

The Continuity of Spirituality/ Secularity

In this Postmodern Era, “catholic” faith is being chastened by experiences of divergence (deconstruction), convergence (accommodation) and emergence (reconciliation). The evolution of faith cannot be disconnected from the sweep of history, rather the sweep of history bears directly on faith’s continued evolution. [Reference: Madges, “God and the World”, 1999, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, pp 108-134; 246-264]

Since Constantine, the Christian Faith has been appropriated as the exclusive claim of dominion theology and imperial ecclesiology. Up to the Protestant Reformation, faith deposits (orthodox belief) were claimed by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. The deposits of faith are found in Tradition (culture) and Scripture. Protestantism differed from Roman Catholicism in believing that Scripture alone held faith’s deposits. Protestantism fragmented over differing ideologies of emphases on divine/human relations.

In the time between the Reformation and the First Vatican Council science expanded and fueled the ongoing deconstruction of literalist belief. Evolution projected new insights into origins of species, which conflicted with the accepted Genesis account of Creation. Other facets of Modernity also unsettled Christian belief and Church authority.

Pope Pius IX sought to end the damage of deconstruction and Modernity by issuing blanket condemnations of Modernism, specifically evolution. He persuaded the Council Fathers to declare (his) Papal Infallibility in matters of faith and morals.

Notable events in the 20th century compounded societal crises and Church unsettling. There were two World Wars and the spread of atheistic communism. Pope Pius XII signaled official acceptance of using scientific techniques in interpreting Scripture (*Divino Afflante Spiritu*), namely, in recognizing that scriptural writings are conditioned by the understandings of the times, by the author’s perspective and immediate circumstances. The Second Vatican Council explicitly acknowledged prevailing belief in evolution and determined that new “analysis and synthesis” were needed (“a matter as important as can be”) insofar as culture/ evolution bear upon Church in the times.

Under these circumstances, the Catholic Church finds itself in a difficult situation. To deny evolution is to deny the obvious, which discredits Church. To embrace evolution is to discredit Pope Pius IX and the First Vatican Council, i.e., its claim of Papal Inerrancy. Notwithstanding, the laity has moved on in acceptance of evolution and in disregard for the Church’s conundrum that comes from its own machinations. The Church for the most part ignores evolution, which is tantamount to denial.

The evolutionary insights of the Jesuit priest paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, influenced behind the scenes the work of the Second Vatican Council. Officially the Church has not removed prohibitions against Chardin; nevertheless, Pope Benedict XVI has explicitly noted Chardin’s religious respect for nature in his insight into the “Mass of the Universe” and the transformative (Eucharistic) process of evolution.

<http://ncronline.org/news/ecology/pope-cites-teilhardian-vision-cosmos-living-host>

Global ecological crises, climate change, economic implosions, worldwide population pressures are demanding new moral/ political awareness and attention to what are right-to-life, pro-life issues. Colonial/ corporate overreach found justification in the schism of the spiritual from the material, namely, in belief that the material world existed for the

spiritual and was meant for human exploitation. It is now realized that human survival depends on ecological sustainability, which changes the moral equation. Church's isolation of secularity from spirituality, and its condemnation of secularity is a schismatic contrivance hurtful to Church and culture, an ineffective approach to resolving anything — it's a curse of darkness, not a blessing of light. <http://ncronline.org/channel/ecology>
<http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/benedict-issues-forceful-environmental-message>

Christian faith and moral behavior are personal prerogatives and obligations first, in the unified realm of spirituality/ secularity; they are institutional prerogatives secondarily by attribution of personal birthright. The human person identifies with God and nature; human communities identify through the human person. Personal conscience is above the self-interest claim of dominion theology (religion) and imperial ecclesiology (politics.) <http://www.gather.com/viewArticle.action?grpId=3659174697239231&articleId=281474978021743>