

SYMPOSIUM: A CELEBRATION OF THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF MULIERIS DIGNITATEM, PART I: ARTICLE: A SPOUSAL HOUR

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Text

[*1]

Introduction

It is an honor and a joy for me to address you today, as we gather to celebrate the theological intuitions of Pope John Paul II on the "mystery of woman" - virgin, bride, and mother - twenty years after the publication of the apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*.¹ These intuitions prophetically respond to the anthropological challenges we are now confronting in every society, at every level, down to the individual woman in the remotest African village. We are here to make that nexus - to identify how Divine Revelation and the teaching of the Magisterium respond to the concrete cultural challenges of our times, so as to better serve humanity.

Mulieris Dignitatem came out a few years before the Cairo and Beijing conferences of the United Nations, which integrated the well-known themes of the Western sexual and feminist revolution - such as "possession of one's body," "control over one's destiny," "free love," the "wanted child," the "right to choose," and a flawed conception of freedom, equality, and power - into new concepts such as "sexual and reproductive health and rights" and "gender equality."² These new themes became global political objectives, priorities of international cooperation and global norms.

[*2] For some fifteen years now, we have been in the implementation phase of Cairo and Beijing and have globalized the Western cultural revolution. The global agents of change have scored a decisive number of critical victories in the developing world, where regional organizations, governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations ("NGOs"), schools, and health-care centers have integrated the new global norms. In these countries

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* [Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women] P 22 (1988) [hereinafter *Mulieris Dignitatem*] (internal quotation marks omitted).

² See generally Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, Sept. 4-15, 1995, Report of the Fourth World Conference, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.177/20/Rev. 1 [hereinafter Beijing Report]; International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, Egypt, Sept. 5-13, 1994, Report of the ICPD (Oct. 18, 1994), U.N. Doc. A/CONF.171/13 [hereinafter Cairo Report].

the cultures, mentalities, and behaviors are changing fast. Whereas the cultural revolution already achieved most of its objectives in the West, the front of the battle has now moved to the developing world.

So we are in a combat - a combat of global scope. Perhaps we could even speak of an apocalyptic combat. The current teaching of the Magisterium brings us back to the origin. God's eternal design, the "revealed truth concerning man as 'the image and likeness' of God," which "constitutes the immutable basis of all Christian anthropology," ³ is both Pope John Paul II's and our starting point.

In contradistinction, world governance today globally imposes a new ethic constructed by social engineers, constructed in fact so as to fill the void left by their deconstruction of our God-given Trinitarian anthropological structure. ⁴ The rejection of God's design, of Revelation, is the starting and ending point of this global agenda.

In the West, the sexual revolution, followed in the Catholic Church by widespread unfaithfulness to the Magisterium, has accelerated the secularization process and led to a general loss of faith. The globalization of the Western cultural revolution threatens to have the same consequences in the non-Western world. The new global ethic puts women on top of its agenda. Gender equality - often a Trojan horse hiding reproductive health, which in turn hides, *inter alia*, what the new jargon calls "safe" abortion - is the transversal priority of international cooperation and the Millennium Development Goals. ⁵

[*3] At the heart of this global combat is the woman. "It is precisely in the 'woman' - Eve-Mary," John Paul II tells us, "that history witnesses a dramatic struggle for every human being, the struggle for his or her fundamental 'yes' or 'no' to God and God's eternal plan for humanity." ⁶ In this combat, our goal is to serve, not to win. The evil one is the prince of this world, but Jesus already won the final victory: "O death, where is thy victory? ... But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." ⁷ We are not fighting a semantic battle. Ours is not a political, diplomatic, or juridical combat. It is, first and foremost, a spiritual one. God does not ask us to succeed, but to be faithful and to persevere until the end.

Yet this spiritual combat does take on political and cultural forms, which I would like to briefly evoke. Let me start with the political challenge we are confronting: the global power-grab phenomenon.

I. Global Power Grab

The globalization of Western secularization is not only an "organic" cultural process surfing on economic globalization. It is also the practical result of an unprecedented global power grab by a minority of radical activists. Those who drove the Western feminist and sexual revolution were at the rudder of global governance at the end of the Cold War.

Let us briefly recall that no sooner did the Berlin Wall fall in 1989 than the United Nations organized an unprecedented series of global conferences to build a "new global consensus" on the norms, values, and priorities for international cooperation in the new "global" era. These conferences adopted a new language ⁸ (which has by

³ *Mulieris Dignitatem*, supra note 1, P 6.

⁴ Genesis 1:26 reads, "And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Revised Standard, Catholic Version) (emphasis added). The use of the plural indicates the implication of the three persons of the Holy Trinity in the creation of man, who is made in the image of the Trinitarian God fully revealed in Jesus Christ.

⁵ In 2000, U.N. member states adopted the Millennium Declaration, which drew on the U.N. conferences of the previous decade, including Cairo and Beijing, and exposed their vision for international cooperation in the twenty-first century. See United Nations Millennium Declaration, G.A. Res. 55/2, U.N. Doc. A/RES/55/2 (Sept. 18, 2000). A year later, the U.N. secretariat turned the Declaration into eight goals - the Millennium Development Goals. The Secretary-General, Road Map Towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, U.N. Doc. A/56/326 (Sept. 6, 2001). The goals will remain the framework of development cooperation until 2015. See *id.*

⁶ *Mulieris Dignitatem*, supra note 1, P 30.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 15: 55, 57 (Revised Standard, Catholic Edition).

now become current currency all over the world) and operated a series of dramatic paradigm shifts, affecting all areas of social life: politics, [*4] economic development, social and cultural values. These paradigm shifts include the change from growth to sustainability, from government to governance, from confrontation to consensus, from the spouse to partners, from universal values to a global ethic, from population control to reproductive health and rights, from the family to family under all its forms, from a sectoral approach to women's issues to the gender perspective, and so forth.⁹

Not everything is black and white in the paradigm shifts, but what is certain is that a global cultural revolution did in fact quietly take place. The "universal paradigm" of Western modernity now coexists with a "global" paradigm of Western "postmodernity." Significantly, the words "virgin," "spouse," and "mother," which belong to Divine Revelation, are absent from the new global language. So are the words "truth," "good and evil," "conscience," and "service," among many others. Those who went to the 1995 Beijing Conference will remember that the word "mother" is virtually absent from the final document,¹⁰ used only in reference to cases such as single mothers or poor mothers,¹¹ but not as the primary vocation of the woman. This absence is in the logic of the new ethic: according to the gender perspective, motherhood is a social construct that obstructs women's equal access to social power and therefore must be "deconstructed."

In a democracy, political decisions are preceded by an open debate in which their content is discussed and becomes clear to everyone. But there has been no debate prior to the decision to give gender equality and all that it includes priority in international cooperation. Instead of a debate, it was taken for granted that a consensus existed on the views of the "experts" - the enlightened despots of our time whose ideological biases were simply ignored. Yet the paradigms forged by these experts were treated as global norms, now already imposed on all governments and cultures. Does this not illustrate what Cardinal Ratzinger, when opening the conclave that elected him Pope, referred to as "dictatorship of relativism"?¹²

[*5] What is the anthropological content of the experts' propositions? A quick reminder.

The 1994 Cairo Conference's paradigm of "sexual and reproductive health and rights" pursues the goal of, inter alia, universal access.¹³ Let me stress the scope of this agenda. By the year 2015, this would mean access to contraceptive information and services for the young, without parental knowledge and consent.¹⁴ This would mean

⁸ Examples of the new language include the following: sustainable development, global governance, quality of life for all, participatory democracy, human security, responsibility to protect, gender equality, consensus-building, holism, equal access, the right to choose. For further examples, see Marguerite Peeters, *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution: Key Concepts, Operational Mechanisms 23-25* (Benedict Kobus trans., 2007), and Marguerite Peeters, *Global Cultural Revolution and Paradigm Shifts* (2009), <http://www.dialoguedynamics.com/content/forum-d-apprentissage/modules/modules-introductifs/article/global-cultural-revolution-and>.

⁹ Peeters, *supra* note 8, at 24-26.

¹⁰ See generally Beijing Report, *supra* note 2.

¹¹ See, e.g., *id.* PP 80(g), 83(s), 179(c), 206(i), 268, 277(a).

¹² Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Homily at the Mass for the Election of the Roman Pontiff (Apr. 18, 2005), in *Homily by the Cardinal Who Became Pope*, *L'Osservatore Romano* (English ed.), Apr. 20, 2005, at 3.

¹³ The term "universal access" conveys the message that it is meant for all, irrespective of age, marital status, state of health, and sexual orientation.

¹⁴ See Cairo Report, *supra* note 2, P 7.16.

All countries should, over the next several years, assess the extent of national unmet need for good-quality family-planning services and its integration in the reproductive health context, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable and underserved groups in the population. All countries should take steps to meet the family-planning needs of their populations as soon as possible and should, in all cases by the year 2015, seek to provide universal access to a full range of safe and reliable family-planning methods and to related reproductive health services which are not against the law. The aim should be to assist couples

access to whatever "choices" individuals may want to make, provided they do not harm the health and life of their partner. This would mean access to "safe abortion" (safe for the mother, not for the child) where abortion is legal.¹⁵ In Cairo, the expression "the family" - meaning the traditional family - was no longer "politically correct." It was now considered "discriminatory" and was replaced by "the family under all its forms," so as to leave open the possibility to choose between "diverse forms of family" - such as homosexual or lesbian couples, families with or without children, reconstituted families, single parent families, and so forth.¹⁶

The Beijing Conference on women a year later adopted a new approach to women's issues and to development called the "gender perspective" - a perspective aimed at "gender equality."¹⁷ To understand what this means, let us recall that in the 1970s, a specific trend within feminism, namely gender feminism, constructed a dialectical opposition between the male-female differences inscribed in biology (and therefore unchangeable) and the different social roles played by men and women (motherhood being considered only a **[*6]** social role). These roles were deemed to be socially constructed, unstable, and changeable. The gender perspective is dynamic. Its purpose is to deconstruct all "social constructs" that allegedly prevent women from enjoying access to social power equal to that of men. It presupposes the nonexistence of an anthropological complementarity between man and woman. Motherhood and the spousal dimension are reduced to "stereotypes" that need to be deconstructed as the primary obstacles to "gender equality." The individual must be able to "choose" and determine herself or himself in a radically "free way." To attain such "freedom," the individual must be liberated from what is given, from reality, from nature, from traditions, from female and male specificities as inscribed in the anthropological configuration of man and woman - from God Himself. Postmodernity thus "celebrates" the individual's radical freedom to choose. It constructs a new utopian world, in which the possibilities to choose would be "infinite" and the individual would be able to "play" his existence without ever giving himself, forever running away from his real vocation and the only way to happiness.

Development cooperation is now stuck - at least until 2015, the "target date" for both the implementation of the Cairo agenda and the Millennium Development Goals - in the "global normative framework" of reproductive health, the gender paradigm, and their multifarious derivatives, such as quality of life, empowerment, sexual diversity, and the right to choose. Reproductive health and gender are but the tip of the iceberg of a new, post-Judeo-Christian ethic.

Quietly but effectively, the paradigms of the new ethic transform cultures and traditions from within and threaten to destroy the basis of all civil societies, namely the family. Whether we like it or not, we have to fight a postmodern "enemy." This enemy is quiet, cultural, soft, disguised, seducing, and seemingly non-threatening. Its practical accomplishment is not oppressive political regimes but the quiet deconstruction of God's Trinitarian design for man and woman. There is a soft spot in our Western values, a disagreeable weakness in democratic idealism.

The effective and unprecedented global political and cultural power wielded by the evil one is a mystery: *mysterium iniquitatis*.¹⁸ Somehow, God has allowed this to happen.

[*7] The United Nations is moribund, but it could be given a new lease on life. The depth, scope, and seriousness of the financial crisis, the food crisis, the energy crisis, the fear of the current recession, and the recently engineered breakthrough of the "climate change" issue could precipitate a movement back to multilateralism. In many places in

and individuals to achieve their reproductive goals and give them the full opportunity to exercise the right to have children by choice.

Id.

¹⁵ Id.

¹⁶ Cf. id. P 5.1 (stating that "various forms of the family exist in different social, cultural, legal and political systems").

¹⁷ See, e.g., Beijing Report, *supra* note 2, PP 25, 57, 79, 163-64.

¹⁸ This expression meaning the "mystery of evil" is often used by the Magisterium. See, e.g., Pope John Paul II, Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday P 2 (2000), in Holy Father's Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2000, *L'Osservatore Romano* (English ed.), Apr. 5, 2000, at 3.

the world, the sense is that the West has become incapable of providing new and lasting global leadership and of redressing the situation. Will there be another wave of global radicalism? What is the historical process that led us to the point of this unprecedented threat?

II. The Cultural Revolution of the West

The cultural revolution of the West is what made it possible for radical minorities to impose their agenda on global governance at the end of the Cold War. Let us now evoke the cultural manifestation of the spiritual combat we are in.

The Western cultural revolution accelerated dramatically in the course of the last century. After Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God¹⁹ came the murder of the father (whom Freud identified as the source of our repression).²⁰ Then came an unprecedented deconstruction of motherhood through radical feminism,²¹ then of virginity and of our spousal identity through the sexual revolution, the spread of the contraceptive and abortive mentality.²²

[*8] Dead now are the father, the mother, the spouse, the virgin, and the family in Western culture. Within a few decades, the West by and large shifted from the spouse to multiple sexual partners; from marriage to free sex; from the "unity of the two"²³ to the gender contract; from the "sincere gift of self"²⁴ to ownership of one's body and control over one's destiny (i.e., the contraceptive and abortive mentality); from the traditional family to the "family under all its forms" (including homosexual couples and reconstituted families); from respect for the sacredness of life to the legalization of abortion, in-vitro fertilization, and sterilization; from parental authority to the rights and empowerment of children (turning children into "citizens" and "against" their parents); from conscience (ability to discern good and evil) to free choice (the right to choose good or evil); from the truth to the right to error; and so forth. The cultural revolution did not bring about liberation and happiness as it promised, but social fragmentation, divorce, loneliness, despair, and suicide. The death of man is the bitter fruit of the "death of God." The devil is homicidal. Didn't the Lord say he was a liar and a murderer?²⁵ He lies and intends to kill.

¹⁹ Dead are all the Gods: now do we desire the Superman to live." Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, reprinted in 11 The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche 3, 91 (Thomas Common trans., Macmillan Co. 1911) (1883).

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, developed the concept of an "Oedipus complex," which is named after the Greek mythical character Oedipus who killed his father. See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* 159-63 (A.A. Brill trans., Random House, Inc. 1994) (1899). According to Freud, "It may be that we were all destined to direct ... our first impulses of hatred and violence toward our fathers." *Id.* at 161. The father soon came to be seen as the source of repression, and the death of the father became a prevalent theme of Western culture.

²¹ Margaret Sanger, the spearhead of the feminist revolution and the founder of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, wanted to liberate the woman from the "slavery of reproduction." See Peeters, *supra* note 8, at 11; David M. Kennedy, *Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger* 94, 257 (1970). According to her, "No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother." Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race* 94 (1920).

²² The contraceptive pill, invented in the 1950s by Doctor Gregory Pincus, a collaborator of Margaret Sanger, was commercialized in the West in the 1960s. George Grant, *Grand Illusions: The Legacy of Planned Parenthood* 101 (4th ed. rev. 2000). During the same period, several Western countries legalized abortion. *Id.* at 210-11. The United States followed in 1972 with the Supreme Court decision [Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 \(1972\)](#).

²³ *Mulieris Dignitatem*, *supra* note 1, P 7 (internal quotation marks omitted).

²⁴ *Id.* (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting 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)).

²⁵ John 8:44.

What is left in a society without fathers, without mothers, without spouses? Partners and citizens, a citizenship that is in fact the caricature of brotherhood, for there can be no real brotherhood without a common father and a common mother. Our society has become flat, horizontal. No wonder the world has become hard to govern.

Contraception, abortion, in-vitro fertilization, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and sexual orientation gained juridical or cultural acceptance in the name of democratic freedom, sometimes becoming recognized rights. Law educates the citizen, so the nexus between culture and law has to some extent created a vicious circle of secularization, both in the West and at the level of global governance, which is under the control of the West.

Well-known individuals and organizations, such as Margaret Sanger and the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Alfred [*9] Kinsey and his sexual education programs,²⁶ and Herbert Marcuse and his promotion of a "non-repressive civilization"²⁷ spearheaded the revolution. Their ideas gradually penetrated the fabric of Western societies. Today, a critical mass no longer seems capable of discerning good and evil.

Our combat is no longer in the line of the great heroic deeds of American history, a glorious record of world leadership. The enemy is no longer "without" Western democracy, but within it; we fight against ourselves. No longer can anyone be sure about the content and interpretation of the language we use, about human rights, about socioeconomic development, about democratization processes, about the platforms of political parties, about education reform programs, about NGOs, about health-care systems, about environmental protection policies, about the Millennium Development Goals, about global governance, about those norms proposed as "values," or about the global "ethic," because they have all been hijacked. Their content depends on the agenda of those who are in power. This agenda is hidden behind the language of self-evident "universal values" - the Western paradigm.

The "right to choose," understood as the freedom of the rebellious individual who seeks to "liberate" himself from the conditions of existence in which God had placed him, has become the cornerstone of a new global ethic. This ethic tempts us today just as the snake tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden: "You will be like God."²⁸

Now the Western agents of the cultural revolution are out of steam, as if they have lost interest in their own agenda. But what has patently failed in the West is now being globalized!

[*10]

III. The Hour of Women Is a Spousal Hour: A Sign of the Times

"The hour ... has come, when the vocation of woman is being achieved in its fullness," reads the closing statement of the Second Vatican Council,²⁹ which preceded by a few years the May 1968 Western cultural revolution³⁰ -

²⁶ Peeters, supra note 8, at 13.

The biologist and zoologist, dubbed by his followers as the "father of sexology," Alfred Kinsey (1894-1956) carried out studies on human sexuality ... at the University of Indiana in the United States... His real objective was to bring about a "sexual liberation" of society As a militant atheist, Kinsey wanted to deconstruct western Judeo-Christian morality, which he represented as repressive.

His two publications, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (a best-seller, published in 1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) kicked off the western sexual revolution.

Id. (footnote omitted).

²⁷ Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), the master of the Western cultural revolution of the 1960s, believed like Freud "that civilization was repressive and weakened drives." Id. at 15. In *Eros and Civilization* (1955), he "advocated a cultural or erotic revolution to make civilization non-repressive." Peeters, supra note 8, at 15-16.

²⁸ Genesis 3:5 (Revised Standard, Catholic Edition).

²⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Message to Women at the Closing of the Second Vatican Council* (Dec. 8, 1965), reprinted in *The Documents of Vatican II* 732, 733 (Walter M. Abbott ed., Joseph Gallagher trans., 1966).

just as *Mulieris Dignitatem* preceded the globalization of the revolution by a few years. The hour of women, John Paul II tells us, is a "sign of the times."³¹ So what does this sign tell us about the times we are in?

Mulieris Dignitatem refers to the "prophetic" character of the woman as bride to manifest to everyone the truth of "the love with which every human being - man and woman - is loved by God in Christ."³² Christ is the bridegroom. The hour of women is a spousal hour. In this hour more than ever before, "the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come."³³ Today, the Magisterium of the Church highlights our spousal identity. Pope John Paul II called us to go out into the deep: *duc in altum*.³⁴ Are we not still, so to speak, standing on the threshold of the mystery of our Trinitarian anthropological structure, the mystery of our spousal identity?

The human heart cannot be satisfied by "partners," the cultural construct replacing the bride in the global ethic. Nor can it find satisfaction in gender contracts, negotiations of "safe sex," "safe" abortion, "confidential" reproductive health information and services, and so forth, which close individuals upon themselves and keep them in their solitude. We are all made for the fullness of the spousal dimension.

[*11] The Church calls us to cooperate in the advent of the civilization of love.³⁵ Love does not spring from citizenship, from rights, from institutions, from the partnerships of global governance. God our Father, our Spouse, our Brother, loved us first.³⁶ Our brothers and sisters live in a society that has deconstructed fatherhood, motherhood, our spousal identity. They thirst for the love of God, but they have not yet experienced it. Let us give them the concrete witness of that love and help them get back to the father, the mother, the spouse.

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³⁰ Between May 3 and June 16, 1968, student protests and general strikes led to violent confrontations with police in Paris and throughout France. Nearly 1800 people were hospitalized and several were killed. See generally Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties* 602-18 (1998).

³¹ *Mulieris Dignitatem*, supra note 1, P 1 (internal quotation marks omitted).

³² *Id.* P 29.

³³ Revelation 22:17 (Revised Standard, Catholic Edition).

³⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* [Apostolic Letter at the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000] P 1 (2000) (quoting Luke 5:4).

³⁵ See, e.g., Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth] P 33 (2009); Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* [Encyclical Letter on the Twentieth Anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*] P 33 (1987).

³⁶ Cf. Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4-7; [1 John 3](#):1, 4:8, 10, 19.