

Social Modernism

Le Sillon, Notre Charge Apostolique, and Fratelli Tutti

Errors about the role of the Church in the world, notions of human dignity, and the nature of fraternity

Le Sillon

- Founded 1894 by Marc Sagnier – French Catholic
 - Inspired by Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum
 - A gifted orator, though sentimental, able to rouse enthusiasm easily
 - At the beginning, supported by the hierarchy because manifested a desire to extend the reign of Christ the King, and was unabashedly Catholic
- Strayed from these original ideals into the realm of trying to marry Catholic notions with those of liberal democracy
- Condemned by St. Pius X's encyclical Notre Charge Apostolique of August 25, 1910
- Sagnier submitted to the condemnation, his organization dissolved, but the ideas hung on w/ tremendous tenacity
- Le Sillon was not a small organization – half a million members at its peak
 - Significant enough that the pope himself thought it necessary to intervene in condemning its errors

Our Apostolic Mandate

- More than 110 years old
- Remarkably up to date – St. Pius X condemns in clear terms errors than run rampant in the Church today

Contrast with Fratelli Tutti

- Pope Francis promotes the very errors condemned by his clear-sighted predecessor
- Encourage you to read side-by-side
 - NCA is refreshing – clear, concise, forceful
 - A tight, well-reasoned in 47 paragraphs of pure Catholic truth
 - FT – is painful
 - A rambling, vague meander through typical nonsense of modern liberalism
 - 287 paragraphs!

Modernism outside what is strictly religious and reaching into social life

Naturalism – underlying principle of modernism, liberalism, freemasonry, etc.

- Denial of the supernatural
 - Includes changing its meaning
 - Undermining it by trying to relegate it only to questions of religion
 - The modernist makes religion into a merely natural process of an interior revelation stimulated by the religious sentiment of the believer
- Practical denial of original sin
 - Utopianism
 - We are never going to be able to eliminate all suffering and build a harmonious life of men on earth w/o crime, violence, dishonesty, etc.
 - Any attempt to lead men to the best possible social situation must involve the recognition of his wounded condition, reliance on grace and on the doctrine of Christ

If Jesus Christ is God, if grace and the Catholic doctrine are the realities that the Church says they are, then these teachings must be applied to all areas of human life.

- Cannot accept the idea that He is God for some and not for others
- St. Pius X condemned the Sillon for just this reason
 - They didn't say it explicitly, but put all religions on equal footing in social life, acted as though Jesus Christ, His Church and His revelation are irrelevant to life in society, or can be set aside and disregarded
- There is only one truth
- Pope Francis never calls for the conversion of mankind, for the imposition of the law of Christ, never speaks about sanctifying grace, never even uses the word "supernatural"

Modernism is agnostic

- Claims that anything beyond what is perceptible by the senses cannot be known w/ any sort of certainty

Liberty, equality, and fraternity

- The revolutionary trinity
 - Who isn't in favor of freedom, equal protection under the law, and mutual support and understanding among everyone – sounds great!
 - This was the motto of the revolutionaries who lopped off the heads of countless Catholics, including priests and religious during the French Revolution
 - Pope Francis adopts takes up this motto as something positive
 - Paragraphs 103 and 219
 - Gives his own take on it, but the expression itself tainted by its associations
 - And what exactly do we mean, anyway?
 - St. Pius X explicitly reprimanded the Sillon for promoting this motto
 - An opposition of doctrine to doctrine: it cannot square w/ Church teaching
 - A program infected by naturalism, and coopting the Church's teaching on these matters
- We need to understand that social life is not merely a matter of conventions agreed upon by the citizens of a country or of the world
 - There are elements that will be a matter of convention, of agreement
 - But the foundations are in the natural law
 - Rooted in the very nature of man as created by God
 - To think that we can remake the world without reference to this law, and thinking we can build a flawless society is to engage in utopian daydreaming
 - Our nature is wounded. Original sin is a reality.
 - It is Jesus Christ who taught the only true unity among men, and the Church carried on this mission – that unity is in charity, in grace, in the Church.
 - Not Pope Francis' vision: "Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all."
 - St. Pius X: "...this union is attainable only by Catholic charity, and that is why Catholic charity alone can lead the people in the march of progress towards the ideal civilization."
- Liberty

- Not the focus of Pope Francis' encyclical – mentioned en passant without much explanation
- An ambiguous term that needs explanation – as Leo XIII did in *Libertas*
 - Physical Liberty
 - Psychological liberty
 - Moral Liberty
- Pope Francis has plenty of criticism for unbridled economic freedom, a freedom that disregards our neighbor, etc.
 - Definitely much of his criticism is legitimate
 - What is the difference between that wrong sort of freedom and the good sort embraced by PF in the revolutionary motto?
 - Hard to say – we're left to divine it for ourselves
- Will see it in the Council's document on religious liberty: *Dignitatis Humanae*
- Modernism obsessed w/ the idea of liberty:
 - Man must be free to attain to his truth by his own vital religious experience
 - Must be free to share his experiences w/ others
 - Modern man has grown up, knowledge of his dignity makes him able to choose for himself, so he must be as free as possible to do so
 - The goodness of any liberty depends very much on what we do w/ it
- Equality
 - Modernism preoccupied w/ equality
 - Truth comes from within, not something imposed by an external authority
 - Everyone on the same level; equally able to bring his contribution
 - Primacy of the individual, downgrading God's teaching authority, and the sharing of that authority w/ men
 - PF speaks of "equality of rights grounded in innate human dignity"
 - And: "...the organization of societies worldwide is still far from reflecting clearly that women possess the same dignity and identical rights as men."
 - There are certain equalities in human beings:
 - We have the same origin, the same nature, the same ultimate goal, are held to the same moral law, are able to attain salvation only through Jesus Christ and His Church
 - There are plenty of inequalities and that is perfectly normal, natural, healthy
 - Some are stronger, smarter, braver, more beautiful, etc. than others
 - All the emphasis on equality leads to the absurdities thrown around today, where those who have greater privilege, etc. need to be leveled down so that everyone reaches the same outcome
 - That is manifest injustice
 - Pope Francis claims that all are created by God equal in rights, duties, and dignity
 - You might be able to manufacture a way that could be understood correctly
 - According to the plain understanding – false
 - Our Lord: "And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more."

- St. Paul: different parts of the body – some more honorable than others
 - St. Pius X: "...the Sillon says that it is striving to establish an era of equality which, by that very fact, would be also an era of greater justice. Thus, to the Sillon, every inequality of condition is an injustice, or at least, a diminution of justice? Here we have a principle that conflicts sharply with the nature of things, a principle conducive to jealousy, injustice, and subversive to any social order."
 - Each has his role in society and these roles are different
 - If they are different, than, of necessity, they are unequal
 - Likewise, the dignity of man and woman is not equal b/c it is different
 - The right approach is not to eliminate differences, which is enormously destructive, and impoverishes rather than enriches human life
 - Rather, it is respect for the differences, each one finding his place in human society according to his own gifts from God
 - Of course, inequality as an excuse for oppression ore enslavement has no legitimate place
- Fraternity
 - The idea underlying this whole matter of social modernism, crux of Fratelli Tutti
 - Different vision that of Catholic charity
 - Not concerned w/ conversion for the sake of salvation
 - Utterly naturalistic
 - "being nice" a sort of generic sterile respect, along w/ mutual cooperation, support, etc
 - Again, PF nowhere provides a definition
 - We are told it is based on the worth of every human person
 - It must be cultivated assiduously or there is no future for humanity
 - We need politics, economics, and solidarity that seek to include all in the sphere of fraternity
 - For Christians, fraternity comes forth from the Gospels, but others draw their sense of fraternity from other places
 - Charity is concerned for others, does good to them, etc.
 - But what is the point: to build a civilization of love, to effect greater equality, and justice in the world around us, "to build a better world", mutual respect and dialogue, etc.
 - A better world according to whom?
 - My idea of a better world is quite different from that of a Muslim
 - Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb
 - No question of missionary charity – of seeking to bring men into the one flock of Jesus Christ in order to lead them to eternal life
 - Rather, to build a better world...
 - St. Pius X: "there is no genuine fraternity outside Christian charity. Through the love of God and His Son Jesus Christ Our Savior, Christian charity embraces all men, comforts all, and leads all to the same faith and same heavenly happiness."
 - How can we even talk about charity w/o reference to that for which men have been created?

- “Catholic doctrine further tells us that love for our neighbor flows from our love for God, Who is Father to all, and goal of the whole human family; and in Jesus Christ whose members we are, to the point that in doing good to others we are doing good to Jesus Christ Himself. Any other kind of love is sheer illusion, sterile and fleeting.”
 - In nearly 250 of this sloganized “fraternity”, we have seen war, crime, oppression, and manufactured misery on a scale never before known in history
- Yet, the modernist thinks we can manufacture a human brotherhood
- Revolutionary ideas are usually packaged in fine sounding words
 - “...evil and error are presented in dynamic language which, concealing vague notions and ambiguous expressions with emotional and high-sounding words, is likely to set ablaze the hearts of men in pursuit of ideals which, whilst attractive, are nonetheless nefarious. Such were not so long ago the doctrines of the so-called philosophers of the 18th century, the doctrines of the Revolution and Liberalism which have been so often condemned; such are even today the theories of the Sillon which, under the glowing appearance of generosity, are all too often wanting in clarity, logic and truth.”
 - Those who are promoting revolutionary ideas are never going to say directly that they are in favor of destruction, death, oppression, etc.
 - Will try to make their program sound palatable, no matter how evil it may be
 - Well-meaning and naïve people are often duped by these slogans
 - Think “women’s rights” standing for abortion
 - Human dignity
 - Human dignity, the foundation for all rights, for a truly just and righteous society, we are told
 - “The Sillon has a praise-worthy concern for human dignity, but it understands human dignity in the manner of some philosophers, of whom the Church does not at all feel proud.”
 - What is the source of man’s dignity?
 - That he is created in the image of God
 - Sin and error distort this image, diminish dignity
 - Fallen man has compromised his dignity and needs Jesus Christ to restore it
 - Of course, he retains a certain radical dignity since the image of God is not destroyed in him
 - Without reference to God, where is man’s dignity?
 - We could expound at length the nightmarish condition of secular society that thought to establish itself w/o God’s influence
 - Abortion, pornography, euthanasia, eugenics programs, rampant drug abuse, weapons of untold destructive capacity, etc.
 - “Contemporary man is becoming increasingly conscious of the dignity of the human person” Vatican II – DH
 - Is he?
 - “More and more people are demanding that men should exercise fully their own judgment and a responsible freedom in their actions...” DH
 - True, demanded more and more

- Does it matter or not if that judgment is wrong and that freedom abused?
 - Are we any less subject in our days to the attractions presented by the world the flesh and the devil?
 - Is a license to err and to sin in any way consonant with our dignity?
- NCA: “Such are the big words by which human pride is exalted, like a dream carrying Man away without light, without guidance, and without help into the realm of illusion in which he will be destroyed by his errors and passions whilst awaiting the glorious day of his full consciousness.”
- Man’s dignity is not a destructive independence, but a submission to God who elevates and perfects his nature by grace.
 - If our personal judgment and freedom do not lead us there, they are worthless
 - Is there any human dignity in hell?
 - The punishment for those who have failed to be what God made them to be.
- So, it is God that is at the center even of man’s dignity
 - Makes sense – any dignity man has comes from God alone
- PF: “we must put human dignity back at the center and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need”
 - God must be at the center and not just any vague notion of God
 - God as He truly is

We are meant to belong to the one Church

- Promotes and restores man’s true dignity
- Possesses only means of securing real freedom, the right understanding of equality, and Christian charity rather than a vague idea of the brotherhood of humanity
- There isn’t a bigger thing that the Church needs to be a part of
 - Est. by God Himself to enable man to reach his perfection: individually & socially