

*Roma locuta est*, and with great authority. We are all challenged; some of us are also shocked, although others are given new courage. And this is the situation from which we now have to work. The Pope's long delay in coming to his promised conclusion—and herein may lie its ultimate providential meaning—has been a forcing-house for so many, even though others may have been left largely untouched in their previous loyalties and reflexes: they have simply had to rethink and to re-make their attitudes. So there now exists a great diversity of conscientious witness. This in turn can itself be perturbing, but it can also be the opportunity for a creative pursuit of truth in common, if only we can find a way of combining due docility with just discrimination. The next stage of the discussion will be even more deeply searching for us all, and perhaps even more protracted. Immediately we can only suggest three lines of thought.

The first matter that arises for comment is the very style of the encyclical *Humanae vitae*. Two new factors have emerged from the intense re-thinking of sexual morality over the past few years; in the first place, a new way of looking at marriage, a contemporary philosophy and set of terms, have begun to emerge to coherent articulation; and, secondly, more lay people have learned to take a larger responsibility for the instruction of their own consciences, with all that this means in changes of attitude to their accredited teachers. But if this is the case, then the choice on the Pope's part of the style of the older philosophy of his predecessors is in itself an unwitting evidence of the conflict of approaches inherent in a time of profound transition. What is at stake is nothing less than what it is to be a man: what is natural for man depends on how one defines man's nature. And what we are now working towards is a redefinition of man that is as contemporary as it is Christian. We have therefore, of course, to respect and use the insights of the empirical and social scientists as well as of the artists of our time, and yet not be afraid to submit these insights to the critical and transforming reevaluation of the true Christian spirit. And it may be that in this process, the older achievement will serve not merely as a model but as a corrective. Because a new worked out in terms of a philosophy that may indeed prove to be philosophy and way of looking at man's being in the world is emerging haltingly to articulation, it simply does not follow that the older philosophy thereby loses its entire validity. Likewise it does not follow that a conclusion should necessarily be false even though it is incomplete.

And the second line of thought follows on from the first. For the conflict of styles is, of course, merely another index for a much deeper conflict and redeployment of the mutual relationships and attitudes of Pope and People. And here two considerations would seem to have to be held in balance. On the one hand, an attempted loyalty to the Pope's ruling in the terms of the older relationship between Pope and People is not incompatible with the feeling for, indeed the fighting for, a different and contemporary version of this necessary relationship—and it is perhaps a significant and willed pointer to the future on the Pope's part that he seems consciously to have avoided even giving the appearance of speaking infallibly, as it was often claimed in the recent past that Pius XI had done in *Casts connubii*. On the other hand, the terms of the new relationship cannot be adequately formulated until they have been acted out, since they must in the nature of things be expressed intellectually *pari passu* with their discovery in practice. As Raymond Williams puts it in quite a different context: 'The making of a community is always an exploration, for consciousness cannot precede creation, and there is no formula for unknown experience.' Not that our particular community can be *merely* project and exploration: the crux of the matter for the Church is surely whether she can justifiably hope for new relationships in the future which are yet faithful versions of the past, and to learn to live accordingly in the dark night in between.

For there is much to be done. Which brings us to the last consideration, arising from the very limitation of the encyclical's subject. This is not so much a question of the limitation to one aspect of the whole positive morality of married life but rather of the encyclical's relative importance in the total context of the renewal of the Church's life marked by the Council. It is surely worth reflecting that this subject of birth-control should have been singled out for such intense and widespread study when such a subject as, for instance, the legitimacy of the use of nuclear weapons, even for defence, should not. In other words, the relative importance which the subject of birth-control has assumed in the lives of Roman Catholics is surely one more index of our remaining preference for what *Gaudium et spes* itself calls individualistic over social morality (§ 31). But if the deepest meaning of the Pope's encyclical is that it is a recall to the ancient notion of the martyr-witness Church, then this must be integrated into our contemporary sense of the witness of our whole social existence. Short of this, the renewal and growth of the Church in terms of its role in society at large will again be arrested in a fixation. We should not under the stress of the shock and anguish forget that the author of *Humanae vitae* is also the author of *Populorum progressio*. Catholicism is about more than the pill.

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P. L.