologians, the cosmos was made for the sake of the human person. Some thinkers, even within the Catholic tradition, still hold to the former view. See generally Steven A. Long,

One cannot make a clear distinction between "natural" and "supernatural": the basic dialogue which first makes man into man moves over without a break into the dialogue of grace known as Jesus Christ. How could it be otherwise if Christ actually is the "second Adam", the real fulfillment of that infinite longing which ascends from the first Adam - from man in general? ¹⁶

With the human person, a creature has emerged from within the cosmic frame, capable of thinking the thought of God, and thus, responding to God - of turning back to him again. But, with Christ, finally, there appears a human being who is so totally the man for God as to be man, for God, and, thus, to be God as man. This event is the central content of the eschatological promise that now becomes the new reference point for the whole cosmic reality. The return of creation to God occurs in and through this one man - the [see org (Eschatos Adam) - Jesus Christ. Pope Paul VI's Address had consisted of a reminder that this eschatological promise is predicated on love, and not dominance, and that the task that lies before the human person must be shaped by this recognition if the dignity of the human person is to be safeguarded. Pope Paul VI envisions a world brought to peace through love. Ratzinger, again, explains this basic view in language that seems to echo the teaching of *Gaudium et Spes*, when he writes:

It is openness to the whole, to the infinite, that makes man complete. Man is man by reaching out infinitely beyond himself and he is consequently more of a man the less enclosed he is in himself, the less "limited" he is. For - let me repeat - that man is most man, indeed the true man, who is most unlimited, who not only has [*56] contact with the infinite - the infinite being! - but is one with him: Jesus Christ. In him "hominization" has truly reached its goal. ¹⁷

Ratzinger goes on to explain that the fact of Christ is, itself, "a new anthropological state of affairs." He insists that if Jesus is the exemplary man, in whom the true figure of man, God's intention for him, comes fully to light, then he cannot be destined to be merely an absolute exception, a curiosity, in which God demonstrates to us just what is possible. His existence concerns all mankind. The New Testament makes this perceptible by calling him an "Adam"; in the Bible this word expresses the unity of the whole creature "man", so that one can speak of the Biblical idea of a "corporate personality." So if Jesus is called "Adam" this implies that he is intended to gather the whole creature "Adam" in himself. But this means that the reality which Paul calls, in a way that is largely incomprehensible to us today, the "body of Christ" is an intrinsic postulate of this existence, which cannot remain an exception but must "draw to itself" the whole of mankind (cf. John 12.32). ¹⁸

There can be no question that the Church stands at the very heart of this reality, as the manifestation of its coming-to-be - what the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council referred to as "an eschatological sign"; ¹⁹ for the Church is Christ's gathering-together of humanity in himself - in her earthly form, she is, therefore, the means whereby, in the course of history, he brings about this end. Ratzinger writes:

From here onwards faith in Christ will see the beginning of a movement in which dismembered humanity is gathered together more and more into the being of one single Adam, one single body - the man to come. It will see

Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law, 4 *Nova et Vetera* 557-606 (2006); Thomas M. Osborne, Jr., *Thomist Premotion and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, 4 *Nova et Vetera* 607-32 (2006). However, it would appear that the latter view triumphed at the Second Vatican Council, where, in *Gaudium et Spes*, we read that the human person is, "the only creature on earth which God willed for itself." Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World] P 24 (1965), reprinted in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II* 513, 536 (Nat'l Catholic Welfare Conference trans., 1967). The Latin reads, "in terris sola creatura est quam Deus propter seipsam voluerit." Id. P 24. We have considered this issue in a somewhat different context in Richard H. Bulzacchelli, *Dives in Misericordia: The Pivotal Significance of a Forgotten Encyclical*, in Karol Wojtyla's *Philosophical Legacy* 125-62 (Nancy Mardas Billias, Agnes B. Curry & George F. McLean eds., 2008).

¹⁶ Ratzinger, *supra* note 13, at 275.

¹⁷ Ratzinger, *supra* note 13, at 176. Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, *supra* note 15, PP 21-24.

¹⁸ Ratzinger, *supra* note 12, at 176 (internal citations omitted).

¹⁹ See Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church] (1964), reprinted in *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II* 107, 107-90 (Nat'l Catholic Welfare Conference trans., 1967).

in him the movement to that future of man in which he is completely "socialized", incorporated in one single being, but in such a way that the separate individual is not extinguished but brought completely to himself.²⁰

[*57] It is easy to see in Pope Paul VI's Address a similar line of reasoning to that expressed by Ratzinger (and reflective, we contend, of Ratzinger's consistent thought). But we ought to look backward from this point as well, to understand the historical context within which the issue before us happens to emerge. For Ratzinger, the great peril driving the Second Vatican Council was a kind of amnesia, according to which the Church had faced the quiet threat of forgetting her own inner heart and purpose in the ossification of increasingly institutionalized, bureaucratic forms.²¹ Thus, the Council's great achievement was realized in an act of remembering - of recovering the corporate memory of the Church's driving charism - her foundational kerygma: the invitation to divine Love. But what is at stake in the opposing fault?

Among the main themes running through the remarkably consistent writings of Joseph Ratzinger, one finds the distinction between "revealed religion" and "natural religion."²² Ratzinger notes that all human beings across all cultures recognize that their lives are not entirely within the bounds of their own control. We see that the world is stricken by tragedy, and that suffering and death do not discriminate, but plague every human life without exception, and with no easy correlation to personal blame. This fact about human existence demands an account, and the history of religions represents the history of our collective, cultural attempts to respond to that demand - for any explanation, no matter how cold or dark or terrifying, is easier to bear than pure, irrational chaos.

[*58] For the practitioners of the so-called "natural religions" - those whom the ancient Hebrew people called "gentiles" and Christians have generally called "pagans" - this awareness that we stood before some radically transcendent force was generally experienced as "darkness" - that is to say, as the sense of something foreboding and unapproachable.²³ However we understood this realm of transcendent power, certain defining similarities seemed to cross all cultural boundaries. God, or the gods, or the spirits, were cold and distant. They remained within their own circles, largely unconcerned with human well-being. In some cases, they were thought hostile to us, who, for our own part, were regarded as embodiments of some primordial evil.²⁴ For these ancient pagans, as

²⁰ Ratzinger, *supra* note 12, at 179.

²¹ See Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theological Highlights of Vatican II* 51-53 (Paulist Press 2009) (1966). Ratzinger is strongly critical of the curialism that had existed prior to the Council. He does not suggest that the curia had to be abolished - indeed, as a matter of historical fact, it remains even today under the papacy of the very same man who had criticized its prior form - but he opposed the tendency of the curia to stand as a filter between the whole Church and the bishop of Rome, creating the distorted sense, even among bishops in the global Catholic Church, that "the Church" was coterminous with the pope and his curia. Thus, the events of the first session of the Council, for Ratzinger, had led to the incommensurable achievement of curial reform, and the restoration of the sense of the Church as a reality fully inclusive of the genuine magisterial authority shared by the bishops in apostolic succession. This achievement represented, for Ratzinger, a reawakening of the Church's consciousness of her true self. See *id.*

²² Ratzinger addresses this issue frequently. See, e.g., Ratzinger, *supra* note 13, at 67-104 (providing a lengthy and highly-developed examination of the problem); see also Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience at St. Peter's Square (May 11, 2011), available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2011/documents/hf_benxvi_aud_20110511_en.html.

²³ We might, at this point, consider the basic profile of pagan temples in comparison to the ancient Hebrew Temple, noting that pagan temples were intentionally difficult to reach, with steps unnaturally sized, while the Hebrew Temple was situated in a way that invited approach. It even featured a "court of the gentiles," as if to suggest that even those outside the covenantal framework of Judaism were not wholly alien to the God of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob. Pagan sacrifices, which tended to occur outside the temple walls, were conceived in terms of appeasement, while the real essence of the Jewish sacrifices, which occurred within the Temple walls, was the response of the human person to draw near to God in love.

²⁴ The Hebrew people directly confront this problem in the book of Genesis, where, in the first creation account, the "seven days" of creation contrast the "seven eons" of the Babylonian narrative about Tiamat and Marduk in the *Enuma Elish*. The Babylonian account begins with a metaphysical dualism weighted in favor of the power of darkness, associated with materiality and femininity, and ends with the emergence of the physical universe of our experience as a consequence of chaos and

with the people of our own time, we seemed to live in a world framed by fear - a world ruled by gods, or by some impersonal force, to whom our cries for mercy rise up in vain.

This asymmetry between human beings and the gods represented the experience of our vulnerability to death in the face of our inability to peel away the veil behind which our destiny was shrouded. The Hebrew people, however, had a different experience - what Ratzinger calls, "revealed religion." This "revealed religion" is what we know that the pagans do not; it is what alerts us to the true dignity and value of the human person, and sets us free to live lives of generous and unhesitating service to God and to our fellow human beings, and [*59] to escape, finally, that self-enclosure that casts human life in terms of hostility and rivalry, and the triviality of being "merely ourselves."

Revealed religion is characterized not simply by our knowledge that God exists, but, more precisely, by our knowledge of who God is. The boundary that separates the human person from the realm of the radically transcendent has been breached by a divine initiative, and we come to see what has escaped the eyes of others. If, for the gentile cultures who surrounded the ancient Hebrew people, the foundational reality was something cold, dark, hostile, chaotic, or evil, for the Hebrew people the foundational reality was Love.²⁵ The single, intentional, orderly source of all being - the underlying logic of the universe - was the Personal God, who revealed his name to us, and bound its meaning to the welfare of his people, with a promise of his intimate presence in our lives, for all generations to come.²⁶ Yahweh ([SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL]), "being-on-his-own-terms," and thus, "the one who cannot be controlled,"²⁷ is the Elohim ([SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL]) - the God who is [*60] spoken of as a plurality, and yet, "is one, while there is no other."²⁸ This God offers himself to

violence. Evil precipitates from the sphere of the gods and forms the universe, as Marduk tears his mother Tiamat limb from limb, until, in some especially pessimistic accounts, her life blood takes the shape of human beings, and, most of all, of woman. The gods must reign in this self-propagating evil, and so, enslave us, ushering in the seventh eon, in which the gods may take their rest. For one version of the Enuma Elish, which admits of variants representing a diversity of traditions, see Stephanie Dalley, *Myths of Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* 230-77 (2008).

²⁵ This insight becomes explicit in the Johannine literature, most notably in his aphorism, "God is love." [1 John 4:8](#), 4:16. The insight is clearly central to the whole history of God's self-revelation. God is seen, in scripture, more under the aspect of love than of cause (though this is not to say that he is not cause); and there is no clear scriptural affirmation of anything like *actus purus*, much less an "unmoved mover," which, in contrast to the anthropomorphisms of Scripture seems a wholly foreign concept. Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, notably, does not appear to accept this concept. See generally Ratzinger, *supra* note 13, at 99-103 (explaining under the heading "The Transformation of the God of the Philosophers" that God is defined by the category of relationship, and that God is both truth and love); Joseph Ratzinger, *The Paschal Mystery as Core and Foundation of Devotion to the Sacred Heart*, in *Towards a Civilization of Love* 145-65 (1985) (written just before he was named Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and explaining that God, "in his paradoxical love" became flesh, and how the New Testament expresses God in terms of both divine love and human love). See also Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* [Encyclical Letter Explicating God is Love] P 10 (2005). It is especially clear that Pope Benedict does not accept this concept when he uses phrases like, "God's passionate love for his people - for humanity," and "recognizing the plan of the Father who, moved by love (cf. Jn 3:16), sent his only-begotten Son into the world to redeem man." [Id. PP 10, 19](#). Pope John Paul II seems to hold a view similar to that of Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. See Bulzacchelli, *supra* note 15, at 125-162. For the principle scriptural images in the Old Testament, see *The Song of Solomon and Hosea*, where the whole focus is upon the aspect of the divine lover.

²⁶ This is a central theme in the scene in which God reveals his name to Moses. See Exodus 3:1-19. God explicitly connects his name to his relationship with his people when he states that he will not be known merely as "God" in the abstract, but as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" - the God who, in his radical supremacy, still knows his people by name, and comes to be known for himself precisely in that context. *Id.* 3:16-19.

²⁷ A good, if brief, analysis of the implications of the name Yahweh ([see org]) can be found in Demetrius Dumm, *Flowers in the Desert* 77-82 (1987). Father Demetrius notes, as a point of great relevance to our broader discussion, that the term is presented, in Hebrew, in the imperfect tense, which always connotes, in that linguistic tradition, an unfinished action. [Id. at 78](#). He goes on to note that the linguistic connotations of the Greek and Latin renderings are not as well-suited to communicate this nuance, but, instead, tend to obfuscate the dimensions of event and encounter by introducing the statically theoretical. *Id.* Joseph Ratzinger makes a similar set of observations in his *Introduction to Christianity*. Ratzinger, *supra* note 13, at 77-93.

his creation, and invites us into his own heart - into the dynamism of his own interpersonal Love, wherein we abandon the posture of appropriation, and enter into the eternal dialogue of giving and receiving.

It is precisely this view that the biblical accounts of creation are intended to communicate. In the first creation narrative in the book of Genesis, Elohim is shown as the sole source of the cosmic order. The light is called "warmth" or "comfort," ²⁹ while the darkness - the symbol of evil, alienation, sin, and death, is called, "a twisting-away," ³⁰ indicating that evil has no positive being in its own right, but occurs only in our withdrawal from the divine goodness. God, moreover, loves the world into being for the sake of the human person. We know this because, on the fourth day, God creates the heavenly lights, and sets them in their places to "be signifiers of festivals, days, and years," ³¹ which are the province only of human concern, and human beings had not yet been made. The culminating creation of human beings "in the image of God," ³² is commanded in a language that reveals God's own inner intimacy, and results in the emergence of a being described first of all, not as rational, but as relational: "male and female he created them." ³³ This image alone stands in stark contrast to those pagan cultures in which human existence was seen as the most definitive of all evils, and the feminine expression of humanity as worst of all. The charge to "be fertile and multiply," ³⁴ stands as a corrective to those who understood human sexuality as a descent into the filth of materiality, resulting in the entrapment of a spirit in the prison of the body. ³⁵ The Hebrew view, [*61] based as it is upon the foundational principle of the divine Love, is a pro-human Gospel of Life. The darkness and sin of the world is not the world's original structure, but the consequence of a "twisting away" from the divine Love and Life in an inward-turning of the will, such that redemption must mean our turning back again. Even the best of pagan philosophy suffers from the tendency to reduce the human person to a mere property of the cosmos, whose existence is not for his own sake, but for that of the perfection of the cosmic order. This is not the view expressed in the Bible, where it is clear that the cosmos is made for human beings, not the other way around.

This is the biblical background that lies at the heart of Pope Paul VI's Regina Coeli Address on Pentecost Sunday, 1970. For the mystery of Pentecost itself is framed within the context of an image running throughout the whole history of salvation - the context of the "purifying fire of God's love," that burns away sin, and death, and impurity, precisely that we might be saved for a life of righteousness within God's own heart, open as it is to the human person. ³⁶ The foundational affirmation of Faith in God - that Love is the source of all things - represents a promise to the human person that our lives are worth living, that we are incommensurably valuable, and that, in spite of all our sins and failings, God is on our side, and we are not alone.

²⁸ Isaiah 46:9 (author's translation).

²⁹ Genesis 1:5 (translating yom ([SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL])).

³⁰ Id. 1:4-5 (translating la'yil ([SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL])).

³¹ Id. 1:14 (author's translation).

³² Id. 1:27 (translating betselem elohim ([SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL])).

³³ Id.

³⁴ Id. 1:28.

³⁵ This view is common in Pagan cults, especially Gnostic cults, persisting well into the Christian era, even to the present day. Notably, it was embraced by the Manicheans, who denigrated the sacraments as materially referenced, and relegated marital life to the status of a compromise tolerated only for the catechumens, but not for the illuminati who, now awakened to the realm of spirit, were expected to avoid as impure whatever would serve to bind together body and spirit. The Kathars embraced a similar view. One can also detect a surviving Gnostic tendency in Calvinist-Zwinglian Christianity, wherein the sacraments are reduced to a purely symbolic status, and are generally not understood to be necessary for salvation. Salvation, it is supposed, comes through an act of "faith," which is seen, on this model, essentially as an actuation of an intellectual state, rather than a movement of the whole person responding to God, body and soul, in the context of the covenantal life of the Church.

³⁶ See Malachi 3:1-6 (author's translation).

The relationship between this root Faith and the culture of life is clear. Once we see that the foundational reality is Love, we understand that the Cross can only be a triumph - the ultimate triumph, not only for one Man, but for all mankind. It is the final indication that love has penetrated even the radical alienation of death, and thus, has breached the walls of Satan's kingdom in the pit. It is the definitive sign that God's love for us simply will not be undone, and thus, that our value in the eyes of God is utterly incommensurable. From this point forward, we know that death - the basic condition of radical alienation - can claim no further voice at the table in any discussion [*62] of our moral lives, for it has been utterly vanquished by the power of God's redeeming Love.

It is precisely this insight that stands at the heart of the Church's moral teachings, and ultimately justifies them. History has shown us, if we have been paying attention, that it is not enough merely to assert that this or that action is "against nature," or "at the service of a natural telos ([SEE SPECIAL CHARACTERS IN ORIGINAL])." ³⁷ When our backs are against the wall, it becomes necessary to find a justification for our fidelity to the moral law that calls us to a course of action doomed, in the eyes of the world, to end in death. ³⁸ When Pope John Paul II goes on to speak about the "culture of death," he is addressing precisely this problem. ³⁹ The culture of death stems from the fear of death - from the belief that, in the end, it is death that frames life, and dictates the parameters within which we stake out a place for ourselves as persons, and, thus, as moral agents and moral patients. The vital range of our moral lives, moreover, is also the criterion according to which human rights and responsibilities are understood and negotiated. Fear of the power of death allows only a limited sphere of influence for our moral principles, until, in the end, we are forced to surrender them lest we die, or otherwise "ruin our lives." Moral deliberation is, thus, reduced to an exercise in compromise, according to which nothing of life or personhood enjoys the status of radical incommensurability, and nothing is always-and-everywhere "wrong" or "right."

The "culture of life," however, is based upon Christ's admonition in John's Gospel, with which Pope John Paul II would frame his whole pontificate, that we must transcend all fear. "Do not be afraid," Christ says, "for I have conquered the world," ⁴⁰ or, in other words, "I [*63] have imposed a new world-order." In this new world-order, where death is overcome by love and life, the human person is finally set free to live the moral demands of the Gospel without regard to death's admonition. When the Church speaks, then, on questions of morality, she can stand, without compromise, for a seemingly impossible standard of righteousness, and challenge the world to look beyond the horizon of fear in the face of the specter of death. When the Church calls the human person to these high standards - and we must recall that *Humanae Vitae*, derided as unlivable by the voices of the secular world, was written under Pope Paul VI ⁴¹ - the Church is calling the human person to hear the truth of the Gospel of Life: that Truth that sets the human person free from fear - the Truth that reality is the product of Love: that God is Love, and that this Love is stronger than death. This confidence is an anthropological datum; for it makes radical morality possible in the lived experience of the human person, and promises to give rise to a "civilization of love and life." ⁴²

³⁷ Joseph Ratzinger was critical of the first draft of Schema 13 (later adopted as Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*) at the Second Vatican Council for this very reason. See Ratzinger, *supra* note 21, at 212-13.

³⁸ See Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* [Encyclical Letter on the Splendor of Truth] P 76 (1993).

³⁹ See Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* [Encyclical Letter on the Gospel of Life] (1995) [hereinafter *Evangelium Vitae*] (using the term "culture of death" twelve times in the encyclical). Pope John Paul II draws the connection between the loss of the sense of God and the loss of the sense of humanity, leading to a distortion of the conscience in those who come to see the world apart from God. *Id.* PP 21-24. We have treated this issue elsewhere, for example, in Richard H. Bulzacchelli, *The Culture of Death and Christian Transcendence*, Address at the Twelfth Annual Christianity Conference: Christianity Besieged, Reeling Between Imperial Atheism and Resurgent Islam (Mar. 2007).

⁴⁰ John 16:33 (translating *tharseite, ego nenikeika kosmon* ([theta] [alpha] [rho] [sigma] [epsilon] [iota] [tau] [epsilon] , [epsilon] [gamma] [omega] [nu] [epsilon] [nu] [iota] [kappa] [eta] [kappa] [alpha] [tau] [omicron] [nu] [kappa] [omicron] [sigma] [mu] [omicron] [nu])).

⁴¹ See Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* [Encyclical Letter on the Regulation of Birth] (1968).

⁴² *Evangelium Vitae*, *supra* note 39, P 27.

It is the confidence authentic to the Yahwistic Covenant that the foundational reality of the cosmos is Love, rather than the cold mathematics of a merely philosophical hypothesis or the chaos, violence, and celestial rivalries associated with the ancient pagan cults, in contrast to which the Hebrew people had taken their own stand in Faith. Pope Paul VI had exhorted the Church to remember this truth, when he said, "the art of loving is often converted into the art of suffering. Should the Church abandon its duty to love because it has become ... too difficult?"⁴³ Our answer to this question is our answer to the question, "who do you say that I am?"⁴⁴ Indeed, "who do I say I am?" and, "what is the final value of the human person?" These questions are all of a piece, and Pope Paul VI urges us to accept as our own the answers given in the Gospel. "The religion of this Council," he declared, to the Fathers in December of 1965, "was primarily the religion of love."⁴⁵ Indeed, we can say that it was the **[*64]** religion of Pentecost, which, "[gives] rise to a new sociology,"⁴⁶ born of love and peace; "and we are all aware how much today the world still needs love and peace!"⁴⁷

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⁴³ Ratzinger, *supra* note 21, at 202 (quoting Pope Paul VI, Speech at the Opening of the Fourth Session of Ecumenical Council Vatican II (Sept. 14, 1965)).

⁴⁴ Luke 9:20; Mark 8:29; Matthew 16:15.

⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *supra* note 21, at 202. Joseph Ratzinger appears to correctly interpret Pope Paul VI's central message:

We prefer to point out how charity has been the principal religious feature of this council. Now, no one can reprove as want of religion or infidelity to the Gospel such a basic orientation, when we recall that it is Christ Himself who taught us that love for our brothers is the distinctive mark of His disciples (cf. John 13:35); when we listen to the words of the apostle: "If he is to offer service pure and unblemished in the sight of God, who is our Father, he must take care of orphans and widows in their need, and keep himself untainted by the world" (James 1:27) and again: "He has seen his brother, and has no love for him; what love can he have for the God he has never seen?" (1 John 4:20).

Pope Paul VI, Address of Pope Paul VI During the Last General Meeting of the Second Vatican Council P 10 (Dec. 7, 1965).

⁴⁶ Regina Coeli, *supra* note 11.

⁴⁷ *Id.* (emphasis added).