

EDITORIAL

THE Holy Father's Encyclical Letter on Christian Marriage has been treated by the English secular press as a very minor piece of news. That is not surprising. It is not, of course, to be expected that the Pope's pronouncements would be regarded as coming from the Vicar of Christ by non-Catholics who do not profess to believe in his unique office and his right to a hearing as the mouthpiece of the eternal Truth. In his opening words, Pope Pius XI declares that he is speaking to the Church, and, through the Church, to the whole human race; because the widespread teaching of the new morality on marriage and family life is not merely something which concerns the Church and Catholics, but is a pernicious thing, which, if it should prevail, will ultimately lead to the break up of our civilization and the ruin of human society.

In the past the Christian tradition was accepted, even by those who rejected the Church's authority. Where marriage was not acknowledged as of divine origin and as having a sacramental sanction, it was at least considered a necessary foundation of any human community and as the sole guarantee of family life upon which our civilization stands. Now, everywhere there is a strong movement to sweep aside the old culture. It takes its extreme form in Russia, where marriage is recognised as only a temporary arrangement which can be terminated at the caprice of either party. What is being practised in Russia is being preached in England and America by such writers as Mr. Havelock Ellis and Mr. Bertrand Russell. 'Love and sex-life,' writes one of the advocates of the new morality, 'have been freed of the superstitions and silences which clouded, confused and bound them;

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marriage has been liberated from the religious and ceremonial rites in which it had once been bound; divorce has been converted into an intelligent device, disenslaved from duplicity and deceit and accessible to all. As a result, morality has been emancipated from the stereotyped stupidities of an enforced convention and an inelastic code.¹

Thus the Holy Father finds it necessary to state clearly and fully Christ's teaching on marriage with detailed reference to the particular errors which are being taught and practised to-day. Already the Catholic newspapers have given an English translation of the Letter in full; and it is the plain duty of every Catholic to possess a copy and carefully read it. For Catholics the Letter will be chiefly the reiteration of principles which they have already learned. The recapitulation of such truths is most necessary and opportune in view of the fact that the teachings of the new morality pervade the whole of modern life. The Press, the Wireless, the Cinema, novels, and literature are all full of this revolt against our Christian moral standards. We should do all we can to make the Pope's great Encyclical Letter more widely known, for (apart from eternal considerations) upon the acceptance of its teaching depends the very continuance of our culture and civilization.

¹ Mr. Calverton quoted in *Christianity and Sex* by Christopher Dawson, p. 7.