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Fruitful and Responsible Love

Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II)

Seabury Press, New York, N.Y. 10017, 1979. 74 pp., \$2.95, paperback.

Cardinal Wojtyla was a pioneer in the theological rethinking of love, marriage, sex, parenthood, and responsibility that has been going on in the Catholic Church the past 20 years. His first book on the subject came out in Poland in 1962. He was a member of the Papal Birth Control Commission of 1964-1966. The present volume brings us, for the first time in English, a distillation of Karol Wojtyla's thoughts four months before his election to the papacy. It contains the cardinal's presidential address to the June, 1978, Milan International Congress on "Fruitful and Responsible Love." This was one of six world-wide congresses held in 1978 (the others were at Melbourne, New York, Colledgeville, San Francisco and Cardiff) to mark the 10th anniversary of Paul VI's *Transmission of Human Life—Humanae Vitae Tradendae*. In six short sections, Karol Wojtyla's address, here translated from the Italian, synthesizes the marriage doctrine of Vatican Council II (*Gaudium et Spes*, 48-52) with that of Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*. In section one, Cardinal Wojtyla welcomes the opportunity to reflect "on a pastoral problem which . . . involves all the people of God." In section two, he reviews the nature of conjugal love as given in *Gaudium et Spes*, 49, 50 and *Humanae Vitae*, 8, 9. He stresses that "spouses, made to the Image of the Living God . . . through their faithful love, become witnesses of that love which the Lord revealed . . . by His dying and His rising," as taught by the Council (*Gaudium et Spes*, 52). The cardinal then addresses in section three the crucial topic of responsibility, "the responsibility which husband and wife take . . . for their love itself. . . . Love is above all a gift . . . born in souls and bodies as the fruit of emotional sensitivity and sensuous attraction, reaching to the hidden depths of the sexual constitution of the organism . . . Responsible love means responsibility for life . . . and the value of the human person . . . that the person as such has a unique value for the other person . . . with all that is beautiful and noble . . . but also with all that is difficult and sometimes tragic." He quotes the Council: "This love the Lord has judged worthy of special gifts, healing, perfecting, exalting gifts of grace and charity" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 49).

In section four, Karol Wojtyla recalls that Paul VI had equated responsible love with responsible parenthood (*Humanae Vitae*, 10), and that the Council had entrusted to the spouses themselves responsibility for the exercise of parenthood, i.e., for transmitting life and educating the young (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50). He adds that in "the sphere of methods of birth control, the authentic measure of responsibility for love . . . will not have recourse to contraception." Children of the Church should be governed by a conscience conformed to the divine law as taught by the Church (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50). In section five, the cardinal develops the role of the conscience. "The pivot of the whole matter is conscience. . . . We are here in the sphere of a type of action . . . in which a man and a woman remain totally alone with each other, thrown upon what they are, not only in their physical masculinity and femininity, but also in their interior experiencing of each other . . . hidden from others. In such a situation, one's own conscience seems particularly decisive: an upright and mature conscience, a conscience both human

and Christian, will indicate here and now the proper measure of responsibility." He defends the moral acceptability of periodic abstinence, based on the distinction between a utilization of natural dispositions and a direct obstruction of the generation of life (*Humanae Vitae*, 16). Spouses "must have a clear understanding not only of their decisions but of the reasons for these decisions [in the regulation of births]. . . . The morality of the action must not be confused with the technique of the action, the principle with the method."

In section six, the future Pope calls upon all people of good will to work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and of Mary, the Mother of all peoples, "to foster the dignity of marriage and the family."

The translation unfortunately is marred by Italianisms which obscure certain sentences. The volume is completed by an appendix of nine brief responses prepared for this edition by former participants in the Milan Congress. Each of the respondents expresses his or her surprise and delight at the papal election by which their friend Karol Wojtyla became John Paul II. The respondents are Giorgio Campanini, sociologist, University of Parma; Jack Dominion, M.D., British psychiatrist whose discussions on marriage have frequently appeared in the *London Tablet*; Francois Guy, M.D., and his wife Michele Guy, M.D., Grenoble, NFP pioneers in France and Mauritius; Vincenzo Lorenzelli, family consultant, University of Genoa; Gustave Martelet, S.J., Paris, the one theologian whose contributions to *Humanae Vitae* were publicly acknowledged by Paul VI; A.F.A. Mascarenhas, M.D., professor of surgery, St. John's Medical College, and national secretary of the Indian Episcopal Commission on the Family; Masamba ma Mpolo, dean of the Protestant Faculty of Theology, Zaire, and Office of Family Education, World Council of Churches, Geneva; Giacomo Perico, moral theologian and former member, Papal Birth Control Commission; Max Thurian, Calvinist theologian, Taize, France.

The nine respondents are quite varied and hard to summarize. Campanini stresses Wojtyla's concern for the married couple, their difficulties, their situation in the concrete. Dominion is delighted by the cardinal's insistence on love as the foundation stone of marriage, a love which is sustaining, healing and growing. He avers that every sexual act is life-giving in the psychic sense if not always necessarily in the strict biological sense. He hopes for a reconciliation of the present division in the Church about *Humanae Vitae*. The Guys were impressed by Wojtyla's "presence, power, resolute strength." Lorenzelli stressed his ecumenical openness. Martelet sees the ray of light of John Paul I recaptured by his successor. Mascarenhas recalled her long conversations with the cardinal at Milan, his encouragement to the NFP movement in India and throughout the world, the need to extend to all families in trouble "without any condemnation . . . a hand of friendship." Masamba ma Mpolo, as a Protestant, recognizes in John Paul II a man "open to other Churches . . . not of separated brethren but of Christians who bring other spiritual dimensionss . . . a man who is free because he believes in the reforming power of the Divine Spirit." He calls Wojtyla "a pastor participating in the joy and anguish of husband and wife, . . . who reminds us of the divine and uncalculating character of fruitful love . . . which transmits life not simply to produce new lives but because it creates fruitful interaction between two persons in a . . . sanctified relationship. . . . [Wojtyla] opposes contraception but accepts the reality of the couple's freedom of conscience in the process of responsible parenthood and of regulating birth." Perico stresses the cardinal's contribution to a deeper understanding of *Humanae Vitae* as a pointer towards perfection, as a distant point of arrival, whose real difficulties need to be faced with honesty and comprehension.

Finally, Thurian, Calvinist vicar-prior of the Protestant Community of Taize, recalls how Cardinal Wojtyla invited him to Cracow to speak on marriage to his seminarians, then how John Paul II greeted him in Rome as a member of the

ecumenical delegation to the Papal Inaugural Mass. He notes the new Pope's "openness and understanding of all the problems of married people and the family." He adds a note of confidence: "I feel sure that with him the Church is going to know a renewal of faith in the openness and fidelity of the great tradition."

This is a small book physically, but a mighty one, invaluable to all who are truly concerned with the family and with ethical and effective regulation of births.

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A Private Choice, Abortion in America in the Seventies

John T. Noonan, Jr.

Free Press, New York, New York, 1979. 224 pp., \$11.95.

This book not only summarizes the legal history of the entire abortion controversy in America in the seventies, but it also presents the basic evidence one must consider to take a stand on the whole question. It does this in only 192 pages, divided into 21 chapters called "Inquiries."

The first five Inquiries discuss the Supreme Court's *Abortion Cases*. The next 11 give a political and legal history of the abortion controversy, explaining where abortion got its political support, how its proponents and the press masked the "liberty" of abortion with legend, and how the "liberty" so expanded that its proponents forced the active cooperation of all in the abortion act. In the last five Inquiries, Noonan explains exactly what abortion is — the killing of human beings — and he proposes a solution that might "limit" the "liberty" of abortion.

Noonan explains with succinctness why the decision in *The Abortion Cases* conflicts with the Constitution. The Constitution insists that certain natural rights of individuals and families antedate the existence of the state. The state must recognize these rights, but it cannot create or destroy them, this truth being the *raison d'être* of the Bill of Rights. But in *The Abortion Cases*, the Supreme Court, in effect, made every right depend on the state's, or its own, will by arrogating to itself the power to establish who is and who is not a legal person. Though the Court claimed to abstract from the question of the unborn's personhood, actually it determined that the unborn were to be treated as nonpersons. If the Court, and not the natures of things, determines who is and who is not a legal person, then every right depends on the Court's will. The abortion decision implicitly separates the whole system of laws and rights from any criterion outside the will of the rulers.

Justice Blackmun tried to ground the "right of abortion" in a right of privacy, claiming such a right of privacy was included in the "liberty" guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment: "Nor shall any State deprive any person of . . . liberty . . . without due process of law." The key phrase here is "due process of law." Blackmun merely begs the question when he implies that the state abortion laws were not "due process." He might as well have said, "This law was not due process because it 'deprived a liberty without due process.'" For Blackmun's argument to work, he had to assume that the state could have no "compelling interest" to limit the liberty of pregnant women. But for *that* assumption to