

Scott HAHN, *The First Society: The Sacrament of Matrimony and the Restoration of the Social Order*. Steubenville OH, Emmaus Road Publishing, 2018, 13,7 × 21 cm, 182 p., ISBN 978-1-947792-54-8

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peut malgré tout déjà partager avec l'auteur – d'une véritable rationalité langagière et herméneutique en la vérité d'un Dieu sans fond(s).

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The most fundamental unit of society is the family. This principle has been promulgated by great Popes such as Leo XIII (*Rerum Novarum*), John Paul II (*Familiaris Consortio*), John XXIII (*Pacem in Terris*) to name a few. Like any structure, if you destroy its foundation, the edifice begins to crumble. The traditional family has been under attack in the western world for years. It has been redefined, separated, divorced, abused, concocted and the expectation is that society will be the better for it. It is this crisis, this disorder that Dr. Scott Hahn addresses and hopes to provide solutions for in this book *The First Society*.

Pulling from the great sociologist, Prof. Carle C. Zimmerman¹, Hahn explains how the definition of family undergoes fluctuation in society as popular philosophy moves from traditionalist to liberal and back again. What Prof. Zimmerman explains is that there are three types of families that exist in society and the one most to the left is called the 'atomistic family.' When a society moves in this direction, to wit, to the acceptance of divorce, marriage as contractual, children as individuals within a house and the acceptance of homosexual unions, the traditional family breaks down. When a society moves too far in this direction, it becomes very difficult to swing back into middle wherein we have the domestic family (covenantal marriages, private property, large families). Hahn's book is one attempt to move our thought, our society back towards a focus on the domestic family.²

The first step for Hahn is to begin with the basics. In chapter three, Hahn reviews the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage between a man and woman, how man is by nature a social being and is made for relationship. From this union of husband and wife spring forth children. Children are born into a small society wherein they can be formed and grow in ethics. We need to find our identity as individuals and hence take our name from our family. With the breakdown of the domestic family, "The state becomes the primary source of identity for an uprooted people." (p. 35)

The next logical step is to reaffirm the teaching of the Church on marriage as a natural institution. Marriage has three essential attributes: fruitfulness or being open to life, indissolubility, and exclusivity or monogamous. This natural institution was

1. Carle C. ZIMMERMAN, *Family and Civilization*, Washington DC, ISI Books, 2008.

2. The third type of family, on the far right, Zimmerman calls the treaty family, characterized by large clan-like structures that become a law unto themselves.

raised to the level of Sacrament by our Lord and it has been perfected through grace. "It is the sacrament that makes marriage possible, both personally and as the foundational social institution; is the sacrament, therefore, that makes sustainable human societies possible." (p. 43) Herein is the premise of the book. If family is the foundational cell of society and marriage is the key to a healthy family and is perfected through the Sacrament, then the conclusion is that we need the Sacrament of Marriage for the restoration of the social order. If we need the Sacrament of Marriage as a society, then we also need the Church that safeguards the Sacrament, to wit, the Holy Catholic Church.

The Church has given us social principles by which society is to be governed. We find this specifically in the principle of subsidiarity, wherein the State supports and promotes the family and where the family and State "perform the duties that are proper to them without encroaching on authorities above or below their own" (p. 82). Both the family and the State pursue the common good. The common good of the family is the common good of the State and vice-versa. They are inseparable.

Hahn moves from this point deeper into the topic of the common good and sex. Setting up the premises, he makes a solid syllogism:

1. The nature of the State is to pursue the common good.
2. The nature of sex uniquely pertains to the common good.

Conclusion: It is in the purview of the State to regulate sex (p. 94).

The law needs to facilitate the virtue of the individuals. Sexual sins, those that are anti-family, and those that tear apart the family, need to be discouraged and the freedom inherent in virtue needs to be celebrated.

Obviously, this type of talk raises the ire of the liberal left and yet Hahn doesn't back down. He continues to point out how a people driven by a lust for autonomy need a "radical centralization of power and authority" (p. 104). Why? Autonomy wants no limitations on choices, actions, self-identifications and so forth. No encumbrances, no obligations, and rights to be so. In doing so, we lose the common good as the personal goal of each individual and family and move towards living to fulfill one's own personal goals. To do this, to wit, to control our own lives, we need predictability. Predictability needs a strong, big, far-reaching government to control the disparaging opinions, to educate everyone in the exact same way, to dismantle difference and promote an egalitarian utopia where all is predictable.

This brings the argument back full circle to the Church. The Catholic Church teaches strongly against socialism and individualism because it knows the nature of mankind. Man is made for relationship. Man is made for woman and to be in a covenantal relationship. This covenantal relationship called marriage is Sacramental and is the key to restoring the social order of western society.

A Catholic society is ordered towards the common good, upholds the sacramentality of marriage which in turn reflects and points to God's covenant with man. Man's destiny is fulfilled in covenant with God. If the State is to be a place wherein a person finds her end, the State needs to be Sacramental. We need sacramental a society.

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