

PATERNITÀ

P. SEQUERI, *Editoriale*

SAGGI

E. VETÖ, *Divine Paternity and Human Paternity. Source without an Origin, Origin with a Source*

SUMMARY: To look towards the paternity of God the Father as the archetype of human fatherhood is more complex than one may imagine because of the infinite distance between the First Person of the Trinity and a human father. At a first level, because of its component of negative theology, the comparison sets into light the traits of human paternity that are precisely not found in the Eternal Father: a human father needs to be a son, a spouse, a member of the human fellowship, and needs to grow in his fatherhood. At a second level, the maternal and social dimensions of God show the way, albeit metaphorically, for an enrichment of human fatherhood. In the end, only generation and “adoption-election” are fully archetypal traits that divine paternity can offer human fatherhood. The ultimate paradox is that, fundamentally, conformation to Christ is what will allow the human father to enter into the right relationship with God the Father.

C. GRANADOS, *Abraham: la genesis de un padre*

SUMMARY: This article offers a biblical and narrative approach to the mystery of fatherhood, on the basis of the singular figure of Abraham. Every father, like Abraham, experiences the limits of his fatherhood and of the need for reference, therefore, to an Origin, to God “from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its name” (cfr. Eph 3:14-15). In Abraham we discover essential dimensions of paternity. The father does not emerge out of the solitude of the “one”, but from the communion generated by nuptiality. He becomes a father as a result of a “promise”. Paternity, though it may be driven by a legitimate, natural desire to perpetuate one’s posterity, is not ultimately explained thus; it does not consist of self-realization. It is born and develops in each person as a “vocation” that starts from a promise and presupposes a surrendering of one’s life. The mystery that “he who loses his life will find it” sums up perfectly the vocation to fatherhood. The father must learn to give his life. It is a dramatic surrender that takes the form of a cross and a painful sacrifice. There is no fruitfulness apart from this way of the cross. Abraham’s story is eloquent in this sense.

L. PEDROLI, “*Tu gli porrai nome*”. S. Giuseppe e la paternità

SUMMARY: The purpose of this study is to investigate the gospel texts that describe Joseph's role in relation to Jesus, in order to illuminate the authenticity and warmth that flower in this fatherly figure, who remains a valid and true exemplar. It is possible to intuit how Joseph's fatherhood assumes the dimension of service, of a true and proper ministry. Joseph's paternity – freely embraced and made an act of love, though it remains mysterious, silent, discrete and hidden – thus offers the best image of the Fatherhood of God. Furthermore, he constitutes an admirable example of what it means to be a father, and of how a man is called to relate in a mature and conscious way to his own fatherhood and to act in accordance with it.

I. SERRADA, *El padre: del fantasma al símbolo. La aportación de Paul Ricoeur*

SUMMARY: The thought of Paul Ricoeur is a suitable way to approach the question of paternity. The article therefore approaches this question on the basis of the paternal-filial life experience of the philosopher of Valence, which is marked from the beginning by his constant search for the deepest sense of reality. Through his dialogue with other authors, among whom Sigmund Freud is of particular interest, Ricoeur opens up a hermeneutic path that leads from the phantasm (as an illusion or mirage from which it would be necessary to free oneself in order to attain the reality) to paternity as a symbol. Therewith, it is possible to begin to decipher its relevance for each person, for their identity and their life. In his own words: “The father is much more than the father”. The hermeneutical path places us in the context of the desire of the human heart for fullness, in order to understand that this is not something unattainable, but is given in the relationship with the one who gives his life for us.

G. ANGELINI, *Evaporazione del padre e sfinimento della cultura*

SUMMARY: The disappearance of the figure of the father, an objective pursued by so much of modern “democratic” thought, has been a fact noted for a couple of decades with disappointment by psychologists and sociologists. The ambiguity of the phenomenon is already reflected in Mitscherlich's essay, Towards a Fatherless Society (1963), which oscillates between hope and denunciation. The hope is that of modern philosophers; the denunciation is that of psychologists and sociologists, who point out the difficulties arising from the absence of the father. The evaporation of the father figure results in difficulties in the child's growing up, and in loss of truthful value on the part of culture. The disappearance of the father is born from an anthropological and cultural change rather than from the hopes of Enlightenment philosophers. In order to understand the phenomenon, it is necessary to clarify the anthropological notion of culture and, at the same time, its essential importance for the building up of the human being. Today, these themes are handled by the new human sciences rather than by philosophy; but they are dealt with from a clinical perspective rather than a spiritual. In order for theology to make its contribution to an understanding of the elimination of the father figure and so to the solution offered, it is necessary to move from the

conventional theoretical model of a faculty-based anthropology to a drama-based anthropology. In this regard, the biblical tradition offers a decisive contribution.

P. SEQUERI, *Storia della paternità. Note critiche*

SUMMARY: Does paternity emerge as a binding figure in the family constitution on the basis of an archaic background of the free movement of sexual intimacy, in which mothers, bound by the burden of care, define the human “community”? Does the human father derive from the affirmation of the male as kidnapper of females and master of children, who becomes a good father, capable of uniting the human family, only when he is “dead”? This essay briefly reviews the deconstruction of the family archetype of generative alliance and community structure, from within the same cultural anthropology. On this basis, the perspective of a desirable theological and anthropological hermeneutic of the affective history of fatherhood and its present epochal juncture are outlined.

J. MCCARTHY, *Notes on Fatherhood*

SUMMARY: In the following essay, I venture some reflections on what it means, in particular, to be a “father”. The essay is in six parts. I begin with a comment about the way “father” and “mother” show up in human language, and what this signifies about the two. I then characterize, in very general terms, the defining task of a mother and father, which provides the proper measure of their work. It is sometimes said that the chief thing required of parents is that they love their children “unconditionally”, and in the third section I discuss this notion critically, although I also try to acknowledge what is true about it. I then describe the place and character of “teaching” in family life. In the fifth section, I discuss the mutual dependence of families and the political order. The essay concludes with a consideration of human fatherhood in light of the paternity of the first person of the Holy Trinity.

P.P. BELLINI, *Paternità, autorevolezza e autorità*

SUMMARY: Fatherhood is generation: like motherhood therefore, it forms a fundamental dimension of the subject’s self-fulfilment. What distinguishes this generativity from any other reproductive phenomenon is not simply the presence of certain feelings or affections between the agents: rather, it is the awareness that generativity means introducing, by continuous approximations, a new subject to the “meaning” of existence, and supporting this subject’s adventure in the fulfilment of this approximation. After decades of devastating manipulation in one direction and the other, the relational asymmetry (implicit in the very nature of the generative relationship) must today rediscover a socially effective place for itself, so that it can perform its proper, essential function. Generativity (which is not equateable to reproduction and which can also be expressed independently of this) must therefore be considered the climax of human relationships, their urgency most at risk.

S. GRYGIEL, *Casa paterna*

SUMMARY: After losing his relationship with the Father and, consequently, with the Father who creates him in His Son, modern man has lost himself in the “dark forest” of opinions that have severed his bond with his earthly father. He lives as if he were absolutely free, doing as he pleases; but in this absolute solitude he also loses his own identity and, consequently, his own dignity. He squanders them as the prodigal son squanders his father’s inheritance “in a faraway land”, where being free equates to being mercenary. The subsequent chaos and confusion become hell. Is there a way out? Is there any hope? Man can cease to be mercenary only by a rebirth in the Spirit and in the Truth. How can one be reborn? One is reborn in the love that spiritually unites man with another, whose presence constitutes an epiphany of the truth that originates with that Love that “moves the sun and the other stars”. Within man’s personal history, it is the father and the mother who constitute that essential event called love.

V. SIRET, *La paternité du prêtre*

SUMMARY: The concept and exercise of Fatherhood has undergone many upheavals for more than half a century. It is now necessary for priests to rediscover the desire to be fathers, even if it has at times been renounced by their contemporaries. The symbolic role of the priest is irreplaceable because he makes visible the invisible. The priest exercises his paternity in the tria munera. Firstly, he is the voice of the Church. Insofar as this is true, it presupposes a clear coherence in his life, and its expression extends even to martyrdom. Secondly, he is most obviously a father when he administers the sacraments, even though he must never forget that he remains a servant. The priest is finally a father when he watches over the growth of God’s people and opens them to the wider Church. From this perspective emerges a way of forming seminarians, which also implies the necessity of a certain osmosis between seminarians and their formators.

R. IAFRATE, *La figura paterna nelle relazioni familiari e sociali*

SUMMARY: The contribution starts from an analysis of the transformation of paternity in recent decades, underlining the current trend towards a tarnishing of paternal identity and its normative and emancipatory functions towards children. This does not mean an elimination of the differences between the paternal code and the maternal code, which continue to have specific and fundamental functions for the birth and development of the human being. The urge to recognize oneself in a father and a mother, or better, in that father and that mother who generated it, is therefore an elementary need of the human being and, going beyond the physical presence/absence of the two figures, remains an inviolable right of the child.

F. PESCI, *Generare ed educare: tra natura e cultura*

SUMMARY: Nowadays, the generative and educational function of the family is seriously called into question because of the claims, in post-modern societies and

cultures, that favour the introduction of forms of relationships alternative to the family form. Contemporary human sciences, on the other hand, have influenced the development of these attitudes and contributed to the growth of a relativistic vision of man and the family, which gives expression to the individualism and utilitarianism typical of both the human sciences and the “liquid” society and culture. Faced with these tendencies, the Catholic vision of the family, with its reference to nature and to the affirmation, even on the political ground, of natural law, has become the object of a strong attack and requires a consistent and effective defence by the faithful. The work of St. John Paul II is, in this context, a fundamental point of reference for all Christians in the contemporary world.

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J.J. PÉREZ-SOBA, *Quale criterio per discernere il bene possibile?*

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