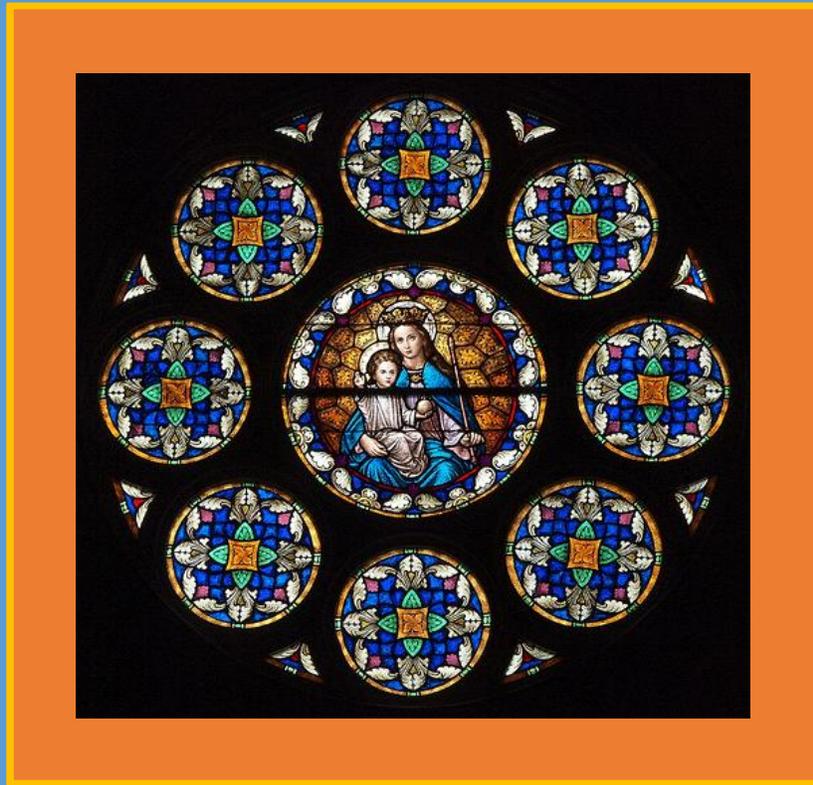


CATHOLIC SOCIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

BY MONSIGNOR LAWRENCE MORAN & RONALD J. ELDRED



Among the topics covered in this essay: The Biblical foundation and theology of social justice; Social doctrines and the natural law and personalist philosophy; Social doctrines of the Catholic Church; Catholic social encyclicals and other documents.

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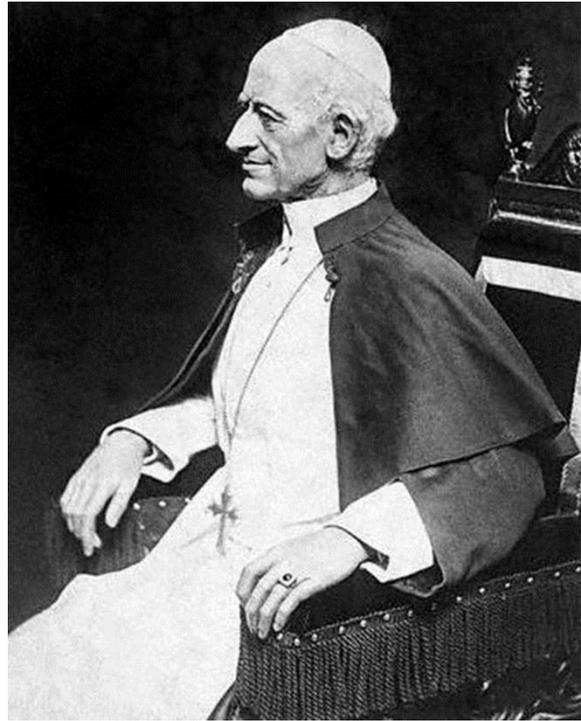
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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Introduction

Catholic social teaching ultimately derives from elements of Jewish law and the prophetic books of the Old Testament and especially from the teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament. Social doctrine is epitomized by Jesus' saying, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me (Matthew 25:40). Jesus is here referring to the "Works of Mercy", especially the "Corporal Works." The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that the Corporal Works of Mercy are "charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in bodily necessities" (No. 2447). They include: feeding the hungry; giving drink to the thirsty; clothing the naked; visiting the imprisoned; sheltering the homeless; visiting the sick; and burying the dead. History is replete with examples of the Catholic Church striving to carry out these activities for the love and glory of God and the love and benefit neighbor. The Church is noted for the fruitfulness of its charity, such as hospitals, orphanages, hospices, schools, and aid to the poor.

In this essay, we discuss the Foundational Principles of Catholic Social Teaching: human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and Caritas or love of God and neighbor. Then we examine the eight key themes of Catholic Social Teaching as out-lined by the U.S. Catholic Bishops that flow from the Foundational Principles of Catholic Social Teaching. These provide the theological reasons for Catholic Social Teaching, doctrines such as humans possessing inestimable worth and dignity, because they are created in God's image and likeness and redeemed by Jesus Christ. Following that, we discuss the Church and Economic Justice. Having completed *the* discussion of the theology underlying Catholic Social Teaching, we consider the philosophy that supports the theology. The two philosophies that have worked together with



Pope Leo XIII (March 2, 1810—July 20, 1903), born Count Vincenzo Gioacchino Raffaele Luigi Pecci, was the 256th Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, reigning from 1878 to 1903, succeeding Pope Pius IX. Reigning until the age of 93, he was the oldest pope, and had the third longest pontificate, behind John Paul II. He is known as the "Pope of the Working Man" and "The Social Pope". Although the Church's social teachings have existed from Jesus' time onward, we usually think of Catholic social doctrine as having been developed by several popes since the end of the nineteenth century on political, economic, and social matters related to poverty and wealth. It is almost universally accepted that the modern foundation of Catholic social teaching was laid by Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*. Several other popes wrote social encyclicals after him addressing the political and social issues of their times. Moreover, Vatican Council II and various Church organizations have released important documents on these matters as well. Taken all together these letters and documents comprise the social doctrines of the Catholic Church.

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Catholic moral theology to explain the reasons for Catholic Social Teaching are the natural law philosophy and Christian personalism, especially the Thomistic Personalism of Pope John Paul II. A discussion of these are essential to show the relationship between natural law and personalism as used by the popes in their social encyclicals and other documents.

Before launching into this discussion, I want to make a few comments about Catholic Social Justice teachings. I believe it was Ralph McInerny who said in his book on Vatican II that one of the deficiencies of the Church before the council was its failure to transmit its social doctrines to the membership. I interpret this to mean that politicians, businessmen, and the laity in general had not been taught their responsibilities to promote the common good. Before the council, the Church had done a much better job indoctrinating the laity in their personal moral responsibilities, but had largely neglected the social dimensions of their behavior. When Vatican II placed a renewed emphasis on the social dimensions of morality, the huge vacuum created before the council in social justice teaching was quickly filled up with the more radical social, political, and economic ideas of progressive or socialistically minded theologians, the most extreme being Marxist Liberation Theology. Every pope since then by various documents have attempted to set the record straight regarding what genuine Catholic social justice morality is about.

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Although the Church's social teachings have existed from Jesus' time onward, we usually think of Catholic social doctrine as having been developed by several popes since the end of the nineteenth century on political, economic, and social matters related to poverty and wealth. It is almost universally accepted that the modern foundation of Catholic social teaching was laid by Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*. Following him, several other popes wrote social encyclicals addressing the political and social issues of their times. Moreover, Vatican Council II and various Church organizations have released important documents on these matters as well. Taken all together these letters and documents comprise the social doctrines of the Catholic Church. Pope John Paul II, who wrote three social encyclicals himself, has stated that the foundation of Catholic social teaching "rests on the threefold cornerstones of human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity". Pope Benedict XVI added *Caritas* or love to this list.

Dignity of the Human Person

The cornerstone of Catholic social teaching is the dignity of the human person. One source has defined human dignity as "that dignity belonging exclusively to human beings and lasting throughout their natural life by which they are due respect for the moral integration of their person." Several popes have written eloquently on the subject of human dignity and social justice. For example, Pope John XXIII states in his 1963 social encyclical *Pacem in Terris* or *Peace on Earth* in English that "Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person, that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature" (No. 9). Pope John Paul II said in his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus* that "Human persons are willed by God; they are imprinted with God's image. Their dignity does not come from the work they do, but from the persons they are" (No. 52). And finally, Vatican Council II declared that "There is a growing awareness of the sublime dignity of human persons, who stand above all things and whose rights and duties are universal and inviolable. They ought, therefore, to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example, food, clothing, housing. . . . the right to education, and work ("The Church and the Modern World", Latin name *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 26). One theologian has said of the dignity of the human person, "The person is the clearest reflection of God among us."

Expressing the same sentiments that we have been considering, the U.S. Bishops declared in a document issued in 1983 entitled *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* that "The human person is the clearest reflection of God's presence in the world; all of the Church's work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God's creative work and the meaning of Christ's redemptive ministry . . . At the center of all Catholic social teaching are the transcendence of God and the dignity of the human person" (No.15). In a 1986 document entitled *Economic Justice for All*, the U.S. Bishops declare that "The basis for all that the Church

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believes about the moral dimensions of economic life is its vision of the transcendent worth—the sacredness—of human beings. The dignity of the human person, realized in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured. All human beings, therefore, are ends to be served by the institutions that make up the economy, not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined goals. Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious. When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred. For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God” (No. 28).

That humans are created in the very image of God is the heart of the matter. Humans possess inherent dignity and inestimable worth, because they are created in God’s very image and likeness; and secondly because God sent his only begotten son in to the world to become one of us and to suffer and die on the Cross for our sake. Regarding this matter, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead” (No. 357). Elsewhere it says “The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God; it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude. Human dignity belongs equally to all human beings. It is based upon the fact of the Redemption: that the Son of God took on human nature, became man in the person of Jesus, and by his life, death and resurrection redeemed man and opened up the possibility for salvation” (No. 1700). And finally elsewhere the *Catechism* states, “Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all men have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity” (No. 1934).

Human dignity is not to be understood as simply a matter of individuality, but has traditionally been understood in the context of community, especially of the family. This is an extremely important matter. The Book of Genesis states “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2, 18). One scholar has said of this verse, “There is the insistence that the person is meant to be in relationship, and so the reason humans are created as male and female is precisely so that they be driven to seek each other. Humanity is meant for companionship.” He goes on to say, “In the earlier creation account of the first chapter we read: ‘And so God created the human being in God’s image; in the divine image did God create the human being, male and female did God create them’ (Genesis 1:27). Now the point is not that to be in the divine image means to have gender. God is neither male nor female; God is relational. For the Hebrew writer God is the God who creates in order to enter into covenant with the creature. God is relational and to be in the image and likeness of such a God means that humanity is meant to be in relationship. We are our true selves when we are in relationship not as isolated beings.” He concludes, “Therefore, when [Catholic Social Teaching] affirms the dignity of the person this is not a reading of the person as an isolated individual. Rather, the communitarian emphasis of [Catholic Social Teaching] situates human dignity within a dense web of relationships. Human beings are most fully alive, most truly in touch with the dignity of their nature,

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when they are able to acknowledge the profound links existing between themselves and God, other persons and the rest of creation.” The Scholastics, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, developed this idea in their Realist philosophy and all of the popes since Vatican II, especially John Paul II and Benedict XVI, have stressed this idea from a more personalist point of view.

To fully understand the reasons we should love our neighbors and care for their physical, mental, emotional, and above all their spiritual well-being, one needs to understand the doctrines of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and Redemption, and Sanctifying Grace. We have examined these doctrines in some detail in at least two of our series for Catholic radio posted on this website and in our essay *Catechism*. The Church’s social doctrines are based on these doctrines.

In summary, all humans possess inherent dignity and inestimable worth, because they are created in the very image of God and because he loves them so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to suffer and die in order to save them. By becoming one of us himself, the son of God the Father, Jesus Christ, made it possible for our human nature to be elevated to the supernatural level by adoption and by grace and to pave the way to eternal life in Heaven with the Trinitarian Family and the holy saints and angels.

True love of neighbor means giving up ones time, talent, treasure, and freedom for the sake of the loved ones, which is expressed in the two commandments of love found in the Ten Commandments: to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matthew 22:37), and to love our neighbor as ourselves, or even better yet, as he has loved us (John 13:34). St. John says in a letter: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us” (1 John 4:11-12). This applies to all human beings. God has a special love for us all, because he created each of us in his own image and likeness, and when we fell from his grace, he continued to love us so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to redeem and save us. All of the Church’s social teachings flow from these two facts. In the final analysis, we will be judged by how much we love our neighbors and how much we have promoted their well-being.

Solidarity

The second foundational principle of Catholic Social Teaching is solidarity. One source maintains that, “solidarity, which flows from faith, is fundamental to the Christian view of social and political organization. Each person is connected to and dependent on all humanity, collectively and individually.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to it as “social charity” (No. 1939). A Catholic Office for Social Justice document states that, “[Solidarity] is a modern term that can make older claims about an organic society and natural sociality understandable to a contemporary audience. Solidarity is more than what is commonly meant by the word interdependence. The fact that we are linked to one another in a variety of ways is interdependence. But individuals may acknowledge this fact while being resentful or indifferent toward it, even as they take advantage of the others with whom they are interconnected. Interdependence does not rule out domination or exploitation.” The document goes on to say that, “Solidarity, on the other hand,

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moves interdependence to another level, beyond acknowledging the fact of interdependence. Solidarity shapes the response we should have to interdependence, evoking within us a desire to build the bonds of common life. As a virtue, solidarity, in the words of John Paul II, is not “a feeling of vague compassion but a ‘firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good’” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, No. 38). The document continues, “Solidarity shapes the character of a person so that mere recognition of interdependence is transformed into a commitment to the common good. It is solidarity that enables people to devote themselves “to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all” (Ibid.).

The Common Good: A concept crucial to understanding the meaning of solidarity is the “common good.” This a term that one scholar states can refer to several different concepts. The “common good” has been defined as, “the quintessential goal of the State, [that]requires an admission of the individual's basic right in society, which is, namely, the right of everyone to the opportunity to freely shape his life by responsible action, in pursuit of virtue and in accordance with the moral law. The common good, then, is the sum total of the conditions of social life which enable people the more easily and straightforwardly to do so.” Pope John XXIII described the common good as “the sum total of conditions of social living, whereby persons are enabled more fully and readily to achieve their own perfection” (*Mater et Magistra*, No. 65). One source says of the common good: “While the dignity of the human person is affirmed, individuals live in common with others and the rights of individuals must be balanced with the wider common good of all. The rights and needs of others must be always respected. In the popular meaning, the common good describes a specific ‘good’ that is shared and beneficial for all (or most) members of a given community.” Fr. John Hardon in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* defines the common good as “The benefit of the community. It is the welfare of the whole community, as the proper object of a just law, and is distinguished from individual good, which looks only to the good of a single person.”

The idea of the common good suggests, then, that each person’s well-being is connected to the good of others. This means in the words of one scholar:

[H]uman beings only truly flourish in the context of a community. Our well-being is experienced amidst a setting in which other persons also flourish. From this perspective we can say two things: Each of us has an obligation to contribute to the common good so that human life can flourish and no description of the common good can exclude concern for an individual, writing off some person or group as unworthy of our interest. That is why human rights claims have become an important dimension of the common good in [Catholic Social Teaching CST], no one should be denied the basic goods needed to join in the life of the community. The centrality of the common good in CST reflects the communitarian outlook of the tradition and a commitment to serve the common good is a means whereby the dignity of each person is given its due.

He adds, “The human person is both sacred and social. We realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others, in community. Human beings grow and achieve fulfillment in community. Human dignity can only be realized and protected in the context of relationships with the wider society.” He concludes by saying, “How we organize our society—in economics and politics,

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in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The obligation to ‘love our neighbor’ has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social commitment. Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society, to the common good.”

Pope John Paul II on Solidarity: Pope John Paul II had a lot to say about solidarity. In fact, he had more to say about solidarity than anyone else of whom we know. He said in one of his three social encyclicals *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, that “Solidarity helps us to see the ‘other’—whether a person, people or nation—not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our ‘neighbor’, a ‘helper’ to be made a sharer on a par with ourselves in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God.” He goes on in this section to say, “Interdependence must be transformed into solidarity, grounded on the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all. Avoiding every type of imperialism, the stronger nations must feel responsible for the other nations, based on the equality of all peoples and with respect for the differences” (No. 39). Elsewhere in the encyclical he tells us that “Solidarity is a Christian virtue. It seeks to go beyond itself to total gratuity, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It leads to a new vision of the unity of humankind, a reflection of God's triune intimate life” (No.40).

Subsidiarity

The third of the four Foundational Principles of Catholic Social Teaching is subsidiarity. The principle of subsidiarity, a core principle of Catholic social teaching, states that human affairs should be handled by the lowest and least centralized level of authority possible. Perhaps it was Pope Pius XI in his 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* that first recognized the principle of subsidiarity on the official level of the Church, holding that “higher levels of authority should act only when lower levels cannot deal with a problem.” He states that “It is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and a disturbance of right order to transfer to the larger and higher collectivity functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies.” He further states that “It is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry.”

The *Catechism* states that “The teaching of the Church has elaborated the principle of subsidiarity, according to which a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good” (No. 1883).

Subsidiarity recognizes that society is based on organizations or communities of people ranging from small groups or families right through to national and international institutions. The principle is that economic and social problems should be solved at more local levels first. The first level of responsibility is the family. To the extent it can't solve problems, then the neighborhood,

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parish, association, or other local unit should attempt to solve them. To the extent they fail, then and only then, should county or city levels of organization attempt to solve economic and social problems. The state and national levels of organization should attempt to resolve economic and social problems only as a last resort. Regarding the different levels of participation in the subsidiarity process, the Archdiocese of Minneapolis-St. Paul document *Major Themes in Catholic Social Teaching* states, “the person in need looks to the family for help; if the family is in need one looks to the neighborhood or local community; if it is the town in need one looks to the county; if the county requires assistance one looks to the state; and if the state cannot meet the need one turns to the national government. Thus, recourse for assistance should not automatically be to the national government but there is no opposition to such recourse if circumstances require it.”

Going back to Pope Pius XI’s encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, he recognized the principle of subsidiarity, which held that higher levels of authority should act only when lower levels cannot deal with a problem. This principle recognizes that society is based on organizations or communities of people ranging from small groups or families right through to national and international institutions. As a rule of social organization, subsidiarity affirms the right of individuals and social groups to make their own decisions and accomplish what they can by their own initiative and industry. A higher level community should not interfere in the life of a community at a lower level of social organization unless it is to support and enable.

Pope John Paul II criticized the welfare state, which he called the “social assistance state” as a violation of the principle of subsidiarity. He states in his social encyclical *Centesimus Annus*:

By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the social assistance state leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending. In fact, it would appear that needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbors to those in need.

Fr. Robert A. Sirico, who is President of the Action Institute, says in his article “Religion and the Welfare State” that “Two lines of reasoning emerge in this religious defense of the welfare state, both of which are seriously flawed. The first assertion contends that the moral integrity of a society is determined by the use of a state’s taxing and transfer apparatus to tend to the needs of the economically marginalized. The second contention is a utilitarian one and sees such governmental transfers as actually effective in ameliorating poverty and minimizing crime.” He contends that:

The problem with the first argument is that it presents a confused notion of morality. The moral status of those from whom Robin Hood stole could not be said to have been elevated by the fact that their money went to help the poor, assuming it really did end up helping them. For whatever noble end one may hope to achieve with the forced sharing of wealth, morality cannot be one of them. Forced morality is no morality because free choice is a necessary precondition for virtue. Additionally, “society” is an abstraction which cannot be said to be moral, except in relation to the actions of the individuals within it. This confused

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vision of morality has resulted in the disintegration of charity into an entitlement and the collapse of justice into love. If all relations are based merely on justice, what becomes of love?

He continues by saying, “Perhaps the saddest thing in all this is that not only does such a system fail to achieve its moral goal; it also fails to achieve its practical goal: Just about everyone admits the massive welfare state doesn’t work— except perhaps a few ill tutored theologians.” He says:

Charles Murray, among others, has shown that welfare programs often end up being a remedy more deadly than the malady by creating the very situations they profess to cure. The simple reason for this was identified by the insightful economist Walter Williams, who said, “What you subsidize (poverty) you get more of; what you penalize (prosperity), you get less of.” Nor has the welfare state reduced crime, because crime is not primarily rooted in economic causes. It is rooted in moral causes.

Fr. Sirico follows with listing several frequently overlooked moral and practical disadvantages to an expansive welfare state:

- Promoting the government as the resource of first resort lessens the incentive of people to become personally involved in needed projects, thus lessening their contact with and sensitivity to the poor.
- The state rarely, if ever, discerns the deepest human needs which often underlie the cause of economic poverty, nor could it address them if it could discern them.
- The burgeoning welfare state hinders the church from fulfilling an essential part of its mission as servant to the world, relegating the church to the role of lobbyist.
- To the extent that the church functions as a lobbyist, rather than clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and performing the other traditional acts of charity itself, the church loses a rich source of its own spiritual nourishment.
- By secularizing social assistance systems (schools, hospitals, orphanages, health clinics, etc.), the moral influence of religious mediating institutions, critical in helping stabilize troubled families, is muted.
- The ever-widening tax base required to finance the welfare state expands the political sphere and further marginalizes the poor by creating disincentives for them to become full participants in the productive (i.e., private) economy.
- This tax burden also restrains the productive sector and discourages economic progress, which is an essential precondition for the amelioration of poverty.
- This enlarged political sphere also seeks to finance itself by the political manipulation of the currency resulting in inflation which negatively impacts everyone, but most especially the poor and those on fixed incomes.

In response to these problems, he claims that there is a slowly dawning awareness of both the moral and practical inferiority of the welfare state within religious circles. For example, he cites Pope John Paul’s comments regarding the matter. He quotes the Pope as saying in *Centesimus Annus*:

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Malfunctions and defects in the Social Assistance State are the result of an inadequate understanding of the tasks proper to the State. Here again the principle of subsidiarity must be respected: a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good. By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the Social Assistance State leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending. In fact, it would appear that needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbors to those in need. It should be added that certain kinds of demands often call for a response which is not simple material but which is capable of perceiving the deeper human need.

Fr. Sirico asserts that these “deeper human needs” can only be addressed in the concrete. To prove his point, he describes the work of Sister Connie Driscoll, a Missionary Sister of the Poor, who operates two shelters for women and children in one of Chicago’s roughest neighborhoods. Over the past eight years one of her shelters has served more than 6,000 women with only 6.5 percent of them returning to the shelter system once she gets through with them, and she does this without accepting federal or state support. He cites the overall recidivism rate in Chicago as 38.9 per cent. Sr. Connie told *Reason* magazine. “I think the public welfare system does everyone a disservice—the people who are paying for it and the people who are using it— because it really does lock people into poverty.” Father reminds us that:

Hospitals, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and a plethora of other effective charitable institutions first emerged from religious inspiration and have been a traditional feature of religious bodies for centuries. The kind of sentiments that produce these types of activities necessitate personal involvement on the part of faith communities and enable them to accomplish what the welfare state is simply incapable of accomplishing. The time has come for religious leaders to abandon their advocacy of more and more government programs and resume their rightful position as the primary ministers of the welfare of the poor.

Subsidiarity and the Family: In accord with the principle of subsidiarity, Pope John Paul II stressed in his social encyclical *Centesimus Annus* the importance of the family and other intermediate communities. He states:

In order to overcome today's widespread individualistic mentality, what is required is a concrete commitment to solidarity and charity, beginning in the family with the mutual support of husband and wife and the care which the different generations give to one another. In this sense the family too can be called a community of work and solidarity. It can happen, however, that when a family does decide to live up fully to its vocation, it finds itself without the necessary support from the state and without sufficient resources. It is urgent therefore to promote not only family policies, but also those social policies which have the family as their principal object, policies which assist the family by providing adequate resources and efficient means of support both for bringing up children and for looking after the elderly so as to avoid distancing the latter from the family unit and in

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order to strengthen relations between generations. Apart from the family, other intermediate communities exercise primary functions and give life to specific networks of solidarity. These develop as real communities of persons and strengthen the social fabric, preventing society from becoming an anonymous and impersonal mass as unfortunately often happens today. It is in interrelationships on many levels that a person lives and that society becomes more “personalized.” The individual today is often suffocated between two poles represented by the state and the marketplace. At times it seems as though he exists only as a producer and consumer of goods or as an object of state administration. People lose sight of the fact that life in society has neither the market nor the state as its final purpose, since life itself has a unique value which the state and the market must serve.

Pope Benedict XVI makes reference to subsidiarity in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. The Pope explains that “[Subsidiarity] is the most effective antidote against any form of all-encompassing welfare state” and is “particularly well-suited to managing globalisation and directing it towards authentic human development.” On the same topic, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “Excessive intervention by the state can threaten personal freedom and initiative. The teaching of the Church has elaborated the principle of subsidiarity, according to which ‘a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good” (No. 1883). In addition, the *Catechism* says that “God has not willed to reserve to himself all exercise of power. He entrusts to every creature the functions it is capable of performing, according to the capacities of its own nature. This mode of governance ought to be followed in social life. The way God acts in governing the world, which bears witness to such great regard for human freedom, should inspire the wisdom of those who govern human communities. They should behave as ministers of divine providence” (No. 1884). To conclude, the *Catechism* says, “The principle of subsidiarity is opposed to all forms of collectivism. It sets limits for state intervention. It aims at harmonizing the relationships between individuals and societies. It tends toward the establishment of true international order” (No. 1885).

The Role of the State in Solving Human Problems: All of this being said, what should be the role of the state in solving human problems? The role of the state should be to serve and protect the common good. In this regard, Pope Pius XII said, “the state, then, has a noble function; that of reviewing, restraining, encouraging all those private initiatives of the citizen which go to make up national life and so directing them to a common end” (Address to Eighth International Congress of Administrative Sciences, August 5, 1951). Pope John XXIII said regarding the role of the state in solving the needs of its citizens that “the whole reason for the existence of civil authorities is the realization of the common good” (*Pacem in Terris*, No. 54). According to the document *Major Themes in Catholic Social Teaching*, “Subsidiarity reflects CST’s opposition to the reduction of human association outside the family to just one form. Subsidiarity prevents any sort of collectivist or totalitarian outlook that permits the state to dominate all other forms of communal life. It is a norm that warns against any state assuming too great a role in public life, but it also warns a state not to fail in fulfilling its duties to promote the common good.”

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Summary of Subsidiarity: Before we go on to our next topic, we will sum up the concept of subsidiarity, especially in light that it is one of the basic fundamentals of Catholic social teaching. I recently read a very insightful article entitled “Surprised by Subsidiarity” by Dr. Jeffrey Miris. He co-founded Christendom Catholic College, has authored and published numerous scholarly books and articles, pioneered Catholic Internet services, founded a non-profit corporation called Catholic Culture to advance the Catholic Faith through education and the media, and established Trinity Consulting, Inc, which is an advanced computer consulting enterprise to help other companies be successful. He summarizes Catholic social teaching by saying:

First, our concern for the poor and marginalized must be motivated by love for the whole person as a child of God. Second, it follows that authentic human development must be directed toward the whole person in every dimension. Consequently, the potential for such development is greatest when it is planned and directed in a local community setting, among those who know the nature and causes of the problems in question and can act most effectively to craft personalized solutions that will actually work In the social order, everything should be done at the lowest possible level. Higher levels of social organization are certainly required to achieve some goals, but insofar as higher levels are brought into any issue, their first priority must be to determine whether that issue can be handled more locally and, if so, to provide whatever assistance may be reasonable to effect that result. Thus each level of social organization retains its own proper sphere of action, each level can be assisted by higher levels to maximize effectiveness, but each level will yield authority to a higher level only in those areas which, by their nature, cannot be effectively addressed more locally.”

Miris contrasts subsidiarity with massive bureaucratized government programs by saying bureaucracies’ “must frequently [implement programs] with little knowledge of conditions ‘on the ground’, little awareness of the distinctive needs of the real persons involved, little appreciation for the spiritual dimension of man (what we might otherwise refer to as his heart or his dignity), and little concern for long-term success—not to mention problems occasioned by constant politicization, partisan struggles, and the quest for legislative or bureaucratic power and influence.”

Miris concludes by quoting Pope Benedict as saying in *Caritas in Veritate* that “integral human development is primarily a vocation, and therefore it involves a free assumption of responsibility in solidarity on the part of everyone”, which, in Miris’ words “strongly implies that problems of development can be effectively addressed only in the context of mutual interdependence among those who know and care for each other more intimately than does the law; and this requires active participation in realistic solutions worked out at the local level.” Miris goes on to say, “As a matter of authentic human development, subsidiarity is vital because, first, it ensures that each person becomes involved in making decisions about what affects him most and, second, it ensures that development is carried on in an interrelated community, based on real knowledge and concern. He closes by quoting Pope Benedict again where he writes, “It is very important to move ahead with projects based on subsidiarity, suitably planned and managed, aimed at affirming rights yet also providing for the assumption of corresponding responsibilities.”

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Caritas (Charity)

This brings us to the last of the Four Foundational Principles of Catholic Social Teaching, which is *Caritas*, the Latin word for charity. Doing something out of a motive of charity is doing it for the love of God and neighbor. Pope Benedict XVI declares in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* that “[C]harity is at the heart of the Church's *social doctrine*’. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36- 40). It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbour; it is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones).” The Pope said in a message delivered on the occasion of the World Day of Peace in January 1, 2009:

[T]he Church has chosen the concept of “charity in truth” to avoid a “degenerat[ion] into sentimentality [in which] [l]ove becomes an empty shell, to be filled in an arbitrary way. In a culture without truth, this is the fatal risk facing love. It falls prey to contingent subjective emotions and opinions, the word “love” is abused and distorted, to the point where it comes to mean the opposite. Truth frees charity from the constraints of an emotionalism that deprives it of relational and social content, and of a fideism that deprives it of human and universal breathing-space. In the truth, charity reflects the personal yet public dimension of faith in the God of the Bible, who is both Agápe and Lógos: Charity and Truth, Love and Word.

Professor Charles Rice says in his *50 Questions on the Natural Law: What It Is and Why We Need It* that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with the approval of Pope John Paul II, said:

[T]he great commandment of love is ‘the supreme principle of Christian social morality’. The supreme commandment of love leads to the full recognition of the dignity of each individual created in God's image. From this dignity flow natural rights and duties. In the light of the image of God, freedom, which is the essential prerogative of the human person, is manifested in all its depth. Persons are the active and responsible sub-jects of social life. Intimately linked to the foundation, which is man's dignity, are the principle of solidarity' and the principle of subsidiarity. By virtue of the first, man with his brothers is obliged to contribute to the common good of society at all its levels. Hence, the Church's doctrine is opposed to all the forms of social or political individualism. By virtue of the second, neither the state nor any society must ever substitute for the initiative and responsibility of individuals and of intermediate communities at the level on which they can function, nor must they take away the room necessary for their freedom. Hence, the Church's social doctrine is opposed to all the forms of collectivism.

This completes our discussion of the Four Foundational Principles of Catholic Social Teaching: human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and charity. Next we will consider the seven key themes of Catholic social teaching.

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THE EIGHT KEY THEMES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has identified seven key themes of Catholic Social Teaching in a document entitled *Justice, Peace and Human Development*. These seven key themes, no doubt, flow from the Foundational Principles of Catholic Social Teaching. We'll add an eighth to this list. The first one is:

- 1. Sanctity of human life and dignity of the person:** In this regard the document states, “The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.”

Pope John Paul II never tired of defending the inviolability of human life and dignity, especially in his encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, (Latin for “The Gospel of Life”). The Church is opposed to any act that attacks the sanctity of human life, including “abortion, euthanasia, genocide, torture, the direct and intentional targeting of noncombatants in war, and every deliberate taking of innocent human life.” Vatican Council II reaffirmed the Church’s long standing principle of the sacredness of human life in its “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World”, *Gaudium et Spes* (Latin for “Joy and Hope”) where it states, “from the moment of its conception life must be guarded with the greatest care.” The Church is not necessarily opposed to war as long as the conditions for a “just” war are satisfied. The conditions that must be satisfied in order for a war to be considered a just one are as follows:

- That at war shall be undertaken by the lawful authority;
- it shall be undertaken for the vindication of an undoubted and proportionate right that has been certainly infringed;
- it shall be a last resort, all peaceful means of settlement having been tried in vain;
- the good to be achieved shall outweigh the evils that war will involve;
- there shall be a reasonable hope of victory for justice (a war undertaken in face of certain failure is, however heroic, irrational and therefore indefensible);
- there must be a right intention, that is, to right the wrong and not simply to maintain national prestige and influence or to enlarge territory, (territory is not a just cause of war), nor may war be waged as part of a scheme for converting others to Christianity;
- and the methods of warfare must be legitimate, i.e., in accordance with inter-

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national agreements, with our nature as rational beings and with the moral teaching of Christianity.

It is very difficult, of course, to ascertain when all of these conditions have been satisfied in any given situation. There is obviously a great room for much uncertainty and disagreement in any particular instance about the fulfillment or lack of fulfillment of these conditions. Some have argued that contemporary conditions make it impossible for all of the conditions to be satisfied in any given situation. Nonetheless, moral theologians have generally held that those who intend to take active part in a war that has already broken out must first be morally certain of its justness. Every pope of the past century has given numerous warnings against nations going to war and disarmament and the prevention of war has been among the first of their aims.

According to the U.S. Catholic Bishops the Church teaches in regard to the dignity of life “to oppose torture, unjust war, and the use of the death penalty; to prevent genocide and attacks against noncombatants; to oppose racism; and to overcome poverty and suffering. Nations are called to protect the right to life by seeking effective ways to combat evil and terror without resorting to armed conflicts except as a last resort, always seeking first to resolve disputes by peaceful means. We revere the lives of children in the womb, the lives of persons dying in war and from starvation, and indeed the lives of all human beings as children of God.”

Catholic social teaching “promotes peace as a positive, action-oriented concept.” In the words of Pope John Paul II, “Peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements.” There is a close relationship in Catholic teaching between peace and justice. It has been said that, “Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among human beings.” Pope Paul VI declared that “If you want peace, work for justice.”

- 2. Call to family, community, and participation:** The second of the Seven Key Themes of Catholic Social Justice Teaching as outlined by the U. S. Bishops is the “Call to family, community, and participation” states the book of Genesis tells us, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” The Church teaches that humans are not only sacred beings, but also social beings. Moreover, it tells us what any good social scientist would tell us; that families are the most basic cells or units of a society. Individual humans would not be fully human without being socialized in the family unit. As one scholar states, “Full human development takes place in relationship with others.” The Church teaches that the family is based on marriage between a man and a woman. It is “the first and fundamental unit of society and is a sanctuary for the creation and nurturing of children. The USCCB states in its document *Justice, Peace and Human Development* that, “Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined.” Together individual families form larger communities from neighborhood, to city, to state, to nation, and reaching out to the entire world community of nation states. All human beings across the entire world are part of the human family. In this regard, the bishops

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state, “How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.” Each institution should be judged by how well it promotes or diminishes the life and dignity of human persons. Much more will be said about the family below in this essay.

- 3. Rights and responsibilities:** The USCCB states in its document *Justice, Peace and Human Development*, “The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.” The document *Major Themes in Catholic Social Teaching* of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis-St. Paul states, “Human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency—starting with food, shelter and clothing, employment, health care, and education. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.”

This means not only that every person has a fundamental right to life and to the necessities of life, but also “the right to what is required to live a full and decent life, things such as employment, health care, and education.” It also means that, “The right to exercise religious freedom publicly and privately by individuals and institutions along with freedom of conscience need to be constantly defended. In a fundamental way, the right to free expression of religious beliefs protects all other rights.” Moreover, “The Church supports private property and teaches that “every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own.” (Leo XVIII, *Rerum Novarum*, No. 6). The right to private property is not absolute, however, and is limited by the concept of the social mortgage. (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* No. 42). The Church teaches that “It is theoretically moral and just for its members to destroy property used in an evil way by others, or for the state to redistribute wealth from those who have unjustly hoarded it” (“The Busy Christian's Guide to Social Teaching”).

- 4. Preferential Option for the poor and vulnerable:** That brings us to of the fourth of the Seven Key Themes of Catholic Social Justice Teaching, the Preferential Option for the poor and vulnerable as outlined by the U. S. Bishops. The USCCB explains that “A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.” Jesus taught that on the Day of Judgement God will ask each of us what did we do to help the least of our brothers and sisters (Matthew 25:40). The *Code of Canon law* states in this regard, “[The Christian faithful] are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of

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the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor from their own resources” (Canon 222, No. 2). The Archdiocese of Minneapolis-St. Paul states in its document *Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching* that “The option for the poor is an essential part of society's effort to achieve the common good. A healthy community can be achieved only if its members give special attention to those with special needs, to those who are poor and on the margins of society.” The document says elsewhere, “Through our words, prayers and deeds we must show solidarity with, and compassion for, the poor. When instituting public policy we must always keep the ‘preferential option for the poor’ at the forefront of our minds. The moral test of any society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. We are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor.” Pope Benedict XVI has taught that, “love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel” (*Deus Caritas Est*, No. 22). This preferential option for the poor and vulnerable includes all people who are “marginalized” in our nation and in other nations, including “unborn children, persons with disabilities, the elderly and terminally ill, and victims of injustice and oppression.”

To show how important the preferential option for the poor is to God, when the Israelites repeatedly broke their covenant with God by breaking the Commandments, he was most incensed with the kings and people for neglecting the plight of the poor, widows, and orphans. God sent several prophets to Israel over several hundred years, such as Elijah, Elisius, and Isaiah, to warn them that they had broken their covenant with him, and foretold what would happen to them if they failed to repent, but they seldom ever listened. So God severely punished them by sending plagues, famines, and conquering armies at various times. This fulfilled the theme of the Book of Deuteronomy that as long as the Israelites obeyed God’s commandments they would be rewarded, but when they broke them they would be punished.

God’s plan of love for humanity is first found in the Old Testament, the covenant he made with the Israelites. In this regard, the Book of Deuteronomy commands: “If one of your kindred is in need in any community in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand against your kin who is in need. Instead, you shall freely open your hand and generously lend what suffices to meet that need” (! 5:7-8). The old covenant required only that Israelites be generous to other Israelites. Jesus extends the command to include all human beings as kindred in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). However, even under the old law Israelites were to have respect for outsiders: Regarding this matter, the Book of Leviticus states: “When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God” (Leviticus 19:33-34). This command must not have been universally practiced by the Jews of Jesus’ time, otherwise he wouldn’t have had to utter the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

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Pope John Paul II noted in his social encyclical *Centesimus annus* that the Church's “preferential option for the poor . . . is never exclusive or discriminatory toward other groups. This option is not limited to material poverty, since it is well known that there are many other forms of poverty, especially in modern society—not only economic, but cultural and spiritual poverty as well.” He said, “The Church has no models to present; models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems in all their social, economic, political and cultural aspects as these interact with one another. For such a task the Church offers her social teaching as an indispensable and ideal orientation, a teaching which, as already mentioned, recognizes the positive value of the market and of enterprise, but which at the same time points out that these need to be oriented toward the common good.”

- 5. Dignity of work and the rights of workers:** The U.S. bishops state in *Justice, Peace and Human Development* regarding the dignity of work and the rights of workers that, “The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.”

Pope Leo XIII said in his 1891 seminal social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* regarding the dignity of work and the rights of workers that employers were “not to look upon their work people as their bondsmen, but to respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character.” We are reminded that, “according to natural reason and Christian philosophy, working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honorable livelihood; but to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers—that is truly shameful and inhuman. Again justice demands that, in dealing with the working man, religion and the good of his soul must be kept in mind.” Further in the document the pope asserts, “workers have a right to work, to earn a living wage, and to form trade unions to protect their interests.”

In this regard, the Office for Social Justice of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis states in “Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching” that, “All workers have a right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, and to safe working conditions. Workers also have responsibilities—to provide a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay, to treat employers and co-workers with respect, and to carry out their work in ways that contribute to the common good. Workers must ‘fully and faithfully’ perform the work they have agreed to do.”

- 6. Solidarity:** In regard to solidarity, the U.S. Bishops state “We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global

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dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that ‘if you want peace, work for justice.’ The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.”

As we discussed the four foundational principles of Catholic social teaching, Pope John Paul II had a lot to say about solidarity. He wrote in his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, “Solidarity is undoubtedly a Christian virtue. It seeks to go beyond itself to total gratuity, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It leads to a new vision of the unity of humankind, a reflection of God’s triune intimate life” This unity of the human race is what binds us together. All of the popes in their social encyclicals have insisted that everyone in the world belongs to the human family and that we must be our brother’s keeper even though we might “be separated by distance, language or culture.” Jesus teaches us that we must love our neighbors as we love ourselves, and in his parable of the “Good Samaritan” he tells us that we should be compassionate to everyone, even our enemies. One source says that “Solidarity includes the Scriptural call to welcome the stranger among us—including immigrants seeking work, a safe home, education for their children and a decent life for their families.”

- 7. Care for God's creation:** This brings us to the seventh theme of the U. S. Bishops, “Care for God’s Creation.” The Bishops of the U.S. remind us that “We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.”

The Office for Social Justice of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis states in *Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching* regarding the stewardship of creation that, “The world’s goods are available for humanity to use only under a ‘social mortgage’ which carries with it the responsibility to protect the environment. The ‘goods of the earth’ are gifts from God, and they are intended by God for the benefit of everyone. The Book of Genesis tells us that “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our like-ness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’”(Genesis 1: 26). God did not tell us to exploit the earth, but to use its fruits for the benefit of all peoples. We are to be the “good stewards” of all the gifts that God has given us (Matthew 25:14-30).

Humans are Co-creators with God

God not only created humans in his image and likeness, but he also made them co-creators with him. The Book of Genesis states that “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God

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said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food' (Genesis 1:24-30). Then "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). These passages tell how God made humans stewards of the earth and co-creators with him. A steward is "one who manages another's property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others." He holds their property in trust; he doesn't own it. We are stewards of God's property, his creation, and we will be rewarded, in part, on how well we take care of it (See the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30).

One scholar has said of co-creation, "In the twentieth century, a line of reasoning that might be called creational has emphasized work as co-creation, that is, it is through work that human beings both shape and build the world. In doing so they fulfill the mandate of Genesis where Yahweh calls humankind to serve as a faithful steward of God's creation. At another level work is also the means whereby persons develop themselves. So also in this way men and women participate in God's ongoing creative activity fashioning both the world about them and themselves. It is in this way that we can speak of ourselves as co-creators; acting in concert with God's grace, humanity exercises a creative role in the historical development of ourselves, our society, our world." He goes on to say:

The spirituality of co-creation should not ignore the penitential and eschatological aspects but it highlights two other dimensions of a Christian understanding of work. Through our freedom and self-awareness, God has invited us into a unique relationship that allows us to see our work as more than just meeting our own needs. Humanity's role in the plan of creation is to co-operate with the Creator in fashioning a created order that reflects the grandeur and purpose of God. Second, our work, whatever it is, has the element of a personal calling, a vocation. We ought to discern, develop and direct our personal talents and gifts so that the work we do becomes both a response to God's call and a means of following Christ. For men and women to be good workers is as much a way of discipleship as being a good spouse, parent or friend. {*Responses to 101 Questions on Catholic Social Teaching* by Kenneth R. Himes O.F.M.}

The *Catechism* says regarding co-creation:

Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another. Hence work is a duty: 'If any one will not work, let him not eat.' Work honors the Creator's gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion

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with the Son of God in his redemptive work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish. Work can be a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ.

8. Distributism: In addition to the list provided by the USCCB, we have added another concept that has played an important role in Catholic social teaching over the past century or so, and that is the concept of distributism. The Catholic Church has consistently opposed both Marxist socialism and liberal capitalism. Socialism is an economic system in which the government owns and controls the means of production, whereas liberal capitalism is an economic system in which the means of production are owned and controlled by a relatively few capitalists. An economic philosophy and system advocated by some Catholics is Distributism, which has been described as a third way between socialism and capitalism. Rather than the means of production being concentrated in the hands of the government or a few rich people, this system would distribute the means of production and most of the wealth among as many people as possible. In such a system there would be many persons owning small farms and small businesses. More people would be independent and self-supporting than would be the case in either socialistic or liberal capitalistic economies. In the ideal society with a distributist economy, there would be government regulation where needed and an acknowledgment of the moral law and of the social responsibilities of those who had wealth. The economy of the United States today is a mixed economy in which some sources of wealth are government owned, such as many local utilities, and others are closely regulated, such as the transportation industries. Moreover there exist some very large businesses, which control vast amounts of money while at the same time there is widespread private ownership. Today the distributive system has made some headway in the U.S. because the middle classes are often small farmers, business owners, and professionals.

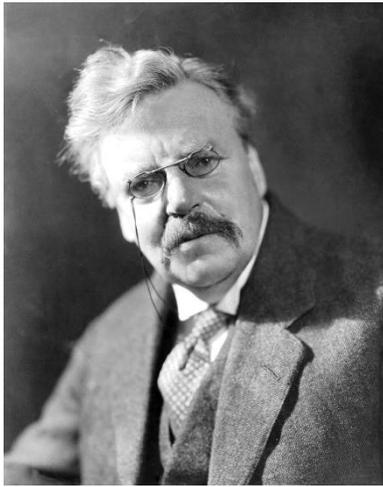


Hilaire Belloc, who was of French origin, was one of the most prolific writers in early twentieth century England. He was known as a writer, historian, orator, poet, and political activist. He is best known for his devout Catholic faith. Belloc was a close friend and collaborator with G.K. Chesterton and was instrumental in his conversion to Catholicism.

Origin of Distributism: Distributism appears to have been formulated in early nineteenth century England. Considerable stimulus was given to the development of distributism by Leo XIII's treatment of distributism in his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. In 1909 Fr. Charles Plater, S.J. founded the Catholic Social Guild at Oxford University. Monsignor H. C. Parkinson, its first president, published a widely circulated *Primer of Social Science*. In 1922, the Guild started the Catholic Workers' College to educate Catholic workingmen in ethics, apologetics, and in the social sciences from the standpoint of Catholic principles. In 1912, Hilaire Belloc, the prominent Catholic historian and apol-

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ologist, launched the Distributist theory of economic social reform in his book *The Servile State*. His close friend G. K. Chesterton strongly endorsed his program that advocated the



Gilbert Keith Chesterton was a prolific early twentieth century English writer, theologian, poet, philosopher, dramatist, journalist, orator, literary and art critic, biographer, and Christian apologist. He was originally a High Church Anglican who eventually converted to Roman Catholicism under the influence of his close friend Hilaire Belloc.

redistribution of wealth by the de-centralization of industry and commerce, and the extension of co-operatives, especially in his classic *The Outline of Sanity*. During the 1930's, they and others treated this subject in numerous English and American publications. Although distributism was far from being an official Catholic project, it met the approval of members of the English hierarchy. For example, in 1918 Cardinal Francis Bourne made a noteworthy address in which he asserted that Christianity and labor ought to co-operate in solving the problem of the distribution of surplus wealth to achieve more equitable wages and benefits for the workingman. In the U.S, distributist thought later influenced Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement, whose goal is to “live in accordance with the justice and charity of Jesus Christ.”

Under a distributist economic system, most people would not have to rely on the property of others to make a living. Examples are farmers who own their own land and machinery, and craftsmen and artisans who own their own materials and tools. One scholar has written Distributism “is influenced by an emphasis on small business, promotion of local culture, and favoring of small production over capitalistic mass production. A society of artisans promotes the Distributist ideal of the unification of capital, ownership, and production rather than what Distributism sees as an alienation of man from work. This does not, however, suggest that Distributism favors a technological regression to a pre-industrial revolution life-style, but a more local ownership of factories and other industrial centers. Products such as food and clothing would be preferably returned to local producers and artisans instead of being mass produced overseas.” Some distributists advocate a “co-operative” approach whereby property and equipment might be “co-owned” by groups larger than a family, such as partners in a business.



Dorothy Day was a twentieth century American journalist, social activist, and devout Catholic convert. Although she has been accused of being a socialist, she promoted the economic theory of distributism instead. In the 1930s, she worked closely with fellow activist Peter Maurin to establish the Catholic Worker Movement, which is a pacifist movement that continues to combine direct aid for the poor and homeless with nonviolent direct action on their behalf. This Servant of God was a very holy and virtuous woman and her cause for canonization has begun by the Catholic Church.

Some Distributist thinkers envisioned an economic system that would return to the guild

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system. Rather than being organized along antagonistic class lines, as are modern labor unions, guilds are “mixed class syndicates composed of both employers and employees cooperating for mutual benefit.” Furthermore, Distributists usually favor the elimination of a banking system that operates on a profit-making basis, and whatever system is left would be closely regulated. They usually favor credit unions to banks. Moreover, the Distributists mentality has been behind much of the anti-trust legislation in the U.S. and Europe, which “seeks to prevent the concentration of market power in a given industry into too-few hands.” Anti-trust legislation is “designed to break up monopolies and excessive concentration of market power in one or only a few companies, trusts, interests, or cartels”, which embodies Chesterton’s philosophy that, “too much capitalism means too few capitalists, not too many.” The assumption behind this legislation “is the idea that having economic activity decentralized among many different industry participants is better for the economy than having one or a few large players in an industry.”

The family plays an important role in a Distributist system. One scholar has written that Distributists see “the trinitarian human family of one male, one female, and their children as the central and primary social unit of human ordering and the principal unit of a functioning Distributist society and civilization.” What’s more, “This unit is also the basis of a multi-generational extended family, which is embedded in socially as well as genetically interrelated communities, nations, etc., and ultimately in the whole human family past, present and future.” Therefore, “The economic system of a society should . . . be focused primarily on the flourishing of the family unit, but not in isolation: at the appropriate level of family context, as is intended in the principle of subsidiarity. Distributism reflects this doctrine most evidently by promoting the family, rather than the individual, as the basic type of owner; that is, Distributism seeks to ensure that most families, rather than most individuals, will be owners of productive property. The family is, then, vitally important to the very core of distributist thought.”

Distributism puts a great deal of emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity. As discussed above, the principle of subsidiarity holds that, “no larger unit (whether social, economic, or political) should perform a function which can be performed by a smaller unit.” Pope Pius XI said of subsidiarity in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* that “Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.” In other words, any activity, especially of production, should be performed by the unit of political, social, or economic organization closest to the family and local community as possible. The Pope stated further that “every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.” In this regard, one scholar has said, “To prevent large private organizations from thus dominating the body politic, distributism applies this principle of subsidiarity to economic as well as to social and political action.”

John Medaille, who is co-editor of The *Distributist Review* webzine and adjunct instruct-

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tor at the University of Dallas, said in an interview on “How to Create a Truly Free Market”:

Capitalism tends to concentrate property in the hands of a few, thereby choking off the market, and socialism continues this by concentrating ownership in the hands of the state. In practice both systems end up with control of the most important resources of the nation in the hands of a few bureaucrats—managers who claim to represent the interests of the nominal owners, be they the share-holders or the general public, but who actually control these resources for their own benefit. Further, economic power, they also concentrate political power, and the large corporations are able to obtain vast privileges and subsidies for themselves, as we saw in the recent meltdown.

Economist Adolf A. Berle, who was a professor of corporate law at Columbia Law School, wrote about the separation of power from property in his 1932 book *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*. He followed up the theme in his 1959 *Power Without Property: A New Development in American Political Economy*. As the title suggests, he found that the divorce between “ownership” and “control” had increased during the decades from the original study. He and fellow author Gardiner Means showed in the earlier study that the means of production in the U.S. economy were highly concentrated in the hands of the largest 200 corporations, and that within the large corporation’s managers controlled firms despite shareholders’ formal ownership.

Milovan Djilas in his 1957 book *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* showed that power was concentrated in the hands of a few under communist systems as well. He had been Vice President of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito, and had participated with Tito in the Yugoslav People’s Liberation War. He was later purged by Tito because he began to advocate democratic and egalitarian ideals, which he believed were more in line with the way socialism and communism should be. In other words, he remained a communist, but believed that the Soviet Union and other communist countries, including Yugoslavia, had strayed away from genuine Marxist ideals. Marxist theory had it that when the means of production were owned by the state representing all the people, social classes, which reflected ownership of the means of production, would wither away; no private property, no classes. It was Dilas’ observation that instead of classes disappearing under the existing communist systems, the Party members had stepped into the role of ruling class, a problem which he believed required another revolution. It didn’t matter whether or not one owned the means of production if he had use of the benefits of the system. For example, party members had the access to fine homes, automobiles, food, vacations, and the like that the masses were denied. Obviously, his views made him unpopular in Yugoslavia and was in prison when his book was published in the West. According to Medaille:

[B]etween the gargantuan state and the gargantuan corporation, the individual is reduced to a situation of servility. What both capitalism and socialism are missing is the willingness to admit that power follows property. Both systems claim to create freedom by concentrating capital, but because this also concentrates power,

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what is left for the mass of men is powerlessness. Distributism, on the other hand, seeks to build an ownership society of free men and women, conscious of their rights and with the means to defend them against the centralizing tendencies of both the state and the corporate collectives.

Medaille goes on to say:

In contrast to a system of concentrated economic and political power, distributist systems rely on a variety of forms of small ownership to distribute economic power: proprietors for property that can be easily used and managed by a single person or a family, co-operatives for larger enterprises, local public ownership for resources like water or sewer systems, employee stock ownership: systems, when that is appropriate, and so forth. In this way, both economic and political power is distributed throughout all levels of society.

In closing, Medaille states:

The major principles of distributism are subsidiarity and solidarity. By subsidiarity, we mean that the lowest levels of society, starting with the family, are the most important, and as much decision-making authority and power as possible should reside there. Higher levels justify their existence only by the help they can give to the lower levels. Solidarity dictates that any political decision must keep in mind the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. Subsidiarity is difficult to realize (in a situation where power is concentrated; only by the diffusion of economic and political power can local communities and families flourish.

Catholic Social Teaching opposes both collectivist approaches to economic and social organization, such as Communism, as well as unrestricted liberal laissez-faire capitalistic policies that assumes “a free market automatically produces justice.” Many social documents maintain that “no society will achieve a just and equitable distribution of resources with a totally free market.” Moreover, “under the principle of subsidiarity state functions should be carried out at the lowest level that is practical.”

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Now that we have completed our discussion of Distributism, what has the Church to say about economic justice, compared with social justice? As the name infers, social justice is a term that applies to a broad range of issues regarding the welfare of human beings, including economic matters, whereas economic justice applies strictly to economic issues regarding the just or equitable distribution of goods and services needed to sustain health and life. The Church has maintained that the economy must serve people, not the other way around. All workers have a right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, and to safe working conditions. They also have a fundamental right to organize and join unions. People have a right to economic initiative and private property, but these rights have limits. No one can morally amass excessive wealth when others lack the basic necessities of life.

Catholic teaching opposes both collectivist and statist economic approaches; but it also rejects the notion that a free market automatically produces justice. Distributive justice, for example, cannot be achieved by relying entirely on free market forces. Competition and free markets are useful elements of economic systems; however, markets must be kept within limits, because there are many needs and goods that cannot be satisfied by the market system. It is the task of the state and of all society to intervene and ensure that these needs are met.

During the early years of the industrial revolution, when capitalists abused workers and their families, including children, by forcing them to work long hours in miserable unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, without workman's compensation, retirement, vacation, or medical benefits, and for extremely low pay, people tended to see capitalism and socialism as mutually exclusive alternatives. The evils of unbridled capitalism were apparent, but the evils of socialism were not yet known. As a consequence, socialism was an attractive alternative to liberal capitalism. The socialist movement attracted many followers during the latter half of the nineteenth and the early half of the twentieth centuries.

Between the years 1865-1931, classical economic liberalism was the dominant viewpoint in large parts of American and European societies. This was a time in which employers had great personal power and often abused it, whereas labor unions had relatively little power and many workingmen and their families suffered terrible poverty and degradation. Capitalism means that the means of production are owned and controlled by private individuals or corporations. In an uncontrolled capitalistic system the means of production tend to become concentrated in the hands of a relatively few owners.

Liberal Capitalism

The liberal capitalistic philosophy holds that economic production and trade are man's highest achievements; therefore, government or any other institution should not interfere in economic matters. This idea was called a *laisse faire* economic system, from the French "hands off." Under such an economic system, government imposes no restrictions on economic activity. When such

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a philosophy prevailed, men, women, and children often worked long hours, for low wages, and in unhealthy, unsanitary, and unsafe working conditions, and with no retirement and medical benefits, while at the same time a few big business owners amassed huge fortunes and lived like kings. In a liberal capitalistic system, wealth and power tend to be concentrated in the hands of a small class of people. Under such a system the rich get richer and more powerful and the poor get poorer and weaker. This was manifested in the so-called “Robber Barons” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Republican Party in the United States, in the main, adopted the *laissez faire* economic policy of liberal capitalism within a decade or so after the Civil War. Under this economic philosophy, whatever benefit the lower classes receive from the economic system must “trickle down” from above. This is the reason that so many social justice advocates in the Catholic Church have gravitated to the Democratic Party, the party allegedly of the common people. It is a shame that the Democrats have become the “death party” in America politics, promoting abortion and other anti-life practices. Moreover, many of them have come to equate social justice with the welfare state. Catholic Democrats either overlook this anomaly or they compromise their faith to fit in. Of course, American politics is not that simple, because a significant number of the working classes vote Republican and many of the more affluent classes vote Democratic. Whatever the case, Liberal Capitalism has material possessions as man's highest goal and it shares this view with Marxist communism. For this reason the Catholic Church has consistently opposed both philosophies.

The Catholic Position on Socialism: During the nineteenth century several socialistic systems were offered to counter the excesses of Liberal Capitalism. The most influential was the communistic system of Karl Marx, a disgruntled German philosopher. Communism claims to have the solution to the problems of economic injustice. Marx and Frederick Engels published their philosophy in 1848 in a paper entitled *The Communist Manifesto*. Their philosophy is a combination of socialism, Hegelianism, and atheism, as well as some of their own ideas. To discuss each of the influences would take us far beyond the scope of this essay. All that will be said here is that socialism is the belief that government, rather than private individuals, should own the means of production. Marx and Engels made the abolishment of private property the cornerstone of their system.

Hegelianism

Hegelianism was Marx's adaptation of the dialectical idealism of nineteenth century German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Marx called his version dialectical materialism, of which a complete understanding is required to understand communism. Fr. John Hardon in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* writes:

Dialectical Materialism is “[t]he philosophy founded by Karl Marx (1818-83) and Friedrich Engels (1820-95), and condemned as such by the Catholic Church. It is materialism because it holds not only that matter is real but that matter is prior to mind both in time

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and in fact. Thus mind is said to appear only as an outgrowth of matter and must be explained accordingly. Space and time are viewed as forms of the existence of matter. It is dialectical in claiming that everything is in constant process of self-transformation. Everything is made up of opposing forces whose internal conflict keeps changing what the thing was into something else. Applied to society, the conflicts among people are essential to the progress of humanity, and to be fostered, as preconditions for the rise of the eventual classless society of perfect Communism.



Hegel's principal achievement was his development of absolute idealism as a means of integrating the notions of mind, nature, subject, object, psychology, the state, history, art, religion and philosophy. In particular, he developed the notion of the master–slave dialectic and the concept of Geist ("mind-spirit") as the expression of the integration), without elimination or reduction, of otherwise seemingly contradictory or opposing ideas. Karl Marx transformed Hegel's Dialectical Idealism into his into his Dialectical Materialism.

This topic would require an essay all of its own to clarify what Father is saying here. As stated above, Hegelianism was Marx's adaptation of the dialectical idealism of nineteenth century German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Marx and Engels transformed Hegel's idealistic understanding of dialectics into a materialist one, an act for which it has been commonly said they "put Hegel's dialectics back on its feet". Marx called his version "dialectical materialism", of which a complete understanding is required to understand communism. Although it is far too complex a subject to discuss in any detail here, we'll try to give a brief explanation of the philosophy.

Hegel used this system of dialectics to explain the whole of the history of philosophy, science, art, politics and religion, but many "modern critics point out that Hegel often seems to gloss over the realities of history in order to fit it into his dialectical mold. . . ."

In the twentieth century, Hegel's philosophy underwent a major renaissance. One scholar has claimed that this was due partly to the rediscovery and reevaluation of him as the philosophical progenitor of Marxism by philosophically oriented Marxists, partly through a resurgence of the historical perspective that Hegel brought to everything, and partly through increasing recognition of the importance of his dialectical method." It was perhaps Georg Lukacs's *History and Class Consciousness* that

did the most to reintroduce Hegel into the Marxist canon. According to one source, "This sparked a renewed interest in Hegel reflected in the work of Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Ernst Bloch. . . ." He states, "Beginning in the 1960's, Anglo-American Hegel scholarship has attempted to challenge the traditional interpretation of Hegel as offering a metaphysical system."

The Hegelian Dialectic: The triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis is often used to describe Hegel's thought, although he never used the term himself. The Dialectic is usually described in the following way:

1. The thesis is an intellectual proposition (set of ideas).
2. The antithesis is simply the negation of the thesis, a reaction to the proposition (one set of

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ideas clashing with another).

3. The synthesis solves the conflict between the thesis and antithesis by reconciling their common truths and forming a new thesis, starting the process over.

According to Walter Kaufmann, a professor of philosophy at Princeton University until his death in 1980, it is an erroneous assumption that the triad formed part of an analysis of historical and philosophical progress called the Hegelian dialectic. He claims that Hegel used this classification only once, that it was Immanuel Kant and other German Idealists who developed the notion. One scholar has said of Hegel's dialectic:

Hegel maintains that the juxtaposition and violent interaction of binary oppositions will continue until a position is reached which is so perfectly balanced that no new antithesis can arise, because there are no extremes left to form a thesis. This bland-sounding paradise is what Hegel calls THE ABSOLUTE IDEA, and history is the process of human civilization working toward this end point, motivated by a spiritual force which Hegel calls the WORLD-SPIRIT or WORLD-MIND. Because the ultimate cause of progress in Hegel's view of history is an abstract force, we call his philosophy a form of idealism (there are many philosophical ideas which merit this description).

Perhaps because of our ignorance, we believe that much of Hegel's philosophy is nothing but pure "gobbledygook", meaning in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* "wordy and generally unintelligible jargon." We understand this is particularly true of his writings in German. Even some philosophers have drawn the same conclusion from reading his works. He might have had something important to say, but it is difficult to see what it is. Idealists don't believe that we can know reality or truth that exists outside our minds, so they are left with constructing their own reality in their own minds. Hegel's prose seemingly goes on endlessly in the following manner:

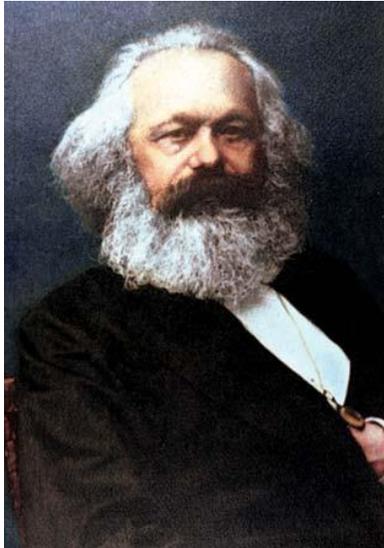
To say that history is the world's court of judgment is to say that over and above the nation-states, or national "spirits," there is the mind or Spirit of the world (Weltgeist) which pronounces its verdict through the development of history itself. The verdicts of world history, however, are not expressions of mere might, which in itself is abstract and non-rational. Rather than blind destiny, "world history is the necessary development, out of the concepts of mind's freedom alone, of the moments of reason and so of the self-consciousness and freedom of mind" (§ 342). The history of Spirit is the development through time of its own self-consciousness through the actions of peoples, states, and world historical actors who, while absorbed in their own interests, are nonetheless the unconscious instruments of the work of Spirit." All actions, including world-historical actions, culminate with individuals as subjects giving actuality to the substantial. They are the living instruments of what is in substance the deed of the world mind and they are therefore directly at one with that deed though it is concealed from them and is not their aim and object (§ 348). The actions of great men are produced through their subjective willing and their passion, but the substance of these deeds is actually the accomplishment not of the individual agent but of the World Spirit (e.g., the founding of states by world-historical heroes).

This type of vacuous prose goes on and on, but there are some who maintain they understand

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what all this apparent nonsense means. This reminds me of the gurus of the 1970's sitting around in circles with their "stoned" disciples responding to their vacuous sayings by "Cool Man" or "Heavy". Karl Marx later accepted Hegel's idea of the dialectical process as the mainspring of inevitable human progress, but he rejects Hegel's explanation that all this is due to some abstract force seeking perfection. In response, Marx developed an idea called *dialectical materialism*.

Karl Marx's Dialectical Materialism



Marx's theories about society, economics and politics—the collective understanding of which is known as Marxism—hold that human societies progress through class struggle: a conflict between an ownership class that controls production and a dispossessed laboring class that provides the labor for production. States, Marx believed governments are run on behalf of the ruling class and in their interest while pretending it represents the common interest of all citizens. He predicted that capitalism produced internal tensions which would lead to its self-destruction and replacement by socialist system.

Karl Marx's view of history is called Dialectical Materialism because he sees the dialectical process being driven forward not by abstract forces, as Hegel did, but rather by solid material conditions, and particularly by economic factors. In other words, while Hegel's description of history rests on the idea that new ideas cause us to change the way we live (our thoughts change, and the world changes in response), Marx's description states that when new economic relationships change the way we live, we develop new ideas (the world changes, and our thoughts change in response).

According to one source, "Materialism asserts the primacy of the material world: in short, matter precedes thought. Materialism is a realist philosophy of science, which holds that the world is material; that all phenomena in the universe consist of 'matter in motion,' wherein all things are interdependent and interconnected and develop according to natural law; that the world exists outside us and independently of our perception of it; that thought is a reflection of the material world in the brain, and that the world is in principle knowable."

Dialectical Materialism has been defined as "the Marxian interpretation of reality that views matter as the sole subject of change and all change as the product of a constant conflict between opposites arising from the internal contradictions inherent in all events, ideas, and movements." This philosophical approach was expressed through the writings of Karl Marx

and Friedrich Engels as well as later by Vladimir Ilich Lenin, and Joseph Stalin, who adapted it to modern communism. Marx developed his ideas of Dialectical Materialism in his famous *Das Kapital* (Capital) and other works. Its central idea, which was borrowed from Hegelianism, is that "all historical growth, change, and development results from the struggle of opposites." As we have outlined above, this means in philosophical terms that a thesis is opposed by its antithesis, which results in a synthesis. It would take considerable space to explain Marx's application of this dialectical process to historical circumstances, but specifically, in the words of one scholar "it is the class struggle—the struggle between the capitalist and landowning classes, on the one hand,

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and the proletariat and peasantry, on the other—that creates the dynamic of history.”

Hegel was a seminal influence on Marx’s thinking. By the time of his death in 1831, Hegel was the most prominent philosopher in Germany. His views were widely taught, and his students were highly regarded. His followers soon divided into right-wing and left-wing Hegelians. According to historians of philosophy, theologically and politically the right-wing Hegelians offered a conservative interpretation of his work, emphasizing the compatibility between Hegel’s philosophy and Christianity. Politically, they were orthodox. On the other hand, the left-wing Hegelians or Young Hegelians, influenced by Ludwig Feuerbach and others, eventually moved to an atheistic position. In politics, many of them became revolutionaries, including Marx and Engels.

Both Marx and Engels began their adulthood as Young Hegelians, one of several groups of intellectuals inspired by Hegel. They soon concluded that Hegelian philosophy was too abstract and was being misapplied in attempts to explain the social injustice in countries undergoing industrialization in the 1840’s, such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. In contrast to the conventional idealist Hegelian dialectic of the day, which emphasized that human experience is dependent on the mind’s perceptions, Marx developed his theory of dialectical materialism, which emphasized that the material world “shapes socioeconomic interactions and that those in turn determine sociopolitical reality.” Marx’s had first become intimately familiar with Materialism while writing his doctoral thesis on the atomism of ancient materialist philosophers such as Epicurus, Democritus, and Lucretius.

Marx and Engels transformed Hegel’s Dialectical Idealism into Dialectical Materialism, because they wanted a philosophy, when applied, would change the world, not simply let it change on its own without human intervention. Marx maintained that he had stood Hegel back on his feet, because Hegel had emphasized spirit or ideas as the driving force in history in his philosophy rather than matter. Marx wrote in *Das Kapital*, “My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.” In the words of one source, “Marx asserted that Hegel’s dialectics go astray by dealing with ideas, with the human mind. Hegel’s dialectic, Marx says, inappropriately concerns ‘the process of the human brain’; it focuses on ideas. Hegel’s thought is in fact sometimes called dialectical idealism. Marx believed that dialectics should deal not with the mental world of ideas but with ‘the material world,’ the world of production and other economic activity.”

In this regard, one scholar has said:

In keeping with dialectical ideas of such sequences as thesis-antithesis-synthesis, thesis-rejection-rejection, and action-reaction-reaction, Marx and Engels thus created an alternative theory, not only of why the world is the way it is, but also of which actions people should take to make it the way it ought to be. Marx summarized, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.” Dialectical materialism is thus closely related to Marx’s and Engels’s historical materialism (and has sometimes been viewed as synonymous with it).

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Historical material has been explained as follows:

Historical materialism is a methodological approach to the study of society, economics, and history first articulated by Karl Marx (1818–1883) as the materialist conception of history. It is a theory of socioeconomic development according to which changes in material conditions (technology and productive capacity) are the primary influence on how society and the economy are organised. Historical materialism looks for the causes of developments and changes in human society in the means by which humans collectively produce the necessities of life. Social classes and the relationship between them, along with the political structures and ways of thinking in society, are founded on and reflect contemporary economic activity.

He concludes by saying, “The ultimate sense of Marx's materialist philosophy is that philosophy itself must take a position in the class struggle based on objective analysis of physical and social relations. Otherwise, it will be reduced to spiritualist idealism, such as the philosophies of Immanuel Kant or Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.” One source states:

Marx's own writings are almost exclusively concerned with understanding human history in terms of systemic processes, based on modes of production (broadly speaking, the ways in which societies are organized to employ their technological powers to interact with their material surroundings). This is called historical materialism. More narrowly, within the framework of this general theory of history, most of Marx's writing is devoted to an analysis of the specific structure and development of the capitalist economy.

Marx's atheism: A distinguishing feature of Marx's philosophy is atheism. He adopted the teachings of a German philosopher named Ludwig Feuerbach, who taught that the Christian idea of God was that man-made creation, that “God was nothing more than an extension of what man would be if he could be just, immortal, truthful, powerful, etc.” In Feuerbach's system, God was made in man's image instead of the other way around. Following him, Marx therefore denied God's existence; in fact he denied the existence of all spirits and claimed that the only reality is material, a philosophy called materialism, of which dialectical materialism is a variety.

Materialism is defined as “a radically empirical philosophy that is based in the conviction that all phenomena originate from a physical cause and can be understood and explained through natural science. According to materialism, matter is the total explanation for space, nature, man, society, history and every other aspect of existence. Materialism does not acknowledge any alleged phenomenon that cannot be perceived by the five senses such as the supernatural, God, etc.” Fr. Hardon defines materialism in *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as follows:

All reality is only matter, or a function of matter, or ultimately derived from matter. There is no real distinction between matter and spirit; even man's soul is essentially material and not uniquely created by God. In ethical philosophy, materialism holds that material goods and interests, the pleasures of the body and emotional experience, are the only or at least the main reason for human existence. In social philosophy, the view that economics and this-worldly interests are the main functions of society.

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According to Marx, since the capitalists are not about to voluntarily give up their property and power, an agent of revolution called the communist party must overthrow all existing systems and impose complete state socialism where private property is totally abolished. Since religion slows down this process, Marx claimed that communists must be militant atheists. He called religion the “opium of the people”, because it was controlled by the ruling classes in a manner to make the oppressed classes be satisfied with their lot in this life and to keep their attention on a glorious next life. He especially hated the Catholic Church, because like today, it is the main obstacle to atheistic ideas and systems based on them. There are several brands of socialism—utopian socialism, democratic socialism, Christian socialism—but several popes have said that one cannot both be a socialist and a Catholic at the same time. Of course, they especially had the Marx’s atheistic brand of socialism in mind.

According to one scholar, “some Hegelians blamed religious alienation (estrangement from the traditional comforts of religion) for societal ills, Marx and Engels concluded that alienation from economic and political autonomy, coupled with exploitation and poverty, was the real culprit.”

Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology is an adaptation of Catholic theology to Marxism. For the last several decades, Marxists have often tried to enlist Christians on their side and some Catholic Christians, such as the South Americans Gustavo Gutiérrez, Segundo Galilea, Juan Luis Segundo, Lucio Gera, and Leonardo Boff, have tried to justify cooperation with Marxists through the movement known as the Theology of Liberation. Marxists are not troubled by Marxist atheism, because to them the ends justify the means. In spite of the Church’s disapproval or condemnation, these theologians have advanced liberation theology as dogmas essential for salvation.

Traditionally theology has been the study of divine revelation, applying human reason to supernatural mysteries in order to gain a much more thorough understanding of them. The ultimate purpose is to know God better so he can be loved all the more. On the other hand, instead of beginning with revealed truths, liberation theologians begin with social institutions and historical situations to better understand political and social problems. Then they offer solutions to these problems in the form of dogmas, declaring that the coming of the kingdom of God depends on social and political revolution. In other words, their focus is not on the salvation of individual souls, but on the reform of social institutions. They are more interested in creating heaven on earth than on helping persons get to Heaven. They have no qualms about interpreting the Bible to suit their purposes. They focus all of their attention on poverty and political oppression, especially as found in Latin America.

Liberation theologians offer several points or dogmas. For example: They claim that Christ's main purpose while on earth was to serve as a social revolutionary, to liberate the poor and overthrow oppressors. To prove their case, they quote Jesus where he said to preach good news to the poor and liberty to captives. Contrary to their interpretation, what Jesus really meant was to preach the good news to the poor of spirit and to free those captive to sin. He did not encourage the violent

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overthrow of oppressive governments. When read as a whole, the Gospels make no references whatever to social revolution. To the contrary, all of Christ's teaching is directed at man's spiritual welfare. He told the rich to help the poor as a moral obligation, but at no time did he tell the poor to revolt against the rich.

Also, they point out that Christ criticized the social structures of his time in his attacks on the Pharisees; therefore, they claim he was a forerunner of Marx and that Marxism is the only current movement that helps the poor and oppressed. To the contrary, the Church teaches that Christ did indeed condemn the Pharisees for their spiritual blindness and hypocrisy, but not because they were one of the dominant classes in society. He made only one statement regarding man's obligations to the government, and that was to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17).

How about their argument that the Church possesses too much wealth and that it should give it to the poor? Liberation theologians claim that the Church's wealth is a scandal. It is true that the Church has great material resources, but it takes a lot of material resources to carry out her mission of spreading the Gospel throughout the world and to pay for its day-to-day operation. Moreover, they sometimes argue that the Church has too much wealth tied up in church buildings and art works and that these should be sold and the money given to the poor. In the first place, the money from such sales would not go very far among the world's poor, and once they are gone, they are gone forever. But more importantly, the beautiful churches and art in the Catholic world offer spiritual consolation to all men, rich and poor alike. These treasures provide a means by which even the poorest person can offer worship to God in the most beautiful of settings. Beautiful churches and art reflect what we think of God and provide the means with which to raise our hearts and minds to him. They help raise our hearts and minds to God.

Liberation theologians also say that the Church itself does not help the poor. This is the most ridiculous claim of all. Throughout history, the Church has been the leader of charitable activity. Wherever she has preached the Gospel she has also brought material benefits to the poor. She has founded and operated countless schools, hospitals, hospices, orphanages, charitable institutions, and other agencies that have served the material needs of the poor as well as their spiritual needs. The Church has spent and is spending more money and time on charitable activity, by far, than any other private institution in the world.

There is at least one other criticism that liberation theologians level at the Church. Theologians of liberation also say that when the Church preaches the Gospel, it is actually getting in the way of serving humans. People are suffering they say and if the Church speaks to them of God, it will not alleviate their sufferings. This an application of Marx's idea that religion is the "opiate of the people" and takes their attention off of their oppression by promising them a better life in the next world for putting up with oppression in this one. In answer to this criticism the Church asserts that its first duty is to save souls for Heaven, not to attempt to create heaven on earth. As Jesus said, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world."

To conclude our discussion of Liberation Theology, we should be concerned with the material

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welfare of our less fortunate brothers and sisters, but we should be even more concerned with their spiritual welfare. Our charitable activities must never take the place of saving souls. We should do everything in our power to serve both their material and spiritual needs, with the latter taking priority. In this regard Jesus said to “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be given you besides.” Moreover, wherever Christianity has spread and people live their lives in accordance with Christian principles, the poor have received untold material and spiritual benefits. On the other hand, wherever Marxism has spread, all have suffered, materially and spiritually. There is no country in the world where Marxism has been or is in control where the people are better off in any way than they were before the communist takeover. Country after country was devastated by communist rule, including the Soviet Union, Cuba, North Korea, China, and the eastern European countries prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990’s. The economies in these countries were in a shambles, their landscapes were riddled with pollution, and their morals had been destroyed by fifty years of godless atheism. Instead of cooperating with Marxism, the Church would have us combat it wherever we can and seek to spread the genuine Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Capitalism Compared with Socialism

The Church has always opposed socialism, an economic system in which the principal means of production are owned by the state or its instrument government. It has always stressed the right of private property, because as Anne Carroll has said, “it is the best way for nature to be used here on earth.” She writes in *Following Christ in the World*, “Holding goods in common produces idleness and distaste for work, disorder and confusion, lack of care for property, and disagreements and conflicts. [On the other hand], [p]rivate property encourages independence and self-sufficiency, provision for the future, and helping others in need.” The Church has allowed for certain exceptions, such as convents or monasteries being allowed to hold property in common, but this practice doesn’t work in regular human affairs.

However, since God ultimately owns all property, the right to own property privately is not absolute. The Church has always taught that persons who need necessities to preserve their lives have a claim on the property of anyone who has a surplus of these things. Starving people who take what they need to survive from those who have plenty and would not share with them are not stealing. For example, during the chaotic period in post-World War II Germany, Cardinal Josef Frings of Munich told his people that they could take coal from the railroad yards, because they had no other way to heat their homes during the winter. Moreover, the government may take property for just purposes, such as by levying taxes. Our Pope, Benedict XVI, became Archbishop of Munich before moving up in the Church’s hierarchy.

On the other hand, the Church hasn’t approved of unbridled or unchecked capitalism either, especially of the form of capitalism known as classical economic liberalism, which was the dominant viewpoint in large sections of American and European societies, especially in Great Britain in the years 1891-1931. In such a system, employers possessed a lot of personal power, which they tended to abuse, whereas the working classes had relatively little power and many

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workingmen and their families suffered terribly. One scholar has said that “Liberal capitalism held that production and trade were the highest achievements of man and that therefore a *laissez-faire* economic system, in which there were no government restrictions on production and trade, was the only just system. Under liberal capitalism, wealth tends to be concentrated in the hands of a small class of men. This system might appear to be the direct opposite of Marxism, but the two share an important premise: that man's highest goals are material goals and that there should be no moral strictures on man's attempts to achieve these goals.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states of this matter:

The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times with ‘communism’ or ‘socialism.’ She has likewise refused to accept, in the practice of ‘capitalism,’ individualism and the absolute primacy of the law of the marketplace over human labor. Regulating the economy solely by centralized planning perverts the basis of social bonds; regulating it solely by the law of the marketplace fails social justice, for ‘there are many human needs which cannot be satisfied by the market. Reasonable regulation of the marketplace and economic initiatives, in keeping with a just hierarchy of values and a view to the common good, is to be commended (No. 2425).

So it depends what one means by capitalism whether or not the Church approves of it or not. In this regard, Pope John Paul II said, “If by capitalism is meant an economic system which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector, then the answer is certainly in the affirmative...” (*Centesimus Annus*, No. 42). On the other hand, he also stated, “But if by capitalism is meant a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality, and which sees it as a particular aspect of that freedom, the core of which is ethical and religious, then the reply is certainly negative” (*Ibid.*). The Archdiocese of Minneapolis-St. Paul states in its document *Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching* that “John Paul is wary of a capitalism which exalts freedom to the extent that justice, rights, the common good and human dignity are sacrificed. This is why he stipulates that economic freedom be understood in the context of a ‘strong juridical framework.’ A false capitalism takes one part of human freedom, economic liberty, and makes of it the whole story.” With respect to this subject, *Catholic Social Teaching* goes on to say:

Within CST there is an appreciation for the utility and virtues of a market economy. But this fundamental acceptance of a free market economic model is always tempered by concerns that self-interest not override the common good, that unregulated freedom not lead to exploitation of others or of creation, that appreciation for material prosperity not create false understandings of human development and well-being . . . Perhaps a fair summary of the position of CST on capitalism is that it gets a conditional approval; it is not inherently wrong but false renderings of capitalist economics, which have existed in the past and continue in the present, must be opposed.

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Opposing Errors Regarding the Church's Teachings on Social and Economic Justice

There are two opposing errors in regard to the Church's teachings on social justice issues: one is that the Church should stay out of political, economic, and social matters and just save souls; the other is that the Church should be an instrument of political, economic, and social reform. In regard to the first:

Error 1: the Church should stay out of political, economic, and social matters: Some have argued that the Church's sole concern is the salvation of souls; that her main concern is the next life, not this one. They claim that she has no right telling government or business how to run their affairs. To support their position they often quote Jesus' words to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." For example, priests and bishops have been criticized for urging their flocks not to vote for pro-abortion political candidates.

Several years ago there was an outcry when Boston's Humberto Cardinal Medeiros advised his people not to support a certain candidate because of his pro-abortion stance. He was charged with meddling in an area where he had no business. He was told that his people should be left alone to make up their own minds for whom to vote. The advice was given in a letter written on church stationery by the Cardinal that was distributed and read to congregations in Massachusetts during the campaign of certain pro-abortion congressional candidates, such as Barney Frank. In his letter, he warned that "those who make abortions possible by law—such as legislators and those who promote, defend and elect the same lawmakers—cannot separate themselves totally from that guilt which accompanies this horrendous crime and deadly sin. If you are for true human freedom—and for life—you will follow your conscience when you vote, you will vote to save 'our children, born and unborn.'" Although the targeted pro-abortion candidates were not defeated, the abortion controversy became a major issue in the campaign as a result of the Cardinal's message. Sharp criticism, sparked by the letter called for a "distinction between preaching a faith and using the pulpit to intimidate a congregation into voting the church's way."

But the very opposite is true; the Church not only has a right to speak out on matters of political, economic, and social justice, but also as God's voice in the world she has an obligation to do so. While it is true that the Church's principal mission is to help individuals save their souls, it is individuals who perform political, economic, and social actions. It is individuals who make the decisions about how much to pay employees, whether to support minimum wage laws, whether to vote for increased defense spending, how much to fund public schools, whether to permit cloning, etc. In order to make morally correct decisions regarding these and other matters, individuals need the sure moral guidance of the Church. Moreover, we live in a highly secular, materialistic, and hedonistic society that is of little help, and even a hindrance, toward helping men and women achieve salvation. This is all the more reason why the Church must teach on the issues that affect the kind of society in which we live.

We Catholics should want to see God glorified, publicly and privately. We should want the actions of all of our political, economic, and social institutions to be for God's greater glory and to benefit all of humankind. For instance, politicians who vote in accordance with the Church's moral

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teachings are not imposing their own morality on the rest of society, they are making public policy in conformance with God's law. The natural law applies not only to Catholics, but also to all human beings. Office holders have a duty to vote on issues in accordance with the Church's moral teachings—the teachings of Jesus—even if the majority of voters in their electoral districts disagree. They are obligated to do what is right, not what is popular. The Catholic Church is the only institution in the world that can speak infallibly on moral issues and promotes family values.

Pro-abortion Catholic politicians are a perfect example of those who say that the Church should stay out of politics, both Democrats and Republicans alike. They say, "I'm not going to let my religion influence my voting or the way I conduct public office"; or "I'm personally opposed to abortion, but I'm not going to impose my religion on others"; or "I'm personally opposed to abortion, but I believe that a woman has a right to choose"; or "Legislators should not be involved in practicing medicine"; or "Abortion is the law of the land"; or "Abortion is just one of many issues and I embrace a consistent ethic of life." Our opinion is that politicians who say they aren't going to let their Catholic religion determine how they vote on social issues are really saying they have few principles. Politicians of both parties have been allowed to hide behind the so-called "seamless garment" too long. It's about time that bishops and priests get the courage to expose them for what they are: accomplices of a "Culture of Death."

The late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin used the seamless garment as an image for a unified or consistent ethic of life. The principal idea is that humans should have a seamless respect for life from the womb to the tomb. That is an idea consistent with what the Church teaches about the dignity and worth of human life at all of its stages. Cardinal Bernardin urged abortion foes to find common ground with others who work for causes that affirm human life. These include advocates of disarmament and world peace, opposition to capital punishment, the poor and oppressed, economic justice, fair and compassionate treatment of prisoners, shelter for the homeless, care of the disabled and terminally ill, racial reconciliation, respect for lifestyle diversity, and, above all, attention to the welfare of women and the rights of children. Now these are all goals worthy of a "Culture of Life," but the problem is that the seamless garment ethic tended to dissipate and confuse the pro-life movement. Some believed at the time that Cardinal Bernadine's real motive for formulating and promoting the consistent ethic of life was to give pro-abortion candidates of both parties room to claim that they were pro-life on many others issues; therefore, Catholics could vote for them with clear consciences. We think that this view is a little cynical; we would like to believe that the Cardinal's motives were noble ones. Perhaps he was simply trying to get the most protection for human life as possible in extremely difficult times.

The problem for Americans is that we often don't have a clear-cut choice. Although it has a few token pro-lifers, tragically the Democratic Party has become the pro-death party. This has made it a catchall for almost every radical and kooky group in America. Several years ago, former Terre Haute mayor Pete Chalos, a strong pro-life Democrat, wrote eloquently on this matter in several articles published in the *Terre Haute Tribune-Star* after his retirement. The problem is compounded by the fact that in many respects the Republican Party is not much better. Although it has displayed a pro-life platform for the past several decades, many Republican officeholders are pro-abortion, pro-euthanasia, pro-homosexual, and the like. We believe that the "seamless gar-

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ment” principle has given Catholic politicians of both parties wiggle room to pander to the ignorance and concupiscence of many Catholics. However, we must say that it is encouraging that many U.S. Bishops are starting to get bolder and speak out against pro-abortion politicians. A good example is Bishop Thomas Tobin of Providence Rhode Island recently censoring U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy, Ted Kennedy’s son, telling him not to take Holy Communion because of his public pro-abortion position. The Vatican has long been outspoken about politicians who promote a “Culture of Death.”

Error 2: the Church should be an instrument of political, economic, and social reform: The attitude opposite to the one just discussed is that the Church's primary mission is political, that she should be a leader in economic and social reform. For example advocates of this position make their priority the overthrow of unjust and oppressive regimes. Many missionaries in foreign countries have come to see themselves as instruments of economic and social revolutionary change. Others even say that that priests should go into politics to promote change. They argue that the Church cannot save souls until the economic and social structures have been made just.

Those claiming that the Church's primary mission is political reform are confusing ends and means. The end of all human action should be the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Political reform is a means to that end or goal, not an end or goal in itself. When God’s laws are obeyed, souls are helped toward salvation. The reformation of political institutions is the means toward achieving the end of God's glory. Those saying that the Church's primary mission is political make God a means to achieving their goals, rather the end of all human activity.

Some have argued that the proper role of priests is to enter public office so they can better help bring about social reform of society. The Church has long forbid priests to hold public office. Wherever and whenever priests have held public office they have become worldly. We could cite many instances in history of priests who held positions in government becoming worldly or venal: Woolsey, Cramner, Richelieu, Mazarin, and Tallyrand come to mind.

Modern examples that come to mind of the Church forbidding priests from holding public office is the cases of Father Ernesto Cardenal Martínez and Fr. Robert Drinan, S.J. Fr. Cardenal was a Nicaraguan Catholic priest who was a liberation theologian of the Nicaraguan Communist Sandinistas party. He held the position of Minister of Culture after the successful Sandinista Revolution. We believe that his brother also held an office in that regime. He occupied this office until 1987, when his ministry was closed owing to economic reasons. Pope John Paul II visited Nicaragua in 1983, and as he was going through a welcoming reception line of government and Church officials on the Managua airport runway, he openly scolded Cardenal as he knelt before him for resisting his order to resign from the government. The Pope refused to allow him to kiss his ring and he admonished Cardenal by saying “You must make good your dealings with the Church.”

Fr. Drinan taught at the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C. from 1981 to 2007. According to several sources, he “played a key role in the pro-choice platform becoming a

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common stance with politicians in the Kennedy family.” He was a congressman for several years, but when Pope John Paul II demanded that all priests withdraw from electoral politics in 1980, he complied by not seeking reelection. Paradoxically, Drinan was one of the most vocal advocates of a woman’s right to choose whether or not to have an abortion. In fact, he spoke out in support of President Bill Clinton’s veto of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act in 1996. John Cardinal O’Connor, then Archbishop of New York, sharply criticized Drinan in his weekly column for the *Catholic New York*. He once wrote, “You could have raised your voice for life; you raised it for death . . . Hardly the role of a lawyer. Surely not the role of a priest.” In 1997, Drinan publicly retracted his opposition to a legal ban on late-term abortion.

The Church has strongly maintained that the priest’s primary role is to administer the sacraments and to preach the Gospel. No one else has the authority to administer the sacraments and to forgive sins, and although others can preach, priests receive special graces to do this. Whenever priests have entered politics in past history, they have invariably become corrupted by the world. Furthermore, priests who get involved in politics are distracted from their primary duties. For this and other reasons, the Church has forbidden priests to hold public office. When priests or religious become directly involved in politics, the Gospel can then become identified with a political system or special interests groups instead of being seen as the standard against which all political movements are to be judged.

Although the Pope, bishops, and priests are supposed to speak out on social and political issues, it is the job of the laity to implement the Gospel. The Vatican II document *Gaudium in Spes* said of this matter, “The hierarchy and the clergy have the responsibility to teach the principles of social justice; laymen to put them into practice.”

Before we go on to another topic, we’ll draw some general conclusions regarding the Church’s social teachings. God’s law is supreme over state law: God is infinitely wise and infinitely good; the state is not. Therefore when the state’s law conflict with God’s law, God’s law takes precedence. The state cannot justly command us to do what is forbidden by God’s law or to prevent us from doing what is commanded by God’s law: If it does, the citizen has an obligation to disobey the state. St. Thomas Aquinas said something to the effect that a law contrary to the eternal law of God is no law at all.

Man’s supernatural end is supreme over man’s natural end. Man’s supernatural end is to live forever. His natural end is limited to life on earth. Therefore, if the two come into conflict, the supernatural must take precedence. The state has the responsibility to put no obstacles in the way of man’s supernatural end. The individual is supreme over the state. As one scholar says, the “. . . individual will live forever; the state will not. Therefore, the state must safeguard the dignity and worth of every citizen, including the helpless, the aged, the retarded, the handicapped, the poor. Man cannot be made a tool of the state, as is done in communist countries.” I have relied heavily on Ann Carroll’s great treatment of *errors* in Catholic social justice in her *Following Christ in the World* for this discussion, a book I used in my Apologetics course before retiring from John Paul II Catholic High School and still use in my homeschool.

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Basic Principles of Economic Justice

We have been looking at the topic of economic justice. There are some basic principles that apply to economic justice. Economic justice is based on three principles: 1) that all men are children of God, created in his image and likeness and possess a right to their lives; 2) that human beings have needs that must be satisfied to live physically and spiritually healthy lives; 3) and that everything belongs to God and that human beings are simply trustees of God's creation and will be judged on how well they use creation for God's glory and the benefit of humankind.

The Just Wage: In order for human beings to preserve their right to life and to live in dignity, they must satisfy their basic needs, such as the need for food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, recreation, transportation, and savings for long-term needs like retirement. The Catholic Church has always taught that in order to satisfy these basic needs, human beings have a right to a living wage. A “just wage” provides them with the necessities of life, those things that they need to live with relative comfort and dignity, but not luxuries. The Church has always insisted that workers have a right to a “just wage” for their services. The term has also been called a “living wage”, a “family wage”, and the like. It is a fundamental teaching of the Church, because it is associated with human dignity. The *Catechism* states of the just wage: “A just wage is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice. In determining fair pay both the needs and the contributions of each person must be taken into account. ‘Remuneration for work should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for himself and his family on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level, taking into account the role and the productivity of each, the state of the business, and the common good.’ Agreement between the parties is not sufficient to justify morally the amount to be received in wages” (No. 2434). In this regard, the Archdiocese of Minneapolis-St. Paul states in its document *Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching* that “People have a legitimate claim based on their dignity to those essential material goods that meet basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, health, education, security and rest—this is the minimum condition of wage-justice. Ordinarily, it is to be expected that an able-bodied person will obtain the basic goods through labor, either as the fruit of one's work or in exchange for it. This is a long-standing presumption within the tradition.” The document goes on to say:

By the time of Leo XIII, however, this presumption had been undercut due to the working of the labor market in the emergent industrial order. Classical liberalism's defense of free markets included the principle of free contract, that is, a just contract was one that the signees entered into freely. In practice, this meant many workers desperate for a position took jobs for paltry wages that were inadequate for meeting basic needs for themselves and their dependents. Leo forth-rightly criticized such an approach and challenged the doctrine of free contract by asserting that justice, not freedom, is the governing norm of contracts. And justice, rooted in human dignity, meant that a just wage is one which allows a worker and family to live in ‘reasonable and frugal comfort (*Rerum Novarum*, No. 34).

In point of fact, millions of workers during the hay-day of the Industrial Revolution not only received totally inadequate wages for them and their families to live with moderate comfort and

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dignity, but more often than not they and their wives and children were forced to work in factories that were unsafe, unhealthy, and unsanitary as well as with no retirement, medical, vacation, or workman's compensation benefits.

To illustrate my point, let us take a hypothetical case. A large corporation employs two men who do exactly the same kind of work. One is a bachelor who has no dependents, lives in an upscale condominium that is furnished with an expensive leather sofa and chairs, has the latest home entertainment system with a surround sound stereo and a 48" plasma TV, drives an expensive BMW sports car, and has an AKC registered Golden Retriever dog. The other man has a wife and six children, has a well-kept large old house in an older but decent neighborhood, drives a five-year-old van, and has a mixed breed dog. Let's further hypothesize that they have relatively the same education, the same experience, the same ability, and the same dedication to the company.

The question is: Does economic justice demand that each be paid the same amount? Although the U.S. Federal Government says "Yes", the Catholic Church says "No". The Church insists that an employer has a moral obligation to pay a man enough to adequately support himself and his family. The Church allows that an employer can pay the bachelor more than he needs, but that economic justice demands that he pay the married man with a family enough to allow them to live in a dignified manner. Some would argue that if he makes too little money to support his family with dignity, that he should get an additional part-time job or his wife could go to work outside the home. The Church condemns this view, because the family is the basic unit of society and must be provided for without the wife being forced to get a job outside the home. Forcing a wife and mother to go to work does not protect the family unit. The man must be paid enough to provide the family with the necessities of life.

I can illustrate this by citing an example from my own family. My maternal grandfather worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad before the industry began to pay high wages. Even so, he was able to earn enough to afford a large modest home in an older, but good neighborhood, for my grandmother and their four children. Even though the home was simply furnished and they ate plain food, they had everything they needed to live in comfort and dignity. Although most of the people who lived in the neighborhood were working class, their next-door neighbor was a prominent attorney and several other neighbors were prominent businessmen and building contractors in the community.

It would be difficult for a workingman to support his family in moderate comfort and with dignity today. The two-paycheck family has almost become a necessity for the working classes. I think it all started during World War II when women entered the workplace in large numbers to take the places of the millions of men who were in the armed forces. After the war when the men came home and reentered the work-place, many women stayed on the job. Moreover, women got used to the idea of working outside of the home for extra income and a higher standard of living made possible by it. Employers were delighted with this turn of events, because more people in the workplace significantly bid down wages. It was not long before they could have two employees, husband and wife alike, for the price of one. Today it takes two working outside the home to adequately provide for the needs of the family, much to the detriment of marriage, children, and

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society as a whole. While my grandfather was able to provide enough income for his family to live with moderate comfort and dignity, husbands of the working classes can no longer easily do so.

Shouldn't talent, experience and dedication to the job count for something when determining wages? Of course! Once the minimum standards have been established for a family living wage, other factors may be taken into account when determining pay, such as the amount of experience, the level of training, competence, and the amount of risk required to do the job. Employers can and should pay engineers, attorneys, and surgeons more, but they should not pay janitors and cooks less than the basic minimum wage. Moreover, other factors must be taken into consideration, such as the fiscal health of the business, the cost of living, market forces, and the role of other stakeholders—local, national and international. The Church recognizes in the words of *Catholic Social Teaching* that “There is no fixed, one size-fits-all approach to defining a just wage. But the conviction is that wages must be determined by more than free consent of the contractual parties. As such, concern for justice and rights must be factored into determination of what constitutes a just wage.”

The rights and obligations of labor: Economic injustice can exist if men are paid too much and it deprives others of a just wage. For example, it is unjust if athletic superstars are paid such exorbitant salaries that others in the organization, such as janitors, mechanics, concession workers, security guards, and groundskeepers, are paid less than they need for themselves and their families to live in dignity. Those who have incomes far above their needs have an obligation to use their surplus for the benefit of others. They can provide help directly to those in need or invest the surplus in businesses that will provide employment for those needing work. Moreover, those in critical financial need through no fault of their own—such as with a serious injury or catastrophic illness—have a right to financial help from private charity and as a last resort from government assistance

The employer also has the obligation to provide safe and dignified working conditions. The “sweatshops” of the Industrial Revolution were unjust. On the other hand, employees have obligations toward their employers. For example, employees can forfeit their right to a job if they do not perform their work well or do not give a full day's work for a full day's pay. Stealing time from the employer is just as dishonest as stealing materials and tools from his premises. Moreover, employees who are habitually late, take extra coffee or smoke breaks, waste time on the job, work poorly, and help themselves to supplies and tools from the plant and office, have forfeited their right to a job.

Labor Unions: How about labor unions? Isn't this another one of the rights of labor? Doesn't the Church maintain that workers have a right to join labor unions? Yes it has! The Church has said that workers have the right to join labor unions, which work for the common good. If labor unions become too powerful, they can actually work against the common good. For example, unions that demand unjustifiably high wages so that prices are driven up or wage and benefit settlements that force companies into bankruptcy are acting irresponsibly. Other examples are union officials who use compulsory union dues to support political causes that many of the members oppose. Another problem that has plagued labor unions for the past fifty years has been

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mob and communist control. Individuals who do not choose to join labor union should not be prevented from working, but they should not expect to receive the benefits that unions have won for their members.

Right to Strike: What has the Church had to say about workers right to strike? Several popes have written in their social encyclicals that workers have a right to strike if employers are consistently unjust. The *Catechism* says of this matter, “Recourse to a strike is morally legitimate when it cannot be avoided, or at least when it is necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit. It becomes morally unacceptable when accompanied by violence, or when objectives are included that are not directly linked to working conditions or are contrary to the common good” (No. 2435).

However, a strike can be morally justified only if there is a serious reason and the strike must be a last resort. Moreover, the good must outweigh the harm. For example, firemen, policemen, and teachers on strike would almost certainly do more harm than good. Firemen and policemen cannot morally strike unless they have made provision for dealing with emergencies. Public employees, on whom the good of others depends, should strike only in extreme circumstances.

There are circumstances when taking a job with a company under strike conditions might be justified. For example if the justice of the strike is unclear and the person is in great need for the job, he would probably be justified in taking the job. Of course, taking a job during a just strike solely for the purpose of causing the strike to fail would be wrong.

How about strikebreaking? Strikebreaking should be judged in accordance with the circumstances. Strikebreakers are those who go to work for companies against which the majority of the workers are striking. If enough people become strikebreakers, the strike will fail. An individual desiring to be employed by a company undergoing a strike should apply the principle of double effect.

The principle of Double-Effect: Fr. John Hardon states in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* that the Principle of Double Effect says, “it is morally allowable to perform an act that has at least two effects, one good and one bad. It may be used under the following conditions:

1. The act to be done must be good in itself or at least morally indifferent; by the act to be done is meant the deed itself taken independently of its consequences;
2. the good effect must not be obtained by means of the evil effect; the evil must be only an incidental by-product and not an actual factor in the accomplishment of the good;
3. the evil effect must not be intended for itself but only permitted; all bad will must be excluded from the act;
4. and there must be a proportionately grave reason for permitting the evil effect. At least the good and evil effects should be nearly equivalent. All four conditions must be fulfilled. If any one of them is not satisfied, the act is morally wrong.

Fr. Hardon gives an example to illustrate the principle of double effect. The lawful use of the double effect principle would be the commander of a submarine in wartime who torpedoes an

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armed merchant vessel of the enemy, although he foresees that several innocent children on board will be killed. All four required conditions are fulfilled: 1. he intends merely to lessen the power of the enemy by destroying an armed merchant ship. He does not wish to kill the innocent children; 2. his action of torpedoing the ship is not evil in itself; 3. the evil effect (the death of the children) is not the cause of the good effect (the lessening of the enemy's strength); 4. there is sufficient reason for permitting the evil effect to follow, and this reason is administering a damaging blow to those who are unjustly attacking his country. Another example would be a pregnant woman having a uterine cancer surgically removed to save her life, but having the unintended consequence of killing the baby.

The rights and obligations of businessmen: We have been talking about the rights and obligations of workers. How about those of businesses? Businessmen must not only have respect for their workers, but for their customers as well. With regard to their customers, businessmen have the obligation to provide a product that is what it claims to be. If they are selling necessities, they have an obligation to charge prices low enough for the average person in the community to afford to buy them. Price gouging of necessities to the public during emergencies is not only immoral by Catholic principles of economic justice, but also illegal. If on the other hand, the products are not necessities, prices can be based on supply and demand. Businessmen have a right to a just profit as a reward for their time, effort, and investment put into their businesses. Although the general principles discussed above are true, it is often difficult to apply them in specific instances. To make practical applications of the Catholic principles of economic justice requires prudent and careful consideration of the circumstances involved, a concern for others and the public good, a proper detachment from materialism, and just good common sense.

The right of private property: Another economic right that the Church has always endorsed is the right of private property. The Church has always opposed socialism whereby the government owns the means of production and has stressed the right of private property. It has consistently held that private property is the most economical way for God's resources to be used here on earth. Consequently, it has long been an advocate of the right of private property. For decades she has encouraged workers to form cooperatives whereby they become sole or part owners of the businesses. Several Popes have issued encyclicals to this effect. Moreover, she has encouraged businesses to make profit sharing arrangements with their workers.

One of the main reasons that the Church has discouraged holding goods in common is that it produces idleness and distaste for work, disorder and confusion, lack of care for property, and disagreements and conflicts. For these and other reasons, socialism wreaked the economies of the Soviet Union, Cuba, North Korea, and numerous other countries since the end of World Wars I and II. Added to this is the fact that all of these countries practiced a form godless atheism.

On the other hand, the private ownership of property encourages independence, self-sufficiency, provision for the future, and helping others. The Church has allowed collective ownership of property in certain special situations, such as convents and monasteries where holding all goods in common has worked, but the practice has not worked well in most situations.

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The ownership of private property is not an absolute right, because all property ultimately belongs to God. Humans are trustees of the world's goods and will be judged on how well they use them for God's glory and to benefit humankind. Persons who need things to preserve their lives have claims on the property of those who have a surplus. If a starving man takes what he needs to live from those who would not give it to him, he is not stealing. For example, during the chaotic months following World War II, the Cardinal Archbishop of Munich, Germany, Joseph Frings, gave the people permission to take coal from the railroad yards to heat their homes during the winter. In addition, the state may take property for just purposes, as in taxation.

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Human Rights endorsed by the Church

I don't know of any official doctrinal list, but several popes have outlined the minimum of what they considered to be basic human rights. For example, according to one source, it was John XXIII who provided the first attempt at a list of human rights endorsed by the church (*Pacem in Terris*, No. 11-27). Also, the 1971 Synod of Bishops proposed a right to development (*Justitia in Mundo*, chap. 1). Moreover, John Paul II listed in an address to the 34th General Assembly of the United Nations some of the most important human rights, which the church endorses, which are as follows:

- The right to life, liberty and security of the person.
- The right to food, clothing, housing, sufficient health care, rest, and leisure.
- The right to freedom of expression, education and culture.
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- The right to manifest one's religion either individually or in community, in public or in private
- The right to choose a state of life, found a family and to enjoy all conditions necessary for family life.
- The right to property and work, to adequate working conditions and a just wage.
- The right of assembly and association.
- The right to freedom of movement, to internal and external migration.
- The right to nationality and residence.
- The right to political participation and the right to participate in the free choice of the political system of the people to which one belongs.

Rich vs. Poor Nations: The *Catechism* states regarding the obligation of rich nations toward poor ones that "Rich nations have a grave moral responsibility toward those which are unable to ensure the means of their development by themselves or have been prevented from doing so by tragic historical events. It is a duty in solidarity and charity; it is also an obligation in justice if the prosperity of the rich nations has come from resources that have not been paid for fairly" (No. 2439). Not only are rich countries obligated to provide economic assistance to poor ones in times of crises, but also to provide economic aid that will help them to develop their own economies. For example, it is a matter of economic and social justice that all of the nations who could afford to do so, especially the more affluent ones, to help the Haitians in their time of dire need.

Global Solidarity and Development: A topic closely related to the obligation of rich toward poor nations is the matter of Global Solidarity and Development. The document *Catholic Social Teaching* states in regard to this matter that, "We are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice. Authentic development must be full human development. It must respect and promote personal, social, economic, and political rights, including the rights of nations and of peoples. It must avoid the extremists of underdevelopment on the one hand, and 'superdevelopment' on the other. Accumulating material goods, and technical resources will be unsatisfactory and debasing if there is no respect for the moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of the person."

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The Natural Law and Personalist Philosophy in Catholic Social Teaching

Introduction

Scholars have considered natural law as a classical way of looking at personal and social morality. Classicism understands reality “in terms of the eternal, the immutable, and the unchanging.” Natural law flows from the eternal law and is eternal, objective, and universal, a system of law whereby God orders, directs, and governs the entire universe. The natural law is based on the idea that human nature is fixed for all time and that God’s law is eternal and immutable, not subject to changing social, cultural, and historical circumstances. Historical consciousness is not generally an important part of a natural law approach to moral issues—personal or social. Natural law is based on the eternal law and human reason. This means, of course, that the natural law can’t grow or become out-of-date. The natural law places emphasis on a fixed human nature that possesses the human faculties of intellect and free will. Natural philosophy is identified with the scholasticism of the Middle Ages.

On the other hand, a more personalist approach to understanding and interpreting reality takes into consideration social change and historical developments. One scholar has written, “Historical consciousness gives more importance to the particular, the contingent, the historical, and the individual.” Personalism, while not rejecting the eternal and immutable, places emphasis on the present and changeableness and is rooted in time or history. On the other hand, as I said, the natural law emphasizes the eternal and immutable.

Natural law doesn’t account very well for changing historical circumstances, while personalism attempts to do so. Also, natural law focuses on the human soul with its faculties of intellect and free will, whereas personalism focuses on the total human person who has not only a soul with the faculties of intellect and free will, but also a body as well. Personalists tend to place more emphasis on the total human being—body and soul. Furthermore, they look at the universe from the point of view of the person—the subject—and not exclusively as objects existing outside the mind. Moreover, they have an historical consciousness not possessed by those who take an exclusively natural law approach.

The two philosophies have different methodological approaches to understanding reality and moral issues as well. The classicist worldview is associated with deductive methodology, which derives its conclusions from premises considered to be eternal truths, and that the syllogism was well suited for this deductive approach. Using this approach “one’s conclusions are as certain as the premises if the logic is correct.” On the other hand, historical consciousness requires a more inductive approach to understanding reality. Those employing an inductive method begin by observing phenomena and reason to general concepts explaining them

Personalists and others who emphasize experience in human behavior, claim that inductive methodology is more flexible than a deductive one. I think that is generally true. The natural law model recognizes few if any gray areas regarding moral issues, whereas the personalist philosophy is more open to the existence of gray areas, because of the complexity of modern societies and

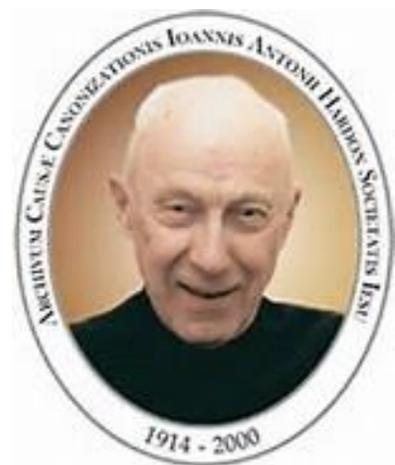
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conditions. Some issues that come to mind are capital punishment, ecumenism, religious liberty, and economic matters. Those who take a classicists approach, such as do neo-scholastics, are generally more “conservative” regarding these and other matters, whereas those who look at issues from a personalist perspective are more “progressive.” For example, Pope John Paul II was “progressive” on both personal and social morality, and contrary to dissident theologian Fr. Charles Curran, his works dealing with personal morality, especially sexual morality, are highly personalistic. John Paul’s “Theology of the Body” is about as personalistic as a theologian can get. What bothers Curran so much is that John Paul doesn’t budge an inch on the Church’s long-standing positions opposing contraception, abortion, homosexuality, pre-marital sex, and other practices that lead to a culture of death. In other words, he commends John Paul for being “progressive” on social issues, but faults him for being “conservative” on the personal moral issues. Curran is one of the leading dissidents from Catholic personal morality.

To sum up the differences between the Natural Law and Personalist philosophy, one scholar writes, “The difference between a neo-classical approach and personalism can be clearly indicated with the word-pair *object-project*. A neo-classical approach will tend to base morality on an objective image of the human person as preconceived and immutable. Personalism, on the other hand, views the status of an ethically grounding anthropology as a *project*, a design, a programme requiring participation, a vocation to be realized. That the above interpretation is not merely theoretical can be demonstrated by analysing the understanding of ‘personalism’ in the encyclical *Humanae vitae* (1968): ‘Human intelligence discovers in the faculty of procreating life, biological laws which are part of the human person’”. First we will discuss the natural law philosophy, then the personalist, followed by a comparison of the two.

The Natural Law

The natural law flows from the eternal law. Fr. John Hardon, who was one of the world's greatest theologians and catechists until his death in 2000, says that the natural law is “what God has produced in the world of creation; as coming to human beings, it is what they know (or can know) of what God has created. It is therefore called natural law because everyone is subject to it from birth (*natio*), because it contains only those duties which are derivable from human nature itself, and because, absolutely speaking, its essentials can be grasped by the unaided light of human reason.” The Bible refers to the natural law in several places. For example, St Paul wrote in Romans 2:14-15 that “When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the



Fr. John Hardon was a renowned catechists and retreat master. His *Catholic Catechism* was the standard until the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was published in 1992. He served as a consultant for the drafting of that document. He was also spiritual director to Mother Teresa.

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secrets of men by Christ Jesus.” He is here, of course, referring to the natural law. Furthermore, in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells the Israelites that God’s law is already in their hearts (Deuteronomy 30:14). The prophet Jeremiah said regarding the natural law, “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). Moreover, extra-biblical sources include St Thomas Aquinas who refers several places to the law of God written on the human heart and Pope John Paul quotes St Paul’s Romans text in his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* in connection with his discussion of the natural law (No. 46).

St Thomas Aquinas said in his famous *Summa Theologica* that the natural law is “nothing else than the rational creature’s participation in the eternal law”, the eternal law being defined as, “The plan of divine wisdom, insofar as it directs all the actions and events of the universe.” One of the world’s leading moral theologians, states that, “Since eternal law embraces the whole of creation, any other law—any other reasonable plan of action—must somehow derive from it. Another prominent theologian says that, “The plan of government that [God] has in his mind bears the character of law, and because it is conceived in eternity and not in time, it is said to be the eternal law.” There is a natural physical law, known as scientific law, and a natural moral law.”

The Eternal Law is, also known as Divine Providence, which is “God’s all-wise plan for the universe This eternal law embraces both the physical and moral laws” Thomas said elsewhere that, people are naturally disposed to understand some basic practical principles, which he calls the “primary principles of natural law. Since everyone knows them naturally, no one can make a mistake about them.” A document of Vatican Council II states in this regard: “The Church calls these naturally known principles ‘natural law.’ They are natural in the sense that they are not humanly enacted but are objective principles which originate in human nature” (see *Gaudium et Spes* 16; *Dignitatis Humanae* 14).

It is the natural moral law that we are concerned with here. Natural moral law has been defined as, “the prescriptions for human conduct derived from reason as applied to the nature of things.” It is therefore called natural law because everyone is subject to it from birth (*natio*), because it contains only those duties which are derivable from human nature itself, and because, absolutely speaking, its essentials can be grasped by the unaided light of human reason.” St. Paul tells us that the natural law is “The law of God written on our hearts”. This means that human beings have the ability to use their reason to know and understand the natural order of things as God has created them.

God gave us the Commandments for our own good, because when we break them we cause ourselves and others harm and unhappiness. Just as one can’t defy the laws of gravity by jumping off of the Empire State Building without harming himself, we can’t break the Commandments without harming ourselves and others. God wants us to love all human beings, including ourselves, as he loves us, because he created us in his very image and likeness and loves us so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to suffer and die for us. All personal and social morality is based on this concept. The natural law is mediated through our conscience.

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Even though the natural law is “written on our hearts”—which means that human beings have the ability to use their reason to know and understand the natural order of things as God has created them—we do not always interpret the natural order correctly, because of our fallen human nature due to Original Sin. God made explicit his law when he revealed them in the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. The natural law has been written in the Ten Commandments, for they are simply the codification of the natural law. Jesus further refined, completed, and perfected the Commandments in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the Gospel. When we fail to correctly interpret the natural law and violate it, it causes us and others unhappiness as well as personal and social problems.

When we fail to adhere to the natural law, it causes us and others unhappiness, suffering, sorrow, and can even cause death. As consequences of the Fall, our intellects have been darkened or diminished, our wills have been weakened, and concupiscence has brought disorder to our passions. As professor Charles Rice, formerly Professor of Law at Notre Dame, tells us, because of our wounded nature we are inclined to draw “the wrong conclusions in their understanding or application of the secondary principles of the natural law.” For example, people can convince themselves that all kinds of acts are moral, such as lying, stealing, abortion, premarital sex, adultery, gay-lesbian relationships, contraception, assisted suicide, infanticide, euthanasia, and many others. They argue that these acts are perfectly normal or natural acts, at least in certain circumstances, whereas they are, in fact, serious violations of the natural law, which, of course, is based on God’s Eternal Law. Whether or not people recognize it or not, these acts hurt us and others in some way.

When we humans violate the natural order of things, we must suffer the consequences. One cannot lie, cheat, steal, kill, fornicate, or adulterate without creating problems for oneself or others any more than one can jump off a tall building and violate the law of gravity. Such violations of the natural order have caused untold damage and misery in our world over the centuries. God gave us the commandments to help us control our appetites, drives, and passions for our good and the good of others. He is not a killjoy or spoilsport who does not want us to have any fun, for after all, he gave us our appetites, drives, and passions for a reason.

Although bodily pleasures associated with sensual appetites can be harmful to us and can even threaten our eternal salvation, they are not evil in themselves. God gave us appetites, which are pleasurable to satisfy in order to conserve the individual and the human race. The appetite to consume beverages and food is essential to our survival as individuals and the appetite to procreate is essential for the survival of the human species. If these activities were not pleasurable, no one would willingly eat or drink or procreate. However, because of original sin, the appetite for pleasure often wars against the demands of reason and causes us to sin. When we sin, we abuse them rather than use them for God’s glory and the benefit of ourselves and others. To abuse the appetite for food and drink—which is gluttony—or the appetite to procreate—which is lust—harms us and others. Germain Grisez, a prominent moral theologian, says of this matter, “Although we are naturally disposed to know basic practical principles and can make no mistake about them, they are not by themselves sufficient for the judgment of conscience which we must make. Our ultimate end is to share in fulfillment in the Lord Jesus, and we do not judge rightly what to do

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unless we judge in light of this end. So we must supplement natural law with faith, by this means drawing on the eternal law in a way that goes beyond reason.”

In spite of the fact that the natural law “is not directly encoded in stone, but written on the flesh of our hearts”, it is as binding on our conscience as is the Ten Commandments. Vatican II teaches us that “human persons find in their conscience a law they do not impose on themselves which demands their obedience: ‘For man has in his heart a law written by God . . .’ This law not only calls the person to do good and avoid evil, but it also when necessary speaks ‘to his heart more specifically: do this, shun that’” (*Gaudium et Spes* 16; see 3-B). Another council document says of the subject: “The Council makes its own explanation of St. Thomas, that this natural law is the human participation in the eternal law . . . the highest norm of human life is the divine law—eternal, objective, and universal—whereby God orders, directs, and governs the whole world and the ways of the human community according to the plan of his wisdom and love. God makes man a sharer in this his law, so that, by divine providence’s sweet disposing, man can recognize more and more the unchanging truth” (*Dignitatis Humanae* 3). Since the natural law “originates in human nature itself—all human beings, of all times and places, of all races and ethnic origins, of all religions—the law written on the heart is ‘binding and embracing’ on all.”

Fr. Thomas Dubay, a prominent theologian of spirituality and renowned spiritual director until his death in 2010, tells us in his book *The Fire Within* that every normal adult has a sense of “oughtness” that he did not acquire and he cannot shake off. He says that it is imperious in its demands and it operates whether he is observed by other human beings or not. After some actions he feels happy and after others he feels guilty, and he cannot easily strip himself of the feelings. In this regard, he quotes scientist Thomas Lewis as saying:

As I understand it, a human being cannot tell a lie, even a small one, without setting off a kind of smoke alarm somewhere deep in a dark lobule of the brain, resulting in the sudden discharge of nerve impulses, or the sudden outpouring of neurohormones of some sort, or both . . . Lying, then, is stressful, even when we do it for protection, or relief, or escape, or profit, or just for the pure pleasure of lying and getting away with it . . . , lying “is, in a sure physiological sense, an unnatural act. . . . We are a moral species by compulsion. A moral compulsion can come only from a person, and in this case the person must be a lawgiver over and above the human race. Who else could so speak? Newman was much impressed with this evidence for the existence of a supreme Governor, the holy God of the universe. For him conscience was the echo of the loving Lord speaking from the depths of each human person.

I think the efficiency in lie detector tests is empirical proof that lying is unnatural. In fact, the existence of the human conscience has been one of many proofs given for God’s existence.

Unfortunately, many if not most people believe that the natural law deals primarily with sexual morality, but this is hardly the case. I’ve read that if one looks at any standard volume on ethics written from a traditional natural law theory point of view, he or she will find that “it deals with sexual morality at no greater length than it treats of other moral topics, such as capital

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punishment, war and peace, property rights, social justice, and so forth”. One philosopher says, “That reflects the natural law view that sexual activity, however important, is just one relatively small part of life among others, not the be all and end all of our existence.” Elsewhere we deal with sexual morality as determined by the natural law,

Objections to natural law theory

There have been many objections to natural law theory aside from the charges that it is weak in both historical consciousness and accounting for social changes as well as its deductive methodology being too inflexible and restrictive. One common objection is that natural law would forbid sterile people to marry. But as Edward Feser states in his *The Last Superstition*, this isn't necessarily true. For example, if someone is sterile through no fault of his or her own, he or she has not done anything to interfere with nature's purposes. However, even sterile married couples cannot, according to natural law theory, allow their own sexual encounters to culminate in anything other than normal sexual intercourse. He says that “procreation would not result anyway is irrelevant: The point is not to do something oneself that interferes with natural processes . . . which is primarily procreative but secondarily (as ancillary to its procreative purpose) to unite husband and wife in mutual affection, not to provide a kind of built-in entertainment apparatus.” He concludes this discussion by saying, “Finally, if someone married a sterile person precisely as a means of avoiding procreation, natural law theory would condemn this as immoral.”

Some opponents of natural law theory claim that for proponents of natural law theory to be consistent they would have to condemn using a natural capacity or organ other than for its natural function, because this would frustrate its natural end. Feser gives some examples to illustrate this point. For example, “holding a table up with one's leg, or holding nails with one's teeth, does not frustrate the walking and chewing functions of legs and teeth, especially since nature obviously does not intend for us to be walking and eating at every single moment. But having one's leg amputated to make some sort of bizarre political statement, or throwing up one's food so as not to gain weight would frustrate nature's purposes and thus be condemned by natural law theory as immoral.” However, “Amputating a leg or removing other organs to save a person's life, though, would not be ruled out by natural law theory, since these organs and their functions are metaphysically subordinate to the overall purpose of sustaining the life and activities of the organism as a whole, and can thus be sacrificed if this is the only way to prevent the loss of that life.” Feser concludes this portion of his discussion by stating, “Natural law theory does not entail that every frustration of nature's purposes is a serious moral failing. Where certain natural functions concern only some minor aspect of human life, a frustration of nature's purposes might be at worst a minor lapse in a virtue like prudence. But where they concern the maintenance of the species itself, and the material and spiritual well-being of children, women, and men—as they do where sex is concerned—acting contrary to them cannot fail to be of serious moral significance.” All of these criticisms seem awfully frivolous to us.

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Personalism

The philosophy of Personalism came to be used widely by Catholic theologians after Vatican Council II, which ended in December 1965. Many theologians didn't reject the natural law theology; they simply added another dimension to it in the explanation and understanding of human behavior. Fr. Thomas McGovern, a priest of the Prelature of *Opus Dei* in Dublin, wrote in an article entitled *The Christian Anthropology of John Paul II: An Overview*:

The Church in the twentieth century has responded with greater sensitivity to the anthropological dimension of theology. This has not happened by accident. Particular philosophers and theologians made valuable contributions to this enterprise which found expression in the documents of Vatican II, especially in the pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, and the decree on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*. . . . Vatican II was the first council of the Church to affirm a detailed Christian anthropology. The need to do so arose as a response to the materialistic conception of man which has dominated much of the twentieth century.

Before we consider the meaning of Christian anthropology, we'll make clear Fr. McGovern's meaning of materialism. Fr. John Hardon defines materialism in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* as "The theory that all reality is only matter, or a function of matter, or ultimately derived from matter." McGovern identifies three types of materialism that has affected the earth for the past few centuries: the materialism that derives from the worship of science; Marxist materialism; and the materialism that results from technological advances. In regard to the first, he states, "The experimental method tended to the view that, since only what can be measured is real, only material reality exists. At the human level, advances in biology, influenced by the theory of evolution, had led to a depreciation of the spiritual dimension of man." In regard to Marxism, he says, "the influences of the Marxist philosophy of materialism, in a tyranny without precedent in human history, brought misery and death to countless millions." And regarding the third type of materialism, he says, "the rapid development of technology, creating a wealthy society driven by consumerism. This society measures progress solely in terms of material wealth, and effectively reduces the practice of politics to the maintenance of favorable economic conditions." He concludes from this listing of materialism that "The driving principles of this rapidly expanding practical materialism are the primacy given to individual subjective rights, and the dominance of a liberal capitalistic outlook indifferent to social responsibilities at a global level."

After clarifying the various meanings of materialism, Fr. McGovern proceeds to identify several of the leading Personalist philosophers and theologians who had a direct influence on Pope John Paul's thinking. He tells us that "These personalist philosophies did not constitute a complete system, but rather expanded the framework of traditional Christian philosophy with a more profound exploration of the reaches of the human spirit." He closes this part of his article by saying:

These insights of personalist philosophy are based on the light of Revelation—on the doctrine of man made to the image and likeness of God and on the Trinitarian theology of

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relationships. These were some of the insights and strands of thinking which, added to traditional philosophy, gave impetus to the articulation of a Christian anthropology in Vatican II and subsequently in the magisterium of John Paul II.

Christian Anthropology: Anthropology literally means the study of man. Anthropology is defined in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as “The science of human beings; especially the study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space and in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture.” From a theological perspective, Christian anthropology refers to the study of humans as it relates to God; it deals with the origin, nature, and destiny of human beings. One source states that “One aspect studies the innate nature or constitution of the human, known as the nature of humankind. It is concerned with the relationship between notions such as body, soul and spirit which together form a person, based on their descriptions in the Bible.” Personalism offers a Christian anthropology as an alternative to a materialistic notion of humans.

By Christian anthropology is simply meant the Christian conception of the nature of human beings, what it is that makes them human and not something else. McGovern points out how as Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, Cardinal Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II, had a considerable influence on the composition of the documents of the council, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, otherwise known as the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.” He writes:

Chapter I is a very evocative reflection on the dignity of the human person in the light of his creation in the image and likeness of God. It is also a rich discourse on the vocation of man, the significance of human freedom and the nature of conscience. The christological conclusion at the end of this chapter (no.22), which has been repeated so often in the magisterium of John Paul II, is perhaps the best known passage of the whole document In reality, it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man.

He quotes John Paul as saying in the second chapter about one of the most important truths about ourselves that “If man is the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake, man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself. This capacity for a relationship with God and with others is a reflection of the inner relational life of God himself which is the Trinitarian communion of the divine Persons. It is of particular importance for understanding the personal vocation to holiness of every man and the evangelizing mission of the Church.” During and after Vatican II, Church documents speak of human beings as persons rather than souls, which are only part of the human being.

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The meaning of Personalism

Personalism is a variety of phenomenology, which has been defined as “the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view.” It literally means the study of “phenomena”, which are “the appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view.” Thomas D. Williams writes in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

Personalism has a “plurality of schools” and that it “exists in many different versions, and this makes it somewhat difficult to define as a philosophical and theological movement. Many philosophical schools have at their core one particular thinker or even one central work which serves as a canonical touchstone. Personalism is a more diffused and eclectic movement and has no such universal reference point. It is, in point of fact, more proper to speak of many personalisms than one personalism. In 1947 Jacques Maritain [a prominent Catholic philosopher] could write that there are at least a dozen personalist doctrines, which at times have nothing more in common than the word ‘person.’ Moreover, because of their emphasis on the subjectivity of the person and their ties to phenomenology and existentialism, some dominant forms of personalism have not lent themselves to systematic treatises.

He goes on to say:

It is perhaps more proper to speak of personalism as a ‘current’ or a broader ‘worldview’, since it represents more than one school or one doctrine while at the same time the most important forms of personalism do display some central and essential commonalities. Most important of the latter is the general affirmation of the centrality of the person for philosophical thought. Personalism posits ultimate reality and value in personhood—human as well as (at least for most personalists) divine. It emphasizes the significance, uniqueness and inviolability of the person, as well as the person's essentially relational or communitarian dimension. The title ‘personalism’ can therefore legitimately be applied to any school of thought that focuses on the reality of persons and their unique status among beings in general, and personalists normally acknowledge the indirect contributions of a wide range of thinkers throughout the history of philosophy who did not regard themselves as personalists. Personalists believe that the human person should be the ontological and epistemological starting point of philosophical reflection. They are concerned to investigate the experience, the status, and the dignity of the human being as person, and regard this as the starting-point for all subsequent philosophical analysis.

Philosophers as diverse as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Edmund Husserl, Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Mounier, Étienne Gilson, Henri De Lubac, Jacques Maritain, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and many others have been classified as personalists.

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Eight points of Personalism

One personalist philosopher has identified eight points that distinguish Personalism from other philosophies.

1. The human person is a subject, not an object like the things of the world: Since the person is called to self-determination, he or she is a moral subject, deciding on all his or her doings in conscience and consequently in a responsible way.
2. The human person is a subject in corporeality: Our body forms part of the totality that we are: what concerns our human body affects our entire person.
3. Because of the materiality of our body, our being is a being-in-the-world.
4. Human persons are essentially directed toward each other.
5. Not only because of our openness to one another are we social beings, but also because we need to live in social groups with appropriate structures and institutions.
6. Human persons are fundamentally open to God, and it is the task of moral theology to explain how, according to our Christian revelation, our relationship to God affects us in all the dimensions of our person.
7. Human persons are historical beings since they are characterized by historicity.
8. All human persons are fundamentally equal, but at the same time each is an originality, a unique subject.

None of these points are new to Catholic moral philosophy, but they do add an emphasis on human experience not found in the traditional natural law perspective.

The meaning of Christian Personalism

Christian Personalism includes all of the above eight points. Personalism has been defined as “Any of various theories of subjective idealism regarding personality as the key to the interpretation of reality.” Joseph Amato defines Personalism in his *Mounier & Maritain: A French Catholic Understanding of the Modern World*, as:

a diverse intellectual movement of the twentieth century. In part, it belongs to no one school; and in part it belongs to everyone who believes man is a personal and communal being who is mortally endangered by his own political, social, economic, and ideological creations. Anyone, in fact, who in the name of man's worth seeks simultaneously to save man from isolation and tyranny, from the furies of individualism and collectivism, can consider himself, if he wishes, a Personalist. Personalism, defined in this loose sense, includes a whole array of men and movements who, without official program, are committed to man's transcendence and are the enemies of all individuals, ideas, societies, and states that deny man the needs of his body, the dignity of his spirit, the presence and sustenance of a true human community.

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Origin of the Word Person

Since the word “person” is so important to the Personalist philosophy, how have theologians and philosophers defined the human person? The correct definition of person is extremely important, because only persons have rights. One of the reasons there has been such a loss of respect for the lives of human beings in our society is a flawed conception of the human person, for only persons have rights. The Supreme Court of the United States redefined person in such a manner to deny personhood to unborn children to justify killing them in their mother’s wombs. The Nazi’s did the same thing by excluding peoples from personhood they wanted to eliminate.

The concept “person” has not always existed. The ancient pagan world had no concept of the person; they simply saw humans as part of a larger entity, such as the family or tribe. Pagans had no conception of the value or uniqueness of each individual, something I think is also true of modern pagans as well. The concept of person is unique to Christianity. The Church found it necessary to develop the concept of person to define the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation in the face of heretical attacks on these dogmas. The early Christians, such as the great second century theologian and philosopher Tertullian, first developed the term “person” to define the Trinitarian and Christological doctrines. See our essay on this website in *Catechism: the Nicene Creed* for a detailed discussion of the personhood of God.

Severinus Boethius, who lived in the fifth and sixth centuries, was the first that we know of to define the concept “person.” He defined person as “an individual, rational substance.” To better understand his meaning of person let’s look at each of the key words in this definition.

- **Individual:** By individual is meant that a person is separate from all other persons and is unique and irreplaceable.
- **Rational:** By rational is meant that a person has the ability to think or in the case of humans, at least have the potential of rational thought. Of course, God is omniscient, i.e., his intellect has no limits; he knows everything. Since humans can think, this definition applies to them as well, even the most severely retarded.
- **Substance:** By saying that a person is a substance, we mean a person exists in himself. Personhood is not an accidental quality like hair color or skin color, but that which distinguishes God from all human beings, human beings from other types of beings, and one human being from another; substance is the very essence of personhood; it is that which makes a person what he is and not something else. Sometimes nature is used in place of essence, although there is a slight difference in there meaning. The three persons of the Trinity are composed of the same uncreated substance. On the other hand, human beings are composed of a substance created by God, which includes both the body and the soul. The soul forms and gives life to the body; body and soul together compose a human substance. The body and the soul taken separately are incomplete substances and will become complete only at the bodily resurrection at the time of the last Judgment.

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Boethius' definition of personalism is a good one as far as it goes, but the problem with it is it doesn't consider the relational aspect of personhood. In summary, persons are individuals who possess reason and are unique and irreplaceable, and is related to other beings. This definition applies to both the Persons of God and human persons.

Catholic Personalism

There are at least two major stains of Christian personalism: the so-called Boston School of Personalism, which has Methodist roots; and the Catholic brand of Personalism. The Methodists brand of personalism has been largely confined to the United States, and is associated with theologians Borden Parker Bowne and Edgar Sheffield Brightman of Boston University, Thomas O. Buford of Furman University, and Ralph Tyler Flewelling of the University of Southern California. Martin Luther King, Jr. is said to have been greatly influenced by personalism in his studies at Boston University.

There were three varieties of Catholic Personalism:

1. **France:** Emmanuel Mounier who in turn influenced Gabriel Marcel and Jacques Maritain.
2. **Germany:** Edmund Husserl whose brand of phenomenology influenced Max Scheler, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Edith Stein, all three Catholic converts. He had a lot of influence on Karol Wojtyła's philosophy (John Paul II) as well.
3. **Poland:** Roman Ingarden who influenced Karol Wojtyła among others. This brand was known as Lublin Personalism after the university where it was centered.

The leader of the movement in France, the philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, identified several contemporary thinkers as creators of this tradition, including Rudolf Hermann Lotze, a nineteenth century German philosopher and logician; Max Scheler who was a German philosopher known for his work in phenomenology, ethics, and philosophical anthropology; Martin Buber who was an Austrian-born Jewish philosopher best known for his existentialist I-Thou philosophy; Emmanuel Levinas, a French Jewish philosopher and Talmudic commentator, the Talmud being a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history; Karl Theodor Jaspers, a renowned German psychiatrist and philosopher who had a strong influence on modern theology, psychiatry and philosophy; Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev, a Russian religious and political philosopher; Henri-Louis Bergson, a major French-Jewish philosopher, who was influential in the first half of the twentieth century; the French philosopher Maurice Blondel; Charles Péguy, a noted French poet, essayist, and editor; and Jacques Maritain, who was a famous French Catholic Thomist philosopher. As should be evident from this list, not all of the pioneering Personalists were Catholics, but those who weren't had an influence on subsequent Catholic thinkers.

Because they emphasized the role that human experience plays in history, religion, and other aspects of our lives, I would add to this list Dietrich von Hildebrand, a German Catholic philo-

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sopher and theologian who Pope Pius XII called a twentieth century Doctor of the Church; Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day who were co-founders of the Catholic Worker Movement in the United States; Edmund Husserl, who was a German-Jewish philosopher and Christian convert considered to be the founder of phenomenology, which is the study of experience and intellectual processes of which we are introspectively aware; St. Edith Stein, who was a German-Jewish philosopher, convert to Catholicism, a nun who took the name of Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, and martyr at Auschwitz concentration camp, where she died in the gas chamber; Gabriel Honoré Marcel, a French Christian existentialist philosopher and playwright; Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II; and, Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Of course, many other noted personalists could be added to this list.

The Nouvelle Theologie (New Theology) and Personalism

We would also add the theologians and philosophers of the *Nouvelle Theologie* (New Theology), such as the Jesuits Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou of the Lyons province and by the Dominicans Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu of Le Saulchoir. One of the founders of the New Theology was Chenu. He and Louis Charlier had been censored and their works placed on the Index in the 1930's by Cardinal Pietro Parente of the Holy Office, now called the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. We understand that he was the first writer to use the term *New Theology* to describe the writings of Chenu and Charlier in a paper in 1942, and was a major influence in Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis* that condemned some of the ideas of these and other theologians eight years later. Parente charged these theologians, among other things, with "having followed Mohler and, more radically, the Modernists, in belittling the value of reason and privileging religious feeling." By Mohler is meant Johann Adam Möhler who was a German Roman Catholic theologian of the early nineteenth century. His ideas were rejected by the Catholics of his day as being inconsistent with the doctrines of the Church.

These theologians were involved with *Ressourcement*, by which is meant returning to the traditional sources of Catholic theology—the Scriptures, Tradition, and the Church Fathers. They also placed a lot of importance in the role of history in the development of Catholic doctrine as well as advocating the use of modern philosophy to better understand the Church's teachings when compatible with them. This movement drew some of its inspiration from earlier nineteenth century theologians and philosophers such as Johann Adam Möhler and John Henry Newman and others, including the French Catholic poets Charles Péguy and Paul Claudel. Academic theologians involved in this movement included such Belgian and German thinkers as Emile Mersch, Dom Odo Casel, Romano Guardini, Karl Adam, and Dom Anselm Stolz. Even though German theologians contributed to the movement, its undisputed center was France. Others who were considered part of the movement were the Swiss Hans Urs von Balthasar and Louis Bouyer, a French Lutheran minister who converted to Catholicism in 1939 and was very influential during Vatican II. Also, the Frenchman Etienne Gilson was considered a devotee of the New Theology.

Although the various theologians associated with the New Theology held different views on specific issues, they all believed that theology had to speak to the Church's present situation and

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that the key to theology's relevance to the present lay in the creative recovery of its past. In other words, as one scholar has said, “they all saw clearly that the first step to what later came to be known as *aggiornamento* [A bringing up to date] had to be *ressourcementó*, a rediscovery of the riches of the Church's two-thousand-year treasury, a return to the very headwaters of the Christian tradition.” To accomplish their objectives, they employed an historical methodology and utilized modern philosophies they believed were compatible with Catholic teaching.

These theologians shared a common view of how the Catholic Church should approach theology. They reacted against the dominance of Neo-Scholasticism and the scholastically-influenced manuals of the day. Neo-Scholasticism is the revival and development of medieval scholastic philosophy starting from the second half of the nineteenth century. It has sometimes been called neo-Thomism, partly because according to one source “Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century gave to scholasticism a final form, partly because the idea gained ground that only Thomism could infuse vitality into twelfth century scholasticism.” During the Renaissance humanism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, “scholastics were put to the background and somewhat forgotten.” This has been the source of the view of scholastics as a rigid, formalistic, aged and improper way of doing philosophy.

During the Catholic scholastic revival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Scholasticism was again made popular, but with a kind of narrow focus on certain scholastics and their respective schools of thought, especially Thomas Aquinas. According to one scholar, “in this context, scholasticism is often used in theology or metaphysics, but not many other areas of inquiry.” Although there were many theologians who contributed to the revival of Scholasticism in the late nineteenth century, Pope Pius IX, in various letters and especially Pope Leo XIII in his 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris* “imparted to neo-Scholasticism its definitive character and quickened its development, setting forth the principles by which the movement is to be guided in a progressive spirit, and by which the medieval doctrine is to take on new life in its modern environment.”

The New Theologians were critical of how they thought the Church seemed out of touch with the Modern World, and they held a more favorable view on ecumenism than the Church held. They thought that the methods of Scholasticism, or at least the Neo-Scholastic variety that prevailed during the first half of the twentieth century, were too rigid and formal to provide sufficient insight into the problems that afflicted modern societies. They believed that Neo-Scholasticism had strayed too far away from the original sources of revelation: Scripture and commentaries on it by the Church Fathers.

We must add that the so-called New Theologians did not reject Thomism, that is, the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, but they simply added a subjective or experiential dimension to better understand the Faith to Thomas' more objective approach. For example, Pope John Paul II always remained a Thomist at heart, but he supplemented it with a Personalist philosophy. On the other hand, Pope Benedict XVI tends to supplement a Personalist philosophy with an Augustinian theology and philosophy. De Lubac, Chenu and other *Ressourcement* theologians claimed to be Thomists all along, but asserted that their interpretation of his works was more faithful to

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Thomas than that of the Neo-Thomists or Neo-Scholastics. In the final analysis, all of those who could be classified as fitting under the umbrella of the New Theology wanted to reform theology by adding a more personalist dimension to it.

The goal of the New Theologians was a return of Catholic Theology to what they perceived as the “original purity of its thought and expression.” To achieve their goal, they advocated a “return to the sources” of the Christian Faith: namely, Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers. This methodology has been called by its French name, *ressourcement*, meaning in French a “return to the sources.” Moreover, the movement adopted openness to dialogue with the contemporary world on theological issues. They also developed a renewed interest in biblical exegesis, typology, art, literature, and mysticism. Also the New Theologians advocated employing modern philosophy to better understanding the faith whenever it is compatible with Christianity. One major project of the New Theologians was to edit and publish many of the writings of the Church Fathers.

Why were the New Theologians so critical of Neo-Scholasticism? For the New Theologians, doing theology meant doing history, which tells the story of a people's experience. The Neo-Scholasticism in vogue in the Church at the time was, for the most part, ahistorical, that is, non-historical. The history of theology and doctrinal development were hardly considered at all in the work of theologians who were devoted to the method of logic and the syllogism. In the search for religious truth, the Scholastics had refined the Church's doctrines by means of these methods, and for the most part they believed to go back to the theology of the Church Fathers or even to the Bible itself was retrogression or going backwards, rather than progression, or going forward. The New Theologians wanted to replace this methodology with a more historically oriented theology, one that took more consideration of human experience. They wanted to add an historical dimension to theology as well as to utilize other modern philosophies compatible with the Faith, especially Personalism. One scholar has said in this regard:

Yet the distinctive approach to historical theology which [the New Theologians] shared was neither mere detached, scholarly reconstruction nor a futile attempt at what Congar calls ‘restitution.’ It was rather a creative hermeneutical exercise in which the ‘sources’ of Christian faith were ‘reinterrogated’ with new questions, the burning questions of a century in travail. With such twentieth-century questions serving as hermeneutical keys, these theologians of *ressourcement* were able to unlock new rooms in the treasure house of tradition and discover there, surprisingly enough, many of the twentieth-century ideas which Neo-Scholasticism neglected or even resisted.

After having done quite a bit a study of this matter, we have come to agree. To not agree, we think, would place one in opposition of the theology of Vatican II and Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. This is, of course, what many extreme Traditionalists have done. We think there is great value in the Scholastic approach, but also that it needs to be supplemented with one that takes into account human experience, human experience as found in the Bible, the Church Fathers, and the development of Tradition.

The term *Nouvelle Théologie* was originally a negative label given the movement by its opponents.

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Usually the term is attributed to the Dominican theologian Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, one of the greatest Scholastic theologians of the twentieth century, as well as a renowned expert in spiritual theology. The future John Paul II got his doctorate in theology under him at the Dominican Angelicum University in Rome. The charge was that the theologians of the movement did not simply “return to the sources” but instead deviated from the long-standing theological tradition of the Catholic Church, thus creating a “new theology” of their own, a claim that the New Theologians denied. Traditionalists who oppose the New Theology have maintained that Pope Pius XII was condemning it in his encyclical *Humani Generis*, because he believed that it unduly criticized the Old Testament texts and “warned of a resurgence of *modernism* in many Catholic seminaries.” *Humani Generis* condemns the New Theologians, among other things, for its criticism of Neo-Scholasticism, the semi-official theology of the Church at the time. The encyclical dismisses the charge that says, “the 'innovators' reproach the 'philosophy of our schools' for 'attending to the intellect alone in the process of thought and neglecting the function of the will and the affections of the spirit,'" It states that, "it is one thing to acknowledge the role of these dispositions in knowing the truth, and another thing to assert the power of the will and of sentiment to the detriment of *ratio*, in order to diminish its role.”

The New Theology didn't fare very well with the Church during the 1950's. One has to remember that European society was in turmoil from the 1930's to the 1940's. In an article entitled “Ressourcement Theology, Aggiornamento, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition”, Marcellino D'Ambrosio describes how a broad intellectual and spiritual movement arose within the European Catholic community in response to the challenge presented by a newly secularized society, a challenge that the reigning Neo-Scholasticism seemed sorely ill-equipped to meet. Prior to Vatican II, experience played a very minor role in Catholic theology, mainly because of the bad experience the Church had had with Modernism at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. But during and after the council, the movement had increasingly more influence on Catholic theology and biblical scholarship, not all of it good by any means.

How did Personalism come to be used so widely by Catholic theologians after Vatican II? We referred above to an article by Fr Thomas McGovern who wrote regarding this matter, “The Church in the twentieth century has responded with greater sensitivity to the anthropological dimension of theology. This has not happened by accident. Particular philosophers and theologians made valuable contributions to this enterprise which found expression in the documents of Vatican II, especially in the pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, and the decree on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*.” Then he continues to say, “Vatican II was the first council of the Church to affirm a detailed Christian anthropology. The need to do so arose as a response to the materialistic conception of man which has dominated much of the twentieth century.” He points out how as Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, Cardinal Wojtyla had a considerable influence on the composition of the documents of the council, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, otherwise known as the “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.”

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Personalism after Vatican Council II

Social documents after Vatican Council II more and more reflected the philosophy of Personalism in addition to the natural law. Before Vatican II, morality was considered almost exclusively from a natural law point of view. During and after the council, Personalism was combined increasingly with natural law to explain Catholic Social Teaching. From Leo XIII to Pius XII natural law philosophy was primarily used to justify the Church's doctrines associated with personal and social morality. We see some use of personalist philosophy by Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, but it was John Paul II who made considerable use of the personalist philosophy both in personal and social morality and Pope Benedict XVI continued that practice to some extent.

Jan Jans, a professor at Tilburg University in the Netherlands, has said of this matter in an article entitled "Personalism: The Foundations of an Ethics of Responsibility":

Any 'fundamental' ethical discussion is thus a discussion on this fundamental level of one's understanding of the human person, or to use a traditional category from western thought, it is a discussion concerning human nature. What is moral can thus be delimited on the basis of the presence or absence of conformity with the natural order or natural law. Catholic moral theology—the domain within which I tend to engage in ethical reflection—witnessed the 'turning point' from an ethical reflection based on strictly formulated natural law towards one rooted in personalism during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Jans tells us that Personalism wasn't invented during the Council, but, "rather, decades of study and reflection conducted by a number of (moral) theologians came to fruition in the Council discussions and found its written form in certain important conciliar documents", such as, the document "Declaration on Religious Liberty", (*Dignitatis humanae personae*). The document begins with the Latin *personae* or person, establishing in Jan's words "a connection between freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, in which both were based on a personalist vision of the human person." He states that "Personalism as the foundation of morality is even more explicitly evident in *Gaudium et spes*, the renowned 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World'". Commenting on the document, he states:

Seen and understood from the assumptions and presuppositions of the natural law model, where 'objective' stands for immutable and established human nature, personalism is nothing more than a reformulation of the existing teaching related to the natural law. In this case, the 'objective criteria' in question are the result of a deductive process and are just as preconceived as the "nature of the person". Catholic moral theology—the domain within which I tend to engage in ethical reflection—witnessed the 'turning point' from an ethical reflection based on strictly formulated natural law towards one rooted in personalism during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Paul VI also argued in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* that the contraceptive mentality will result in men losing respect for women and "no longer (care) for her physical and psychological equilibrium" and will come to "the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment

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and no longer as his respected and beloved companion.” Professor Janet Smith of Ave Maria University maintains:

This concern reflects what has come to be known as a ‘personalist’ understanding of morality. The personalist understanding of wrongdoing is based upon respect for the dignity of the human person. The Pope realized that the Church's teaching on contraception is designed to protect the good of conjugal love. When spouses violate this good, they do not act in accord with their innate dignity and thus they endanger their own happiness. Treating their bodies as mechanical instruments to be manipulated for their own purposes, they risk treating each other as objects of pleasure.

Pope Paul applied both natural law philosophy and personalist philosophy in reasserting the Church’s longstanding tradition position against contraception.

Pope John Paul II also wrote extensively on contraception from a Personalist perspective. One scholar says of this matter, “And although the contribution of the present pope John Paul II to the conception of *Humanae vitae* remains as yet unclear, it is by now quite evident that his ‘personalism’ is equivalent to such a reformulation of neo-classical natural law ethics.” The pope began his discussion of contraception in July 1984 when in the words of one scholar he emphasized “the design of the human body revealing God's truths. It is explained and reaffirmed that the fundamental structure of males and females, which causes sexual intercourse between them to result in both greater intimacy and the capability of generating new life, demonstrates a morally inseparable connection between these two functions.” During the pope’s discussions, he explains how the bases of the Church’s moral teachings on matters of sexuality are scriptural teachings. Regarding contraception, one source reports the pope as explaining:

[the] moral wrongness of using artificial means to manipulate such a significant aspect of the created body. However, the language expressed by bodies, in this context the language expressed during sexual intercourse, is so damaged by the use of artificial contraception that the conjugal act ‘*ceases to be an act of love . . . [or] communion of persons*’ but rather is a mere bodily union.” The source goes on to say, On “the other hand, the licitness of natural family planning (NFP) methods is held to be evident from the structure of the human body, which has natural periods of fertility and infertility. The morality of these methods was literally designed into the body, and use of them, unlike use of artificial contraception, can actually improve the dialog between couples which is expressed through the language of the body. Throughout these speeches the main emphasis is on the intrinsic *goodness* of the marital act. The power of love between spouses is said to both lead to and be nourished by the moral use of the conjugal act. Thus, moral exercise of sexual intercourse uses the form of the body to reveal the love of God toward Creation.”

He concludes this discussion by saying, “John Paul states many other benefits claimed for moral use of NFP, some from *Humanae Vitae*. These include an increase of marital peace, less spousal selfishness, increased and more positive influence over their children (5 September 1884), and increased dignity of person through following the law of God. Use of NFP is also said to increase appreciation of children, by fostering respect for what is created by God.”

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Karol Wojtyła's (John Paul II) brand of personalism

Pope John Paul II wrote thirteen encyclical letters in which he employed his personalist philosophy by focusing on the dignity of each human person as ends in themselves, not means to achieving ends. One scholar has said of the pope's philosophy: "Through this lens, John Paul II analyzed the problems faced by the contemporary world and provided penetrating insight into their solutions—solutions that focused not on political or economic policy, but on conversion."

Karol Wojtyła grew up around the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, where he attended as a student and later served as a professor. One of his professors in the early 1940's was Roman Ingarden, who had gotten his doctorate in philosophy in Germany under Edmund Husserl, the Father of phenomenology. Phenomenology has been defined as "the philosophical study of the structures of subjective experience and consciousness." As a philosophical movement it was founded in the early years of the twentieth century by Husserl and was later expanded upon by a circle of his followers at the universities of Göttingen and Munich in Germany. From there it spread to France, the United States, and elsewhere, often in contexts far removed from Husserl's early work. One source states that "Phenomenology, in Husserl's conception, is primarily concerned with the systematic reflection on and study of the structures of consciousness and the phenomena that appear in acts of consciousness."

Ingarden encouraged Wojtyła to read Max Scheler and he ended up doing his doctoral dissertation in philosophy on Scheler's ethics of values, which he presented in 1953. Scheler was a German philosopher known for his work in phenomenology, ethics, and philosophical anthropology. He further developed Husserl's philosophical method, and the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset called him "the first man of the philosophical paradise." Even the German philosopher Martin Heidegger thought that all philosophers of the century were indebted to Scheler and praised him as "the strongest philosophical force in modern Germany, nay, in contemporary Europe and in contemporary philosophy as such." In 1954, Wojtyła defended his doctoral thesis on "An Evaluation of the Possibility of Constructing a Christian Ethics on the Basis of the System of Max Scheler." We must add that he didn't find Scheler's personalism very helpful in understanding Catholic morality more deeply.

Wojtyła had received a solid Aristotelian-Thomistic formation at the Angelicum University in Rome and he used the phenomenological method in the words of one scholar to "develop a creative and original personalistic synthesis, enriching Thomistic metaphysics and anthropology with insights from phenomenology." Wojtyła later took a professorship of ethics at both the Theological Faculty of Cracow and Lublin's Catholic University, where he founded the Polish personalistic school, also known as the Lublin School. As one scholar has written:

Like all students of his time, he was well formed in the philosophical principles of Thomist theology, accepting fully St Thomas' definition of the person as a subject of intellectual and volitional actions. His philosophical approach, however, enabled him to study a dimension of the person not developed in Thomist ontology—the creative aspect of human action and interpersonal relations. Descriptive analysis of human experience through the phenom-

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enological method allowed him deepen his understanding of the person as a being who entrusts himself to God.

Some scholars have classified John Paul's personalism as Thomistic Personalism. His Aristotelian-Thomistic formation was accomplished at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, which is a Dominican school, otherwise known as the Angelicum. There he wrote his doctoral thesis on St. Thomas under the direction of the great Neo-Scholastic Thomist Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. As I just mentioned in the paragraph above, he wrote his doctoral dissertation in philosophy on the ethical system of the phenomenologist philosopher Max Scheler. Thomistic Personalism was developed by John Paul and others, such as Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, Robert Spaemann, and Yves Simon in response to "the dehumanizing forces of determinism and materialism of the nineteenth century, and especially against collectivism on the one hand and individualism on the other." As one scholar has said of Wojtyła's personalism, "his personalism was influenced by his experience of Hegelian totalitarianisms in his native Poland, both of Nietzschean (National Socialism) and Marxist (Leninist Communism) stamp. In his 1994 work, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, the pope narrates how interest in man and in his dignity became the main theme of the polemic against Marxism, and this because the Marxists themselves had made the question of man the center of their arguments."

John Paul experienced both Nazi and Communists totalitarianism directly himself. They developed in nineteenth century Germany and Communism spread to Russia and elsewhere during the twentieth century, including into his native Poland. The nineteenth century saw the dehumanizing effects of the collectivistic philosophies of Hegel and Marx, the deterministic sociology of Comte, the biological determinism and materialism of Darwin, the atheistic collectivistic philosophy of Nietzsche, and the psychological determinism of Freud. Furthermore, the Scientific, Technological, and Industrial revolutions contributed further to the dehumanization of society. The dominance of Liberal Capitalism, with its excessive individualism, also contributed to human misery. John Paul II, as Karol Wojtyła, experienced both Nazi and Communist tyranny.

John Paul and others developed their brand of personalism to counter the dehumanizing effects of these tyrannies. In the words of one scholar, the Thomist brand of personalism is distinguished from other brands by "adopting a Thomistic metaphysics that posits man's rational nature as the essential difference between persons and non-personal beings. Based on this key difference, Thomistic personalism focuses on the singularity of persons vis-à-vis other beings, not just as numeric members of a species, but as self-determining subjects possessing a unique dignity and worthy of special regard." By applying Thomistic metaphysics to their analysis of the human person, the Thomas personalists were able to avoid the subjectivism of other personalist philosophies.

The problem of totalitarianism was to be a major consideration of Vatican Council II. And that was in part due to Karol Wojtyła's influence on the Council as Cardinal Archbishop of Cracow. In light of past Nazi tyranny and present Communist atheism and materialism, he thought that the time was right for the Council in the words of one scholar "to emphasize the transcendent spiritual order and the uniqueness of human personal existence in the created world. In other words, he

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concluded, ‘it is appropriate to delineate the question of Christian personalism.’” This scholar continues to say “the brutality of the Nazi occupation as a student and seminarian, and, later, of the tyranny of Communist oppression, gave him a unique perspective on the fundamental truths about man that needed to be proclaimed and defended by the Church.” He then quotes Cardinal Wojtyla as saying, “The two totalitarian systems which tragically marked our century—Nazism on the one hand, marked by the horrors of war and the concentration camps, and communism on the other, with its regime of oppression and terror—I came to know, so to speak, from within. And so it is easy to understand my deep concern for the dignity of each human person and the need to respect human rights, beginning with the *right to life*. This concern was shaped in the first years of my priesthood and has grown stronger with time.”

Others who heavily influenced Wojtyla’s personalist philosophy was another of Husserl’s disciples, Dietrich von Hildebrand, who as I said earlier Pope Pius XII called a twentieth century Doctor of the Church. During his professorial years Wojtyla produced two important books using the personalistic methodology, one being *Love and Responsibility* in 1960 and the other *The Acting Person* in 1962 as well as numerous essays, lectures, and articles. One scholar has said that his concern for the acting person “arose not from the disputes with Marxism, but rather from his deep personal interest in man.” He says that “In describing his own calling, John Paul writes that ‘when I discovered my priestly vocation, man became the *central theme of my pastoral work*.’ From the above, one already foresees the anthropological slant that Wojtyla’s work would take.”

According to Max Scheler, Philosophical Anthropology is the philosophical science concerned with the questions about the essence or nature of man. Cardinal Wojtyla stated, “The centrality of the human person in moral theology represents a shift of emphasis from a more nomothetic framework to an ethics based on philosophical and theological anthropology.” By “nomothetic” he means a Natural Law framework. As Pope John Paul II, he told the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, then headed by Joseph Ratzinger, the future Benedict XVI, that in order to renew moral theology we need to return to Christology and anthropology. To quote one scholar on the matter, his principal objective was “to incorporate into Aquinas’ objectivistic anthropology of the person a more dynamic, personalistic approach.” Pope John Paul was to apply his Thomistic Personalism to both personal ethical issues as well as social issues. As one scholar has said in this regard:

As Pope he has continued to employ personalistic arguments in his magisterial teaching, and in a sense has conferred on personalism a certain authority which raises it above the level of a mere philosophical position. John Paul clearly sees personalism as coalescing with revealed truths about the human person, and therefore as a contribution to theological reflection and renewal. He speaks of ‘regret’ that the Second Vatican Council’s doctrine of the dignity of the human person, who is united through the Covenant to Christ, the Creator and Redeemer, ‘has still not been introduced into theology nor has it been well applied.’ From this, John Paul identifies ‘the need for theological renewal based on the personalistic nature of man.’ He likewise explicitly invokes the personalistic argument in his encyclical letters *Laborem Exercens*.

The pope wrote in another social encyclical *Centesimus Annus* that “It will be necessary to keep

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in mind that the main thread and, in a certain sense, the guiding principle . . . of all of the Church's social doctrine is a *correct view of the human person* and of his unique value." *Centesimus Annus* makes it perfectly clear that the Church's social doctrine begins with the principle that "there is something due to the person because he is a person," and that "social structures must be evaluated according to how they serve the person." John Paul argues that "the social order will be stable only if it takes the rights and interests of individual persons into account; any attempt to oppose the common good and the good of individual persons will be doomed to failure." John Paul states, "What the social order needs is a correct understanding of the human person—a proper anthropology. The church makes her contribution by offering a Christian anthropology—a view of man that is rooted in theology. In this way, one moves from the social order to the human person to the revelation in Christ of what it means to be human. In my case, that progression was from economics to economic personalism to Christian anthropology to theology."

Criticisms of Personalism

Difference between person and individual: Some conservative critics of personalism claim that the philosophy is too individualistic. What is the difference between Personalism and Individualism? This is an important distinction, because personalists stress the belief in the uniqueness of the human person by distinguishing between the concepts of "person" and "individual." Thomas Williams tells us in his article "What is Thomistic Personalism?" that "The major difference is that an individual represents a single, countable unit in a homogeneous species of being, interchangeable with any other member of the species, whereas a person is characterized by his uniqueness and irreplaceability." In this regard, he quotes the famous Catholic theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar as saying, "Few words have as many layers of meaning as *person*. On the surface it means just any human being, any countable individual. Its deeper senses, however, point to the individual's uniqueness which cannot be interchanged and therefore cannot be counted." Commenting on this quotation, Williams states:

In this deeper sense persons cannot, properly speaking, be counted, because a single person is not merely one in a series within which each member is identical to the rest for all practical purposes, and thus exchangeable for any other. One can count apples, because one apple is as good as another (i.e., what matters is not that it is *this* apple, but simply that it is *an* apple), but one cannot count *persons* in this way. One can count human beings, as individuals of the same species, but the word *person* emphasizes the uniqueness of each member of the human species, his incommunicability.

Since individualism is a term that is so widely used and prized in democratic societies such as our own, is there anything wrong with using the concept of individualism with respect to human beings? It depends on what one means by individualism. Williams says that to the extent that individualism is "the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, or social outlook that stresses the moral worth of the individual, and places emphasis on independence and self-reliance, it can be good, but to the extent that it leads to severe social fragmentation [and atomization of society], it is bad." As one personalist scholar has said, "most personalists have been very sensitive to the

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sterility of individualism.” He goes to write, “[Personalists] have taken very seriously the interpersonal relations in which human persons live and move and have their being. The interiority of a person does not isolate a person from others, but rather opens him or her to others. Personalists refuse to think about social life only in terms of rights and of protection against intruders; they also think in terms of solidarity and co-responsibility. The personalism to which we are committed impels us to work towards a new kind of solidarity that is precisely based on the fact that each member, as person, is always more than a mere part of the community.”

In other words, human beings are social beings by their nature. Persons are made for relationships with other human beings. They can only be human in relationship with other human persons. Williams commenting on John Paul’s view regarding this matter says, “The person never exists in isolation, and moreover finds his human perfection only in communion with other persons. Interpersonal relations, consequently, are never superfluous or optional to the person, but are constitutive of his inherent make-up and vocation. By underscoring the person’s vocation to communion, personalists endeavor to overcome the polarization of individualism on the one hand and collectivism on the other . . . As much as he may strive for independence, the human person necessarily relies on others.” To prove his point, Williams writes, “In the first place [the human person] depends radically on God as the source of his being. Moreover, from the moment of conception he depends on other persons for his survival and development, and this interdependence is a hallmark of human existence. The human person tends towards society as a basic human value. Thus Aristotle, when considering the good of self-sufficiency, hastens to add that such a term is not employed with reference ‘to oneself alone, living a life of isolation, but also to one’s parents and children and wife, and one’s friends and fellow citizens in general, since man is by nature a social being.’” Pope John Paul and other personalists tie the “law of the gift” that shows in William’s words that:

[T]he relation and society of which the person alone is capable, and which is necessary for his realization as a person, consists not only in association, but in love. It consists in a love which gives and gives itself, which receives not only things but other persons as well. Only persons can give love and only persons can receive love. Love has as its true object other persons, not things nor even qualities, but the person himself. Whereas individualism seeks the self above all and views others as means to one’s own profit, love seeks to make of the self a gift to another. Where individualism hopes to find personal realization in self-interest, love realizes that, in the words of the Council, ‘man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself.’ Here the antagonism between individualism and personalism manifests itself.

We’ll finish this topic by quoting from Pope John Paul’s *Letter to Families*, where he writes of the antithesis between individualism and personalism:

Love, the civilization of love, is bound up with personalism. Why with personalism? And why does individualism threaten the civilization of love? We find a key to answering this in the council’s expression, a ‘sincere gift.’ Individualism presupposes a use of freedom in which the subject does what he wants, in which he himself is the one to ‘establish the truth’ of whatever he finds pleasing or useful. He does not tolerate the fact that someone else

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‘wants’ or demands something from him in the name of an objective truth. He does not want to ‘give’ to another on the basis of truth; he does not want to become a ‘sincere gift.’ Individualism thus remains egocentric and selfish. The real antithesis between individualism and personalism emerges not only on the level of theory, but even more on that of ethos. The ethos of personalism is altruistic: It moves the person to become a gift for others and to discover joy in giving himself. This is the joy about which Christ speaks.

In summary, we’ll quote Fr. Thomas McGovern again:

Christian anthropology is grounded on fundamental guiding principles about man, his history, and his destiny. In response to the dechristianization of the West through different forms of materialism, the Church wishes to propose and activate a new evangelizing dynamic. Recent philosophical and theological reflection has provided the Church with new insights and ideas which have facilitated a novel and vibrant restatement of the principles of Christian anthropology, especially as presented by Vatican II and in the magisterium of John Paul II. These principles can be summarized as follows: First, man is the image of God; this is the fundamental truth about the human person and the point of departure for all subsequent reflection on him. Second, Christ revealed man to man; he is the way and the truth for every human person. Third, the communion of love of persons is a reflection of the inner life of the Blessed Trinity. This is the point of departure for understanding the nature of the nuclear Christian family which is a microcosm and model of an authentic human society. Finally, man attains self-fulfillment in the giving of himself to others; this is the Christian conception of man’s calling and the basis to organize a better society which can only be achieved through charity.

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Documents of the Catholic Church's Social Teachings

According to one theologian, “there can be no doubt that a significant development toward historical consciousness has occurred in the body of official social teaching” over the past century.” During the nineteenth century the Catholic Church opposed much of the freedom and thought of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. In the words of one theologian, “Freedom in religion, philosophy, science, and politics threatened the old order in all its aspects. Individualistic freedom forgot about human beings' relationships to God, to God's law, to human society in general, and to other human beings. Continental liberalism with its emphasis on individualistic freedom was seen as the primary enemy of the church.”

It was Pope Leo XIII who “broke the ice” so to speak and began an accommodation of the Church with the modern world. As popes tried to chart a middle course between the extremes of individualistic capitalism and collective socialism, they became more historical and inductive. Since Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, the Church's social documents have evolved to account for changing social, cultural and historical circumstances, especially since the Second Vatican Council. During and after the council, the Church has increasingly taken into account historical and personalist considerations in its documents. The Church's social documents become less deductive and more inductive with each successive encyclical or letter.

The main shift was in the words of one theologian, a “*Shift to the person, with an emphasis on freedom, equality, and participation.*” He goes on to say, “Within the time frame of the one hundred year span, there has been a very significant shift in Catholic social teaching, away from an emphasis on human nature with a concomitant stress on order, the acceptance of some inequality, and obedience to the many controlling authorities to a recognition of the vital importance of the human person with the concomitant need for human freedom, equality, and participation.”

Although Leo was by no means a radical in either theology or politics, his papacy did move the Church back to the mainstream of European life. He was very much a part of the old Scholastic tradition with its emphasis on natural law as the governing factor in human morality. One source has written of this matter:

[Leo] stressed order and social cohesiveness rather than freedom. God's law and the natural law govern human existence. Leo's view of society was authoritarian, or at least paternalistic. He often referred to the people as the ignorant multitude that had to be led by their rulers. We must recall, of course, the very low state of literacy existing at that time. In social ethics, freedom was seen as a threat to the social organism. Individualistic capitalism was condemned as a form of economic liberalism that claimed that one could pay whatever wage one could get away with. Leo was no friend of democracy, because no majority could do away with God's law. And freedom of religion could never be promoted, but only, at best, be tolerated as the lesser evil in certain circumstances.

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Aeterni Patris

Pope Leo XIII accomplished a lot in his long reign of 35 years (1878-1903). As soon as he was elected to the papacy, he worked to encourage understanding between the Church and the modern world. He thought the most effective way to do this was to firmly reassert in his 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (Eternal Father) “On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy” the scholastic doctrine that science and religion should co-exist. As Pope, he used all his authority to revive the theology and philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, which, more than any other single document, provided a charter for the revival of Thomism. His intention was to make the thought of Aquinas—as the official philosophical and theological system of the Roman Catholic Church. It was to be normative not only in the training of priests at church seminaries but also in the education of the laity at universities. He believed to reinstate the importance of Scholasticism, especially the philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, could provide weapons with which to combat modern atheistic socialism and liberal capitalism.

The encyclical attempts to clarify the roles of faith and philosophy (reason), later to be followed by John Paul II's encyclical, *Fides et Ratio* (*On] Faith and Reason]*), showing how each profits from the other. According to the encyclical, the philosophy most useful for explaining and defending the Faith is that of St. Thomas. His approach was new, because since the French Revolution, most popes had defended the Faith by condemning the errors in contemporary philosophy, not to explicitly recommend a return to Scholasticism. The encyclical, however, was no surprise to anyone acquainted with the pope before his election to the papacy. As Cardinal Pecci, he had for years been spearheading a Thomistic revival in the schools in his diocese of Perugia, Italy.

The document was, of course, disliked by some scholars, but even those who liked it interpreted its meaning differently. Some used it to authorize a return to a strict adherence to St. Thomas' Realist philosophy; others believed the document urges more a return to the spirit of Thomistic thinking than a strict adherence to it. Whatever the various effects might have been, the document succeeded in reestablishing St. Thomas as a central figure in Catholic philosophy.

Providentissimus Deus,

In his 1893 encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, Pope Leo XIII described the importance of scriptures for theological study. It was an important encyclical for Catholic theology and its relation to the Bible, for as Pope Pius XII said fifty years later in his encyclical on the Bible, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*:

On the Study of Holy Scripture, was an encyclical issued by Pope Leo XIII on 18 November 1893. In it, he reviewed the history of Bible study from the time of the Church Fathers to the present, spoke against the errors of the Rationalists and “higher critics”, and outlined principles of scripture study and guidelines for how scripture was to be taught in seminaries. He also addressed the issues of apparent contradictions between the Bible and

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physical science, or between one part of scripture and another, and how such apparent contradictions can be resolved.

In 1892 Leo instituted the *École Biblique* in Jerusalem, the first Catholic school specifically dedicated to the critical study of the bible. With *Providentissimus Deus*, Pope Leo gave the first formal authorization for the use of critical methods in biblical scholarship. In 1902, he instituted the Pontifical Biblical Commission, whose purpose was “to adapt Roman Catholic Biblical studies to modern scholarship and to protect Scripture against attacks.”

Leo XIII and Rerum Novarum

Essentially, Leo XIII had two concerns. First, he opposed the atheistic philosophy of communism, but recognized its appeal to workers. Communism offered workers a socio-economic and political alternative to the self-interested alliance between aristocratic privilege and capital-industrial interests. In short, it was an influential part of a growing movement for political and economic equality. The Church could not ignore this movement. Secondly, he took issue with what he saw as the excesses of liberal-capitalist development in Europe. Liberal capitalism has material possessions as man's highest goals and it shares this view with Marxist communism. For this reason the Catholic Church has consistently opposed both philosophies. This opposition was expressed in several papal encyclicals over a hundred-year period.

Rerum Novarum is an encyclical issued by Pope Leo XIII on May 15, 1891, literally meaning in Latin “*Of New Things*.” It is the custom of naming papal encyclicals by the first two or three words in Latin, which is the Church’s official language. The English title of the encyclical is “On the Condition of the Working Classes.” It was an open letter sent to all Catholic bishops that addressed the condition of the working classes. It not only discussed the relationships and mutual duties between labor and capital, but also of government and its citizens. Of primary concern was the need for some amelioration of “The misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class.” It supported the rights of labor to form unions, rejected socialism and liberal or unrestricted capitalism, while affirming the right to private property. The Pope was prompted to write the encyclical over a growing concern with the atheistic philosophy of communism, which was becoming so prevalent during the latter nineteenth century, especially among European workers. A scholar has said of the matter, “Communism offered workers a socio-economic and political alternative to the self-interested alliance between aristocratic privilege and capital-



Rerum novarum was an encyclical published by Pope Leo XIII on May 15 1891, meaning in Latin “of revolutionary change” and whose English title is “Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor”, It was sent to all bishops, addressing the condition of the working classes. It is considered a foundational text of Catholic social teaching, and many positions taken by the pope were developed further by later encyclicals, such as Pius XI *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), John XXIII *Mater et magistra* (1961), and John Paul II’s *Centesimus annus* (1991).

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industrial interests. In short, it was an influential part of a growing movement for political and economic equality. The Church could not ignore this movement.”

The document was written within the context of a lot of poverty and discontent among the working classes of Europe and North America. One source has written on this subject, “Because of the Industrial Revolution, workers are being exploited by profit-hungry employers. Public authorities are not protecting the rights of the poor.” Since it was the first social encyclical, and set the tone for all subsequent social encyclicals, it is considered “the most significant of all the encyclicals before or since.” One scholar has maintained that “*Rerum Novarum* broke down the barriers that separated the church from the worker. Never before had the church spoken on social matters in such an official and comprehensive fashion.” He goes on to say that the encyclical was the “First comprehensive document of social justice” and that it, “brings the subject of workers' rights to light.”

Ultimately Pope Leo’s goal was to reconcile the Church with the working class, particularly by dealing with the social changes that were sweeping Europe that so adversely affected them. The new capitalistic economic order had resulted in the growth of an impoverished working class, with increasing anti-clerical and socialist sympathies. Leo’s goal was to reverse this trend. He was a great diplomat as well as a defender of the Faith against anti-Catholic sentiments. *Rerum Novarum* addressed for the first time social inequality and social justice issues with Papal authority, focusing on the rights and duties of capital and labor.

The principle concern to the pope was the excesses of liberal-capitalist development in Europe. Among these excesses were “the exploitation and dire poverty of workers and the concomitant concentration of privilege and wealth in the hands of a few.” One scholar has summarized the pope’s recommendations to rectify these conditions, which include:

1. Recognition and promotion of human dignity through just distribution of wealth.
2. Present inequality creates a decline of morality as shown in alcohol consumption, prostitution, and divorce.
3. Workers have basic human rights that adhere to Natural Law, which says all humans are equal.
4. Basic economic and political rights, including the right to work, to own private property, to receive a just wage, and to organize into workers' associations.
5. Employers and employees each have rights and responsibilities: while the worker should not riot to create a situation of conflict with the employer.
6. The employer should maintain an environment respecting worker's dignity.
7. The just organization of society for the common good.

He summarizes the encyclical by saying, “In short, Leo rejected communism and the philosophy on which it was based. At the same time, he did not ignore the basis of its appeal to workers and condemned the exploitative nature of the liberal-capitalist alternative. This encyclical became the standard for all other subsequent documents on social and economic issues.” He concludes his discussion of the encyclical by saying, “The church has the right to speak out on social issues. Its

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role is to teach social principles and bring social classes together. The state's role is to create a just society through laws that preserve rights.” The pope also stresses the primacy of the family and local associations and that the state exists to facilitate their functioning, not to determine or control how they function.

As we said at the beginning of this essay, although the Church’s social teachings have existed from Jesus’ time onward, we usually think of Catholic social teaching or doctrine as having been developed by several popes since the end of the nineteenth century on political, economic, and social matters related to poverty and wealth. It is almost universally accepted that the foundation of Catholic social doctrine was laid by Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*. Following Pope Leo, several other popes wrote social encyclicals addressing the political and social issues of their times. All of the subsequent social documents of the Church have built on his ground-breaking encyclical. Although this encyclical is considered a foundational text of modern Catholic social teaching, as we shall see below, many of his positions were supplemented by later encyclicals, such as Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), John XXIII's *Mater et magistra* (1961), and John Paul II's *Centesimus annus* (1991). Moreover, Vatican Council II and various Church agencies have released important documents on these matters as well. Taken all together these letters and documents comprise the social teaching or doctrines of the Catholic Church.

Development occurred in the methodology of official Catholic social teaching precisely because of changing historical circumstances. In the nineteenth century, the church opposed the individualistic liberalism of the day. In the twentieth century, as time went on, the central problem became the rise and existence of totalitarian governments, both on the political right and left. In this context, the Catholic Church began to defend the freedom and dignity of the human person against the encroachments of totalitarianism. For example, Pope Pius XI wrote encyclical letters in the 1930's against fascism, Nazism, and Communism. After World War II, Catholic teaching consistently and constantly attacked communism stressing the freedom and dignity of the individual.

Pope Pius XI and Quadragesimo Anno

The second great document on Catholic Social Teaching was Pope Pius XI's 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. The English title of the encyclical is “On the Reconstruction of the Social Order.” The Latin is literally translated to “In forty Years,” which commemorated the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. The document was written in response to the Great Depression of the 1930's, which “rocked the world.” Democracy was declining in Europe and dictators were emerging to take power in Italy, Germany, and elsewhere. This encyclical repeated many of the themes of *Rerum Novarum*, such as the dignity of labor, the rights of workers to organize, etc. It also emphasized the immorality of keeping economic control in the hands of a few. It recognized the principle of subsidiarity, which is the doctrine that “higher levels of authority should act only when lower levels cannot deal with a problem.” It also emphasized that labor and capital need each other, and that a just wage is necessary so workers can acquire private property, too. The

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state has the responsibility to reform the social order, since economic affairs can't be left to free enterprise alone. The pope approved of public intervention in labor-management disputes and urged international economic cooperation. One scholar has summarized the main points of *Quadragesimo Anno* nicely by saying:



Quadragesimo anno (Latin for “In the 40th Year”) is an encyclical issued by Pope Pius XI on 15 May 1931, 40 years after Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum novarum*. Unlike Leo XIII, who addressed the condition of workers, Pius XI discusses the ethical implications of the social and economic order. He describes the major dangers for human freedom and dignity arising from unrestrained capitalism and totalitarian socialism /communism. He also calls for the reconstruction of the social order based on the principle of solidarity and subsidiarity.

After detailing the positive impact *Rerum novarum* has had on the social order—through the church, civil authorities, and now-flourishing unions—[the Pope] stresses that a new situation warrants a new response. [He] charges that capitalism's free competition has destroyed itself, with the state having become a ‘slave’ serving its greed. Also, while the lot of workers has improved in the Western World, it has deteriorated else-where. [He warns] against a communist solution, however, because communism condones violence and abolishes private property. [Moreover] labor and capital need each other. [The Pope writes that] a just wage is necessary so workers can acquire private property, too.

He closes by stating, “The state has the responsibility to reform the social order, since economic affairs can't be left to free enterprise alone. Public intervention in labor-management disputes approved; international economic cooperation urged.”

We don't see much evidence yet of a personalistic philosophy in Pius' encyclical. Keep in mind this encyclical was released in 1931. As we have heard, the pope proposes in this encyclical is a plan for the reorganization of the world's social and economic system into what one theologian has called “moderate corporatism or solidarity.” He says:

This papal plan, in keeping with the traditional emphasis in the Catholic tradition, sees all the different institutions that are part of society as working together for the common good of all. Catholic social teaching has insisted on the metaphor of society as an organism with all the parts existing for the good of the totality. In such an understanding, labor and capital should not be adversaries fighting one another, but should work together for the common good.

The idea of society being an organism with various parts working together in harmony for the common good is a conservative or traditional one, one that was very common in the nineteenth and earlier centuries. This theologian states that the deductive nature of the plan is “quite evident”, and that “Such a deductive methodology is in keeping with the neoscholastic thesis [or natural law] approach to theology.”

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Pope John XXIII: Mater et Magistra

That brings us to Pope John XXIII's 1961 social encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, which means "Mother and Teacher" in English. Its English title is "Christianity and Social Progress". One source has said that this was a time when advancements "in nuclear energy, automation, space exploration, and improved communication technologies pose complex, new problems for industrialized nations. Meanwhile, millions live in poverty in Asia, Africa, and Latin America." This encyclical "gave an updated interpretation of the classic theme of private property and introduced the notion of private initiative as an extension of private property." A source has said that its innovation was to internationalize "for the first time, the plight of nonindustrialized nations." Pope John was also greatly concerned with the conditions for world peace, confronting the arms race, international relations, racism and aid to poor countries for economic development.

Previous encyclicals had left responsibility for social justice with the individual, but *Mater et Magistra* placed some responsibility for this in the hands of the state. One scholar has written that to fully understand this document one has to read Pope John's *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) in conjunction with it. One scholar sums up the main points of the encyclical as *Mater et Magistra* as follows:

- The encyclical enumerates the economic, scientific, social, and political developments that have taken place since *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno*;
- that there is not just a disparity between rich and poor classes anymore—there's a disparity between rich and poor nations;
- that the condition of the world's farmers is bad and must be improved;
- that the arms race and spending contributes to poverty;
- and that peace would be possible if economic imbalances among nations were righted.

He concludes by saying that the Pope claims, "It's the duty of wealthy, industrialized nations to help poor, nonindustrialized nations; but in giving aid, it is every country's duty to respect the latter's culture and to refrain from domination. Since technological advances have made nations interdependent as never before, cooperation and mutual assistance are necessary. The Pope says all Catholics should be reared on Catholic social teaching."



Mater et magistra is the encyclical written by Pope John XXIII on the topic of "Christianity and Social Progress". It was promulgated on 15 May 1961. The title means "mother and teacher", referring to the role of the church. It describes a necessity to work towards authentic community in order to promote human dignity. It taught that the state must sometimes intervene in matters of health care, education, and housing.

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Pope John XXIII: Pacem in Terris

Pacem in Terris means “Peace on Earth.” in English. This document was issued on April 11, 1963 and was welcomed by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, because of “Its optimistic tone and development of a philosophy of rights.” It was issued during the midst of the Cold War, which was a particularly tense time, because of the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

Pope John XXIII admired the New Theologians, who were both personalist oriented and conscious of historical developments. He had come into contact with the New Theologians, who were progressive, but orthodox, while serving as papal nuncio in France during the late WWII years. He especially admired Henri de Lubac. After becoming Pope in 1958, he called for an ecumenical council and appointed de Lubac as a consultant to the Preparatory Theological Commission for the upcoming council. He was then made a *peritus* or theological expert to the Council itself, and later, Pope Paul VI made him a member of its Theological Commission as well as of two secretariats. Pope Paul thought so much of him that he proposed making him a Cardinal, but de Lubac refused the honor, because he didn’t want to have to be a bishop as well. The pope elevated de Lubac's junior colleague, Jean Daniélou, to the cardinalate instead. Pope John Paul II made de Lubac a cardinal in 1983, with a dispensation from having to be consecrated a bishop.

Although largely deductive and Neo-Scholastic in tone, Pope John XXIII's social encyclicals *Pacem in Terris* and *Mater et Magistra* reflect some personalist thinking and historical consciousness. To illustrate the point, Fr. Charles Curran brings to our attention that “at the end of each of the four chapters or parts of *Pacem in Terris*, there is a short section on the signs of the times—the special characteristics of the present day.” He goes on to say, “Two years later, *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World of the Second Vatican Council, gives a much greater emphasis to historical consciousness. Each of the five chapters in the second part of the document deals with a specific area of concern and each begins with the signs of the times.”

According to one scholar, Pope John in his 1961 *Mater et Magistra* insisted that the ideal social order rests on the three values of truth, justice, and love. Two years later, in *Pacem in Terris*, the pope adds a fourth element—freedom. He says in this regard:

Pacem in Terris develops, for the first time, a full-blown treatment of human rights in the Catholic tradition. Before that time, Catholic thought had been fearful of rights language, precisely because of the danger of excessive individualism. Catholic social teaching had insisted on duties and obedience to the divine and natural law, and not on rights. In its quite late embracing of the human rights tradition, *Pacem in Terris* still recognizes the danger of individualism by including economic rights and by insisting on the correlation between rights and duties.

The Pope outlined in the encyclical the conditions necessary for ensuring peace in the world. He details the specific social rights and responsibilities “that ought to exist (1) between people, (2)

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between people and their public authorities, (3) between states, and (4) among people and nations at the level of the world community.” He said in the words of one scholar that, “Some specifics: cultural changes demand that women have more rights; justice, right reason, and human dignity demand that the arms race must cease; [and] the United Nations needs to be strengthened.”

Vatican II and Gaudium et Spes

One of the most important social documents of the twentieth century was not a papal encyclical, but one of the documents of Vatican II entitled *Gaudium et Spes*, which is Latin for *Joy and Hope*. The English title is “The Church in the Modern World.” This is one of the principle documents of Vatican Council II. Issued in December 1965, the document was the “first social teaching to represent opinions of the world’s bishops.” It was issued in the midst of the Cold War and arms race. One source sums up the document well as follows: “It is up to all Catholics, as the ‘People of God’, to scrutinize the great technological and social changes—good and bad—that have transformed the world.” Some of these changes include industrialization and mass communication, then lists many changes they have effected in turn, such as “greater gaps between rich and poor, overpopulation, rapid growth of city life, [and] questioning of traditional values by the younger generation, etc.”

He goes on to say, “*Gaudium et spes* also explores the relationship between the Catholic Church and humanity. His summary states “that while the church isn’t bound to any party or social system, its mission ‘begins in this world’; all people called to improve the world; Jesus is the lord of history; etc.” The summary closes by saying, “Families, the foundation of society, are especially vulnerable to today’s new trends; the Catholic Church should use culture more to spread the gospel; with new developments in weaponry, a new evaluation of war is needed.”

Dr. Jeffrey Mirus sums up the document nicely in “Vatican II on the Church and the World: Man’s Calling” where he writes “The final document of the Second Vatican Council addresses the relationship of the Church to the modern world, and what the Church has to offer men as they struggle to develop and solve problems old and new . . . it is also the Council’s longest document. However, as the Council wishes in this case to address modern problems in fairly broad terms, the document is not doctrinally dense.” He continues:

The English title indicates that *Gaudium et Spes* has a pastoral purpose—the purpose of enabling the Church to speak more effectively to mankind. Therefore it should be distinguished from the earlier *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, which was devoted primarily to doctrine on the nature and constitution of the Church. By way of introduction to the current *Pastoral Constitution*, the Council Fathers note that the Church shares all human joys, hopes, anxieties and griefs, and so the Church wishes to propose the wisdom of Christ to the whole of redeemed humanity. “The human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed,” the Council notes. “Hence the focal point of our total presentation will be man himself, whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind

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and will. A special “Introductory Statement” calls attention to the paradox of modern society in that “while man extends his power in every direction, he does not always succeed in subjecting it to his own welfare.” He has never had such a wealth of resources yet “a huge proportion of the world’s citizens are still tormented” by hunger, poverty and illiteracy. He has a keen interest in freedom, yet “at the same time new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance.” He has an intense vision of unity and solidarity, and yet the world is divided into opposing camps and conflicting forces, and “political, social, economic, racial and ideological disputes still continue bitterly.” And finally, “man painstakingly searches for a better world, without a corresponding spiritual advancement. In the midst of all this, certain specific problems arise. The modern world has moved from a “rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one”, and the rate of change is very rapid. This has a deleterious impact on the wisdom of well-established traditions. The scientific worldview has enabled us to distinguish religion from magic or superstition, but as a result “growing numbers of people are abandoning religion.” There is a growing “imbalance between specialized human activity and a comprehensive view of reality.” Rapid communications have bred widespread discontent among those who “judge themselves to be deprived either through injustice or unequal distribution” of the benefits of our material culture.” [Nonetheless, “the Church firmly believes that Christ, who died and was raised up for all, can through His Spirit offer man the light and the strength to measure up to his supreme destiny.”

Personalism in *Gaudium et Spes*: As we stated above, natural law philosophy was used almost exclusively to articulate Catholic social teaching before Vatican II. The use of the Personalist philosophy was used sparingly. Fr. Joseph W. Koterski tells us in “The Use of Philosophical Principles in Catholic Social Thought: The Case of *Gaudium et Spes*” that:

Personalism is the name for a movement in contemporary philosophy that Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II have used extensively in their contributions to Catholic thought about the great social questions. By its focus on the human person, this approach offers the benefit of arguments that may have more immediate appeal than do natural law arguments, if only because one appears to carry less metaphysical baggage (such as detailed investigation of teleology and natural function). Especially when one is working in the realm of international law, or operating politically in a pluralistic society where there is little patience for metaphysics, it may prove fruitful to make one’s arguments about distributive justice and the social order on the tenet that all persons are moral subjects, each with certain inalienable rights. But despite the apparent rhetorical advantages of this approach, the popes appear to have chosen wisely not to let their case rest on personalism alone but always to develop it in tandem with natural law considerations.

He continues to say, “It is easy to see the reason for this when one considers the problem of precisely how one should properly define ‘person.’ On a wide range of social issues, including the protection of the unborn from abortion, of defective children from infanticide, of immigrants from racists, and of the senile and the comatose from deprivation of care, there are often virtually interminable debates about how to define personhood, particularly when one party or another

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finds it advantageous to rule some individuals whose existence is inconvenient out of the protected class of persons in the effort to solve some ‘social problem.’” He further states:

The resolution of these questions about personhood invariably requires a return to considerations about human nature. In learning how to make these arguments, it will be crucial for students to appreciate that reliance on the functional definitions for personhood in terms of rationality or self-consciousness that are useful in helping to differentiate healthy mature adults of the human species from healthy mature adults of any other species do not suffice as non-arbitrary demarcation-criteria for ruling individuals in or out of the species. As its chief philosophical pillars, CST has relied especially upon natural law theory and, to an important but lesser extent, personalism.

The problem appears to be, how can the Church cast an ethics that satisfies both those who accept the Faith and at the same time those who don’t accept it? Is there a common ground that both could agree on regarding the rights of the human person? To address the issue, Fr. Koterski says the document attempts to do this at the beginning by presenting an elaborate anthropological and sociological analysis from a natural law perspective as the vision of human life, human nature, and human personhood that is indispensable for ethics. In this regard he states, “[J]ust as philosophical anthropology depends on metaphysics, so any ethics depends in important respects on anthropology (not to mention the primacy of ethics over *laissez-faire* economics).” He goes on to say:

While the document certainly does have recurrent references to theological anthropology, it also quite clearly is engaged in philosophical anthropology by virtue of its effort to address those people of good will and open mind who may not be of the household of the Faith, those who may not share our religious presuppositions, who may not be ready to assume the truths of Scripture and Revelation but who can be counted upon to join the Council in its effort to read “the signs of the times.”

By the “signs of the times” he means “the vast number of changes (both deepseated changes and those that are more superficial) in the social order, in public morals, in culture and attitudes, in religious practice, in technology and economic life, in communications and the media, and so on.” In other words, he believes that the council Fathers were trying to find a common ground that both believers (Catholics and other similar minded Christians) and non-believers (secular minded people) could accept regarding the basis for human rights. Believers are inclined to accept a theological anthropology that empathizes scripture and tradition as the basis for human rights, whereas non-believers would possibly find a philosophical anthropology employing natural law more acceptable for that purpose. The problem with a natural law philosophy, however, is that human nature is taken to be fixed and morality unchanging, something the secular minded liberal philosophy rejects, because they believe human nature can be improved, even perfected. Responding to this notion, Fr. Koterski states:

It strikes me as particularly significant that the adversary that the Conciliar text is again and again addressing here is the position that human nature itself changes and has changed, and that for this reason that there can be no unchanging or objective morality and

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certainly no absolute or exceptionless moral norms. Historicity, in short, seems to imply the relativity of moral truth, and it is for precisely this reason that the Council apparently felt the need to address the many ways in which the world has been changing, so as to affirm against the view that human nature has changed, that it has not changed. Not only does the Council bring to bear the theological and revealed notion that Christ, “the perfect man,” reveals to human persons what human nature can and should be, but also that there is an abiding human nature—the very claim that scholastic natural [law has] quite a history, but the human constitution that is the battleground for sin and grace has an abiding character on which the Council can ask the readers of this document, whatever their own commitments, to reflect, so as to see the permanent moral demands of the natural law for how human beings ought to choose their actions and how they ought to form and reform their societies so as to ensure the protection of human persons, their marriages and families, their social associations and their rights.

The Council addresses the issue by emphasizing in accordance with natural law philosophy that human nature hasn’t changed, but also of “certain changes in how we understand the abiding needs of human nature and especially to a deep awareness of the changing social challenges that need to be met in order to respect human nature and human dignity.” To make this approach to the issue more palatable to the liberal mentality, Fr. Koterski maintains that the document contains:

considerable philosophical sophistication in its treatment of human nature. Not only does the document review and affirm the unity of matter and spirit and of body and soul in each person, but it takes up the gauntlet of inadequate anthropologies by criticizing materialist reductions of the human person and the perversity of anthropological dualists, those who would try to distinguish between human *being* and human *personhood*. The text of *Gaudium et Spes* at several points takes up the disputed question of human freedom—the nature and proper description of freedom, genuine and faulty notions of autonomy, and the legitimate and proper goals of free choice. In many ways, this document seems to me to anticipate some of the great themes of the second chapter of John Paul II’s *Veritatis Splendor*.

He adds that “we also find the Council Fathers affirming the intrinsically social character of human nature, a point that is, as we have seen, absolutely crucial to Catholic Social Thought, for the human person achieves integral fulfillment only in the family, social life, and the political community.” These insights, in turn, justify the conclusion that “society is not, as it tends to be for many political theorists, only a necessary evil or some artificial construct by virtue of a social contract. Likewise, there are important sections devoted to the differences between male and female and their indispensable complementarity—points that become crucial for the normative comments in the second part about the morality of marriage, family, and society.” Fr. Koterski informs us that the third chapter of the second part on socioeconomic life:

Is deeply in harmony with the previous tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, not only in its general claim that the inviolable dignity of the human person must be honored in the economic realm, but in its rather technical analyses of topics like productivity, labor, property ownership, and distributive justice. For example, there is “a vigorous case made

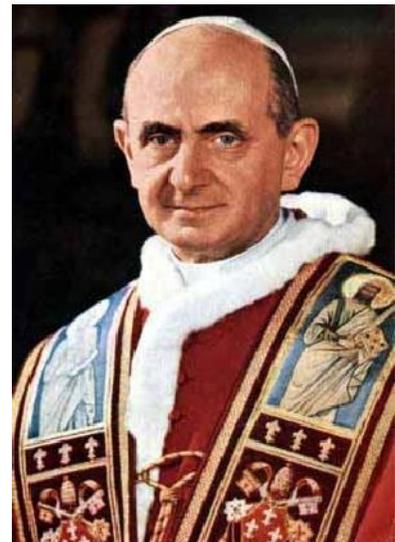
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that theories that obstruct economic and social reform in the name of a false liberty and a view of *laissez faire* economics, as if moral principles were irrelevant, should be treated as erroneous, as should theories that subordinate the basic needs of individuals to the collective organization of production. There is a healthy respect for the economic laws of the market and for the technical intricacies of efficient decision-making processes in local, national, and world economies, but as is very typical of Catholic Social Teaching, the document repeatedly insists that there are moral norms that need to be respected and that may never be violated. On the topic of property and private ownership, for instance, there is considerable attention given (very much in the natural law tradition of moral argumentation) to the very purpose of private property (namely, to provide individuals with a kind of independence that enhances their ability to do their duties to their dependence and that extends their freedom). But, always correlated with this defense of private property, *Guadium et Spes* joins in adding a sense of the social demands on private property that come from the common good and the communal purpose of all earthly goods.

Pope Paul VI

Populorum Progressio: Pope Paul VI wrote several social documents, one being an encyclical entitled *Populorum Progressio*. The English name of the encyclical is the “Development of Peoples”. It came out on March 26, 1967 when the Vietnam War was raging and various African nations were fighting wars of independence. It was the first encyclical specifically devoted to the issues of international development. The document reasserted a variety of Catholic social teachings, such as worker’s rights to a just wage; security of employment; the right to fair and reasonable working conditions; the right to join a union and strike as a last resort; and the universal distribution of resources and goods.

One scholar has summarized the main points of the encyclical as follows: “The church, in response to Jesus’ teachings, must foster human progress—progress not understood solely in terms of economic and technological advances, but in terms of fostering full human potential (i.e., social, cultural, and spiritual).” It “Traces world conflicts to the root cause of poverty, advocating proper development as a means to peace.” He states regarding the document that a “Wider disparity between rich and poor nations, exasperated by an inequity in trade relations that free trade is unable to correct: developing nations, exporters of cheap raw goods to industrialized nations, are unable to pay for expensive manufactured goods of industrialized nations.” The Pope warns that there is an urgency to addressing these problems, because he sees a “growing disparity [that] tempts the poor



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to violence and revolution as possible solutions. [The Pope supports] international development agencies, such as a World Fund and Food and Agriculture Organization, and since the goods of the earth belong to all, “the right to private property is subordinate: the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations.”

The encyclical has been criticized by people of a more conservative perspective as being too progressive; that it reflects too much of a liberal view of economic development. Conservative scholars and others of a more conservative mind believe that it stresses too much the redistribution of wealth as the main solution to economic development, rather than the creation of more wealth. We will return to this subject below when discussing Pope Benedict XVI’s recent encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*.

Octogesima Adveniens: Another of Pope Paul’s social documents is *Octogesima Adveniens*. Its English title is “A Call to Action on the Eightieth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*.” It was issued on May 14, 1971 for the Eightieth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. According to one source, it was an Apostolic Letter written by the pope to Maurice Cardinal Roy, who was the President of the Council of the Laity and of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace. At the time of issuance, the world was verging on a recession, so the “new poor” were especially vulnerable. It followed a decade of civil rights activity on behalf of minorities and women and continuing student protests against the Vietnam War.

One scholar has written that the encyclical is “A vigorous endorsement of *Mater et Magistra*. *Populorum Progressio* presented Catholicism as no longer tied to a social system based on natural law, but rather as a proponent of a pluralistic, decentralized approach to economic problems. Paul VI was concerned with development and justice, trade issues, structural injustice, development aid and working for justice.” One source claims that “*Octogesima Adveniens* is one of the first magisterial documents to mention the topic of the preservation of environment, an issue that was fairly new in the political sphere at the time of the text’s publication.” He continues:

The letter addresses urbanization and the new social problems it has created—such as a new loneliness and specific problems for youth, women, and the “new poor.” (“New poor” includes the elderly, the handicapped, and the marginalized of the cities—i.e. people disadvantaged because of urbanization.); it notes lingering discrimination because of race, origin, color, culture, sex, and religion; it stresses personal responsibility on the part of Christians in seeing that injustice is challenged; the letter encourages Christians to combat injustice and to focus on political action—not just economic action; and it encourages individual Christians and local churches to apply gospel principles of justice to contemporary situations and to take appropriate political action.

The letter illustrates the shift from a natural law model to a more personalistic model. While not abandoning natural law, the pope strongly endorses a shift to historical consciousness and less stress on the order and laws inscribed in human nature. Instead, the historical character and the dynamism of the church’s social teaching are stressed. The Pope states in this regard:

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It is with all its dynamism that the social teaching of the church accompanies human beings in their search. If it does not intervene to authenticate a given structure or to propose a ready-made model, it does not thereby limit itself to recalling general principles. It develops through reflection applied to the changing situations of this world, under the driving force of the gospel as the source of renewal when its message is accepted in its totality and with all its demands. It also develops with a sensitivity proper to the church which is characterized by a disinterested will to serve and by attention to the poorest. Finally, it draws upon its rich experience of many centuries which enables it, while continuing its permanent preoccupations, to undertake the daring and creative innovations which the present state of the world requires.

One scholar points out that “*Octogesima Adveniens* does not see conscience in the light of obedience to law. The most characteristic word to describe the function of conscience in this papal letter is discernment. Pope Paul VI also introduces into Catholic social teaching the methodological importance of utopias.” Regarding this matter, the Pope writes:

The appeal to a utopia is often a convenient excuse for those who wish to escape from concrete tasks in order to take refuge in an imaginary world. To live in a hypothetical future is a facile alibi for rejecting immediate responsibilities. But it must clearly be recognized that this kind of criticism of existing society often provokes the forward-looking imagination both to perceive in the present a discarded possibility hidden within it, and to direct itself toward a fresh future; it thus sustains social dynamism by the confidence that it gives to the inventive powers of the human mind and heart; and, if it refuses no overture, it can also meet the Christian appeal. The Spirit of the Lord, who animates human beings renewed in Christ, continually breaks down the horizons within which one's understanding likes to find security and the limits to which one's activity would willingly restrict itself, there dwells within one a power which urges one to go beyond every system and every ideology. At the heart of the world, there dwells the mystery of the human person discovering oneself to be God's child in the course of a historical and psychological process in which constraint and freedom as well as the weight of sin and the breath of the Spirit alternate and struggle for the upper hand.

The letter concludes with a recognition of shared responsibility, a call to action, and the realization of a pluralism of possible options. It definitely marks a decided shift toward a more personalistic model in Catholic social teaching.

Evangelii Muntiandi: Pope Paul's third social document was *Evangelii Muntiandi*. The English title is “Evangelization in the Modern World.” It was issued December 8, 1975 and was an apostolic exhortation following the work of a synod on the theme. The context of the document was the prevalence of “atheistic secularism, indifference, consumerism, focus on pleasure, discrimination, and desire to dominate.” It deals with “evangelism, and affirms the role of every Christian (and not only ordained priests) in spreading the Catholic religion.” Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II, participated in its drafting.

One scholar has summarized the main points of this document as follows: He says that “With a

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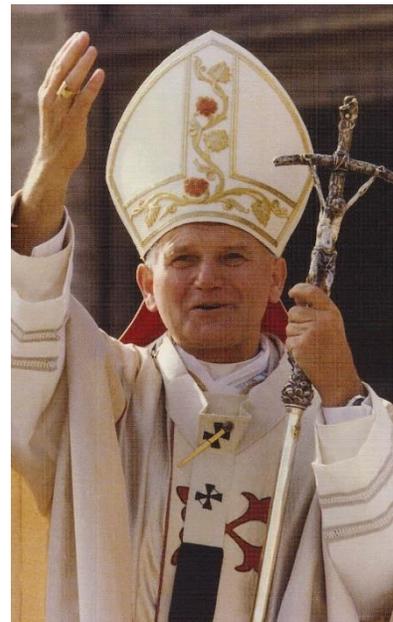
fundamental aim to make the Church of the twentieth century ever better fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to people of the twentieth century, [the document] poses three ‘burning questions’: (1) What has happened to the hidden energy of the Good News, noted for its ability to have a powerful effect on human conscience? (2) To what extent is that evangelizing force really able to transform the people of the 20th century? (3) What methods should be employed so that the power of the Gospel may realize its full effect?” In regard to evangelizers and evangelization, the summary states, “Jesus proclaimed a salvation that includes liberation from all oppression, and it's the role of the church to continue that proclamation.” It states that “redemption includes combating injustice [and that] evangelization should affect human judgment, values, interests, thought, and lifestyle.” It concludes that “evangelization [is] important in an increasingly de-Christianized world, [and is] as important to nonpracticing Christians as to non-Christians.” Finally, the pope lists avenues of evangelization that should be explored, including homilies, personal witness, mass media, etc.

Pope Paul VI appears to be even more “progressive” than John XXIII. For instance, according to Fr. Charles Curran, one of the most extreme “progressive’s” in the Church, the Pope’s letter “shows a very heightened awareness of historical consciousness. The letter and documents that followed show an increasing importance to contemporary developments.”

John Paul II’s social teaching

Laborem Exercens: That brings us to Pope John Paul II. He wrote three encyclicals and other documents on social justice matters. The first one was *Laborem Exercens*. It is entitled “On Human Work” in English. The encyclical was issued on September 14, 1981 on the 90th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum*. It focuses on the themes “that work is central to the social question and that work has potential not only to dehumanize but also to be the means whereby the human person cooperates in God’s ongoing creation.” Work is the key to making life more human and the measure of human dignity. Nature of work is: (1) to fulfill the command in Genesis to ‘subdue the earth’ and (2) to make family life possible. This was a time that large numbers of people were unemployed or underemployed and migrant workers were typically exploited. The Pope criticizes both capitalism and Marxism, denouncing the tendency of capitalism to treat humans as mere instruments of production. He also affirms the right to private property against Marxist collectivism, yet subordinates private property to the right of common use.

The Pope states in the encyclical that, work is a duty and that employers need to provide for workers by means of good



Pope John Paul II wrote three encyclicals and other documents on social justice matters, including *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, and *Centesimus Annus*. Many have considered his third social encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* the greatest of his many writings, certainly of his social encyclicals.

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planning and international collaboration. He asserts that im-balances in living standards must be righted and that resources must be used to create employment. Moreover, the Pope deals with numerous rights of workers in the encyclical. For example, in regard to a living or just wage, he says that wages must be sufficient to support a family, and working mothers should be afforded special consideration. In regard to benefits, he states that workers deserve health care, accident insurance, unemployment benefits, pensions for their retirement, and vacations for leisure. Regarding the work environment, workers have a right to safe and healthy conditions. He also says in the encyclical that workers have a right to unionize, that disabled people should be given opportunities to work, and that people have a right to leave their native countries in search of a better livelihood elsewhere. The document concludes with a detailed treatment of the “spirituality of work”.

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: Pope John Paul’s second social encyclical was *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. The English title is “On Social Concern.” It was issued on December 30, 1987 and was written in regard to ‘Social Concern’ for the 20th anniversary of Pope Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio*. The world economy was in flux at the time and debt, unemployment, and recession was affecting both rich and poor nations alike. The Pope deals with authentic human development and adopted a critical attitude toward both capitalism and communism. He warned that economic development alone might not set people free but only enslave them more.

One source has summed up the main points of the encyclical by saying, “While praising the optimism and innovation of *Populorum progressio*—the document being commemorated—notes serious backsliding on issues of development. Twenty years’ worth of unfulfilled hopes include: [the] obvious gap between northern and southern hemispheres, global debt (forcing nations to export capital), unemployment and underemployment.” The Pope states that there should be “a unity of the world—not a ‘First World,’ ‘Second World,’ ‘Third World,’ or ‘Fourth World.’” John Paul notes that “Outright underdevelopment abounds, a result of the ideological opposition existing between East-West blocs and their strong penchants to militarism (‘wars by proxy’), imperialism, neo-colonialism, and exaggerated concerns for security. Their competition blocks cooperation and solidarity.” The author of this summary states that the Pope “Chastises the West for abandoning itself to a growing, selfish isolation. Chastises the East for ignoring its duty to alleviate human misery. In fueling the arms trade, both blocs contribute to refugee populations and increased terrorism.” He concludes the Pope’s main ideas found in the document as “Emergence of ‘superdevelopment,’ an excessive availability of goods leading to consumerism and waste; existence of ‘structures of sin’; and [that] international trade discriminates against developing countries.”

Centesimus Annus: Many have considered Pope John Paul’s third social encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* the greatest of his many writings, certainly of his social encyclicals. In English it means “The Hundredth Anniversary”, commemorating the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. Issued on May 1, 1991, it updated *Rerum Novarum* and tied it to “the preferential option for the poor.” It was issued in the context of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, but the Pope criticized both capitalism and communism. In this encyclical, the Pope expresses concern with the changing nature of work and workers’ conditions, the North-

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South gap, the option for the poor, the universal destination of the world's goods, and the structures of sin that enslave them more.

One scholar has listed the main points of the encyclical, which placed emphasis on certain problems as follows:

1. Of the unjust and inequitable sharing of goods among industrialized and poor countries.
2. Of the unjust distribution of goods within a given nation.
3. Of the exploitation of goods with disregard to the environment.
4. Of the role of governments who have the duty to manage the destination of goods for the welfare of all and not only of particular groups.
5. Of the danger that States turn into welfare agencies easily blocked by bureaucratic trappings.
6. Of the necessity for a free market and for the movement of capital to be regulated for the common good, to which even legitimate profit ought to be ordained and subordinated.

This same scholar states that, “*Rerum Novarum* makes references to the state of the world today throughout its entirety. It proves to be significantly accurate as to what has happened since then. The events in 1989 and 1990 were predicted by Pope Leo XIII because of his foresight of negative consequences of social order, which was socialism—the only social philosophy of its time.”

The “preferential option for the poor” was one of the main themes of the encyclical. William E. Simon, who was Secretary of the Treasury from 1974 to 1977, said in this regard:

Somebody once said that *preferential option for the poor* sounds like a bad English translation of a bad Spanish translation of a dumb German idea. And there is no question that the preferential option has been used to promote a socialist agenda and state-centered development schemes in the Third World. But I think the pope has taken a decisive step in the right direction with *Centesimus Annus*, which stresses that the poor are empowered best through participation in a free economy. That is what I mean by a preferential option for the poor: getting poor people off welfare and into productive work. The best way to do this is by letting the free enterprise system thrive One of the most important teachings of *Centesimus Annus* is that countries are poor not because they have a particular monetary system or because they have been exploited by the developed world but because they are cut off from the world market. Foreign aid is rarely effective in promoting development We know that private enterprise is the only way to create lasting development; socialist “development” means creating an oligarchy of government or military bureaucrats sitting on top of a country of serfs.”

The encyclical includes a lengthy discussion of both capitalism and socialism. One scholar quotes the Pope as saying the “fundamental error of socialism is that it is based on an atheistic view of humanity instead of a transcendent one [which] leads to a ‘social order without reference to the person's dignity and responsibility.’” He says that the Pope “Distinguishing, on the one hand, between ‘unbridled,’ ‘radical,’ or ‘primitive’ capitalism and, on the other hand, a ‘business economy’ that serves and protects the human person, ‘it would appear that, on the level of

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individual nations and international relations, the free market is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs.” In regard to capitalism, he says that the Pope recognizes the freedom of the human person, but he warns against the “consumeristic tendency of modern capitalistic societies, saying it cheapens the person, harms society, and ultimately poisons the planet” Moreover, capitalism should not be used “as an economic tool, to the level of an all-encompassing ideology.” The Pope emphasizes “the balance of giving power to the state while not destroying the value of the human person. It shows how a free-market society can achieve greater satisfaction of material needs than Communism.”

Charles Rice, a recently deceased professor emeritus at Notre Dame, states that capitalism and socialism have the same root. He says:

Although *Centesimus Annus* came down hard on socialism, it offered small comfort to Western materialism. The Pope criticized the response offered to Marxism by “the affluent society or the consumer society. It seeks to defeat Marxism on the level of pure materialism by showing how a free-market society can achieve a greater satisfaction of material human needs than communism, while equally excluding spiritual values . . . Insofar as it denies an autonomous existence and value to morality, law, culture and religion, it agrees with Marxism in the sense that it totally reduces man to the sphere of economics and the satisfaction of material needs.” Indeed, John Paul said that the atheism that is the “first cause” of socialism’s errors is “closely connected with the rationalism of the Enlightenment, which views human and social reality in a mechanistic way. Thus there is a denial of the supreme insight concerning man’s true greatness, his transcendence in respect to earthly realities, the contradiction in his heart between the desire for the fullness of what is good and his own inability to attain it, and above all, the need for salvation which results from this situation.”

Gregory R. Beabout, who is an associate professor of philosophy at Saint Louis University and an expert on John Paul’s thought, captures the essence of the encyclical when he writes in an article entitled “Centesimus Annus Turns Ten” that “A free culture, a free market, a free polity—this model of a free and virtuous society is perhaps the most profound contribution of the encyclical.” He continues to write, “The driving concern of the encyclical is the dignity of the human person, a dignity given to all humans since they are created in the image of God. He closes by saying, “*Centesimus Annus*, now a decade old, teaches us that the primary task of working for social justice lies at the level of the human heart and involves promoting the culture of life.” John Paul writes, “It follows that the church cannot abandon man and that ‘this man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission . . . the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption.’ This and this alone, is the principle which inspires the Church’s social doctrine.”

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Pope Benedict XVI *Caritas in Veritate*

This encyclical, which was issued in June 2009, is on the subject of integral human development in charity and truth. It was originally scheduled for release in 2007, on the 40th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's social encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, but was delayed in order to take into account the economic crisis beginning in 2008.

Although the document is 144 pages of “moral exhortations and policy prescriptions”, its central theme is that “markets ought to work for human beings, not the other way around.” The pope rejects the idea that the economy should be allowed to work without any outside control. In this regard he states, “The conviction that the economy must be autonomous, that it must be shielded from ‘influences’ of a moral character, has led man to abuse the economic process in a thoroughly destructive way.” Moreover, in the words of one scholar, he “unabashedly talks about the desirability of ‘redistribution’ of global wealth.”

Since the document is a long one, the Vatican issued its own summary, but even it is too long to consider in this essay; however, we found several much shorter summaries compiled by various scholars, the best of which was compiled by John Allen, the Vatican correspondent for the *National Catholic Reporter*. Although this weekly newspaper is probably the most progressive or liberal one in existence, we have generally found Allen's articles and books to be fairly balanced. According to Allen, the Pope admits that the Church has few technical solutions to economic problems the world encounters, but he offers several concrete ideas for political and economic leaders to consider, such as:

- Resisting a “downsizing” of social security systems;
- Support for labor unions and the rights of workers in a global economy marked by mobility of labor;
- Combating hunger “by investing in rural infrastructures, irrigation systems, transport, organization of markets, and in the development and dissemination of agricultural technology”;
- Enshrining access to steady employment for all as a core economic objective;
- Protecting the earth's “state of ecological health”;
- Seeing “openness to life,” meaning resistance to measures such as abortion and birth control, as not only morally obligatory but a key to long-term economic development;



Caritas in Veritate meaning in English: "Charity in Truth") is the third and last encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, and his first social encyclical. It was signed on June 29, 2009, and was published on July 7, 2009. It was initially published in Italian, English, French, German, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish. The encyclical is concerned with the problems of global development and progress towards the common good, arguing that both Love and Truth are essential elements of an effective response. The work is addressed to all strata of global society—there are specific points aimed at political leaders, business leaders, religious leaders, financiers and aid agencies but the work as a whole is also addressed to all people of good will. *Caritas in Veritate* contains detailed reflection on economic and social issues.

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- Ensuring that the targets of international aid programs are involved in their design and implementation, and trimming the bureaucracy sometimes associated with those programs;
- Lowering domestic energy consumption in developed nations, investing in renewable forms of energy, and adopting new more sustainable lifestyles;
- Curbing an “excessive zeal for protecting knowledge” among affluent nations, “through an unduly rigid assertion of the right to intellectual property, especially in the field of health care”;
- Opening up global markets to the products of developing nations, especially in agriculture;
- Commitment among developed nations to devote a larger share of their gross domestic product to development aid;
- Greater investment in education;
- More generous immigration policies, recognizing the economic contributions of migrants, both to their host countries and to their countries of origin by sending money home;
- Support for micro-finance, consumer cooperatives, and socially responsible forms of business;
- Reform of the United Nations and international institutions of economics and finance, in order to promote “a true world political authority . . . with real teeth,” though one informed by the principle of subsidiarity—meaning respect for the liberty of individuals, families, and civil society;
- Opposition to abuses of biotechnology such as a new eugenics.

Underlying his specific positions, Benedict argues for a view of the human person founded on faith in God and open to spiritual meaning, as opposed to “an empiricist and sceptical view of life.” He says, “Without the perspective of eternal life, human progress in this world is denied breathing-space,” the pope writes. Authentic development “requires a transcendent vision of the person, it needs God.”

Naturally, progressive Catholics and secular liberals praised those parts of the document that contains progressive economic analyses of the world’s economy, but were dismissive of those parts that “expressed strong opposition to abortion, gay marriage, embryonic stem cell research, and population control programs. The Pope argued that the indecencies of poverty and hunger should be no surprise in a culture marked by ‘indifference . . . towards what is and is not human.’” As we will discover when analyzing the encyclical below, some conservative Catholics were very critical of parts of it, especially of the economic parts.

An analysis of *Caritas in Veritate*: There was quite a bit of discussion going on among Catholic scholars since the encyclical was released. Literally dozens, even hundreds of articles have been published during several months after its publication in which the authors attempted to analyze *Caritas in Veritate* from either the right or left, from either conservative or liberal political or religious perspectives. Of the many articles I read, the best one written from an orthodox Catholic perspective is by Philip F. Lawler entitled “*Caritas in Veritate*: an awkward

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hybrid, an important breakthrough—or both?”

Lawler is a distinguished Catholic scholar who is presently Director of *Catholic Culture*, a leading online website whose mission is “to advance the Catholic faith and support the formation of authentically Catholic culture.” He and other leading Catholic scholars “take seriously the need to present information and ideas which are in complete harmony with the teaching authority of the Catholic Church.” To accomplish their mission they provide “[f]resh, original and incisive commentary and analysis on a wide range of topics—from an unfailingly faithful and balanced Catholic perspective”, including news and cultural commentary, and a popular blog. Moreover, they are also a very reliable guide for Catholic News. Lawler has been a Catholic news editor and journalist for more than 25 years. He has written several books and numerous essays, book reviews, and editorial columns. He has been Director of Studies for the Heritage Foundation, a member of two presidential inaugural committees, and a candidate for the US Senate. He has also acted as editor of *Crisis Magazine*, editor of *The Pilot*, editor of *Catholic World Report*, as well as being the founder and editor of Catholic World News, which is the first online Catholic news service. Because of his considerable expertise in matters Catholic and because of his faithful orthodoxy and intense loyalty to the Church, we highly regard his opinions.

Lawler starts his article by referring to an article by Peter Steinfels in the July 17, 2009 *New York Times* called “From the Vatican, a Tough Read.” Steinfels is a professor at Fordham University and co-director of the Fordham University Center on Religion and Culture as well as religion columnist for *The New York Times*. His articles tend to be on the liberal or progressive side of Catholic doctrinal issues. Lawler quotes Steinfels as saying, “Why is *Caritas in Veritate* (“Charity in Truth”), Pope Benedict XVI’s new encyclical on the world economy and authentic human development, so poorly written? The matter is all the more confounding since Benedict has often shown himself a graceful writer, and one who has insisted on the importance of beauty in communicating his church’s message.” Lawler agrees with Steinfels that the Pope is usually an accomplished writer who has an “admirable ability to express difficult ideas in easy language—to make things seem simple even when they are complex”, but that the encyclical “is not written in that admirable prose style”, except for brief polished passages. In this regard, Steinfel’s writes in his *Times* article, “But published commentaries are already noting the ‘dense prose’ or warning that ‘theological reflections usually don’t make for light summer reading.’” He quotes another commentator as saying, “The encyclical ‘can be difficult to read,’ . . . ; it is marred by ‘irritating fits and starts, assertions, qualifications, doubtful formulas and doubling back,’ says another.” Then Steinfels goes on to say, “And that is just from Roman Catholics who admire the encyclical.”

Steinfels follows up with an example of a noted orthodox Catholic scholar who doesn’t like the encyclical overall, a scholar named George Weigel, a chief biographer of John Paul II. Steinfels quotes Weigel as saying, “Those unhappy about it are still blunter. Describing the document as ‘a duck-billed platypus,’ George Weigel, the neoconservative biographer of Pope John Paul II, has derided the language of whole sections as ‘clotted and muddled.’” Neoconservatism has been identified as “a political philosophy that emerged in the United States of America, and which supports using American economic and military power to bring liberalism, democracy, and human rights to other countries.” It is believed that neoconservatives had a lot of influence on

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President George W. Bush's aggressive foreign policy after 9/11. The term neoconservative has been given to Catholic scholars who are conservative on traditional matters regarding doctrine and morality, but somewhat liberal in the classical sense on economic and social matters. Michael Novak, the late Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, and George Weigel are among the most prominent Catholic neoconservatives. Their view of the Just War doctrine clashed with the views of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. William Kristol and John Podhoretz come to mind as leading non-Catholic neoconservatives.

Several reasons are given for the alleged incoherence of the encyclical. In his *New York Times* article, Steinfels identifies three possible explanations "for the encyclical's ungainliness." The first is that encyclicals "are a genre wielding theology and philosophy to address complex issues that a worldwide church may confront in many very different forms. Thus a tendency toward abstract language and vague or hedged generalizations."

The second explanation is that the encyclical is the work of many hands, which is true of almost all encyclicals. He states that "They are drafted, circulated and redrafted. Popes are personally and intensely involved in the process, but to different degrees." He continues to say, "In this case, the recognizable voice of Benedict XVI seems to disappear as *Caritas in Veritate* turns from its powerful theological reflections on the links among love, truth and justice to its equally powerful but more mundane reflections on poverty, hunger, greed, corruption and what it sees as the necessity of transforming economic and political institutions." Steinfels maintains that "This shift in tone allows a conservative Mr. Weigel to welcome the parts of the encyclical in line with his own political preferences and culture-war concerns as the true voice of the pope while dismissing the rest—presumably including the encyclical's statements about unregulated markets, unemployment, the rights of labor, the redistribution of wealth and the strengthening of international governing bodies like the United Nations—as the left-wing boilerplate of a Vatican body, the Council for Justice and Peace."

According to Steinfels, a third possible explanation for the "tough read" is offered by Jesuit sociologist and theologian John A. Coleman, who is an expert on Catholic social teaching. Coleman believes that the Pope simply tried to accomplish too much in the encyclical, that it incorporates too wide a range of subjects such as human nature, the Holy Trinity, and the current economic crisis, as well as inequality, and the energy problem. Also the Pope tries to show "a link between Catholic teaching on sexuality and life issues like abortion and Catholic stances on social issues like poverty and the environment."

Lawler suggests that Weigel might have a clue why the document is such a mixture of both "obfuscation and clarity." Weigel wrote an article published in *National Review* magazine, July 7, 2009 edition, entitled "*Caritas in Veritate* in Gold and Red: The revenge of Justice and Peace (or so they may think)" in which he opts for the second of Steinfels three possible reasons for the encyclical's lack of coherence: that the encyclical is the work of many too hands.

Just a little bit of Weigel's background. He is an American Catholic author, and political and social activist. He currently serves as a Distinguished Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. He was the Founding President of the James Madison Foundation and an author of many

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books on Catholic issues, including the best-selling biography of Pope John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*.

Lawler says that “Weigel has argued convincingly that an astute reader can work his way through the encyclical, marking some passages as the work of Pope Benedict and others as the product of a laborious drafting process supervised by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.” Quoting directly from the article, Weigel asserts that “Indeed, those with advanced degrees in Vaticanology could easily go through the text of *Caritas in Veritate*, highlighting those passages that are obviously Benedictine with a gold marker and those that reflect current Justice and Peace default positions with a red marker. The net result is, with respect, an encyclical that resembles a duck-billed platypus.” Lawler states that Steinfels is “not quite so decisive in his judgment of the writing”, but he does agree with Weigel insofar as he says that “the maladroit prose of the encyclical is a sign that there were too many hands involved in the drafting process. It is indeed hard to avoid the conclusion that *Caritas in Veritate* was the product of a committee—with all the awkwardness that implies.” The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace is a part of the Vatican’s Roman Curia. It is “dedicated to ‘action-oriented studies’ for the international promotion of justice, peace, and human rights from the perspective of the Catholic Church. To accomplish its purposes, it cooperates with various religious orders and advocacy groups, as well as scholarly, ecumenical, and international organizations.”

Weigel concludes that this encyclical is a “hybrid” blend that reflects “the Pope’s own insightful thinking on the social order with elements of the Justice and Peace approach to Catholic social doctrine, which imagines that doctrine beginning anew at *Populorum Progressio*.” This 1967 encyclical of Pope Paul VI is discussed above. Weigel is critical of this document, because he and other neoconservatives believe it emphasizes economic development by redistributing the world’s wealth, rather than by increasing its wealth.

Pope Benedict’s approach with Justice and Peace’s: Weigel maintains that The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace “imagines itself the curial keeper of the flame of authentic Catholic social teaching. . . .” He tells us that the Council had prepared a “not-very-original thinking” draft for Pope John Paul II when he was writing his 1987 social encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. According to Weigel’s account, the Pope had a trusted colleague read it and provide his opinion. He reportedly told the Pope that the draft was unacceptable, because “it simply did not reflect the way the global economy of the post–Cold War world worked.” As a result, the Pope “dumped” the Council’s draft and composed an encyclical entitled *Centesimus Annus* “that was a fitting commemoration of [Pope Leo XIII’s] *Rerum Novarum*.” Weigel tells us that *Centesimus Annus* “not only summarized deftly the intellectual structure of Catholic social doctrine since Leo XIII; it proposed a bold trajectory for the further development of this unique body of thought, emphasizing the priority of culture in the threefold free society (free economy, democratic polity, vibrant public moral culture). By stressing human creativity as the source of the wealth of nations, *Centesimus Annus* also displayed a far more empirically acute reading of the economic signs of the times than was evident in the default positions at Justice and Peace.” He states that Justice and Peace has been “pining for revenge” ever since. According to Weigel, since then the members of the Council had attempted unsuccessfully to get John Paul to issue an encyclical commem-

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orating the 35th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, then Pope Benedict the 40th anniversary in 2007. Weigel says that “[it] is one of the worst-kept secrets in Rome that at least two drafts of such an encyclical, and perhaps three, were rejected by Pope Benedict XVI.”

Weigel favors John Paul's encyclical *Centesimus Annus* over Pope Paul's *Populorum Progressio* because he claims that Justice and Peace imagined “a *Populorum Progressio* anniversary encyclical as the vehicle for its counterattack against *Centesimus Annus*. . .” He asserts that of all the social encyclicals from Pope Leo's 1891 *Rerum Novarum* to John Paul's last social encyclical, Pope Paul's *Populorum Progressio* “is manifestly the odd duck, both in its intellectual structure (which is barely recognizable as in continuity with the framework for Catholic social thought established by Leo XIII and extended by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno*) and in its misreading of the economic and political signs of the times (which was clouded by then-popular leftist and progressive conceptions about the problem of Third World poverty, its causes, and its remedies).” In other words, Pope Paul's encyclical is too politically and economically “leftist” for Weigel.

Apparently, Weigel believes that Pope John Paul's *Centesimus Annus* corrected the deficiencies of Pope Paul's *Populorum Progressio*. He writes in his article, “[f]or in the long line of papal social teaching running from *Rerum Novarum* to *Centesimus Annus*, *Centesimus Annus* implicitly recognized these defects, not least by arguing that poverty in the Third World and within developed countries today is a matter of exclusion from global networks of exchange in a dynamic economy (which put the moral emphasis on strategies of wealth creation, empowerment of the poor, and inclusion), rather than a matter of First World greed in a static economy (which would put the moral emphasis on redistribution of wealth).” Weigel claims that “Paul VI himself had recognized that *Populorum Progressio* had misfired in certain respects, being misread in some quarters as a tacit papal endorsement of violent revolution in the name of social justice. He claims that Pope Paul tried a course correction in the 1971 apostolic letter, *Octogesima Adveniens*, another *Rerum Novarum* anniversary document.”

Why issuing *Caritas in Veritate* was delayed: Why did it take so long for Pope Benedict's social encyclical to be published? It was supposed to come out in 2007. We heard several times during 2007 that the Pope was about to issue a new encyclical on Catholic social teaching, but it never came. According to Weigel, an encyclical on the subject was originally scheduled to appear that year, to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Pope Paul VI's, *Populorum Progressio*. However, that year passed without the encyclical being released, then another, and still no encyclical. Of course, we didn't know at the time that the encyclical was published “only after an unusually long and contentious process of preparation” in Weigel's words. As he reports, most experts on Vatican affairs believe that Pope Benedict rejected at least two early drafts of the document prepared by the Justice and Peace office. He writes, “Obviously the Vatican bureaucracy (to be specific, the Justice and Peace council), failed to produce an acceptable document on the timetable the Pope had anticipated.”

Perhaps it is good that it didn't come out earlier, because it would have occurred before the beginning of the recession in 2009. Lawler addresses this very issue in his article where he

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comments that, “maybe the delays were providential.” He goes on to say, “When it did finally make its debut, *Caritas in Veritate* spoke to a worldwide audience keenly interested in social justice, and quite prepared to consider fundamental changes in the global economic system. The collapse of the world's financial system forced people to re-think basic questions; the meeting of the G8 powers—who gathered in Italy just after the publication of the encyclical—helped to focus still more attention on the Pope's prescriptions for reform.” After the collapse of the world's economy, the Pope must have been holding off publishing the document until he could account for the collapse.

Even though there are some so-called deficiencies in the encyclical, it still is a very important document for Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Lawler says that even if the encyclical is a “hybrid,” as Weigel had contended, it is still an important document. He continues to say, “Whether or not he drafted every sentence himself (and clearly he did not), Pope Benedict signed his name to the encyclical, and gave it the authority of his teaching office. We know that the Holy Father did not do this lightly. He rejected earlier drafts of the document. He allowed the project to slip behind schedule, even to the point of embarrassment. He was evidently determined to wait until he had a document that satisfied him. *Caritas in Veritate* satisfied him.”

There was a lot of interest when the encyclical first came out, but interest waned a lot afterwards. In this regard, Lawler states that the mass media quickly lost interest in the papal document when they found out that the Pope didn't support the position of either liberal or conservative economic policies. Nonetheless, he maintains that a lot of other people think that the encyclical is an important contribution to the discussion of economic justice, in spite of its stylistic defects. For an example, he cites Lord Brian Griffiths, who was formerly economic adviser to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and a vice-chairman of Goldman Sachs International, as saying regarding the encyclical: “Despite heavy competition from some of the world's finest minds, it is without doubt the most articulate, comprehensive and thoughtful response to the financial crisis that has yet appeared.” Lawler responds by saying, “Remarkable, isn't it? A leading executive of the world's most powerful financial firm—a man with experience in setting national policy for a major economic power—thinks that *Caritas in Veritate* is the most important intellectual response yet made to the world's economic crisis.”

Pope Benedict XVI's contribution to the Encyclical: How can we distinguish between those parts of the encyclical that are the Pope's ideas and which are Peace and Justice's? Weigel claims that those passages marked on gold can be attributed to Pope Benedict. He points out that “the Pope follows the lead of John Paul II, particularly in the new encyclical's strong emphasis on the life issues (abortion, euthanasia, embryo-destructive stem-cell research) as social-justice issues—which Benedict cleverly extends to the discussion of environmental questions, suggesting as he does that people who don't care much about unborn children are unlikely to make serious contributions to a human ecology that takes care of the natural world.” He also says that the “Benedictine sections in *Caritas in Veritate* are also—and predictably—strong and compelling on the inherent linkage between charity and truth, arguing that care for others untethered from the moral truth about the human person inevitably lapses into mere sentimentality.”

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Weigel identifies several of the Pope's reasons why poor Third World countries fail to develop their economies and consequently suffer from widespread poverty and hunger, one being due to what Weigel calls the reign of "thug-governments." We think that this is particularly true in Africa, which is in a constant state of civil war and strife. Also, we might add the dictatorial rule of countries like Cuba and North Korea result in abysmal poverty for the masses. Weigel identifies a second major reason the Pope sees contributing to a lack of economic development around the world, and that is how various birth-control practices contribute to "catastrophically low" birth rates that create serious global economic problems. The Pope especially levels sharp criticism of international aid programs tied "to mandatory contraception and the provision of 'reproductive health services' (the U.N. euphemism for abortion-on-demand); and neatly ties religious freedom to economic development." Weigel states that "All of this is welcome, and all of it is manifestly Benedict XVI, in continuity with John Paul II and his extension of the line of papal argument inspired by *Rerum Novarum* in *Centesimus Annus*, *Evangelium Vitae* (the 1995 encyclical on the life issues), and *Ecclesia in Europa* (the 2003 apostolic exhortation on the future of Europe."

Peace and Justice's contribution to the Encyclical: Weigel then considers the passages of *Caritas in Veritate* to be marked in red—the passages that reflect the ideas and approaches to economic and social development of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, ideas and approaches according to Weigel "Benedict evidently believed he had to try and accommodate." He says that "Some of these are simply incomprehensible, as when the encyclical states that defeating Third World poverty and under-development requires a 'necessary openness' in a world context, to forms of economic activity marked by quotas of gratuitousness and communion." He concedes that "This may mean something interesting; it may mean something naïve or dumb. But, on its face, it is virtually impossible to know what it means."

As we mentioned earlier, Weigel and other Catholic neoconservatives are critical of the economic and social position of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. In this regard, he states, "There is also rather more in the encyclical about the redistribution of wealth than about wealth-creation—a sure sign of Justice and Peace default positions at work." Recall this was the neoconservative's main criticism of Pope Paul VI's, encyclical *Populorum Progressio*.

Recall that we discussed above how neoconservatives were critical of the Pope's advocacy of a world political authority to ensure integral human development. In regard to Weigel's criticism of the Council's position, he asserts:

And another Justice and Peace favorite—the creation of a 'world political authority' to ensure integral human development—is revisited, with no more insight into how such an authority would operate than is typically found in such curial fideism about the inherent superiority of transnational governance. (It is one of the enduring mysteries of the Catholic Church why the Roman Curia places such faith in this fantasy of a 'world public authority,' given the Holy See's experience in battling for life, religious freedom, and elementary decency at the United Nations. But that is how they think at Justice and Peace, where evidence, experience, and the canons of Christian realism sometimes seem of little account."

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He is here, of course, referring to the promotion of contraception, abortion, and other instruments of the “Culture of Death” promoted by the United Nations around the world, which are so adamantly opposed by the Church. He wonders why the Council would have such faith in the United Nations after this struggle, a sentiment with which we concur. It is impossible for us to know how strongly Pope Benedict had hopes for reforming this international body into an instrument of worldwide economic and social development. Perhaps this point in the encyclical was another of his concessions to keep peace in the papal household.

The Law of the Gift: The encyclical contains quite a bit of discussion of John Paul’s idea of the “Law of the gift”, the idea of “gratuitousness.” Regarding this matter, Weigel believes that this “might be an interesting attempt to apply to economic activity certain facets of John Paul II’s Christian personalism and the teaching of Vatican II, in *Gaudium et Spes* on the moral imperative of making our lives the gift to others that life itself is to us” . . . But the language in these sections of *Caritas in Veritate*, he says, “is so clotted and muddled as to suggest the possibility that what may be intended as a new conceptual starting point for Catholic social doctrine is, in fact, a confused sentimentality of precisely the sort the encyclical deplores among those who detach charity from truth.” I suggest that Weigel believes Peace and Justice to be at fault for this too. Essentially what the “Law of the Gift” boils down to is that we get more out of a giving loving relationship that we give.

The idea of the “Law of the Gift” was an important concept in Pope John Paul’s thinking and in Pope Benedict’s as well. John Paul, when still Karol Wojtyla, developed the idea in his book, *Love and Responsibility*. There he used the idea of marital love to illustrate this idea. He pointed out that marital love has two aspects that must be considered in a successful marriage: the subjective and the objective. The subjective aspect places emphasis on the emotional content of love, what has been called Romantic love. It is nothing more than the natural pleasurable experience of a loving relationship, but it isn’t love itself. In the words of Edward Sri, a prominent Catholic scholar who teaches at Benedictine College in Kansas, the objective aspect of love goes beyond the pleasurable feelings that one in love experiences on the subjective level. Interpreting John Paul II, he says:

True love involves virtue, friendship, and the pursuit of a common good. In Christian marriage, for example, a husband and wife unite themselves to the common aims of helping each other grow in holiness, deepening their own union, and raising children. Furthermore, they should not only share this common goal, but also have the virtue to help each other get there.” He says that one must ask the following questions to determine whether or a not a relationship is a loving one: “Does the other person truly love me more for who I am, or more for the pleasure he receives from the relationship? Does my beloved understand what is truly best for me, and does she have the virtue to help me get there? Are we deeply united by a common aim, serving each other and striving together toward a common good that is higher than each of us? Or are we really just living side by side, sharing resources and occasional good times together while we each selfishly pursue our own projects and interests in life? These are the kinds of questions that get at the objective aspect of love.

Describing this objective aspect of love, Karol Wojtyla teaches that what makes marital love

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different from all other forms of love, such as friendship, is that two people surrender themselves entirely to the other. He calls this “Self-giving Love.” Dietrich von Hildebrand, who was a great influence on John Paul’s thinking called this kind of love “Self Donation,” True marital love means totally surrendering oneself to the other without giving up one’s identity, without giving up one’s mind and will. Love is a decision, a free act of the will, to do the will of others, to do what is necessary to promote their total well-being—mental, physical, emotional, and above all spiritual well-being. In self-giving love, a man recognizes in a profound way that his life is not his own. In a true loving marital relationship, Sri tells us that the spouses surrender their own wills to his or her beloved. He says, their “own plans, dreams, and preferences are not completely abandoned, but they are now put in a new perspective.” They are subordinated to the good of their spouse and any children they might have from their marriage. He writes that, “many marriages today would be much stronger if only we understood and remembered the kind of self-giving love that we originally signed up for. Instead of selfishly pursuing our own preferences and desires, we must remember that when we made our vows, we freely chose to surrender—we lovingly *wanted* to surrender—our wills to the good of our spouse and our children.” Jesus gives us the essence of love in the Gospel. He didn’t tell us to feel good about him when he told us what it means to love him. He said, “If you love me, obey my commandments.” In other words, loving Jesus is using one’s will to do his will; to freely surrender one’s will to his as he did to his Heavenly Father. The same applies to loving others, especially one’s spouse and family.

Sri says of the Pope’s law of self-giving that “At the heart of this gift of self is a fundamental conviction that in surrendering my autonomy to my beloved, I gain so much more in return. By uniting myself to another, my own life is not diminished but is profoundly enriched.” He claims that in an age of individualism, this idea might be very difficult to understand. He asked why should anyone want to go outside of himself to find happiness? Why would one ever want to commit himself to someone else in this radical way? Why would anyone want to give up the freedom to do whatever he wants with his life? However, he says:

[F]rom a Christian perspective life is not about ‘doing whatever I want.’ It is about my relationships—about fulfilling my relationship with God and with the people God has placed in my life. In fact, this is where we find fulfillment in life: in living our relationships well. But to live our relationships well, we must often make sacrifices, surrendering our own will to serve the good of others. This is why we discover a deeper happiness in life when we give ourselves in this way, for we are living the way God made us to live, which is the way God Himself lives: in total, self-giving, committed love.

How can this idea of the Law of the Gift be applied to Catholic social teaching? Much of what John Paul II and others have said about true marital love can also be said about all other loving relationships as well, including loving the entire human race. Applying self-giving love and the “Law of the Gift” not just to God or spouses and children, but to all of his children, true love then is giving up one’s time, talent, treasure, and freedom for the sake of the loved ones, which is expressed in the two commandments of love found in the Ten Commandments: to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, or even better yet, as he has loved us. This applies to all human beings. God has a special love for us all, because

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he created us in his own image and likeness, and when we fell from his grace he continued to love us so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to redeem and save us. All of the Church's social teachings flow from these two facts.

Pope Benedict on the environment: There was quite a lot said about Pope Benedict's position of environmental issues. Because of his interest in the world's environment, some labeled him the "Green Pope." Of course, the Pope is concerned about the environment, because it is God's creation and humanity he has assigned it to be its caretaker; the human race is the earth's trustee. We heard Pope Benedict say several times that we must do a better job taking care of the environment, but at the same time not to worship the earth. Philip Lawler recently published a great article on this subject entitled "The Pope's 'green' message: not standard environmentalism", in which he relates the content of Pope Benedict's "State of the World" address to the Vatican diplomatic corps on January 11. Afterwards headlines appeared in the world's press claiming the Pope had come out on the side of environmentalists. For example, the ultra-liberal *New York Times* headlined an article describing his speech, "Pope Denounces Failure to Forge New Climate Treaty", the BBC called its coverage of the speech "Pope Benedict XVI lambasts Copenhagen failure", and the *Time* magazine article was entitled "Pope Denounces Lack of New Climate Treaty." Lawler states that one might have concluded, from the press coverage that, "the Holy Father's speech was devoted mostly to the Copenhagen conference. But that conclusion would have been wrong." In fact, he tells us that the Pope barely gave a hundred words to the subject in his full three-thousand word address.

Pope Benedict was a "Green Pope" in so far as he had a keen interest in maintaining and improving the world's natural resources. As Lawler concedes, the description of Benedict as a "Green Pope" is an accurate description in the sense that the pope frequently spoke about the need to take care of the environment. He writes:

Twice in quick succession—in his message for the World Day of Peace on January 11, and now in his address to the diplomatic corps just 10 days later—he has made that argument forcefully to representatives of the world's political leadership. But the 'green' message preached by Pope Benedict is very different from mainstream environmentalism. Unfortunately most secular reporters, deaf to the spiritual content of the Pope's message, miss the distinction." [He goes on to say], "Most of the world's people—including most of the world's Catholics—learned about the Pope's talk not by reading the actual text, or even the official Vatican summary, but by hearing the reports that filtered through the secular news media. Secular reporters tend to read all events in secular terms—in political terms—and so they gravitated toward a politicized reading of the Pope's words.

To complicate matters, Lawler claims that, "the Vatican's public-relations efforts are notoriously inept, unable to focus reporters' attention on the most important themes of papal teaching. Furthermore, the Vatican officials most likely to speak with reporters are the ones most inclined to put their own political 'spin' on the Pope's words. The net result is coverage that glosses over the most critical aspects of the Pope's message."

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What is the essential thrust of the pope's message? According to Lawler, the Pope made his argument for environmental stewardship in the context of an argument about the dignity of human life and human nature. He quotes the Pope as saying, "It is in man's respect for himself that his sense of responsibility for creation is shown," and that as Saint Thomas Aquinas taught, "man represents all that is most noble in the universe." Lawler asserts that this message is "the polar opposite of the extreme environmentalist line, which views mankind as a threat to the earth." Then concluding this theme of the Pope's speech, he states, "Drawing on a Judeo-Christian tradition that traces back to Genesis, the Pope said that God set man up as steward over creation, to fill the earth and subdue it. The Christian is naturally an environmentalist, because he wants to fulfill God's plan." Moreover, the Pope says, "Following God's plan means respecting natural law, he said; it means honoring the lessons that are inscribed in human nature. So he explained that a reverence for life, and a determination to support marriage and the family, are also signs of respect for God's creation."

In addition to environmental topics, the Pope also addressed several other serious issues, such as peace in the Middle East, drug traffic in Latin America, nuclear weaponry, global hunger, secularism in Europe, and natural disasters in Asia. But as Lawler comments, "His thoughts on all those topics, regrettably, did not fit into the story line that most reporters chose."

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St. Thomas Aquinas on Social and Economic Justice

Social justice is a term that applies to an entire society; it refers to the idea that a just society provides fair treatment and a just share of the benefits of society for all individuals and groups. St. Thomas Aquinas, who was a great thirteenth century philosopher and theologian, was a major impetus for the development of the concept. He said “Justice is a certain rectitude of mind whereby a man does what he ought to do in the circumstances confronting him.” He believed that justice is a duty that all humans owe to each other, not something enforced by any human-made law. This reflects the Christian idea that every human being is created in God’s image; therefore, they are equal and must be treated with respect. His ideas regarding justice are tied in with the moral or cardinal virtues and the concept of natural law.



St. Thomas dealt with a number of economic issues in his famous *Summa Theologica*. Among the topics he covers are the division of labor, property rights, the just price, value theory, insider trading, and usury. Although he was not unfriendly to trade and did not believe it was sinful in itself, he believed that it could present opportunities for sinful behavior. He taught that the economic system should be subordinate to the moral and political purposes of society.

St. Thomas taught that civic virtue aims at the highest, natural end of human life, meaning the common good that sustains individual and corporate life, while at the same time being capable of being ordered toward the ultimate end of love of God.

Division of Labor: Aquinas taught that dividing the manufacture of products into several tasks is part of God’s Divine Providence and originates from the natural law, which recognizes that different men possess different abilities and inclinations for different occupations and functions. He believed that the division of labor satisfied the needs and wants of individuals.

Private Property: St. Thomas teaches that private property is an extension of natural law and is necessary for human life. Although he acknowledges that all property is communal under natural law, “he also contends that the addition of private property was an extension, and not a contradiction, of natural law.” Aquinas explains that human reason derives the notion of distinction of possession for the benefit of individual human lives. He states that possession of private property is necessary because: (1) men will more resolutely and attentively take care of things if they possess them instead of the goods being held in common by all or many others; (2) possession advances order rather than chaos and confusion as responsibility can be determined; and (3) private possession promotes a more peaceful state. Aquinas realized that, not only does creativity require property, for without property under the dominion of every person the individual’s liberty of action is diminished. He accepted an unequal distribution of private property, but also approved of the regulation of private property by the state. He also said that while the

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ownership of goods should be private, the use of goods must be in common (so that the poor and needy can have their share) or must be in service of the common good.

Just Price: Scholars have offered several interpretations as to what St. Thomas meant by a “just price”. Various interpretations offered are as follows: (1) a price based on labor cost; (2) a price based on utility or usefulness; (3) a price based on the total cost of manufacturing or providing the product; a price based on market supply and demand.

According to one source, the just price for Aquinas is “the one, which at a given time, can be received from the buyer, assuming common knowledge and the absence of fraud and coercion.” When speaking of the “just price” in an organized exchange, “Aquinas often appears to mean the price that is paid in a more or less competitive market. Noting that exchange takes place for the utility of both parties, Aquinas states that the norm of commutative justice is expressed in the principle of equivalence between reciprocal contributions. Accordingly, there needs to be “a certain equivalence or proportion between what is given and what is received. Aquinas describes commutative justice as the principle of absolute equality in exchanges of goods and services among individuals. He explicitly repudiated the notion that prices should be determined by one's position or station in life, noting that the selling price of any commodity should be the same whether or not the buyer or seller is poor or wealthy.”

Value Theory: For Aquinas, “the valuation of goods does not seem to depend upon any intrinsic property of the goods themselves. The equality to which Aquinas frequently refers appears to be the mutual satisfaction gained by each contracting party in an exchange. Aquinas also observes that the one element that measures all products and services is the need that involves all exchangeable goods because all things can be related to human needs. It is apparent that Aquinas was certainly not reducing the value of a good to labor by itself. Recognizing that market forces affect the value that is placed on goods and services, Aquinas is clearly not subscribing to the labor theory of value.”

Aquinas wrote that “buying and selling seem to have been introduced for the mutual advantages of the involved parties because one needs something that is possessed by the other and vice versa.” He states that “when market exchanges occur to meet the needs of the trading partners then there is no question of unethical behavior. However, if one produces for the market in expectation of gain then he is acting rationally only if his prices are just and his motives are charitable. The prices are just if both the buyer and seller benefit and the motives are charitable if the profits are to be used for self-support, charitable purposes or to contribute to public well-being.”

Insider Trading: Aquinas anticipates the problem of “insider trading” when he observes that a person may sell a scarce product at the prevailing market price although he knows that more of the product is on the way and will be available shortly. The implication is that there is no moral duty to inform a potential customer that the price of the product that one is attempting to sell is probably going to be lower in the near future.”

One scholar maintains that, “Aquinas, at least implicitly, anticipated the concept of opportunity

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cost. He explains the idea of price as just compensation to the seller for the utility lost when he becomes detached from the item sold. Aquinas also mentions the benefits supplied by men of commerce when they conserve and store goods, import goods that are necessary for the republic, and transport goods from geographical areas where they are in great supply to places where they are scarce.”

Usury: Aquinas, like the Bible and Aristotle, “condemned the practice of charging interest for the lending of money. Free market critics have claimed that “All fail to see that borrowers are not injured when they take out a loan and, in fact, are likely to benefit if they can invest in a project that yields a return greater than the interest paid.” Aquinas claimed though that, “usury is sinful and unnatural because money is barren and was simply invented for the purpose of exchange.”

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Conclusion

In summary, in this essay, we discussed the Foundational Principles of Catholic Social Teaching: human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and Caritas or love of God and neighbor. Then we examined the eight key themes of Catholic Social Teaching as outlined by the U.S. Catholic Bishops that flow from the Foundational Principles of Catholic Social Teaching. These provide the theological reasons for Catholic Social Teaching, doctrines such as humans possessing inestimable worth and dignity, because they are created in God's image and likeness and redeemed by Jesus Christ. Following that, we discussed the Church and Economic Justice. Having completed *the* discussion of the theology underlying Catholic Social Teaching, we considered the philosophy that supports the theology. The two philosophies that have worked together with Catholic moral theology to explain the reasons for Catholic Social Teaching are the natural law philosophy and Christian personalist philosophy, especially the Thomistic Personalism of Pope John Paul II. A discussion of these are essential to show the relationship between natural law and personalism as used by the popes in their social encyclicals and other documents.

We believe with the late Ralph McInerny, who said in his book on Vatican II, that one of the deficiencies of the Church before the council was its failure to transmit its social doctrines to the membership. We interpreted this to mean that politicians, businessmen, and the laity in general had not been adequately taught their responsibilities to promote the common good or the general welfare. Before the council, the Church had done a much better job indoctrinating the laity in their personal moral responsibilities, but had largely neglected the social dimensions of their behavior. When Vatican II placed a renewed emphasis on the social dimensions of morality, the huge vacuum created before the council in social justice teaching was quickly filled up with the more radical social, political, and economic ideas of progressive or socialistically minded theologians, the most extreme being Marxist Liberation Theology. Every pope since then by various documents have attempted to set the record straight regarding what genuine Catholic social justice morality is about.

In conclusion, all humans possess inherent dignity and inestimable worth, because we are created in the very image of God and because he loves us so much that he sent his only begotten son into the world to suffer and die in order to save us. By becoming one of us himself, the son of God the Father, Jesus Christ, made it possible for our human nature to be elevated to the supernatural level by adoption and by grace and to pave the way to eternal life in Heaven with the Trinitarian Family and the holy saints and angels. All of the Church's social teachings flow from these facts. In the final analysis, we will be judged by how much we love our neighbors and how much we have tried to promote their well-being.