Chapter 4

MAN

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1. The dignity of man today

No century in history has spoken more about the dignity of man than the twentieth. Yet no century in history has threatened the dignity of man more, both in theory and in practice.

Note: "Man" does not mean "males", or "males more than females". Despite this fact, many publishers today strictly censor the traditionally inclusive use of "man" or "he"—a use we find until the 1960s in all English translations of the Bible, all the documents of the Church, and all the great secular books in the history of Western civilization.

This censorship is usually insisted on out of respect for the strong feelings of a small minority of influential feminists, and perhaps in guilt and reparation for the many real injustices done in the past by men to women.

Traditional language is maintained in this book, not out of any desire to exclude women or to deny the full equality between men and women (full equality is a biblical principle, by the way), but because of the conviction that past injustices against women are not atoned for by future injustices against language.

In the English language, the word "man" does double duty; it means two things, "humans" and "male humans". For English has only one word ("man") where many other languages

Threatened it in theory because the three thinkers who have had the most influence on the twentieth century—Darwin, Marx, and Freud—all reduced man to something soulless: either an accidentally evolved clever ape, a cog in the economic State machine, or a suppressed sex maniac.

Threatened it in practice because of the twentieth century's most dramatic invention, genocide: the deliberate murder of more than one hundred million innocent people, more than the entire population of the world for most of man's history. And not just by Hitler, Stalin, and Mao. In "free" America, well over a million human beings a year continue to be slaughtered in the womb.

The cause of this human carnage should be obvious to any Christian or Jew or Muslim. Once "God is dead" to any society or ideology, so is his image in man. "The abolition of man" (the title of a prophetic book by C. S. Lewis) follows from the abolition of God. For God is the source of all life, and when any culture says No to God, it says No to life and becomes what Pope John Paul II has dared to call a "culture of death".

The defense of man is thus bound up with the defense of God. They are inseparable. "If any one says 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 Jn 4:20).

For the same reason, if anyone says "I love man" and hates God, he is a liar. For a great building will not stand without a strong foundation. Everyone in our culture affirms "the dignity of man", but what is its foundation? What prevents its collapse?

2. The basis for the dignity of man

The Catholic answer is clear: "Of all visible creatures only man is 'able to know and love his creator.'[1] . . . [H]e alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity" (CCC 356). This is one of the most crucial and challenging sentences in the *Catechism* for our time.

Man's dignity rests on his destiny. He is not simply from the dust and for the dust but from God and for God.

Even the theory of evolution agrees with the Genesis account in seeing man as the culmination of the natural process. We naturally wonder what is

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have two. In Latin, for instance, *homo* means "human being" and *vir* means "male human being". In Greek, *anthropos* and *aner* make the same distinction. When English writers said "God and man" they did not mean "God and males".

Why not say "God and humanity" then? Because "God and man" not only sounds better than "God and humanity", but it means something different. "Man" is a concrete term, like "God"; but "humanity" is an abstract term, like "divinity".

[1] *GS* 12 § 3.

the point and purpose of the whole universe; the answer is not its gases and galaxies but the man who asks that question. The galaxies are only the stage, the setting for the play; we are the actors.

The universe is a great cathedral. The stars and seas are God's holy pictures on the walls to raise the mind of man to worship and adore his Creator. Without God, the cathedral loses its meaning, its dignity, and its destiny. So does man the worshipper.

Man has value and dignity because he is a holy thing, like the Eucharist. In man, too, Christ is truly hidden.

3. Christ as the meaning of man

"In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear" (GS 22). Man sees his own meaning and destiny much more clearly in Christ than in any of his own ideas or dreams, philosophies or psychologies, ethical or social ideals. Christ is the answer to the most important and challenging question we can ask: What am I supposed to be? What is the meaning of my life? To this question we have, not an abstract answer or a theory, but a concrete answer, a fact: the man Jesus Christ. He is the datum for man's knowledge of himself.

To understand this concrete datum, let us consult our written data, the Bible. (Both Christ and Scripture are called "the Word of God".) Christians read the Old Testament in light of the New, as a farmer interprets a seed in light of its fruit. So we should expect to find Christ at the center of the Old Testament, too. And we do, starting with God's creation of the universe and of man.

Genesis 1 says God created the universe by his Word, but it does not say what God's Word is. The New Testament does. Jesus Christ is the Word of God (Jn 1:1–14). Genesis 1:26–27 says God made man "in the image" of God, but it does not say what the image of God is. The New Testament does. Jesus Christ is the image of God (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49). Man's dignity is based on the fact that he is created to be like Christ.

In this fallen world, that means Christ's Cross: self-giving love culminating in death. And in the next world it means the full glory of Christ's Resurrection body.

4. Christ as the basis for human solidarity

Man finds his meaning in Christ not only as an example or ideal to imitate but as the "Head" of a "Body" that is organically one and one with its Head, just as the thing between your shoulders is organically one with the body it directs. We are Christ's "members" (1 Cor 12:14–27; Rom

12:4–5)—"members", not like stockholders in a corporation, but like the limbs of a body.

Human solidarity, like human dignity, is another idea modern man rightly praises but usually without knowing its true basis. *Why* are we one? Are all men one merely because of our material origin in Adam (or in apes)? Or is it rather because of our end, our destiny in Christ? The question is not merely theoretical. Our culture is now seriously asking why we should respect all human life, including the unborn, the severely handicapped, the retarded, the insane, the sick, the dying, even the wicked and the criminal. And our culture does not know the answer. Why should we treat these inconvenient and "unwanted" people as our brothers and sisters? The Church thunders the gentle answer: Because they *are* our brothers and sisters, "in Christ".

In the Incarnation, Christ assumed humanity—all humanity, not just one Jewish, male, white body. Christ became man, not just *a* man. All men are therefore carriers of the image of the Son as well as of the Father. Non-Christians cannot unmake the image of Christ in them by denying it, any more than atheists can unmake the image of the Father in them by denying it.

"The brotherhood of man" rests on "the Fatherhood of God" made incarnate in the Body of Christ. Why are we one? The Church not only *says* the answer, "the Body of Christ"; she *is* that answer.

5. The human body

Man was created "in the image" of God (Gen 1:26–27). What is the image of God? It is not only the soul. Although God's nature is spirit, not body (Jn 4:24), yet "[t]he human body shares in the dignity of 'the image of God': . . . it is the whole human person that is intended to become, in the body of Christ, a temple of the Spirit [cf. 1 Cor 6:19–20; 15:44–45]" (CCC 364). That is why our bodies are holy, temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19).

"For this reason man may not despise his bodily life. Rather, he is obliged to regard his body as good and to hold it in honor since God has created it and will raise it up on the last day" (GS 14).

We are neither animals nor angels. Our bodies are neither the whole of our nature, as with animals, nor outside our nature, as with angels. They are not external to us, not costumes for spirits to hide in, like Halloween masks, or instruments for minds to manipulate, like computers. We are essentially body as well as spirit.

Why did God design us this way?

God designed us to be the priests of the whole of creation. "God created

[2] Cf. *GS* 12 § 1; 24 § 3; 39 § 1.

everything for man,[2] but man in turn was created to serve and love God and to offer all creation back to him" (CCC 358). How then do we fulfill our destiny as the priests of the whole creation?

When we offer ourselves to God, we offer up the whole universe in our body, for our body is a "microcosm", a little cosmos, the universe in miniature. We are made of star-stuff and mineral-stuff and plant life and animal sensations, as well as mind and will and heart. "Through his very bodily condition [man] sums up in himself the elements of the material world. Through him they are thus brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the creator" (GS 14; cf. Dan 3:57–90). In us, the floods clap their hands and the hills sing for joy (Ps 98:8).

So nature becomes humanized in us. And we become divinized in Christ. We are the bridge from matter to spirit, and Christ is the bridge from man to God. As Scripture says, "all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor 3:22–23).

6. The unity of soul and body

Man is not merely a body (that is materialism). Nor is he merely a soul (that is spiritualism). Nor is he two beings, like a ghost in a machine (that is dualism). He is one being in two dimensions, bodily and spiritual. "The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the 'form' of the body"[3] ['form' here means not 'external shape' but 'intrinsic nature']; "i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature" (CCC 365).

The human soul is not imprisoned in the body, as Plato taught, but expressed in it, as the meaning of a play is expressed in its words. And the body is not enslaved by the soul but fulfilled by it, as a beautiful piece of marble is fulfilled and brought to perfection in a great work of sculpture.

7. The human soul

The human soul is not a pure spirit, like an angel. It is the "form" of the body; it is meant to inform a body. The body is not a house, and the soul is not a ghost. We are not haunted! The soul is not something strange, occult, or alien. Just the opposite. It is who we are; it is our personality. God gave it to us at conception (that magical moment that was the beginning of our body, too), and we shape it through all of life's choices.

The Church's most important teachings about the soul are (a) "that every

[3] Cf. Council of Vienne (1312): DS 902.

spiritual soul is created immediately by God—it is not 'produced' by the parents—and also" (b) "that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and" (c) "it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection"[4] (CCC 366).

On each of these three points there is good reason for our faith:

a. The soul must be created rather than evolved because matter cannot make spirit any more than space can make time or color can make sound. They are two different dimensions. "You can't get blood from a stone", and you cannot get self-consciousness and free will from atoms and molecules.

b. The soul must be immortal because it is not made of atoms spread out in space and capable of being cut into parts. It is not composed, so it cannot be decomposed.

c. The soul must be reunited with a new body because God made man as a soul-body unity, and God makes no mistakes. Therefore the resurrection of the body is needed to complete and perfect our human nature in heaven. (Between death and resurrection, we are incomplete.) We do not become angels any more than we become ants.

8. Human sexuality[5]

God invented sex. That is why it is not "bad" or "dirty". Nor is it merely neutral, to be used as we please. It is good and holy.

No aspect of the Church's teaching is more misunderstood and rejected today than her unchanging and unchangeable principles of sexual morality. For these cannot be understood except in the context of her vision of man.

Man has not evolved by accident or blind chance. Man has been loved into existence by God. Man is willed by God, deliberately designed, as male and female. That is the first reason why sex is holy.

The second reason is that God has designed and willed not only the existence of sex but also its purpose. It is holy not only because of its origin but also because of its end. That purpose is to be the means of procreating the greatest things in the universe: new persons, with immortal souls. "By transmitting human life to their descendants, man and woman as spouses and parents cooperate in a unique way in the Creator's work" (CCC 372; cf. *GS* 50 § 1).

[4] Cf. Pius XII, *Humani Generis*: DS 3896; Paul VI, *CPG* § 8; Lateran Council V (1513): DS 1440.

[5] A word about words. Throughout centuries of English usage, "sex" meant not merely something we do (copulation) but something we are (male and female). And "gender" meant something grammatical, not biological: *words* had gender (masculine and feminine nouns). Today, "gender" means what "sex" used to mean, and "sex" means simply copulation or even any erotic stimulation ("having sex"). In other words, we have taken the word "sex" away from our personal *being* and reduced it to our biological *doing* and taken the word "gender" away from grammar and exalted it to refer to human beings.

Sexual intercourse is like the Consecration at Mass. It is a human work that God uses as the material means to do the most divine work done on earth. In the Mass, man offers bread and wine, the work of nature and human hands, for God to transform into the Body and Blood of Christ. In sex, man offers his work—the procreation of a new body—for God to do his work: the creation of a new soul. God grants priests the incredible dignity of being his instruments in working one of his two greatest miracles. God grants spouses the incredible dignity of being his instruments in working the other one.

Something that is so very good "ontologically", that is, in its being, essence, or nature, needs to be respected and rightly used. Misuse of something ontologically good is morally bad. The better and more important it is ontologically, the more seriously harmful its moral abuse is. We have rules for careful use of precious works of art, not for paper clips.

The principles of sexual morality are essentially unchanging because the meaning of sex is essentially unchanging. They stem from human nature itself, which God designed, not from the changing mores of society, which man designs. God's law is very clear: no adulterated sex, that is, sex outside of marriage. As Holy Mass is the place for Transubstantiation, holy marriage is the place for sex.

9. Complementarity of men and women

The biblical and Catholic vision of sexuality rejects both chauvinism, which sees one sex (either one) as superior, and unisexism, which sees the two sexes as different only by social convention, not by nature. God invented sex, and God created men and women *different in nature but equal in value*. Chauvinism and unisexism share the common false assumption that all differences must be differences in value.

Male and female were designed by God to complement, complete, and perfect each other, to love each other, and to find joy in each other, both biologically and spiritually. "Man and woman were made 'for each other'—not that God left them half-made and incomplete: he created them to be a community of persons, in which each can be 'helpmate' to the other, for they are equal as persons . . . and complementary as masculine and feminine" (CCC 372).

The first and foundational community was a man and a woman, Adam and Eve. The first foundation of all human community, no matter how wide, even worldwide, is the family. And the family, no matter how extended, is based on this first foundation: one man and one woman becoming "one flesh" (Mt 19:3–6).

10. Man and nature

On the one hand, man is part of nature. He is the culmination of creation, but he is a creature, not the Creator. Nor is he an angel, confronting nature from outside. Nature is not his machine but his "garden", to be loved, reverenced, and cared for (Gen 2:15).

On the other hand, man is superior to nature by his reason and free will; and God entrusted him with the "dominion" (lordship or mastery) of nature (Gen 1:28–29). Man is the artist. Nature is his material and his studio. An artist "masters" his material by knowing, loving, and respecting it.

To master his material, an artist must first master himself. "The 'mastery' over the world that God offered man from the beginning was realized above all within man himself: *mastery of self.* The first man was . . . free from the triple concupiscence"[6] [disordered desire] "that subjugates him" [like an addict] "to the pleasures of the senses" [lust], "covetousness for earthly goods" [greed], "and self-assertion" [pride], "contrary to the dictates of reason" (CCC 377).

Self-mastery comes through the three virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience. (These three are formally taken as lifelong vows by Catholics in religious orders.) They are the three weapons that counter the three key vices of greed, lust, and pride, which come from the three sources of temptation, "the world, the flesh, and the devil" (competitive pride was the invention of the devil, who taught us to want to be "like gods": Gen 3:5).

11. The Fall of man

How did man succumb to temptation? Was the Fall a historical event?

"The account of the fall in *Genesis* 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place *at the beginning of the history of man*"[7] (CCC 390). The Church does not require us to interpret the creation and Fall stories in Genesis literally, but she does insist that they must be interpreted historically, as something that really happened.

For if the creation was not a real historical event (however symbolically that event may have been expressed in Genesis) but a mere myth in the popular sense, like Santa Claus, then how did the universe get here?

And if the Fall was not a real historical event (also narrated in symbolical language) but only a myth, then how did sin get here? Sin is a historical fact, as real as the universe. Its cause must also be a historical fact.

[6] Cf. 1 Jn 2:16.
[7] Cf. *GS* 13: § 1.

12. The origin of evil

There are only two alternatives to the Fall, two other possible answers to question of the origin of evil. If evil is not our fault, it must be the fau either what is greater than us or of what is less than us: either God or nat If a statue has defects, we must blame either its sculptor or its material—u the statue has free will and altered the sculptor's design.

God is all-good, so he cannot be the origin of evil. And he is all-pov ful and created the universe out of nothing, so matter is not the origi evil; it is subject to his will and is good. The only remaining suspect is one we see in the mirror.

In confronting the mystery of evil, we must at least be honest enoug begin by admitting the reality of our data: human evil, moral wicked sin. "Sin is present in human history; any attempt to ignore it or to give dark reality other names would be futile" (CCC 386). G. K. Chesterton sin was the only Christian dogma you could prove simply by reading the newspaper.

The only adequate explanation of "horizontal" evil, the evil we do to other (like Cain's murder of Abel), is the prior story of "vertical" evil: Fall, man declaring independence from God, the source of all good. "T to understand what sin is, one must first recognize *the profound relation of to God*, for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its identity" (CCC 386).

13. The need for divine revelation to understand man

This is why secular explanations of evil are not sufficient. "Without knowledge Revelation gives of God we cannot recognize sin clearly are tempted to explain it as merely a developmental flaw, a psycholo weakness, a mistake, or the necessary consequence of an inadequate s structure" (CCC 387). Without God's revelation, without the knowl that human nature in its present state is fallen from the true norm and not normal but abnormal, all our judgments of man are upside down. then see sin as normal and human and see sanctity as abnormal and su human, as drunks might see sober people as abnormal. This is precisely fundamental error about man that is assumed by our secular society. "Ig rance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action,[8] morals" (CCC 407).

Man is like a caged dog in a railroad station who has chewed off his

[8] Cf. John Paul II, *CA* 25.