

# A Marriage Made in Heaven

*the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights & the  
Society of Catholic Social Scientists*

By Dr. Joseph A. Varacalli

Former V.P. Dan Quayle calls it the “cultural elite.” Theologian Richard Neuhaus refers to it as a modern day form of “gnosticism.” Sociologist Peter Berger terms it the “new class.” Adapting Berger’s phrase to the radical left wing of the Catholic Church, I coined the phrase, the “new Catholic knowledge class.” To many average Americans, who form the basis of a contemporary “populist” revolt, there is in our society a powerful group of heavy-handed and arrogant snobs.

However named, the underlying reality is the same: there exists a category of secular and progressivist intellectuals, bureaucrats, and social activists who dominate both America’s public square and the infrastructure of America’s mainstream religious denominations. Moreover, this group carries both a worldview and vested ideological interests (in terms of the sociological, trilogy of status, power, and wealth) which are furthered by bashing the Judaic-Christian heritage and excluding the latter from any meaningful participation within the American political system and cultural life of the society.

Given its potential with both a 2,000 year tradition and impressive moral, intellectual, and organizational resources (especially when inspired by such a visionary leader like John Paul II), it becomes clear why the secularist assault is concentrated against the Catholic Church. In short, all roads *do* lead to either Rome or secularism. It is Rome that constitutes the last great obstacle to the modernist onslaught; destroy (or capture) Rome and the game is over. Given this, it is not hard to understand why the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights was founded by Father

Virgil Blum, S.J. in 1973 and so recently re-energized by William Donohue. If these men and their organization didn't exist, they would have had to be invented.

The defense of the religious and civil rights of Catholics and other orthodox religionists requires, however, more than just the participation of lawyers, politicians, and an organized and educated laity. This is so because much of the philosophical and intellectual underpinnings of the attack on the Judaic-Christian heritage comes from a contemporary social science that 1) for better or worse, is a social fact of life that, subtly or not, influences all aspects of American life and 2) is dependent almost solely on secular assumptions, concepts, and theories about the nature and destiny of, and relationship between, the individual and society.

Consider the following examples. School administrators take-for-granted a Freudian-like assumption of human sexuality and conclude that condom distribution is both a strategic and moral imperative. Many psychologists portray supernaturally-based religion as both an illusion and opiate while seeing their own discipline as an alleged enlightened substitute for it. Many in the marriage counseling profession talk of courtship and marriage exclusively in contractual and emotional terms consisting merely of social, economic, and psychological exchanges. In many sociology classes, the traditional nuclear family is depicted as an abusive prison for, at least, women and children. Many anthropologists see to be unable to condemn such practices as human sacrifice, homosexuality, and children being born out of wedlock, thus promoting, either unconsciously or not, the philosophy of moral relativism. Many political scientists, forged in the Marxist-inspired and anti-American and anti-Western civilization era of the 1960s-1970s, routinely and uncritically consider all American military intervention as a form of economically self-serving imperialism. Afro-American courses tend to assume, *a priori*, that all Caucasians are

racists; the reality of black racism is never broached. Similarly, much feminist scholarship simply defines men as sexist and ignores the injustice done to men in employment through the use of quotas. While racism, sexism, homophobia, and ageism are unquestionably seen as real “social problems,” the deleterious effects of abortion, euthanasia, divorce, day-care centers and, last but not least, religious bigotry are either not addressed or not addressed squarely. Intellectual discourse within the social science departments of America’s colleges and universities – Catholic institutions definitely included – thus take place within the narrow parameters of “politically correct” thought.

Such thought and behavior, again, is anything but absent within important sectors of the Catholic clergy; witness the effects of a “therapeutic mentality” on conceptions of sin and in the implementation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To top things off, even many Bishops, when trying to form and implement positions on social issues and pastoral policy, rely heavily on secular social science with, predictably, unsatisfactory results. Put crudely, a secular social science attacks the Church from both without and within.

One recent response to the present unhappy state of affairs regarding secular social science and the Catholic faith is the formation, in 1992, of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists. The purpose of the S.C.S.S. is basically twofold: 1) to incorporate, where appropriate, Catholic philosophical/theological assumptions, issues, concepts, and modes of interpretation into the social sciences and 2) to bring Catholic social doctrine into the American public square from which social policy is forged. Minimally, at least, the restoration of the “social sciences in Christ” would guarantee the Church a voice in both the intellectual and political marketplace.

More to the point of this essay, it would also help immeasurably the complimentary – albeit more “defensive” –

goals of the Catholic League. Put another way, the best defense is often a good offense; the evangelistic thrust of the S.C.S.S. into the academy, the government, and, indeed, the Church herself should, theoretically, result in a lessening of the bigotry against and ignorance of, the Catholic faith that the Catholic League routinely must confront.

The S.C.S.S. – now with over 200 professional members in social science and social science related disciplines – is off to a good start. One national conference has been held and two more are in the works. Many scholarly papers have been published in the S.C.S.S. organ, the *Social Justice Review*, and others are in press. The Society's first two major intellectual projects on, respectively, "Catholics and Politics" and "Catholics in Defense of the Traditional Family," are nearing completion. Many standing committees and regional chapters are buzzing with activity. The S.C.S.S. has a Bishop's Board which includes, most prominently, Cardinal John O'Connor. Our Advisory Board is replete with the names of outstanding Catholic scholars and includes three Catholic college presidents. Officers of the Society include Stephen Krason of Franciscan University, Robert George of Princeton University, Alberto Piedra of Catholic University, and Gerard Bradley of Notre Dame. A young dynamic priest of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, Reverend Robert Batule, serves as Society Chaplain.

The goals of The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights and that of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists are distinct yet complimentary. May both continue to work to defend and promote an authentic Catholic presence in the United States and may they cooperate with each other as the situation dictates. Indeed, such organizational cooperation may represent, in this case, a marriage made in heaven.

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