Chilean Scholar Offers Thorough Assessment, Balanced Response Rooted in Tradition

Editor's Note: The following article appears in the current (Feb. 2019) print edition of *Catholic Family News* (subscribe HERE; current subscribers can access the E-Edition HERE). Readers may recall that last month Professor Roberto de Mattei, President of the Lepanto Foundation, reviewed Italian journalist Antonio Socci's latest book, *The Secret of Benedict XVI: Why He Is Still Pope*, with its self-explanatory subtitle. This month, Professor De Mattei examines another work published in 2018, *Pope Francis's "Paradigm Shift": Continuity or Rupture in the Mission of the Church?*, by Chilean scholar José Antonio Ureta.

Unlike Socci, Ureta recognizes Francis as the legitimate Roman Pontiff according to the Church's public judgment (thus rejecting the problematic theory of "Benevacantism"), while at the same time meticulously documenting the many disturbing words, deeds, and omissions that have come to define his disastrous pontificate. In the final analysis, as De Mattei observes, Ureta exhorts the faithful to reject the opposing extremes of blind obedience and Sedevacantism and, instead, maintain the middle course of virtue through respectful resistance of error.

Interestingly, at the beginning of the Pope's recent trip to the United Arab Emirates (Feb. 3-5, 2019) for the Human Fraternity Meeting, the Apostolic Vicar of Southern Arabia (Bishop Paul Hinder) issued a press release in which he expressed his hope that Pope Francis' "encounter with the Grand Imam of Al Azhar" might "lead to a **paradigm shift** not just in relations between Christians and Muslims but in people's thoughts and minds around the world when it comes to religious freedom and acceptance of each other's beliefs!" (emphasis added). Thus, the timeliness of Ureta's book is proven once again.

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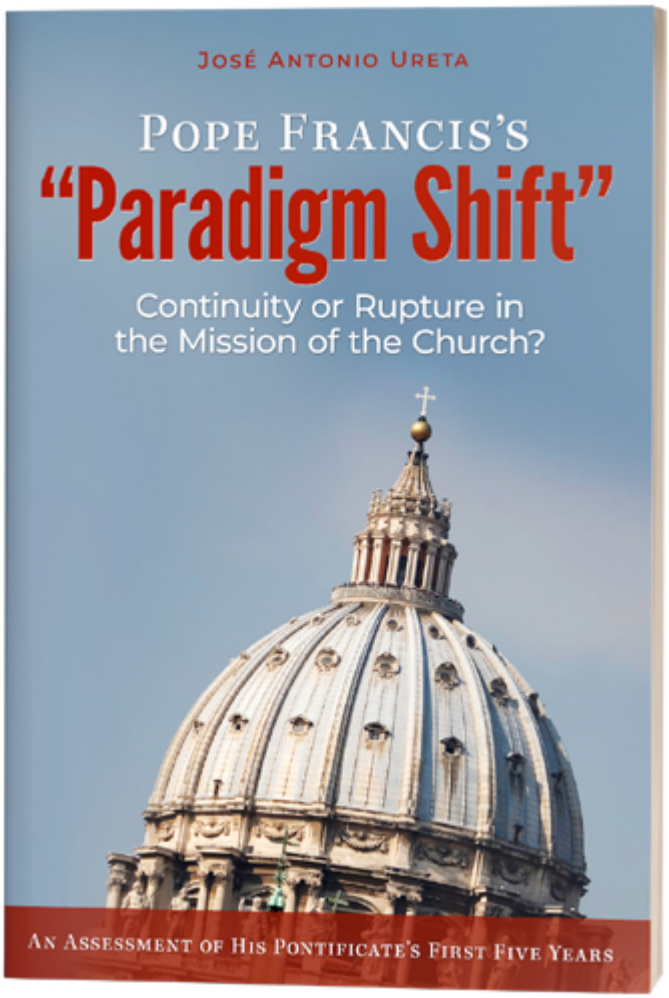
"Keep therefore and do the things which the Lord God hath commanded you: you shall not go aside neither to the right hand, nor to the left." – Deut. 5:32

Assessing Francis' "Paradigm Shift"

Among the more interesting books published in 2018 is the work of Chilean scholar José Antonio Ureta entitled, *Pope Francis's "Paradigm Shift": Continuity or Rupture in the Mission of the Church?* It is distinguished by the unique charateristic of not only offering an accurate assessment of the first five years of the reign of Pope Francis but also suggesting

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useful lines of action for opposing the self-destuction of the Church which this pontificate has accelerated.



According to Ureta, the quinquennium of the pontificate of Jorge Mario Bergoglio was characterized by a "paradigm shift" in the Church. The term "paradigm shift" was used by Pope Francis himself in the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* (Dec. 27, 2017) as a synonym for his "cultural revolution" (VG, n. 3). One of the cardinals closest to the Pope, Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago, presented a conference on Feb. 9, 2018 expressly titled "Pope Francis' Revolution of Mercy: *Amoris Laetitia* as a New Paradigm of Catholicity", which was dedicated to explaining the new cultural revolution "in the relationship between moral doctrine and pastoral praxis."

The "paradigm shift" is a new conceptual model of the Church which replaces the old one. A primary area of clear discontinuity with the preceding pontificates is that of the so-called "non-negotiable principles." The values which were important to John Paul II and Benedict

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XVI – family, life, and education – are absent or reduced to a minimum in the pastoral horizon of Pope Francis, who, in an interview with *Corriere della Sera* (Mar. 4, 2014), declared: "I have never understood the expression 'non-negotiable values.'" Pope Bergoglio has instead expressed closeness and sympathy towards those who negate these values, such as the leader of the Italian Radical Party Marco Pannella and Emma Bonino, a supporter of divorce, abortion, homosexual unions, free drugs, and euthanasia. The John Paul II Institute on Marriage and Family, which had been distinguished in its defense of non-negotiable values, was excluded from the organization of the Synod on the Family of 2015 and was "refounded" in September 2017 with a completely new orientation. The controversial former Archbishop of Terni, Vincenzo Paglia, was named as its Grand Chancellor, and he was then named President of the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAV), which was also restructured and purged of its most orthodox professors.

A Political-Social Shift

Another field in which the "paradigm shift" appears obvious is the political-social realm. Notwithstanding the disastrous results of "real socialism", Pope Francis has cultivated a privileged rapport with those regimes which draw their inspiration more or less directly from Marxist ideology, from Cuba to Venezuela, and three times he has received the leaders of the communist-inspired "popular movements" at the Vatican. To a journalist who commented to him, "You are regarded as a communist, pauperist, populist pope," Pope Francis replied, "I say only that the communists have stolen the flag" (*Il Messaggero,* June 29, 2014). The same concept was repeated in his book-interview with the French intellectual Dominique Wolton.[1]

For Papa Bergoglio, "Inequality is the root of social ills" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 202), contrary to what Catholic doctrine teaches, according to which sin is the cause of every other evil, while the essential equality of men, who are all children of God, is not opposed to the inequality in accidentals. As Ureta correctly observes: "This is at variance with Catholic social doctrine, which teaches that sin is the root of all evil (including social evils), and the essential equality of all the baptized as children of God and heirs of Heaven does not contradict accidental inequality resulting from varied talents, diligence, education, and condition."[2]

The new paradigm also expresses itself in an "ecological" vision of the universe, which holds that the lifestyle of the indigenous peoples represents a model of wisdom for the rapport of man with nature. The encyclical *Laudato Si*, ignoring the results of the most serious scientific studies, is based on the collaboration of intellectuals like the ex-religious brother Leonardo Boff or Hans Schellenhuber, a bitter defender of birth control, who Pope Francis

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also nominated as a member of the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences. The projection of the neo-pagan and blasphemous light show on the facade of St. Peter's Basilica on Dec. 8, 2015 constituted an outrageous translation of the papal encyclical into images.

Accompaniment and Pluralism

Alongside the theme of ecology, the pastoral *leitmotif* of Pope Francis is the theme of "accompaniment" of immigrants, which seems to consitute the one absolute and "non-negotiable" principle of his pontificate. The visits of the Pope to the islands of Lampedusa and Lesbos are symbolic episodes which indicate that for him the migratory phenomenon seems to have a true and proper theological dimension. In receiving the Charlemagne Award in 2016, Pope Francis declared, "European identity is and always was an identity that is dynamic and multicultural." The consequence of this principle is the rejection of the Christian roots of Europe in the name of a misunderstood charity, which is preparing the continent of Europe for its future submission to Islam. The "culture of encounter", in fact, leads Francis to idealize the religion of Mohammad and to exonerate him of any responsibility for the violence practiced in his name (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 253). For Pope Francis, Islam is a "religion of peace" and may even be called an instrument of salvation because "God is only one, always the same. Some pray to Him in one manner, others in another" (Discourse of Jan. 19, 2014).

The attitude of Pope Francis towards Islam is no different from that taken towards other non-Christian religions, as became apparent in the inter-religious video put out by the Holy See in January 2016. It featured a Buddhist, a Jew, a Catholic priest, and a Muslim saying in succession, "I confide in Buddha," "I believe in God," "I believe in Jesus Christ," and "I believe in God, Allah." They are then followed by Pope Francis himself, who appears in the video saying: "Many think differently, feel differently, seeking God or meeting God in different ways. In this crowd, in this range of religions, there is only one certainty we have for all: We are all children of God."

Equally astonishing are the statements made in the first of Pope Francis' infamous interviews with Eugenio Scalfari (Oct. 1, 2013), in which the Pope declares: "I believe in God, not in a Catholic God, there is no Catholic God, there is God." In the same interview, Pope Francis adds: "Proselytism is solemn nonsense, it makes no sense. We need to get to know each other, listen to each other and improve our knowledge of the world around us."

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Scandalous Interviews with Scalfari

At the beginning of his dialogue with Eugenio Scalfari, Pope Francis responded to the journalist with his "Letter to a Non-Believer" in which he affirms: "I would not speak about 'absolute' truths, even for believers, in the sense that absolute is that which is disconnected and bereft of all relationship. Truth, according to the Christian faith, is the love of God for us in Jesus Christ. Therefore, truth is a relationship. As such each one of us receives the truth and expresses it from within, that is to say, according to one's own circumstances, culture and situation in life, etc."

This philosophical relativism inevitably leads to ethical relativism, which says that absolute moral principles do not exist. To Scalfari's question – "Your Holiness, is there a single vision of the Good? And who decides what it is?" – Pope Francis responds: "Each of us has a vision of good and of evil. We have to encourage people to move toward what they think is Good." And the Pope adds: "Everyone has his own idea of good and evil and must choose to follow the good and fight evil as he conceives them."

Pope Francis' relativization of morality had its most noteworthy expression in the phrase, "Who am I to judge?" (a homosexual person) uttered in July 2013 while returning from his first papal trip to Brazil. The interpretation of this statement by the mass-media as a papal "endorsement" of homosexual practice was never clarified or corrected by the Holy See. Also indicative of a gradual acceptance of homosexual relations has been the support given to the American Jesuit James Martin, who has been committed for decades to making the Church accept the LGBT community and its lifestyle.

Amoris Laetitia – "Paradigm Shift" Par Excellence

The most striking example of the paradigm shift and the cultural revolution currently underway, however, is the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, which foresaw a "case by case" possibility of admitting divorced and civilly remarried persons to Holy Communion. While affirming that it did not wish to change Church doctrine on the indissolubility of marriage, the document permits the divorced and civilly remarried to be absolved in confession and to receive Holy Communion without committing to living as brother and sister.

According to Ureta, the thread which links all of the aspects of Pope Francis' paradigm shift is found in the desire to embrace modernity "and align the Church with the secular and anti-Christian Revolutions which most popes over the last two centuries condemned in various ways."[3] If the remote origin of this paradigm shift seems to be the Second Vatican

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Council, its proximate origin is the agenda of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, of whom Francis considers himself a disciple. The *ralliement* to the modern world born in the French Revolution is contained in the spiritual testament which was entrusted by Cardinal Martini to his confrere Georg Sporschill and to the journalist Federica Radice with these words: "The Church must recognize her own mistakes and walk a radical path of change starting with the pope and the bishops […] The Church is 200 years behind the times. Why doesn't it stir? Are we afraid? Is it fear rather than courage?"

In order to put the Church on par with the world, Pope Francis affirms that it ought to move towards becoming "a Church that goes out," which will replace having a defensive attitude towards the world as it is today. In an interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro, Pope Francis seemed to suggest an immanentistic and Teilhardian view of the universe and history. He attributed to *divine* action the impulses of new dynamics in human action: "God manifests himself in historical revelation, in history … God is in history, in the processes. … God manifests himself in time and is present in the processes of history. This gives priority to actions that give birth to new historical dynamics."[4] In *Amoris Laetitia*, the Pope pointed out the need "to focus on concrete realities, since 'the call and the demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history…'" (AL, n. 31). The final objective of Pope Francis, according to what he told Eugenio Scalfari, is "the fulfillment of the goals prescribed by Vatican II and particularly that of having the Church meet with modernity" (Interview of Oct. 25, 2015).

"Definitive *Ralliement* of the Church to the Revolution"

In the light of the abundant documentation produced by the Chilean scholar, one can only share his conclusive judgment that "this pontificate can be characterized as attempting to carry out a definitive *ralliement* of the Church to the Revolution and its secularized humanism. Moreover, this surrender of the Church to the Revolution is being done while the latter is at an impasse because, in its current stage, its final steps, the Revolution can no longer disguise the full stench and evil of its ultimate goal."[5]

Faced with the new paradigm of Pope Francis, a paradoxical situation is verified: many conservatives, basing their thought on an erroneous notion of the Magisterium, have remained paralyzed by the possibility of being in disagreement with the reigning Pope, while on the other hand the progressives have been transformed into defenders of the "living" Magisterium of Pope Francis to the bitter end. Neither of these two groups admit that the rule of orthodoxy is conformity with the Deposit of Faith, that is, with Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Both groups identify the person of the Pope with the Magisterium of the Church, forgetting that the Pope is not the successor of Christ, but only his Vicar.

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Infallibility was guaranteed to the Church only in two specific situations: in declarations made by the Pope *ex cathedra* and in the ordinary universal teaching of the bishops united to the Pope, that is, in that which has been taught, according to St. Vincent of Lerins, "always, everywhere, and by all" (Commonitory, 2, 6). In other cases the Pope may err, and when the faithful find a contradiction between his words and the perennial Magisterium of the Church, it is not obligatory to err with the Pope, and there may also be the duty to resist him and correct him fraternally.

Legitimate Resistance of Error – A Balanced Approach

How should we comport ourselves on the practical level? Recalling the doctrine of the classic authors, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Robert Bellarmine, Ureta proposes a balanced way between two opposite solutions:

> "One would be to say, 'After all, the Pope is the representative of Christ and the bishops are the successors of the Apostles. They are the living magisterium. Who am I to judge them? If the Pope and the bishops who support him are mistaken, it is their problem.' The other would be to say, 'All this is pure heresy; therefore, the one promoting it cannot be Pope.' One would thus fall into sedevacantism and dispense oneself from resisting a superior because his authority is no longer recognized.
>
> These false alternatives must be rejected. The faithful must recognize Pope Francis as the Vicar of Christ on earth and the diocesan bishops as successors of the Apostles. Notwithstanding this recognition, Catholics must 'resist them to the face,' as Saint Paul did with the first Pope."[6]

This balanced position was suggested in his own day by Professor Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira (1908-1995) to the leaders of the Chilean TFP in the conclusion of their book, *The Church of Silence in Chile* (1976). To the question, "Are we obliged, according to sound doctrine, to go to those [demolishing] pastors and priests … to receive the teachings of the Church from their lips and to receive the sacraments from their hands?" Professor Corrêa de Oliveira answered:

> "In this respect, it is necessary to point out that:
>
> a) In order for there to be a full ecclesiastical filiation … there must be in the

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> spiritual relations between sheep and shepherd, as between son and father, a minimum level of mutual confidence and harmony.
>
> b) Given the extension and importance that these pastors and priests have assigned to the destructive action … in the concrete order there are no conditions for the *habitual* exercise of those relations. We cannot see how such an exercise could fail to bring with it a proximate risk for the Faith and *grave* scandals for the good."[7]

According to José Antonio Ureta, the right of cessation of daily ecclesiastical relations with demolishing Church authorities is analogous to the right of a good wife who is psychologically attacked by an abusive husband or the right of children toward a bad father. Without abandoning the family home, mother and children may legitimately move to an isolated part of the house. In doing this, they make use of their right of self-defense against the father's evil ways. Their withdrawing from routine family life does not mean they reject the indissoluble conjugal and filial ties that bind them to husband and father. Nor are they remiss in their duty of fidelity to him by avoiding regular contact.[8]

This attitude of self-segregation from demolishing pastors to preserve one's faith and to prevent scandalizing the weak – which is not a kind of "Benedict Option" inside the Catholic Church, but a supreme act of resistance to bad pastors – is not something new: it has been practiced by good, faithful lay people since the early ages of the Church.

The Chilean scholar further specifies:

> "That resistance should be exercised not just regarding the admission of adulterers to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, but in defense of human life when threatened by procured abortion and euthanasia. It should lead the faithful to defend indissoluble marriage and oppose the legal recognition of same-sex unions. It should inspire them to stand for private property and free enterprise against collectivist policies and assaults by so-called popular movements. Catholics should be moved to reject miserabilism and Indigenism, which are proposed as solutions to a theoretical anthropogenic global warming over which the scientific community is divided. The baptized should be motivated to uphold their Christian identity and national culture in the face of the migration crisis. Consequently, it should lead them to reject the West's Islamization, the philosophical and spiritual relativism of a multiculturalist utopia, and the Vatican's *Ostpolitik* with anti-Christian regimes that persecute Catholics.

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> Catholics must, therefore, enter a *state of resistance* and remain so until the true Catholic paradigm becomes again the compass that guides, inspires, and vivifies the whole life of the Church."[9]

Uphold the Papacy, Love the Church – Do Not Abandon Either

Ureta concludes his study by renewing his immutable fidelity to the primacy of the universal jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff. Reaffirming this devotion is more opportune than ever in a moment in which there exists in traditionalist circles the temptation to reduce or nullify the juridical and institutional dimension of the Church. No one may construct a Church of his own making. It is necessary to serve and love her just as Our Lord founded and loves her. It is to His Church and only to this Church that His divine promise has been reserved: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

Translated by Giuseppe Pellegrino.

The articles and conferences by Professor Roberto de Mattei can all be found on https://www.patreon.com/lepantofoundation.

Notes

[1] *Politique et société: Pape François, rencontres avec Dominique Wolton*, ed. L'Observatoire, Paris 2017, p. 227.

[2] José Antonio Ureta, *Pope Francis's "Paradigm Shift": Continuity or Rupture in the Mission of the Church?* (Spring Grove: The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property, 2018), p. 29.

[3] Ureta, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

[5] Ureta, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

[6] Ureta, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

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[8] Cf. *ibid*., pp. 168-171.

[9] *Ibid*., p. 165.

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