

CHAPTER II

SOME SOURCES OF FAMILY DIVISIONS

CONSIDERED FROM A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the previous Chapter we considered many concrete or immediate factors of division in today's families. In this Chapter we will investigate some sources of family divisions from a Christian theological perspective. We will consider the origin of the many and various evils which afflict marriages and families.

1. Sin and Various Kinds of Alienation

. . . sin contradicts not only the covenant with God, but also the covenant between husband and wife and the communion of the family¹

St. Augustine defined sin as a word, deed, or desire in opposition to the eternal law of God.² Sin is thus an evil action, an omission or commission, internal or external, that is contrary to God's law or will. Since God's law or will is basically to love God, others and oneself in a proper order (cf. Mt 22:37-40), sin is contrary to true love. Sin, therefore, not only violates God's law. It also violates personal dignity and communion--it causes various kinds of alienation. These include alienation of man from God, of men and women from each other, and of man from the rest of creation. Sin also wounds man in his nature, resulting in disorders in both his spiritual and corporal dimensions. Since man is the center of "all things on earth",³ man's sin has negative repercussions which extend beyond himself. Sin is opposed to truth, life, and love. As love respects and adheres to the truth, unites and gives life; sin violates the truth, divides and results in destruction and death.

It is, however, beyond our purpose to set forth an elaborate and comprehensive theology of sin here.⁴ Rather, we will be concerned with sin as it regards family divisions. We will consider especially original and personal sin and their negative consequences with regard to family life.

a) Original Sin and its Consequences

Original sin refers to the original sin of the first human parents which has been transmitted to all of us through human generation.⁵ As human nature is transmitted through human generation, it is transmitted in a fallen or wounded

state, and deprived of sanctifying grace or friendship with God, because of original sin. With regard to original sin or the fall of Adam, the Apostle Paul says in part that, ". . . sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned." (Rom 5:12). The Apostle Paul, however, affirms that God offers the free gift of life, of God's grace to everyone through Jesus Christ. He says this gift considerably outweighs the fall (cf. Rom 5:15-19). With regard to original sin, we can also note here that the Catholic Church, in its dogma of the Immaculate Conception, teaches that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was preserved from original sin, in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ, by a special divine privilege.⁶

With regard to original sin or the sin of our first human parents, Scripture teaches that this sin involved pride and disobeying God (cf. Gen 3; Sir 10:15; and Rom 5:12-19). In reading the narrative of the Fall in *Genesis*, chapter 3, we should keep in mind that it is written in an archaic literary form appropriate to its time of composition. Nevertheless, it communicates many deep religious truths concerning man, sin, and the sad consequences of sin for man, male and female. Family life today still suffers from these consequences of the Fall or original sin.

Before the Fall, in their state of original innocence, man and woman enjoyed a harmonious relationship with God, each other, and the universe (cf. Gen 1-2). Their sin, however, caused various forms of alienation (cf. Gen 3).

First of all, the original sin of our first human parents broke their loving friendship or communion with God. After their sin they feared God and were expelled from the garden of Eden (cf. Gn 3:8-11 and 23-24). In the language of a later theology, they lost the gift of original justice.⁷

Their sin also had sad consequences for the man/woman relationship. Concerning this Pope John Paul II, in a General Audience on July 30, 1980, said in part:

The words of Yahweh God to the woman in *Genesis* 3:16, "Your yearning shall be for your husband, yet he will lord it over you," seem to reveal to a thorough analysis in what way the relationship of mutual gift, which existed between them in the state of original innocence, may be changed, after original sin, into a relationship of mutual appropriation [that is, seeing the other as an object or possession to be used or exploited].⁸

In the book, *Love and Responsibility*, Karol Wojtyla (now Pope John Paul II) also says that the teaching of original sin explains the universal evil which impedes man, male and female, from loving simply and spontaneously. Sin, he says, violates the person and obscures the value of the true union of persons. Sin is born when man, male or female, refuses to subordinate feeling to the person and love. In sin the will

loses contact with the value of the person.⁹

From the account of the Fall in *Genesis*, Chapter 3, we see that other consequences of sin are suffering, toil and death. In line with this the Second Vatican Council teaches that in abusing his freedom and sinning, man has not only disrupted his relationship with God and others. Man also became out of harmony with all created things and split within himself. The Second Vatican Council teaches, too, that God would have kept man immune from bodily death if man had not sinned (cf. also Wis 1:13 and 2:23-24; Rom 5:21 and 6:23; and Jam 1:15).¹⁰

With regard to original sin and the wounding of human nature, the Second Council of Orange (529) and the Council of Trent (1545-63) teach that the whole man, both body and soul, was changed for the worse because of this sin.¹¹ Concerning the wounding of our soul or spiritual nature by original sin, St. Thomas Aquinas speaks of four wounds as follows:

In so far as reason is deprived of its direction towards truth, we have the 'wound of ignorance'; in so far as the will is deprived of its order towards good, we have the 'wound of malice'; in so far as the irascible appetite is deprived of its ability to face the difficult, we have the 'wound of weakness'; in so far as the concupiscible appetite is deprived of its ability to temper the pleasurable, we have the wound of 'concupiscence'.¹²

It seems that we can relate these "wounds of original sin" to some of the problems in family life today. Can we not relate the "wound of ignorance" to the difficulty that many today experience in understanding certain basic truths about marriage and the family, including certain moral truths? Can we not relate the "wound of malice" to the lack of real caring for the true good of others, including their family members, on the part of many today? Can we not relate the "wound of weakness" to the lack of courage on the part of many to be faithful to their family duties, also in difficult times? And finally, can we not relate the "wound of concupiscence" to various forms of sexual immorality today which have harmed numerous people, marriages and families?¹³

From the above we can see that many of the evils which attack family life today are the consequence of original sin, which we have inherited. It would be a mistake, however, to think that all the problems which families face today are the direct consequence of the sin of our first parents. The subsequent sins of millions of people throughout human history, as well as our sins today, have contributed greatly to the evils that we see today.

b) Personal Sin and its Consequences

The many sorrows of human life are by no means the fruit of original sin alone. In fact, the most

severe and unbearable of human evils are the fruit of the continued deliberate sins of men. There is a special bitterness in the free and malicious hatreds, betrayals, and ingratitude of life.¹⁴

Some of the greatest sufferings today are experienced by people who have been rejected by a spouse or other members of their family. Even in loving families though, the members often hurt each other by their failures to love, their sins, which are not always completely deliberate. As Scripture teaches, we all are guilty of sin and should acknowledge our sins so that God will forgive us ". . . and purify us of everything that is wrong." (1 Jn 1:8-10). Because we all have personally sinned, we all are also personally responsible for family divisions.

Personal sin refers to the sin which a person personally or actually commits. Personal sin enslaves the one who sins (cf. Jn 8:34). Our personal sins also deepen the spiritual wounds of original sin.¹⁵ Unless we personally repent and receive God's forgiveness and healing, our personal sins make it harder to avoid further sins.

Concerning the consequences of sin, including our own personal sins, with regard to the family, we should consider a little further here the social consequences of sin. In the biblical story of Cain and Abel (see Gen 4:1-16), we see how envy and anger lead to fratricide within the first human family. Another biblical story, concerning the tower of Babel (see Gen 11:1-9), illustrates how speech, which God gave to man as a medium for union among men, because of sin, became a source of confusion and division among men.¹⁶

The many social injustices in the world do not just happen. They are the result of personal sins, past and present, including sins of omission. The Second Vatican Council teaches that at a deeper level the frequent disturbances in the social order including economic, political and social forms:

. . . flow from man's pride and selfishness, which contaminate even the social sphere. When the structure of affairs is flawed by the consequences of sin, man, already born with a bent toward evil, finds there new inducements to sin, which cannot be overcome without strenuous efforts and the assistance of grace.¹⁷

With regard to personal sins, we can note that sin is found primarily in the will, the power or faculty which is the source of all voluntary human action. When sin is attributed to other powers, it is only as they are subject to voluntary control and yet retain in themselves a capacity for disordered activity. Since evil as evil is not in itself desirable, the sinful activity is not directed immediately to the evil, the disorder of sin, but rather to some positive goal that involves the disorder.¹⁸ For example, a person who

commits adultery will be seeking some positive goal such as personal enrichment which, however, involves some very serious disorders including the violation of marriage vows, and serious injustices to the other spouse(s) and any children of the marriage(s) or that may be conceived in the adulterous union.

With regard to personal sin, traditional Catholic theology distinguishes material and formal sin, and venial and mortal sin. These distinctions are relevant with regard to considering family divisions.

Material and Formal Sin

The distinction of material and formal sin concerns whether we look at the evil action objectively, or subjectively (that is, as it is in the consciousness of the individual who performs it). A material sin is the performance of an objectively evil action, one that is contrary to true human dignity and God's will. The objective sinfulness of an action is known on the basis of divine revelation as faithfully interpreted by the Magisterium of the Church, and also on the basis of a correct rational analysis of the nature of the action.¹⁹ An action is said to be a formal sin when the conditions necessary to subjective imputability are present. Formal sin presupposes human freedom and a knowledge or awareness that the action is wrong.²⁰ It is, therefore, possible for a person to sin materially without also sinning formally, if he or she is not aware that the action is wrong, due to no fault of their own, or because the action was not done voluntarily. Formal sins especially cause divisions, also in the family, and destroy the personal integrity of the sinner since he (or she) is freely choosing to do an action that he (or she) knows to be wrong. Material sins, which are not also formal sins, however, are also harmful since they are contrary to true human dignity and the authentic communion of persons. We should, therefore, seek to truly educate our consciences, forming them correctly, according to objective truth and the will of God.

The distinction of material and formal sins is also relevant with regard to fraternal correction within the family. If someone, for whom we have a responsibility, such as a spouse or child or brother or sister, etc., does something objectively wrong, we should correct them with love (cf. Mt 18:15-16), humbly and prudently (cf. Mt 7:3-5 and Mt 10:16). We should, however, refrain from attempting to judge how another person stands before God, since one person cannot know the depths of another (cf. 1 Cor 2:10-11). Only God knows the background, the mind and the heart of a person completely, and he will judge fairly.

Venial and Mortal Sin

The distinction of venial and mortal sins refers to the

fact that not all sins are equal in their gravity. A venial sin involves an action that is not pleasing to God, but for various reasons the action does not result in the person being separated from God. A venial sin is not serious enough to deprive one wholly of the life of grace or friendship with God (cf. Pr 24:16). A mortal sin, however, refers to a sin that is serious enough to separate one from friendship with God, to destroy the life and love of God within one, or to deprive one of the state of sanctifying grace.²¹ The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith teaches that:

A person . . . sins mortally not only when his action comes from direct contempt for love of God and neighbor, but also when he consciously and freely, for whatever reason, chooses something which is seriously disordered. For in this choice . . . there is already included contempt for the divine commandment [of love of God and neighbor (cf. Mt 22:37-40) which includes other particular precepts (cf. Mt 19:16-19)]: the person turns himself away from God and loses charity.²²

Since mortal sins result in the loss of charity or the love of God, they are especially destructive of the true communion or unity of persons, also in the family. Catholic teaching concerning mortal sins is in accord with biblical teaching that certain sins can exclude one from the kingdom of God (cf. Ep 5:5; and Gal 5:19-21), a kingdom of loving communion with God and others in friendship with him. With regard to the seriousness of mortal sins, we can also note here that the Catholic Church teaches that those who die in the condition of personal mortal sin enter hell soon after their death.²³ This would mean experiencing eternal punishment (cf. Mt 25:31-46)--being permanently deprived of loving communion with God and the members of one's family. In this life though all sins can be forgiven, including all mortal sins, even of the greatest sinner, if he (or she) sincerely repents and receives the forgiveness of God who wants all people to be saved (cf. 1 Tm 2:4). But God does not force his love and salvation on us. We are free to accept or reject his gifts.

In light of our treatment in this section with regard to sin, original and personal, and its consequences (various kinds of alienation), we can see that sin is the real cause of all family divisions. Sin alienates us from God and each other, from the rest of creation, and even from ourselves. All the various forms of human suffering, all the disturbances within families and society, and death are the result of sin, original and personal. All of the concrete or immediate factors or causes of family divisions, that we considered in Chapter I of this treatise, can be related to sin and its consequences.

In closing this section we should note that sin is not the last word. The Christian vision as presented in

Scripture and Church teaching is not a pessimistic vision, but a very hopeful vision. God, in his great mercy and love, wants to redeem or liberate us from sin and all its consequences, including death. He wants to unite us with himself and each other forever. In Chapter III of this study, in section 5, we will consider the great mystery of Redemption in Jesus Christ, which reveals a love that is more powerful than sin, than death, than any division.

2. The Real Enemies of Family Unity

As we considered in the previous section of this chapter, sin--the original sin of our first parents, the subsequent sins of men and women throughout human history, and our own personal sins--is the source of family divisions, as seen from a Christian theological perspective. Since sin is such a great evil, with such serious negative consequences, we should consider as our real enemies whatever tends to induce or tempt us to sin. In Biblical terms these real enemies of man are the "world", the "flesh", and the "devil" (see, for example, Jn 12:31; Rm 7-8; and Jn 8:44; respectively). These three are also the real enemies of family unity, because they are the sources of temptation to sin for the members of every family on this earth. These three "enemies" tend to confuse and blind us concerning God's vision for the family. They also tend to lead us to act in ways contrary to God's marvelous plan for family unity. Before we consider each of these "enemies" in particular, let us consider a precaution of the great Catholic mystical theologian, St. John of the Cross:

It should be noted, then, that the evils which come upon a man are born of his enemies, those mentioned above: the world, the devil, and the flesh. The world is the enemy least difficult to conquer; the devil is the hardest to understand; the flesh is the most tenacious, and its attacks continue as long as the old man lasts.²⁴

a) The "World"

The Greek word *κόσμος* (cosmos) for the English word "world" is used with various connotations in different sections of the Bible. "World" can mean the created universe which gives witness to the goodness and wisdom of God (cf. Pr 8:22-31; Ac 14:17 and Rm 1:19ff.). "World" is also used sometimes to signify the "world of people" or mankind which God loves: "Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life." (Jn 3:16). Sometimes, too, this world and the things of this world are contrasted with heaven and spiritual things (cf., for example, Mt 16:26 and

Mk 8:36). But, the term "world" is often used, in a theological sense, especially in the Johannine and Pauline writings, to mean fallen or unredeemed, rebellious mankind which is alienated and hostile to God and Jesus Christ. It is with this sense of the term "world" meaning the evil or sinful world, whose prince is Satan (cf. Jn 8:44-5, 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11), that we are concerned here. "In this sense 'the world' often stands for all that is hostile to God and his salvific plan."²⁵

The Apostle Paul in 1 Cor 1-3 contrasts the spirit and wisdom of this world with the Spirit and wisdom of God. He says in part that "the depths of God can only be known by the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 2:11), and that "the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God" (1 Cor 3:19). He also warns Christians not to be conformed to this world (cf. Rm 12:2). Referring to Rm 12:2 the Second Vatican Council says in part:

By the world is here meant that spirit of vanity and malice which transforms into an instrument of sin those human energies intended for the service of God and man²⁶

For our purposes, we can thus understand the "world" and "the spirit of the world", according to their negative biblical connotations, as sources of family divisions. We can relate the "world" in this sense to everything in our environment which opposes God's vision and plan for family unity. Wherever there are inducements to sin and the proposal of anti-family values "the spirit of the world" is at work. The biblical term "world" in this sense can be related to some of the concrete or immediate factors of division in today's families that we considered in Chapter I of this paper. For example, can we not say that the spread of reductionist or false ideologies, oppressive regimes, social injustices, the promotion of alternative lifestyles to the Christian moral teaching for marriage and the family by the media, in schools and peer groups, and so on, are products of the evil or sinful world which is opposed to God and his ways? Even those of us who consider ourselves Christians can at times be instruments of the "world". Whenever we sin, we can be a bad example to others. Whenever we express views concerning marriage and the family which are not in accord with God's view, we are encouraging divisive behavior which harms people and the authentic communion of persons.

Our considerations here concerning the sinful world and family divisions have been brief. It should be mentioned here, though, that Jesus Christ has been victorious over the sinful world (cf. Jn 16:33). Those who believe in Jesus and remain faithful to him will also be victorious. Christ's victory over the sinful world will not be fully complete until that day when he is manifested in glory and all things are subjected to God under him (cf. 1 Cor 15:20-28).²⁷

b) The "Flesh"

The Old Testament word for flesh is the Hebrew *bāsār*; the New Testament word is the Greek *σάρξ* (*sarx*). The term "flesh" is used with various connotations in different sections of the Bible. In some places "flesh" is an element of our corporal being--flesh and blood and bones (cf. Mt 16:17 and Lk 24:39). Sometimes the term "flesh" is used to designate the entire body (cf. Gal 4:14), or man in his concrete totality (cf. Lk 3:6). The Word of God "was made flesh" (Jn 1:14) means that he (the Word or Son, the second divine Person of God) became man or assumed human nature with a body and soul. In these senses "flesh" has good connotations because matter, the body, and man in his concrete reality are good as created by God. But, "flesh" is also used in a different and negative sense, especially in the Pauline writings (e.g. Rom 7-8), to signify corrupt, fallen, sinful, unredeemed human nature. It is with this latter sense that we are concerned here, where the "flesh" is seen as at enmity with God, in opposition to God's Spirit (cf. Gal 5:16-26) and, therefore, also the enemy of man and his true self. "Flesh" in this sense is one of the real enemies of healthy family life and family unity. The "flesh" in this pejorative sense does not mean the human body, which is part of the person and to be loved. The "flesh" here rather signifies a source of temptation or a tendency to sin which comes from within man, from his fallen weak human nature.²⁸ Jesus himself teaches that:

. . . it is within, from men's hearts, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a man unclean (Mk 7:21-23).

Related to sinful "flesh" are the expressions "old man" (cf. Eph 4:22) and the theological term "concupiscence". Concupiscence does not mean sin, but rather the inclination or tendency to sin. It inclines us "to every capital sin, that is, to pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth, and to their dismal fruits."²⁹ Concupiscence, therefore, not only regards the inclination to commit sins related to sex. Nor should sinful "flesh" be limited to so-called "sins of the flesh". Regarding "works of the flesh", in Gal 5:19-21 the Apostle Paul, besides mentioning some types of sexual irresponsibility, speaks of idolatry, sorcery, feuds, wrangling, jealousy, bad temper, quarrels, disagreements, factions, envy and drunkenness. The Apostle also speaks of "the mind of the flesh" (cf. Col 2:18, see the Greek text), which means a proud mind.³⁰

"Flesh" in this sense of human nature corrupted by the Fall and as a source of temptation to sin, or a tendency to sin from within the person, is thus an "enemy" of family unity. Many marriages and families are torn apart by pride,

egoism, quarreling, selfishness, self-indulgence, jealousy, irresponsibility, lack of impulse control, and so on. The "flesh" is a moral weakness which affects us all, and which results in all sorts of divisions if allowed to work.

The Catholic Church teaches, as experience shows, that concupiscence remains after baptism to provide a trial. But, concupiscence, the tendency to sin, does not injure those who do not consent to it.³¹

We are called to love not "according to the flesh" (see the Greek text), but "by the Spirit" (cf. Rom 8:12-13). To belong to Jesus Christ one must crucify the "flesh" or "all self-indulgent passions and desires" (cf. Gal 5:24). The Good News of Christianity is that God has done what we by ourselves are unable to do--he ". . . dealt with sin by sending his own Son in a body as physical as any sinful body, and in that body [in the flesh] God condemned sin." (Rom 8:3). The Christian's victory over sin and the "flesh" is assured in the measure that he or she relies not on his or her own strength alone, but believes in and relies on the Crucified Savior who is the source of the Spirit of life.³²

c) The "Devil"

Today the existence of the devil is often questioned or even denied.

As G.K. Chesterton once remarked, the cleverest thing the devil ever did was to induce people to believe that he did not exist. It was truly a masterstroke, enabling him to carry on his nefarious operations, not just with the tolerance of so-called enlightened opinion; but with the active cooperation of well-meaning, [but deceived] . . . people . . .
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Scripture, however, with sober realism speaks of the devil, the supreme evil spirit (Hebrew *sātan* meaning adversary and rendered in Greek as *ὁ σατάν(ας)* --*ho satan(as)*--, or by the Greek *διάβολος*--*diabolos*--meaning accuser or slanderer), as well as of demons, evil spirits (Greek *οἱ δαίμονες* --*hoi daimones*--meaning the demons). The Catholic Church, in accord with Scripture, affirms the existence of the devil and demons:

. . . . For the devil and other demons were created by God good according to their nature, but they made themselves evil by their own doing. As for man, his sin was at the prompting of the devil³⁴

Concerning the devil, Pope Paul VI has also said in part that he is:

. . . the treacherous and cunning enchanter, who finds his way into us by way of the senses, the

imagination, lust, utopian logic, or disorderly social contacts in the give and take of life, to introduce deviations³⁵

In the New Testament the devil or Satan is referred to by such expressions as the evil one (Mt 5:37), a murderer and liar and the father of murderers and liars (Jn 8:39-44), the accuser (Rev 12:10), the adversary (1 Pt 5:8), the enemy (Mt 13:39), Beelzebub (Mt 5:37), the prince of this world (Jn 14:30), the Great Dragon and the Ancient Serpent (Rev 12:9), and the Tempter (Mt 4:3). Demons are commonly referred to as unclean or evil spirits (e.g. Lk 4:36 and 8:2). Jesus has authority over them and he also gives his disciples authority over them in his name (cf. Lk 10:17-20).

In theology the devil and demons are seen as fallen angels. They are malicious, hating God and man. It should be remembered though that they are mere creatures--God remains the Lord of all and their power is limited by God's Providence. Because of Christ's redemption they can only really harm those who permit them to do so. They are irrevocably alienated from God by their own free doing. The main way they seek to harm people is by inducing them to sin and thus bringing upon themselves misery, and everlasting ruin if they remain unrepentent.³⁶ Not all temptation to sin though comes from the devil and other demons. Much temptation comes from the "world" and the "flesh" as we considered above.

Concerning the family, we can say that the devil and other demons seek to bring division and ruin into marriages and families. They seek to obstruct the realization of God's salvific plan for marital and family unity in many and various ways. Finally, they seek to lead the members of families to reject God and his will forever and thus join them in experiencing eternal punishment (cf. Mt 25:46). Satan and his demons:

. . . know that the fate of mankind depends on the spiritual durability of family relationships. If one splits the atom, the smallest unit of matter, tremendous physical disaster results from the explosive forces released. And if one splits the family, the smallest unit of society, tremendous social disaster results from the explosive passions released³⁷

Concerning the devil, Scripture teaches us to "Be calm but vigilant, because your enemy the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to eat. Stand up to him, strong in faith . . ." (1 Pet 5:8-9). We need to be vigilant and discerning because Satan disguises himself as "an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). Note how temptation often takes the form of falsely making what is in reality evil, sinful, divisive, harmful to people and contrary to God's will, "appear" to be good.

Concerning the devil and demons, Christianity offers hope to all. The Second Vatican Council speaks of "a monumental struggle against the powers of darkness" which "pervades the whole history of man",³⁸ but also teaches in accord with Scripture that:

. . . God determined to intervene in human history in a way both new and definitive. For He sent His Son, clothed in our flesh, in order that through this Son He might snatch men from the power of darkness and of Satan (cf. Col 1:13; Acts 10:38) and that in this Son He might reconcile the world to Himself (cf. 2 Cor 5:19)³⁹

In this section of the paper we have considered briefly the "world", the "flesh" and the "devil" as the real enemies of family unity. These three "enemies" are related because they are each, by themselves or together, sources of temptation to sin. They are opposed to God and his loving plan for marriage and the family; the "world" can be related to forces in our environment, the "flesh" to forces within ourselves, and the "devil" and "demons" to evil personal spiritual beings, which oppose God, his truth, will, life, love and plan for everlasting unity. They are, therefore, indeed our real enemies. As Ralph Martin, one Catholic author, puts it:

The evidence is all around us, for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Christian eyes and ears should be able to recognize and identify the workings of the world, the flesh, and the devil in the midst of our fallen blinded society⁴⁰

In concluding this section on the real enemies of family unity--the "world", the "flesh" and the "devil"--which are sources of temptation to sin, we should note that God will enable us to overcome all temptations if we entrust ourselves fully to him. With regard to this the Apostle Paul teaches:

You can trust God not to let you be tried beyond your strength, and with any trial he will give you a way out of it and the strength to bear it. (1 Cor 10:13)

3. False Teachers, Prophets, and "Antichrists"

Jesus warned that before his glorious Second Coming many false prophets and false Christs would arise and deceive many. In connection with this he said that many would betray and hate one another, even those within the same family. We are exhorted to be vigilant and to pray. Jesus says that those who stand firm to the end will be saved (see Mt 24-25;

Mk 13; and Lk 21). The apostles Paul, Peter and John also warn Christians to be on their guard concerning false teachers, prophets, and "antichrists", rivals of Christ, who would try to lead them astray and would even be found within the Church (see, for example, Ac 20:28-32; 1 Tim 4:1; Gal 1:6-10; 2 Pet 2:1ff.; and 1 Jn 2:18-29).

These warnings should alert Christians, including Christian married couples and their families, to be on their guard against those who propose false teachings and solutions concerning their problems.⁴¹ According to an authentic Christian perspective, salvation and the grace to achieve true and lasting family unity come only from God through Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 14:6; and see Ch. III of this treatise).

There is only one Mediator between God and mankind, Jesus, who is the true and only Christ or Messiah (cf. 1 Tim 2:5-6). Following false "messiahs" or false messianic ideologies can only result in greater disunity, also within marriages and families. In Gal 1:6-10 the Apostle Paul warns against troublemakers who want to change the Good News of Jesus Christ. He says there is only one Good News--we must not follow a different version than the traditional one. In 2 Tim 3:5 he also warns about people who keep up the outward appearance of religion but reject its inner power.

Today some people, including some theologians, seek to "reinterpret" the Gospel according to their personal bias. Some also hope that the Catholic Church will change some of its teachings concerning marriage and the family. As it was made clear at the 1980 Synod of Bishops concerning the family, this is a false hope.⁴² Pope John Paul II has also stated that the "Church will never water down and will never change her teaching concerning marriage and the family."⁴³

Indeed, the Church cannot change her teaching concerning marriage and the family, since this would mean betraying the Good News of Jesus Christ.

False Teachers

With regard to false teachers, Scripture teaches in part:

They will destroy themselves very quickly; but there will be many who copy their shameful behaviour and the Way of Truth will be brought into disrepute on their account. (2 Pet 2:1-2).

As an example of false teaching today concerning sexual morality and marriage, which has been spread within the Church, we can refer to the book, *Human Sexuality*, edited by Anthony Kosnik. This book involved a study commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America. Both the American Bishops and the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, however, have stated that this book has given wide distribution to certain erroneous principles and conclusions. It has been a source of

confusion among the people of God.⁴⁴

With regard to true and false teaching, we should note here that only the Magisterium of the Catholic Church can give an authoritative interpretation of the Word of God, of the Sacred Scripture and the Sacred Tradition of the Church.⁴⁵ The teaching and advice of priests, theologians, teachers, catechists, counselors, family experts, and so on, to married couples and families (indeed, to everyone), should always be in complete harmony with the authentic Magisterium of the Church.⁴⁶

Those who have a genuine vocation as a teacher or minister of God's word should use their gift (Rom 12:7). They should take great care about what they teach and the example they set. They should openly proclaim and hold fast to the authentic message of Jesus Christ, also with regard to marriage and family life, and patiently correct error and refute falsehood. Some people, however, will not be content with sound teaching. Avid for the latest novelty, some people will turn to myths instead of listening to the truth. False teachers should be opposed, especially by bishops and pastors in the Church, because they can cause the ruin of whole families as Scripture states (see Tit 1:9-16. Cf. also 1 Tim 4:1-16 and 6:2-10; and 2 Tim 2:14; 4:5).⁴⁷

False Prophets

There were both true and false prophets in Old Testament and New Testament times (cf. Jer 23:9ff.; 1 Cor 12:10; and Ac 13:6-12). Christians are told not to despise genuine prophecy (cf. 1 Th 5:20), but are warned to be on their guard against false prophets (cf. Mt 7:15-20). Today there exist many false prophets who have led many people astray. Their influence has also been destructive with regard to many families. With regard to this we can note that, according to one estimate, over 1800 cults exist in North America. A common feature of these cults is that "they cut their members off from society and sever personal and family relationships."⁴⁸

Here, it is not our purpose to treat prophecy fully. Rather, we will consider a few basic differences between true and false prophets. People who are aware of these differences will less likely be deceived by false prophets.

A true prophet is a genuine spokesman of God, who calls people to a deeper fidelity to God. True prophecy never comes from human initiative, but is inspired by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Pet 1:21). Since the Holy Spirit would never contradict himself, true prophecy will always be in accord with God's known revelation, as faithfully proclaimed by the Magisterium of the Church. True prophecy will always be for the benefit of families and the Church community (cf. 1 Cor 14). We should realize that the purpose of genuine prophecy is to promote growth in love and unity. Even true prophecy is imperfect. When there is perfection of love, prophecy will disappear (cf. 1 Cor 13). A true prophet will exhibit

the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control (cf. Gal 5:22-24).⁴⁹

Jesus also says that false prophets, who disguise themselves "as sheep but underneath are ravenous wolves" (Mt 7:15-20; cf. Lk 6:43-44), can be known by their bad fruits. False prophets, especially if they are inspired by demons (cf. 1 Tim 4:1), can be known by such signs as obstinancy, vanity, false humility, disobedience to legitimate Church authorities, hardness of heart, uncontrolled passions, hypocrisy, simulation, duplicity, fanaticism, lack of true love and devotion, etc. False prophecy will often appear "good", since "Satan himself goes disguised as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). False prophets often express the egotistical hopes and aspirations of groups or individuals. They may proclaim a "false peace", while living immorally themselves and condoning the immorality of others (cf. Jer 23:9ff.). False prophets, however, may not always be inspired by demons. Some may simply be self-deceived. In any case, false prophecy will not promote growth in true love and unity. Rather, it will ultimately lead to an increase of divisions within the Church and families.⁵⁰

Antichrists

1 Jn 2:18-22 speaks of "antichrists", rivals of Christ, who are also to be found within the Church, but who never really belonged to Christ (cf. also 1 Jn 4:1-6 and 2 Jn 7-11). Scripture also speaks of "an Antichrist", a "man of lawlessness", who will come before Christ's Second Coming and claim to be God, but who will be annihilated with Christ's glorious appearance (cf. 1 Jn 2:18 and 2 Th 2:1-12).⁵¹ We can note that the prefix *anti* in the Greek (*antichristos*) can express the idea of substitution as well as that of hostility. Some biblical passages suggest that the Antichrist will attempt to work by usurping divine and messianic prerogatives, to win over followers by deceiving them concerning his real identity. He will, however, be really opposed to the work of God, especially that accomplished in Jesus, the true Christ or Messiah.⁵²

Lesser "antichrists"--and the "Antichrist" when he comes--are really human instruments of the devil. Although scriptural teaching concerning them is somewhat mysterious, they are related to the work of Satan, religious seduction and temporal persecution.⁵³ Fr. Karl Rahner, S.J., a noted Catholic theologian, says this teaching

. . . gives Christians a permanent right not merely to wage war upon anti-Christian powers and ideas in the abstract, but to recognize and to flee from men and powers in the concrete as its representatives.⁵⁴

Teaching concerning "antichrists" is not meant to cause panic (cf. Mk 13:7). Rather, it should lead Christians,

including married couples and families, to become more deeply committed and faithful to Jesus, the true and only Messiah or Christ. This teaching should not surprise us, since Jesus himself said that many false Christs would arise and deceive many (cf. Mt 24-25; Mk 13; and Lk 21). We should, therefore, be on our guard against being led astray by false "messiahs" and their empty promises and false teachings, also with regard to sex, marriage and family life. Following Jesus will lead to greater unity, but following "antichrists" can only result in more divisions, also within families.

Teaching concerning "antichrists" should give us a sober awareness that there are, indeed, powers of iniquity working in the world. These evil powers or "antichrists" also work to destroy the family, the basic cell of society and the Church.⁵⁵ They may seek to do this by turning the members of families against each other and against God (cf. Mk 13:12), by deception and intimidation.

In the world today we can certainly see many and various anti-family, anti-God, anti-Christian and anti-Catholic forces at work. In some places in recent years some believers in God and in Christ have been persecuted openly or even killed for their faith. In other places the persecution or intimidation, the seductions and deceptions, have been much more subtle, but still very real.

Concerning our times, Karol Wojtyla (now Pope John Paul II) in his farewell speech after a visit to the United States in 1976 said in part:

We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has gone through. I do not think that wide circles of the American society or wide circles of the Christian community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-Church, of the Gospel versus the anti-Gospel. This confrontation lies within the plans of divine Providence; it is a trial which the whole Church . . . must take up.⁵⁶

With regard to this great confrontation or trial though, let us remain faithful and united to Jesus Christ, and to each other in him. Let us not forget his words that "there is no need to be afraid" (Mt 10:31), and "Your endurance will win you your lives" (Lk 21:19).

In this section we have considered false teachers, false prophets, and "antichrists". These agents of division can be related to some of the concrete factors of family disorganization which we considered in Chapter I, especially to the confusion and distortion of truth, and to some of the social and political factors.

* * * * *

In this Chapter we have considered from a theological perspective some sources of family divisions--sin, the "world", the "flesh", the "devil", false teachers, false prophets, and "antichrists". These sources can be related to the concrete or immediate factors of family disorganization, which we considered in the preceding Chapter of this study.

Although our considerations concerning the causes of division of the family in Part One of this treatise have been quite comprehensive, they are far from exhaustive. Much more could be said with regard to each of the areas considered. Our purpose though has been to point out the main causes of division of the family. It is hoped that this presentation can be a real contribution to help families and members of families to overcome barriers and divisions intelligently, and to grow in unity with God and each other. Let us now go on to consider the causes of unity of the family in Part Two of this study.

Chapter II Notes:

1. Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 58.
2. Cf. St. Augustine, *Contro Faustum* XXII, 27. PL 42,218.
3. Cf. The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 12.
4. For a few theological works on sin see, for example, Albert Gelin and Albert Descamps, *Sin in the Bible*, trans. by Charles Schaldenbrand (New York: Desclée Company, 1964); St. Thomas Aquinas, ST, I-II, 71-89; and Piet Schoonenberg, S.J., *Man and Sin: A Theological View*, trans. by Joseph Donceel, S.J. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1965).
5. Cf. The "Decree on Original Sin" by the Council of Trent (1545-63), TCT, pp. 158-61, or DS 1510-16.
6. Pius IX, The Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* (1854), TCT, pp. 207-8, DS 2800-4. Concerning the doctrine of original sin, as guaranteed to us by Scripture and tradition and as taught by the Church, we can also note here that Pope Pius XII in *Humani Generis* (1950) taught that Christians cannot support the theory of polygenism, with regard to the origin of the human race, since it does not appear how such a theory can be reconciled with the doctrine of original sin (cf. TCT, p. 155, DS 3897).
7. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, ST, I-II, 85, 1.
8. From *L'Osservatore Romano*, Italian weekly Thurs. ed., July 7, 1980, p. 1 (The translation from the Italian is mine). Cf. also Giovanni Giavini, "Il Matrimonio alla Luce della Parola di Dio", Giorgio Companini, ed., *Dossier Sulla*

- Famiglia* (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1979), p. 159.
9. Cf. Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (New York: Farrar/Straus/Giroux, 1981 revised ed.), pp. 159-166.
 10. Cf. The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 13 and 18.
 11. Cf. TCT, pp. 157-8, DS 371 and 1511.
 12. St. Thomas Aquinas, ST, I-II, 85, 3.
 13. Cf. The Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 7.
 14. Ronald Lawler, O.F.M. Cap., et al., eds., *The Teaching of Christ*, 2nd ed. (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1983), p. 73.
 15. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, ST, I-II, 85, 3. Cf. also Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Marriage: Human Mystery and Saving Reality* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1976 ed.), pp. 25-27, which relates sin, original and personal, and its negative consequences to the difficulty in achieving a happy and successful marriage.
 16. Cf. Pascal Foresi, *Theology of Social Man*, trans. by Julian Stead, O.S.B., S.T.L. (New York: New City Press, 1967), pp. 62-64.
 17. The Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 25.
 18. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, ST, I-II, 74 and 75.
 19. The Second Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 14, teaches that the Catholic Church has the responsibility to teach authoritatively ". . . that Truth which is Christ Himself, and also to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order which have their origin in human nature itself."
 20. Cf. I. McGuinness, "Sin (Theology Of)", NCE, Vol. 13, pp. 243-4; and Jn 15:22-24.
 21. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, ST, I-II, 72, 5; and Lawler, *The Teaching of Christ*, pp. 292-6.
 22. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1975), n. 10. This declaration was approved and confirmed by Pope Paul VI.
 23. Cf. Pope Benedict XII's Constitution *Benedictus Deus* (1336), TCT, pp. 349-51, and DS 1000-2.

24. From *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies Publications, 1973 paperback edition), p. 656.

25. From the article "World (In the Bible)" by J. L. Ronan, NCE, Vol. 14, pp. 1022-3. For a good treatment of the term "world" as used in the Bible see, for example, the article "Monde" in the *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1974 ed.), published under the direction of Xavier Léon-Dufour, et al., pp. 784-91.

26. From the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 37.

27. Cf. the article "Monde" in the *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*, p. 789.

28. Cf. the article "Chair" in the *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*, pp. 146-152; the article "Flesh (In the Bible)" by W. E. Lynch, NCE, Vol. 5, pp. 961-2; and John L. McKenzie, S.J., *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Bruce Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 280-2.

29. From Lawler's *The Teaching of Christ*, p. 368.

30. Cf. John L. McKenzie, S.J., *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 282.

31. Cf. The Council of Trent's "Decree on Original Sin", 5 (DS 1515).

32. Cf. *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*, pp. 151-2.

33. Vincent P. Miceli, S.J., *The Antichrist* (West Hanover, Massachusetts 02339: The Christopher Publishing House, 1981), p. 5 (From Malcolm Muggeridge's "Foreword").

34. From the solemn profession of faith drawn up by the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, (DS 800), cited from TCT, p. 146.

35. Pope Paul VI, *Address* during his General Audience, November 15, 1972, cited from Lawler's *The Teaching of Christ*, p. 75.

36. Cf. Lawler, *The Teaching of Christ*, pp. 74-6.

37. Miceli, *The Antichrist*, p. 231.

38. From the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 37. The theologian Dionigi Tettamanzi briefly considers the

struggle against Satan and his temptations, and the victory over these, by Christians in the area of marriage and the family, in *La Chiesa Domestica* (Naples: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1979), pp. 239-40.

39. From the Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, 3. For further treatments with regard to the devil, Satan and demons in the Bible, theology and Church teaching, see related articles and bibliographies in such reference works as the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (NCE) and *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*.

40. Ralph Martin, *A Crisis of Truth*, p. 167. For some significant and interesting evidence in our society with regard to the workings of the world, the flesh and the devil, see this book, Chapter 10 concerning "Powers, Principalities, and Organizations"; as well as the book, *Evidence of Satan in the Modern World* (Rockford, Illinois 61105: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1974), by Léon Cristiani and trans. by Cynthia Rowland.

41. Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 4.

42. Cf. *The Family Synod*, p. 60 (discourse of Cardinal Joseph Cordeiro, Archbishop of Karachi, Pakistan).

43. John Paul II, "Homily at the Mass For Families" (February 19, 1981, Lahung Airport, Cebu City, The Philippines), *L'Osservatore Romano*, Italian weekly Thur. ed., February 26, 1981, p. 10.

44. See the American Bishops' statement, November 1977, and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's Letter to Archbishop John R. Quinn, President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the U.S.A., *L'Osservatore Romano*, English weekly ed., December 17, 1979, pp. 9-10, concerning the study, *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), ed. by Anthony Kosnik. Ralph Martin in *A Crisis of Truth: The Attack on Faith, Morality, and Mission in the Catholic Church* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1982) considers numerous examples of false teaching within the Church today.

45. Cf. The Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, 10 and 12.

46. Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 73; *The Code of Canon Law*, Bk. III; and The Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Ch. III.

47. With regard to false teaching we can also consider heresy. For a theological treatment of heresy see, for example, Karl Rahner, S.J., *On Heresy*, trans. by W.J. O'Hara (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964).

48. Pastoral Team, *Marriage and the Family*, p. 63.

49. For fuller treatments with regard to "true" and "false" prophets, private revelations, and discernment of spirits see Bruce Vawter, C.M., *The Conscience of Israel: Pre-Exilic Prophets and Prophecy* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), pp. 21-28; Karl Rahner, S.J., *Visions and Prophecies* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1963); and Jordan Aumann, O.P., *Spiritual Theology*, Ch. 14.

50. Ibid.

51. For a study of the Antichrist in Scripture, in the writings of the Fathers of the Church and Cardinal John Henry Newman, see Vincent P. Miceli, S.J., *The Antichrist*. With regard to the coming Antichrist, we can note here that while some modern commentators prefer a collective interpretation, "Catholic theologians have been nearly unanimous in maintaining that the Antichrist will be an individual person", G.J. Dyer, "Antichrist: Comment of Fathers, Theologians", NCE, Vol. 1, p. 618.

52. Cf. M. Rodriguez, "Antichrist", NCE, Vol 1, p. 616.

53. Cf. *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*, p. 71.

54. Cited by Rudolf Pesch, in his article "Antichrist", *Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. by Karl Rahner (London: Burns and Oates, 1975), p. 15.

55. Cf. Miceli, *The Antichrist*, p. 231.

56. Reprinted in *The Hall Street Journal* (November 9, 1978), and cited by Ralph Martin in *A Crisis of Truth*, pp. 187-8.