This invaluable reference tool is essential for those seeking a clear and comprehensive introduction to Catholic social thought, as well as a Catholic-informed social science and social policy perspective on these and countless other subjects.

—THE CATHOLIC ANSWER

This book is a valuable summary and scholarly examination of this major, crucial social document of the Catholic Church. It explores, with considerable thoroughness, the Compendium’s content, sources, perspectives, and the questions it discusses. It is certain to become a standard in the literature on the Compendium.

—STEPHEN M. KRASON, president, Society of Catholic Social Scientists

Catholic Social Thought presents detailed commentary and response to the Vatican’s 2005 Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, with contributions from outstanding American scholars. Addressing theology, social theory, the family, economy, government, labor, global society, gender, peace, and the environment, the various authors explore the core theology, explain the Compendium’s themes and arguments, and apply their own intellectual powers to applications of its teachings. Some of the chapters are largely expository, some more critical (in both positive and negative senses). Some operate from a standard of magisterial assent in conformity with Ad Tuendam Fidem, others do not. Together the chapters represent the range of Catholic thinking on social issues in the American church today.

CONTRIBUTORS
Anthony J. Blasi • Carroll J. Baugher • Charles M. A. Clark • Michael Coulter • John Larrivee • Kevin E. Miller • James A. Montmarquette • J. F. X. Paiva • Deborah Savage • Stephen Scharper • D. Paul Sullins • Andrew J. Weigart

D. PAUL SULLINS is professor of sociology at the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

ANTHONY J. BLASI is professor of sociology at Tennessee State University.

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American Reflections on the Compendium

Edited by D. Paul Sullins and Anthony J. Blasi
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Introduction

Anthony J. Blasi and D. Paul Sullins

The spring of 2005 is remembered for the final decline and death, on April 2, of Pope John Paul II followed by the swift election of Pope Benedict XVI. Overshadowed by these dramatic events, however, almost no one noticed a quiet action that may, in the long view, rival them in significance for American Catholics: the U.S. publication, on March 15, 2005, of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church.¹

To understand the unprecedented nature of this document, one must recall that over the past century the principles and themes known today as Catholic Social Teaching have been articulated exclusively through occasional documents, that is, documents written and promulgated with respect to particular occasions or social circumstances. While such documents were mindful of the systematic implications of their teachings, their primary purpose was to address a particular situation or context in world affairs. The first task, therefore, of anyone attempting to understand or reflect on the teachings thus promulgated has been to trace the development of themes through the various pastoral, political, and social contexts in which they were articulated. By contrast, in the Compendium, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has set forth, for the first time, the structure and scope of the entire body of teaching in this area in a systematic and definitive way. In content, structure, authority, and intent the Compendium does for Catholic Social Teaching what the 1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church did for Catholic doctrine more generally, providing an authoritative magisterial reference and summary for both Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

The Compendium thus adds nothing, yet changes everything, for Catholic social thought. In content, the volume claims (8) to be nothing more than a synthesis of teachings previously issued. Yet in a fundamental sense the volume is not only profoundly new, it is an altogether new point of departure for Catholic social thought. From now on, the first task in interpreting Catholic social thought will be not to trace its development through the history of the social encyclicals, but to comprehend its complete and systematic magisterial statement as published in the Compendium.
The Compendium was compiled at the request of Pope John Paul II, who proposed in 1987, in the encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (41):

In today’s difficult situation, a more exact awareness and a wider diffusion of the “set of principles for reflection, criteria for judgment and directives for action” proposed by the Church’s teaching could be of great help in promoting both the correct definition of the problems being faced and the best solution to them.

The 1997 exhortation Ecclesia in America, issued after consultation with the American bishops, issued a definite call for “a compendium or approved synthesis of Catholic social doctrine, including a ‘Catechism’” that would help to promote and support the study of this doctrine [Catholic Social Teaching] in every area of the life of the particular Churches in America, especially in the universities, so that it may be more deeply known and applied to American society.

Two aspects of the resulting Compendium are already apparent in this proposal. First, while intended to be relevant to society in general, the Compendium was written with special application to American society and for consideration in American universities. Second, its intent is primarily catechetical, following an arrangement and structure designed to teach.

Following the threefold distinction of principles, criteria, and directives noted above, the Compendium, after an introduction, is organized into three parts. Part 1 reviews the background theological doctrines pertinent to Catholic Social Teaching, in two chapters focusing on God’s activity in the created order and the mission of the Church, before setting forth four foundational “principles for reflection”: the dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. An entire chapter is devoted to human dignity, clearly the most important of these principles, while the fourth and final chapter of part 1 discusses the remaining three principles. Part 2 applies “criteria for judgment” with chapter-length treatments of seven key aspects or institutions of human society: the family, human work, the economy, civil society, the international community, the environment, and military conflict. Part 3 provides guidance for social action for pastors and the lay faithful. A short concluding chapter restates the ideal of Catholic Social Teaching to build a “civilization of love.”

American Catholics cannot help but note that this ordering of themes is very different than that proposed by the U.S. bishops or taught in most U.S. theologates. In 1998 the U.S. Bishops published a set of reflections called “Sharing Catholic Social Teaching” in which they articulated seven “key themes” designed to “serve as a starting point for those interested in exploring the Catholic social tradition more fully.” These themes are: life and dignity of the human person; call to family, community and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and the
rights of workers; solidarity; and care for God’s creation. The presentation of Catholic social teaching in U.S. theologates has followed a similar thematic arrangement. According to a report by Katerina Schuth, “four broad categories with sub-themes are frequently chosen as the framework for presenting [Catholic social teaching]” in U.S. seminaries and houses of formation. These categories are: care for the human person; concern for work and family; economic organization and political participation; and developing a culture of peace and solidarity. According to Schuth, this categorization “outlines the basic principles of the complex Catholic social tradition.”

Like the Compendium, these typologies were formed for pedagogical purposes, and they are not inconsistent, in broad terms, with the Compendium’s organization of the Catholic social teaching material. Yet the Compendium introduces a more focused, ordered, and comprehensive arrangement of the set of ideas comprising Catholic social teaching. It is possible, from the fact that it is listed first, to infer a certain priority for the notion of human dignity in the U.S. Bishops and theologates lists; but in the Compendium the fundamental character of this principle is made explicit. The U.S. lists do not indicate any sense of relative priority among the themes or principles they set forth, with the result that it is not clear what organizing principle, if any, guided their selection. Moreover, the U.S. arrangements cannot be said to be comprehensive. Neither mentions subsidiarity, a fundamental principle in the Compendium. In the U.S. Bishops’ list the common good is addressed only obliquely, as is concern for the environment in the theologates’ ordering.

Although never acknowledged, the Compendium is strongly influenced by the thought of Joseph Cardinal Höffner, as presented in his widely-used text Christliche Gesellschaftslehre (Christian Social Teaching), published in eight editions from 1962 to 1983. The systematization of Catholic social teaching presented in the Compendium is clearly patterned on that of Höffner’s text. The table of contents is virtually identical to the arrangement of topics provided in the Compendium. Part 1 of Höffner’s book, for example, after setting forth the social nature of man, propounds three principles of a Christian understanding of the social order—solidarity, the common good, and subsidiarity—exactly as does the Compendium. These principles are then applied, in part 2, to the range of social institutions, with sections on marriage and the family; work and profession; the economy; the state; and the community of nations. With additional chapters on the environment and peace, this is the same list, and in the same order, of the topical applications found in part 2 of the Compendium.

In a more detailed way, the Compendium at many points reflects specific characteristics of Höffner’s exposition and thought. A couple of examples, chosen at random from numerous possibilities, will suffice to illustrate. First, in his discussion of the virtue of justice, Höffner reviews the emergence of the term “social justice” in the nineteenth century in the context of the three traditional forms of justice recognized in Thomist thought. After considering a variety of alternative interpretations of the concept, Höffner proposes, uniquely, that social justice is “identical with legal justice correctly understood.” On the same topic
the *Compendium* teaches: “The Church’s social Magisterium constantly calls for the most classical forms of justice to be respected: *commutative, distributive* and *legal justice*. Ever greater importance has been given to *social justice*, which represents a real development in *general justice*, the justice that regulates social relationships according to the criterion of observance of the *law*” (201). As a second example, in discussing the economy, Höfﬁner includes an original section titled “Scarcity and the Need to be Economical,” in which he writes: Experience teaches that most essential commodities are not available in unrestricted fullness . . . ; compared with human needs, they are scarce . . . Man’s normal response to the tension arising from having needs which must be met from a limited supply of goods is this: he seeks to deal sparing and economically with scarce goods, i.e., to conserve them, in order to obtain the greatest possible use from those that are available. In the industrial age, . . . [e]conomic growth must take place in an ordered and controlled way.”6 The *Compendium*, in a section with no references to magisterial documents (346), expresses essentially the same idea: “Resources in nature are quantitatively scarce, which means that each individual economic subject, as well as each individual society, must necessarily come up with a plan for their utilization in the most rational way possible, following the logic dictated by the *principle of economizing.*”

Clearly, Höfﬁner’s ideas and interpretation form the basis for much of the *Compendium* material, although his treatment is far more philosophical, and engages the Scholastic material much more extensively, than does the *Compendium*. As noted in chapter 9 of the present volume, the work of another German Thomist social theorist, Johannes Messner, also appears to be reﬂected in the *Compendium*. For the committed student, a careful study of the work of Höfﬁner, Messner, and perhaps German neo-Thomism in general would help to amplify and provide greater understanding of many of the teachings of the *Compendium*.

In the American Catholic context, there are certain ironies connected with the publication of a document like the *Compendium*. As a new type of document, as noted above, there is a certain lack of clarity regarding the speciﬁc nature of the *Compendium*’s authority. The document explicitly claims magisterial authority (8), and is addressed respectively, after the manner of encyclicals, to all bishops, the Catholic faithful, members of other religious communities, and all persons of good will (9–11). Yet it is a publication, not of the Holy See, but of a pontiﬁcal council. Unlike the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is probably the most similar recent magisterial document in type and form, the *Compendium* is accompanied by no certifying papal apostolic constitution. With a rare hint of asperity (“As one knows, but it seems to bear repeating”), the *Compendium* reminds the reader that the authority of its extensive quoted material rests on the authority of the underlying documents, which can be quite diverse (8). But the *Compendium* never clarifies the nature of its own authority, that is, the authority of its original, non-quoted material.

American Catholics are also likely to perceive some irony in the very fact of the Vatican issuing such a *Compendium* of social teachings a mere four decades after Vatican Council II. The Council highlighted the social and cultural plural-
ism of both the Church and the world, acknowledging a difference between central truths and the multiple ways these truths needed to be brought home to different peoples. Consequently it recognized the legitimacy of nations democratically generating their own economic and political programs. It called for the celebration of the sacraments in vernacular languages and endorsed the use of indigenous musical and artistic styles in order to reach out to various peoples and encourage their active participation. It emphasized the responsibility of bishops to spread the gospel message in ways suitable to their environments. Yet in the Compendium we have a statement of Church social doctrine that synthesizes formulations that have emanated entirely from the Holy See and the Vatican curia itself. No statements from local bishops or national councils of bishops, let alone from Catholics sans mitres, found their way into the Compendium's multitudinous footnotes. Despite the interest at Vatican II in ecumenical initiatives, no references are made to statements from other Christian churches, other religious traditions, or from such personages as Mohandas Gandhi, Desmond Tutu, or Martin Luther King, Jr. Despite the image of the Church as the people of God so prominent in the Council documents, there are no references to Mother Theresa or Dorothy Day. Despite the widespread intent at the Council to update the Church, no intellectuals from the modern era are cited. This is simply to say that, as its name implies, the Compendium does not pretend to be a statement of all that should weigh upon one's conscience in social matters, but that it is "simply" a statement of magisterial views. Such a statement is no mean achievement, but it should be seen as but one step toward formulating a truly catholic social ethic.

Irony, of course, is double-edged. At the same time as the centripetal nature of an exclusively Vatican statement pulls in the opposite direction of diversity, decentralization, indigenization, and ecumenism, it also gives these a correcting contextual significance that they would not otherwise have. Without the integrative system of thought that the Vatican provides, Catholic social theory would be analogous to a drama that features striking scenes and memorable characters but is somewhat lacking in story line or narrative coherence. Catholics would confront as many sensitivities and issues as others, but would lack perspective to see the significance of day-to-day events. Because the modern world features what sociologists term "differentiation"—an extension and refinement of the division of labor into an array of specializations and job descriptions—faith risks being compartmentalized into the Sunday (or in some traditions, Sabbath) worship business. A synthesis of the social teachings of the Church serves as a correction of that. Because the modern economy divides people into a public life—in such macro-institutions as big business, big government, and big military—and a private life—of such micro-institutions as family, local education, and religion (especially under the guise of "spirituality")—a synthesis of teachings that themselves synthesize all such dimensions of life serves as a double corrective.

But the correction can go further. Without the sense of a larger picture such as that inherent in the general nature of the Compendium, there is a danger of the
Church itself assuming the form of a loose union of otherwise unrelated fixations. The late Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago was attuned to this danger when he called for a consistent ethic of life, weaving different issues together into a seamless garment. The fact that some American Catholics campaign against the death penalty but remain silent on the matter of abortion, while some “pro-life” (i.e. anti-abortion) activists pass over executions without comment, is evidence of this danger. To become so one-dimensional as to be hyperactive over one manifestation of a value, but then not open one’s mouth over another, is to lack a pervasive faith and a real sense of the larger picture. Was it admirable for church people to stand before the racial slavery of previous centuries and be concerned instead with the precise date of the Second Coming? Is it admirable in the very hour of these lines being written for Christians to be so keen on immigration laws being upheld that they cannot be moved by the plight of people so desperate as to smuggle themselves at great risk across international boundaries to work at a job as a busboy or day laborer? The sense of the larger picture, though visionary, is very practical; it adds greater realism to one’s view of the world.

As with any system of moral thought, Catholic social thought is concerned with applying general or normative truths to particular choices and actions. There are far-ranging implications of the core theology behind the multitude of issues taken up in the Compendium. That core theology, expressed in the first four chapters, is based on the strong doctrine of creation so characteristic of the Catholic theological tradition: God wants to love and does love and therefore is both inherently plural in a divine unity; however, God does not stop there but goes on to create, so that there can be a divine love for non-divine entities as well. Moreover, God fashions part of creation, humanity, to reflect the divine nature and thus also be capable of that kind of love. Humans are thus transcendent creatures, worthy of having their dignity respected, who are therefore called to transcend themselves and respect that dignity in each other. The Church is the vehicle of that insight, continuing the revelatory activity of Jesus, who united the divine and the human in himself. In modern thought these ideas are expressed in terms of the “personalist principle” and human rights. Personhood and rights are aspects of the social nature of humans; persons are not isolated entities who have no obligations toward one another. The particular principles of the Church’s social doctrine are extensions of this theology: the common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, participation, and solidarity.

Far-ranging as these principles may be, they do not provide ready-made answers to every social issue. One must use one’s own reason to grasp the facts of situations, identify the relevant principles, and move toward a moral conclusion. This is, of course, the traditional procedure of natural law, which is not a set of answers so much as a process. Humans, created in the image and likeness of God, can grasp the creative will of God by observing the creation, since the creation reflects the intent of the Creator. If the human reasoning is right, it will agree with positive revelation rightly understood, since God will not be in self-contradiction. Thus reason needs be allowed to operate so that people can pro-
ceed from the general principles toward responses to the issues that arise in everyday life. Tradition represents the independent reasoning of thousands of minds over time and can thus be understood as a resource for the comprehension of truths. Freedom is a positive good insofar as it allows tradition and reason to operate.

Much of the original material in the Compendium, particularly in parts 2 and 3, appears to be comprised of such reasoning on the part of Vatican officials, that is, statements that proceed from the core theology and principles but do not themselves necessarily comprise such. Thus one can faithfully accept the core theology without necessarily accepting, at the same level, all of the particular criteria and applications to be found in the Compendium. One would do well, consequently, to dwell upon the core principles in the volume and to take the issues raised in various chapters quite seriously. Taking them seriously means understanding and appreciating the various arguments—about the family, human work, economic life, the political community, the international community, the environment, and the promotion of peace—and engaging them with one's own intellectual powers.

As Cardinal Martino elegantly expressed in the Presentation of the Compendium, it is the motive of its authors that it serve as an occasion “for an encounter, for dialogue, for cooperation in serving the common good.” Likewise, Cardinal Sodano’s introduction to the volume notes that Pope John Paul II “invokes God’s blessings on those who will take the time to reflect on the teachings of this publication.” The various authors whose contributions follow below do exactly that. They explore the core theology, follow the Compendium’s applications in its various arguments, and apply their own intellectual powers to the applications. Some of their essays are largely expository, some more critical (in both a positive and negative sense). Some operate from a standard of magisterial assent in conformity with Ad Tuendam Fidam, others do not. Together they represent the range of Catholic thinking on social issues in the American Church today. All the chapters should be taken as invitations to join the discussion.

As academics, we believe that critical appraisals and hard questions regarding the teachings and claims of the Compendium are not inconsistent with, indeed are some of the best ways to express, faithful submission to magisterial truth and strong appreciation for the work, in a spirit of solidarity, respect, and love (18). We would not want such scrutiny to obscure the fact that, in our opinion, the very project of the Compendium is commendable and the resultant volume admirable and deeply enlightening. The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has given a great gift to the world. For the first time, the Church at large, as well as citizens everywhere on the globe, have in hand a convenient volume in which Catholic social teaching can be found.
Notes


Part I

Principles of Catholic Social Thought
Chapter 1

The Gift and Mission of Love: The Theological Dimension of Catholic Social Teaching

Reflections on Compendium Chapter 1

Kevin E. Miller

Debate about the proper interpretation of the practical norms found in contemporary Catholic social teaching, and about the directions in which that teaching should continue to develop, has often reflected at-least-implicit disagreement concerning the theological foundations of that teaching. One might note, for example, the significant contrasts between, on the one hand, the emphasis by “liberation theologians” on the present reality and temporal consequences of God’s saving plan and more specifically on the need for human beings to demand from one another a just share of existing wealth, and, on the other hand, the somewhat more recent insistence by “neoconservatives” or “Whig Thomists” on the transcendence of God’s perfect Kingdom and particularly on the dignity of wealth-creating human enterprise by virtue of our being in the image of the Creator.

This essay will consider what is indicated about the theological foundations of Catholic social teaching in the new Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Following a brief sketch of some of the key elements of chapter 1 of the Compendium, it will argue that it is most helpful to see its theology as rooted especially in that of Henri de Lubac (and hence as contrasting with both of the influential contemporary approaches mentioned above, despite some common elements with each). The essay will conclude with some brief thoughts on the practical significance of the Compendium’s approach.
A Summary of the *Compendium*’s Theology

The (theo-)logical starting point for the *Compendium* is indeed the Trinity. Although the Catholic faith concerning the Trinity is not elaborated at length, the *Compendium* does affirm: “God is Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; truly distinct and truly one, because God is an infinite communion of love” (31). The mention here of “love” is noteworthy. One could say that, like “communion,” “love” captures or summarizes what is said in “truly distinct and truly one.” As “distinct,” the Divine Persons are able to give to and receive from one another in love. And precisely because this love, this giving and receiving, is total, the Persons are “one.” Furthermore, if the Trinitarian life is, in a certain respect, love, then that life can also be shared with creatures, since love can be shared. Thus, it is possible for creatures to enter into the “communion” of both true distinction and true unity.

The *Compendium*’s Christology is likewise brief, but it gives prominent attention to Jesus’ identity as one of the Trinity, as the Son of the Father. We are reminded: “He proclaims: ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father’ (Jn 14:9)” (28). And the text continues (29):

> The love that inspires Jesus’ ministry among men is the love that he has experienced in his intimate union with the Father. The New Testament allows us to enter deeply into the experience, that Jesus himself lives and communicates, the love of God his Father—“Abba”—and, therefore, it permits us to enter into the very heart of divine life... He invites all to follow him because he is the first to obey God’s plan of love... 

Jesus’ self-awareness of being the Son is an expression of this primordial experience.

Finally, and similarly: “The Face of God, progressively revealed in the history of salvation, shines in its fullness in the Face of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead” (31). Thus, Jesus, the Son, is distinct from the Father, and so can be loved by him and (obediently) love him in return. Jesus is also, in that relationship of love, one with the Father, and so he makes the Father known and even present.

Next, and especially important in a presentation of the Church’s teachings on human society, is the *Compendium*’s theological anthropology (and soteriology). Firstly, we are, of course, creatures (26-27); that is, our very existence is “gratuitous.” All that God does for us in his plan, culminating in the sending of the Son, reflects the same gratuitousness. Furthermore, this gratuitousness is in turn a reflection of the love that makes up the inner-Trinitarian life:

God’s gratuitous love for humanity is revealed, before anything else, as love springing from the Father, from whom everything draws its source; as the free communication that the Son makes of this love, giving himself anew to the Father.
The Gift and Mission of Love

and giving himself to mankind; as the ever new fruitfulness of the divine love that the Holy Spirit pours forth into the hearts of men (cf. Rm 5:5). (31)

It might be added that this connection between the inner-Trinitarian love and God’s love for humanity is what one might expect from what was said about the connection between the inner-Trinitarian life and Jesus’ identity and mission.

It also follows from this connection that what God offers to humanity through Jesus Christ is precisely a share in the life of the Trinity. The Compendium therefore tells us: “The Son has been given everything, and freely so, by the Father: ‘All that the Father has is mine’ (Jn 16:15). His in turn is the mission of making all men sharers in this gift and in this filial relationship . . . .” (29). One must maintain that this sharing is, in itself, gratuitous. However, the Compendium suggests that there is nevertheless a kind of continuity between the gratuitousness of creation and that of God’s gift to us in Jesus of a share in his own life. Put differently, it suggests that God created us with an openness to this further gift as our perfection. So, it tells us: “In the communion of love that is God, and in which the Three Divine Persons mutually love one another and are the One God, the human person is called to discover the origin and goal of his existence and of history” (34). Note: “the goal” of our very “existence.” And, even more clearly:

The pages of the first book of Sacred Scripture, which describe the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26-27), contain a fundamental teaching with regard to the identity and the vocation of the human person. They tell us . . . that man and woman, because they are free and intelligent [emphasis added], represent the “thou” created by God and that only in relationship with him [emphasis added] can they discover and fulfill the authentic and complete meaning of their personal and social lives . . . . (36; cf. also 108-9)

That is, from our very nature as free and intelligent, our end can only be God.

Another essential point follows in turn. If we are made to share in the Trinitarian communion of love, then we are made to live in communion with one another, expressed in that love. Chapter 1 of the Compendium makes this point repeatedly. Already throughout the chapter’s opening section on “God’s Liberating Action in the History of Israel” (20-27), we are told that we who receive God’s gifts must therefore live the golden rule in our human relations, must practice justice (cf. 201-3) and solidarity (cf. 192-96). A fortiori, Jesus reveals to us that we must live in love with one another. Hence, the Compendium adds:

For Jesus, recognizing the Father’s love means modelling his actions on God’s gratuitousness and mercy . . . . Jesus’ followers are called to live like him . . . . (29)

Meditating on the gratuitousness and the superabundance of the Father’s divine gift of the Son, . . . the Apostle John grasps its profound meaning and its most logical consequence. “Beloved, if God so loves us, we also ought to love one an-
other. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us" (1 Jn 4:11-12). The reciprocity of love is required by the commandment that Jesus describes as “new” and as “his”: “that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (Jn 13:34). (32)

The commandment of mutual love, which represents the law of life for God’s people, must inspire, purify and elevate all human relationships in society and in politics. “To be human means to be called to interpersonal communion,” because the image and likeness of the Trinitarian God are the basis of the whole of “human ethos,” which reaches its apex in the commandment of love.” (33)

The revelation in Christ of the mystery of God as Trinitarian love is at the same time the revelation of the vocation of the human person to love. (34)

The Compendium further clarifies that as Christ came for all, so this love must embrace all, including one’s enemy (40, 43). Mary, with her fiat and Magnificat, her perfect acceptance and living of God’s love, is, then, the model for Christians (59). And Catholic social teaching is above all “The Way of Love” (204-8) and calls above all “For a Civilization of Love” (575-83).

It must also be said that as it is only in God that we find our fulfillment, so it is only in reconciliation with and love for God that we are enabled to live in loving communion and solidarity with one another. Estrangement from God leads to disharmony within the world (27), but Christ can and does, with our cooperation, transform and purify and perfect and redeem our relationships with others (41-44, 52). It follows that we can and must—as in one of the chapter’s subheadings—speak of both “The transcendence of salvation and the autonomy of earthly realities” (45-48).

Finally, the Compendium indicates an ecclesiology, and especially a theology of the Church-world relationship, that likewise follows from the above considerations. First, the Church is as it were the privileged place of our participation, together, in the loving Trinitarian communion (32, 49-51). Second, it is especially and precisely as such that the Church transforms the world (52-55). One might even say that Catholic social teaching is above all a kind of expression of the Church’s inner nature as God’s gift of communion to and for the world (cf. 55); this is why, according to chapter 2 (60-71), Catholic social teaching is truly part of “evangelization.” But this does not mean that the Church’s worldly mission is merely optional. Precisely because we are in the world (without being of it), we need to live the life of the Kingdom, the life of the Trinity, in and even for the world.

And in that light, one may clarify that the above does not mean that only those who explicitly know Christ and the Church can participate at all in God’s life and thereby contribute to the world. The Compendium notes that “The Ten Commandments . . . contain a privileged expression of the natural law” (22). This does not mean that their context in Scripture is irrelevant; nor, still less, that one’s being Christian does not matter—it does, because of our tendency toward sin and because it is important for us to live the life God offers in its fullness. But it does mean that
all people of good will should be able to discover at least the primary things that the Commandments prescribe and proscribe, and, with the help of Christ and the Holy Spirit (cf. 41), obey them. So all persons of good will can live in harmony with God and neighbor and even contribute significantly to the working out of God's plan. Indeed, as the Compendium affirms,

*The complete fulfillment of the human person, achieved in Christ through the gift of the Spirit, develops in history and is mediated by personal relationships with other people, relationships that in turn reach perfection thanks to the commitment made to improve the world, in justice and peace. Human activity in history is of itself significant and effective for the definitive establishment of the Kingdom, although this remains a free gift of God, completely transcendent. (58)*

Even for the Christian precisely as a Christian, love *in and for* the world is necessary if not primary.

**Henri de Lubac as Source for the Compendium**

Nowhere does the Compendium mention the name of any such contemporary theologian as Henri de Lubac. However, it will now be argued, de Lubac's thought is very important as theological background for the Compendium. It is worth beginning this part of the discussion by noting that of the fifty footnotes in chapter 1 of the Compendium, twenty cite Vatican Council II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*. The next most frequently cited source is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, with eight references. No other source is cited more than three times. This should not be very surprising, since the Pastoral Constitution is such an extensive and intensive treatment of the Church-world relationship in general and in its particular implications for life in various communities and social spheres. But one might also take it as a clue to the importance of de Lubac's theology for the Compendium.

It is fairly well known that de Lubac was a *peritus* at the Second Vatican Council and that his thought was one of a number of significant influences on several of the Council's texts. Perhaps chief among these was *Gaudium et Spes*. By way of an especially clear example of this influence, in his very first book, *Catholicism* (originally published in 1937), de Lubac writes the following: "By revealing the Father and by being revealed by him, Christ completes the revelation of man to himself." And in *Gaudium et Spes* (22), we read: "Christ, ... by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear." More generally, it can be argued that the Pastoral Constitution should be read in light of de Lubac's thought, and especially his theological anthropology.

It is also worth mentioning that Karol Wojtyła took part in the Council and there met de Lubac. Wojtyła's thought was already similar to de Lubac's.
Wojtyła singled out the passage just quoted from *Gaudium et Spes* (22), which so clearly echoes de Lubac, as “a key point in the Council’s thought.” Still later, as John Paul II, he made *Gaudium et Spes*, and especially that same passage, something of a keynote of his papacy. Since Catholic social teaching was further developed by Pope John Paul II, and since the *Compendium* draws heavily from his writings (chapter 1 alone cites him fourteen times) as well as from the Council (and the *Catechism*), we have further reason to expect that de Lubac’s thought informs the *Compendium*.

To substantiate this, one can outline some key elements of de Lubac’s argument in *Catholicism* and thereby show specific parallels between his thought and the *Compendium*’s theology. First, as he begins to make a case that Catholic unity is not at odds with the integrity of the person, de Lubac appeals above all to the Trinity:

> For do we not believe that there are three Persons in God? It is impossible to imagine greater distinctions than those of this purely threefold relationship, since it is these very distinctions that constitute them in their entirety. And do they not arise in unity, the unity of one same Nature? The most complete expression of Personality appears to us thus in the Being of whom every being is a reflection—an image, a shadow, a trace—the consequence as well as the consecration of the highest unity.

So, like the *Compendium*, de Lubac sees the Trinity at least as a model for human communion, and perhaps even as its ultimate source.

Second, it is clear that de Lubac sees Catholic unity as unity in God, and more specifically as unity in Christ, and that he sees this specific unity as the only kind that is not at odds with the person. Because, and only because, there is room in us for Christ, there is also room in us for all people. Attempts to build human society in opposition to Christ, for example, Marxism, are “quasi-religious ideologies” that, by contrast, “result in man’s ruin.” De Lubac, like the *Compendium*, rejects attempts to have worldly “autonomy” without “transcendence.”

Third, de Lubac’s thesis that unity in Christ, and only this unity, is compatible with respect for the person is closely linked with his famous thesis that we have by nature a supernatural end, a natural desire for God. This thesis is elaborated at much greater length and in much greater depth in some of de Lubac’s subsequent writings, such as *Mystery of the Supernatural*, but one can find it already in *Catholicism*. Early in the book, de Lubac speaks of our being made in God’s image as a “natural” principle, but then states that this image is a “participation in God,” and adds that for the early Christians, it was therefore God himself more so than Adam who is the Father of the human race. More significantly, he equates “infidelity to the divine image that man bears in him” with a “breach with God” and says that it is at odds with “the supernatural union of man with God,” logically implying that it is because we (by nature) bear the divine image that we are capable of union with God. Also, he notes that Paul’s “mention of this ‘new man’ who is ever ‘renewed’ is, in
the Epistle to the Colossians, coupled with a reference to the unique Image, "the image of him that created him," and to "Christ . . . all, and in all."\textsuperscript{28} So, specifically, our being in God's image constitutes our openness to Christ.

When de Lubac discusses the relationship between unity in Christ and personalism, he refers again to this basic theological anthropology. Among several "paradoxes" that are resolved only by faith (like unity and personalism), de Lubac lists this: "the vision of God is a free gift, and yet the desire of it is at the very root of every soul."\textsuperscript{29} More pointedly, de Lubac argues: "Man no more loses himself or disintegrates by becoming an integral part of that spiritual Body of which he must be a member than he does by submitting himself to God and uniting himself with him."\textsuperscript{30} But we do not disintegrate by uniting ourselves with God if and only if we are, by nature, open to him.\textsuperscript{31} Thus the thesis of natural openness to God serves as a premise for the argument about unification and personalism. Again, de Lubac says that "Christ completes the revelation of man to himself. By taking possession of man, by seizing hold of him and by penetrating down to the very depths of his being Christ makes man go deep down within himself, there to discover in a flash regions hitherto unexpected."\textsuperscript{32} And this claim that Christ reveals to us that we have a place in ourselves for him is the premise for his conclusion, mentioned above, that we thereby have room in ourselves for other people. De Lubac goes on to say: "That image of God, the image of the Word, which the incarnate Word restores and gives back to its glory, is 'I myself'; it is also the other, every other."\textsuperscript{33} But we are by nature in the image of God; so, again, we are by nature open to God in Christ, and, through and in him, to "the other." De Lubac's theological anthropology, then, coincides with that of the Compendium, in its indications that God is the sole end of our nature, and in its use of this basic principle as a premise for conclusions about the possibility of and need for Christ as the source of true human unity.\textsuperscript{34}

Fourth, one may turn briefly to de Lubac's ecclesiology. For de Lubac, the Church is the place for that union with Christ and, in him, with one another, to which we are naturally open and for which we have a natural desire. De Lubac writes that "the Church . . . , like Christ, . . . 'knows what is in man,' because there is an intimate relationship between the dogma to which she adheres in all its mystery and human nature, infinitely mysterious in its turn."\textsuperscript{35} If our nature is open to Christ, then it is open to the Body of Christ, the Church.\textsuperscript{36} Furthermore, it is not the Church's "exterior organization"—necessary though that is in this life—but rather its "interior unity" and "life" that is at her center.\textsuperscript{37} And it is above all by being itself, by being this communion, that the Church contributes to the world.\textsuperscript{38} So de Lubac's account of the Church-world relationship also agrees with that of the Compendium.

Finally, there is the question of the role of the "unbeliever" in God's plan for the human race. For de Lubac, "salvation . . . consists in . . . receiving the form of Christ, and that is possible only through the Catholic Church";\textsuperscript{39} likewise, outside Christianity efforts at unity will not succeed.\textsuperscript{40} But he has already insisted that "the grace of Christ is of universal application, and that no soul of good will lacks the concrete means of salvation, in the fullest sense of the word. There is no man, no
“unbeliever,” whose supernatural conversion to God is not possible from the dawn of reason onward; and in the course of making this argument for the necessity of the Church, and for “critical judgment” of “objective systems” other than Christianity, de Lubac allows that there is room for “admiration” of the spirituality, charity, and so on of unbelievers. Later, he speaks at much greater length of the need for respect for the ways God is at work in the world outside the Church. It would seem to follow that even those who have not yet seen or accepted the Church in its fullness might well nonetheless respond to invitations to cooperate with Christians in significant ways in God’s plan for the world (and for themselves). This seems very similar to the Compendium’s view, with its mention of natural law and of the role that all can play in God’s saving plan.

**Applications and Conclusion**

While detailed analysis of how a de Lubac–inspired theology of the human person, the Church, and the world plays itself out in the Compendium’s more specific social-moral teachings is beyond the scope of this essay, it would be proper to close with two very brief suggestions of connections between the theological thought of chapter 1 of the Compendium and the chapters of Part II that deal with the several institutional realms of collective life. The first of these connections is with the treatment of how people involved in business firms should make use of their legitimate freedom within a market economy. It is noteworthy that, consistent with de Lubac’s personalism, the Compendium does speak of the importance of economic freedom and goals. But it is also important that it also calls for an explicit awareness that a business “represents a good for everyone and not a structure that permits the satisfaction of someone’s merely personal interests” (339); and more specifically insists:

> Business owners and management must not limit themselves to taking into account only the economic objectives of the company, the criteria for economic efficiency and the proper care of “capital” as the sum of the means of production. It is also their precise duty to respect concretely the human dignity of those who work within the company. In important decisions concerning strategy and finances, in decisions to buy or sell, to resize, close or to merge a site, financial and commercial criteria must not be the only considerations made. (344)

As Trinitarian love must be explicit, one might say, so also must a capitalist’s practical concern for those whom his decisions affect.

The second connection concerns the Compendium’s teachings on the international community and peace. The Compendium speaks positively of “the journey towards an authentic international ‘community,’” and hence, at least in principle, of such international political structures as the United Nations, and it sees them as a
necessary means to a truly “ordered and peaceful coexistence within the human family” (440-41 f). Further, it says that not only justice but also charity and love are necessary for peace (494), and adds that “engaging in a preventive war without clear proof that an attack is imminent cannot fail to raise serious moral and juridical questions” (501). As the economy must be explicitly structured around (Trinitarian) love for (all) others, not simply (or primarily) self-love, so, the Compendium suggests, must the international order. Individual national sovereignty is real and important but also relative to the service of universal solidarity and peace.

This essay’s clarification of the theology of the Compendium and especially the role of de Lubac’s thought therein should, then, serve both as a useful beginning for further study of and conversation about that theology in itself (including the roles of other major twentieth-century theologians, such as Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, and Hans Urs von Balthasar, as sources in relation to de Lubac), and as a helpful reference point for understanding the practical social teaching on which most of the Compendium focuses.

Notes


2. For a more detailed critical summary of this school, contrasted with an approach more influenced by de Lubac (and von Balthasar), see David L. Schindler, Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), esp. introduction and chaps. 1-3. The understanding implicit in this essay of the correct reading of Vatican II’s and John Paul II’s social Magisterium is heavily influenced by Schindler.

3. For this epithet, see Tracey Rowland, Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II (London: Routledge, 2003), 16 and passim.


5. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, trans. Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2005); citations will be indicated in the body of the paper by paragraph numbers. Italics and notes in Compendium quotations are in the original.


8. “Solidarity” is of course a favorite word of John Paul II, but he did not introduce it into Catholic social teaching. For an earlier twentieth-century use, see, for example, Pius XII, Summi Pontificatus 35. See also its repeated use in Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes. For the distinction and relationship between “communion” and “solidarity,” see esp. John Paul II,


12. On the meaning and importance of natural law, see John Paul II, Veritatis Splendor 35-53.


15. The echo of de Lubac’s Catholicism in Gaudium et Spes was first brought to my attention by David L. Schindler, “Christology and the Imago Dei: Interpreting Gaudium et Spes,” Communio 23 (1996), 168n21.

16. For a detailed argument, see Robert F. Gotcher, “Henri de Lubac and Communio: The Significance of his Theology of the Supernatural for an Interpretation of Gaudium et Spes” (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2002).


20. See, e.g., the references to Gaudium et Spes in John Paul II’s first two encyclicals, Redemptor Hominis and Dives in Misericordia. See also my analysis of de Lubac’s influence on his Evangelium Vitae: Kevin E. Miller, “The Role of Mercy in a Culture of Life: John Paul II on Capital Punishment,” in Life and Learning VIII, ed. Joseph W. Koterski (Washington, DC: University Faculty for Life, 1999), 405-42.

21. The consequences of this point for the reality of genuine worldly autonomy seem to


31. For more on this crucial point, see de Lubac, *Mystery of the Supernatural*, chap. 4.

34. Also, like the *Compendium*, de Lubac closely links love with gratuitousness; see *Mystery of the Supernatural*, chap. 12.

37. De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 76. Thus, de Lubac’s ecclesiology differs from the “perfect society” ecclesiology associated with, for example, Bellarmine; for assessment of the latter, see Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1978), chap. 2.
42. De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 224.
45. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2432. [This note is reproduced from the *Compendium*.]
46. For more on this reading of Catholic socioeconomic teaching, see Schindler, *Heart of the World*, 122-26, and chapter 6 of the present volume.
Chapter 2

The Social Theory of Catholic Social Teaching

Reflections on Compendium Chapter 4

D. Paul Sullins

Introduction

The fourth and final chapter of part 1 of the Compendium sets out the “permanent principles” of Catholic social teaching, and thus offers the most direct set of insights and implications for general understandings of human society. This material, therefore, provides a fruitful context in which to address the question: What general theory of society is articulated or assumed by magisterial Catholic social thought? In this essay I address this question by attempting to locate the nexus of principles in this body of teaching, as set forth in the Compendium, within the context of social theory more generally.

Critical Considerations: Does Catholic Social Teaching Assume a Particular Social Theory?

Some will object that my question is wrongly posed, since magisterial social teaching is openly reticent to commit to particular views of society or even social outcomes, much less to develop a systematic account of human society. The Compendium (41) quotes Sollicitudo Rei Socialis to the effect that the Church’s social doctrine is not an “ideology,” and adds: “It is not . . . intended to define . . . economic, political and social relationships” (72). This lack of formalization is consistent with the historical development of Catholic social
doctrine, as it has emerged in occasional, pastoral writings directed to specific eras or social situations; but it is also, at least since the encyclicals of John Paul II, an explicit part of the magisterial self-understanding of the character or goals of Catholic social doctrine. In this respect the criticism of those such as Hobgood who find in Catholic social doctrine the juxtaposition of incompatible social models, suggests that the magisterium has succeeded at least in not being too definitive.

Despite the disclaimers by its authors and perceptions of incoherence or insularity by its critics, however, it is quite possible to detect in the Compendium a definite, albeit broad and implicit, understanding of human society. Though not acknowledged, the influence of modern and more recent notions of social institutions are not hard to discern. Some bounds to social theory are clearly enunciated. For example, the well-known dual rejection of collectivist states on the one hand and excessive individualism on the other, a position first formulated in Rerum Novarum, rules out the adoption of a fully Marxist or utilitarian view of society. A contract theory of society is explicitly rejected (149n297), as is any totalitarian social model (48). As we shall see, other views of society are in some cases proscribed and in others required by the substance of the principles propounded.

In refraining from articulating a systematic theory of society, the carriers of the Church's doctrinal tradition recognize a limit to their competence in favor of those with more expert knowledge (78, 197) and an allowable range of opinion on the topic. There is, by inference, no single "Christian society," and thus a multiplicity of social forms that may be equivalently moral. It does not follow, however, that no social theory is preferable to another in terms of consistency with Catholic truth. Although there are many possible anthropological models, for example, magisterial Catholic social thought is not shy in propounding a single clear "Christian anthropology." Many qualities of character and personality are possible, but the Compendium is likewise clear about certain specific features of character that are virtuous. In philosophy, Catholic teaching explicitly privileges Thomistic thought, and by extension Greek philosophical understandings, and even declares certain philosophical positions to be in error, while asserting that "[t]he Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonize any one particular philosophy in preference to others" (Fides et Ratio 49), and commending engagement with a wide variety of philosophical systems. In these areas, it appears, propounding a discrete Christian anthropology and set of virtues or a philosophical preference in no way obviates the affirmation of the huge diversity of persons, personalities, and ways of thinking in existence. In the same way, it is not obvious that the articulation of a Christian social theory would militate against the engagement by the Church of a multiplicity of social arrangements.

Despite (understandable) magisterial reticence to commit to particular views of society, moreover, such a link between moral doctrine and social theory is more than incidental. In the past decade theorists of "radical orthodoxy" have argued that any understanding of society ineluctably carries embedded moral
commitments. Catholic doctrinal discourse makes a similar argument when it rejects certain social arrangements for not comporting with full human dignity. On this view it is not possible to articulate a purely formal model of society without smuggling in, or assuming, normative metaphysical and moral positions. Yet if this is true, the opposite must also be true: It is not possible to posit principles for the moral functioning of society without also assuming, in doing so, certain formal attributes of human society. In defining the principles of a good society, therefore, magisterial Catholic social thought reveals certain assumptions or understandings about what constitutes society at all.

Embedded Functionalism in Catholic Social Teaching

Chapter 4 of the Compendium (160) grounds Catholic social teaching in three principles—the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity—which are in turn grounded in the fundamental ideal of human dignity in society. Together these form the “criteria for judgment” for assessing particular social systems, and, by extension, social theories. This architectonic of three principles grounded in human dignity reflects Thomas Aquinas’ distinction, following Aristotle, of differing forms of justice grounded in human nature. General justice, according to Aquinas, is that which directs virtuous actions to the common good; it is, says Aristotle, the virtue of the good citizen, not merely the good man, and thus clearly corresponds to the Compendium principle of the common good. This general orientation (or “final cause”) is particularized via two other forms of justice: distributive justice, by which the common goods of society are related to the parts of society, and commutative justice, which governs the relations among the parts of society. These correspond, more loosely, to the Compendium principles of subsidiarity and solidarity respectively.

The presentation of each social principle is followed by a discussion of its particularization, as it were, in the lives of social participants. The discussion of the common good is followed by an explication of the concept of the universal destination of goods; subsidiarity is followed by a section on participation; and solidarity by a discussion of the fundamental values of social life. The implicit dynamic of this presentation, in accord with the evangelistic intent of the Compendium, is one of reciprocal call and response. Both a condition for and result of a society ordered on the common good is the response of persons to dedicate personal goods, that is, property, to the common good. In the same way subsidiarity calls persons to full participation in social life and solidarity to the pursuit of corresponding personal values. Under all three headings this call-response dynamic orients persons in society toward a fulfillment that transcends society.

Where in the span of modern social theory would we most likely locate the understanding of society revealed in this understanding of human life? The answer to this question is more definite than might be supposed: the view of society embedded in the Compendium is very similar to post-revolutionary
French social theory. In particular, as I will endeavor to show, the Compendium reflects, almost point for point, the themes and ideas of the early-nineteenth-century French-language social theorists de Bonald and de Maistre. Its outlook and assumptions thus have a strong affinity with the major social theorists who were influenced by them, either directly or indirectly, that is, Émile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. As these theorists are central figures in the development of the school of sociology known today as functionalism, we can say broadly that Catholic social teaching reflects a view of society that is largely functionalist in orientation. This affinity does not preclude some important criticism and qualification of functionalist ideas, however, and comes by way of an even closer affinity with the ideas of Bonald and Maistre.

Bonald and Maistre are the prime contributors to a body of thought that challenged the stark theses of the Enlightenment in the wake of the French Revolution. In that context their thought is distinctly conservative and reactionary, oriented to restoring the status quo ante and preventing further social upheaval. They are together often referred to as the early “French sociologists,” “French conservatives,” or (not surprisingly, in this context) “Catholic conservatives.” Although they did not write systematically, Irving Zeitlin’s influential exposition, as adapted by Ritzer, usefully organizes their social thought into a series of clearly stated themes. While other interpretations of their thinking are possible, Zeitlin’s schema is generally recognized as thorough and balanced, and provides a useful heuristic to assess the Compendium’s relation to the central points of their thought. As we shall see, the Compendium articulates or assumes almost all of Bonald and Maistre’s themes, albeit with added emphases and with critiques of some of the tendencies of conservative sociological thought. Many of the themes are also reflected in the thought of de Tocqueville, Durkheim, and Parsons. In the discussion below I relate these themes of French social theory and contemporary functionalism to the three foundational principles of Catholic social teaching set forth in the Compendium.

Solidarity and the Pre-eminence of the Social

A central theme of the thought of the French conservatives is the pre-eminence of the social whole over the isolated individual. Against the social nominalism of the Enlightenment, Bonald and Maistre asserted that society is “real,” that is, having characteristics and laws of development that cannot simply be reduced to some aggregate of its component individuals. Here, of course, we can see not only the anticipation of Durkheim’s notion of “social fact” but also of his discussion of society as a reality sui generis. Far from individuals constituting society, the conservatives argued, it is society that creates individuals, by means of the processes of social transmission that Durkheim later called moral education and Parsons termed socialization. Moreover, they asserted, the atomized “individual” conceived by the Enlightenment is an abstraction. It is not such “individuals,” but rather the
relationships among them—what Parsons would later call roles and statuses—that are the components of the social order. Elements, such as revolution but also urbanization, that revoke or destabilize these roles and statuses, the conservatives argued, fatally weaken the order of society.

The *Compendium* clearly reflects a similar critique of the autonomous individual: "The human person may never be thought of only as an absolute individual being, built up by himself and on himself, as if his characteristic traits depended on no one else but himself" (125). This "reductionist conception" is countered not only by the divine origin and intention of the human person but also by the fact that persons are "united... into an organic, harmonious mutual relationship" (125, quoting *Summi Pontificatus* 42). Individual identity, in fact, only has meaning in relationship: "... only insofar as [the human person] understands himself in reference to a 'thou' can he say 'I'" (130). At the same time the *Compendium* rejects the opposing tendency, characteristic of Bonald, Maistre, and Parsons, to reduce the person to "a mere cell of an organism that is inclined at most to grant it recognition in its functional role within the overall system" (125). Persons are more than just social actors; yet, as the separate discussions of the agents of social transmission make clear, personhood is also incomplete without socialization. Education "forms man in the fullness of his personal dignity in all his dimensions, including the social dimension" (238); and "[i]n the family, persons are helped to grow in freedom and responsibility, indispensable prerequisites for any function in society" (238). Even work contributes to "the self-realization of the person" (272). Personhood thus involves socialization into social functions, though it cannot be reduced to this.

Conservative/functionalist sociological assumptions are also evident in the treatments of social sin and social charity. Every sin is social to some extent since "each individual's sin in some way affects others" (117, quoting *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* 16), an involvement which includes not just the reciprocal relations between individuals but "between the individual and the community, and also between the community and the individual" (118). Social charity, on the other hand, is "to make use of social mediations to improve [one's neighbor's] life or to remove social factors that cause his indigence." It is "to strive to organize and structure society so that one's neighbor will not find himself in poverty" (208). These admonitions would have no meaning if social factors, organization, or structure were not conceived to be realities that could affect the poverty status of one's neighbor, and that independently of the possession or lack of personal charity toward the neighbor on the part of any individual. In the objection that persons must not be manipulated by social, economic, or political structures lies the recognition that they can be so manipulated. Though they never remove personal guilt or responsibility, social structures are clearly recognized as strongly causal for personal behavior and self-understanding.

These and other conservative/functional themes are reflected in a heightened way in the *Compendium*'s exposition of the principle of solidarity. Against the idea that a purely political or juridical order could unite
disconnected individuals, Bonald and Maistre asserted that the interdependence of social roles provided the glue that held society together. Durkheim formalized this insight into his well-known theory that the social whole coheres by means of the division of labor into highly specialized interdependent functions. Durkheim was the first to call such coherence "solidarity." Durkheim also proposed that, for society to function well, the level of interaction among persons, a function of both their contiguity and means of communication that he called "dynamic density," needed to be kept in equilibrium. Too little dynamic density would lead to excessive individualism; too much, however, would lead to the distortion and weakening of social norms ("anomie") leaving social participants confused and purposeless.

The Compendium sets forth its vision of solidarity in the context of a pervasive critique of the social effects of globalization, consumerism, and urbanization, reflecting the French conservatives’ critique of the growing industrialization and urbanization of their own day. Globalization, notes the Compendium, "poses troubling questions" (362). The increasing "bond of interdependence between individuals and peoples" and the "rapid [or, in 362, "dizzying"] expansion in ways and means of communication" have led to "exploitation, oppression and corruption that have a negative influence on the internal and international life of many States" (192, see also 362). The result is growing social isolation and economic inequality. To counter this the Compendium advocates a reassertion of ethical-social norms (193). Solidarity, notes the Compendium, must be understood both as a social principle and as a moral virtue (192). Social solidarity, similar to the Durkheimian concept, refers to the functional unity of persons as social participants. Moral solidarity strives to bring the de facto social solidarity into line with justice and the common good. Globalization's disordering effects can be opposed by new or increasing organization: "Thanks . . . to resolute action taken by [the organizations of civil society], it will be possible to place the present process of economic and financial growth taking place on a global scale within a framework that guarantees an effective respect of human rights . . . as well as an equitable distribution of resources" (366).

The social assumptions of this reasoning are essentially Durkheimian: Increasing interaction results in disorder and a weakening of norms, which must be corrected by strengthening norms and/or stronger formal organization. This functionalist logic is repeated in the Compendium's particular critiques of globalization's corrosive effect on the solidarity between generations (367) and workers (321). Consumerism is criticized for its disintegrating effect on society due to its promotion of self-centered values and individual autonomy, much as Protestantism was by the conservatives.

**Subsidiarity and Social Structure**

Against the vicious equalization envisioned by the French revolutionaries, Bonald and Maistre asserted that "the existence and maintenance of small
groups . . . [such as] the family, neighborhood, religious and occupational groups" and "status and hierarchy, in the family, the church and the State" are essential for society to function. Tocqueville's well-known advocacy of a dominant aristocracy to counter the changeable "tyranny of the majority" in a democracy and his appreciation of the necessity of the "art of association" for civilized life also express these themes. These ideas, precursors to full-blown functionalism, are also fundamental to the Compendium's exposition of the concept of subsidiarity.

The Compendium asserts clearly the essential importance of small, primary groups for the social order: "Civil society, understood as the sum of the relationships between individuals and intermediate social groupings . . . strengthens the social fabric and constitutes the basis of a true community of persons, making possible the recognition of higher forms of social activity." Life together in society, in the network of relationships linking individuals, families and intermediate groups by encounter, communication and exchange, ensures a higher quality of living.

Subsidiarity's first responsibility is the protection of the family, the most concrete community of persons that "stands at the foundation of life of the human person as the prototype of every social order". Not only individuals, the French conservatives held, but also "the parts of society are interdependent and interrelated." The Compendium reflects this view as well, asserting that the interdependence that fosters social solidarity is not merely a division of labor among individuals but "is found at every level" of social aggregation. "Every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community." This insight is fundamental to sociological functionalism, as elaborated most extensively in the mid-twentieth-century work of Talcott Parsons, which featured detailed abstract analyses of the interdependence of social institutions by mechanisms of differentiation and integration.

The Compendium is equally explicit regarding the need for authority to order the parts of society: "No society can hold together unless some one be over all"; therefore "every civilized community must have a ruling authority" (quoting Pacem in Terris). The authority envisioned ("some one," "a ruling authority") is clearly centralized, singular, and hierarchical. Conceptually, the principle of subsidiarity is inexplicable in the context of any non-hierarchical view of social institutions. It is, of course, entirely excluded by the Enlightenment notion of the autonomous individual confronting mass society.

Once Catholic social teaching's assertion of the moral primacy of human dignity is accepted, subsidiarity can almost be inferred from functionalist sociological assumptions alone. If persons are primary, and if society requires an authority and intermediate groups, then the authority must order and authorize social groups to foster, as much as possible, the autonomy of persons. As articulated in the Compendium, then, the doctrine of subsidiarity is a product not only of the moral, but equally of the sociological, commitments of Catholic social teaching.
The Common Good and the Ends of Society

Against the attempts of the Philosophes to reshape human nature, Bonald and Maistre asserted that “man has constant and unalterable needs, which every society and each of its institutions serve to fulfill.”18 Tocqueville likewise asserts that “one can change human institutions, but not man.”19 This principle is clearly reflected in the Compendium: “Hence, the social order and its development must invariably work to the benefit of the human person, since the order of things is to be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way around” (Gaudium et Spes 26, quoted in 132). “The person,” adds the Compendium (132), “represents the ultimate end of society, by which it is ordered to the person.” The principle of this ordering is what Catholic social teaching means by the common good, which is defined as “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (164, quoting Gaudium et Spes 26). Thus “a society that wishes and intends to remain at the service of the human being at every level is a society that has the common good—the good of all people and of the whole person”—as its primary goal” (165).

The intent to serve persons in human society is not only an ideal, but is also reflected in the array of institutions that have risen in all, or almost all, societies. For Catholic social teaching, each of these institutions, while constantly needing to be reformed in line with ethical-social ideals, already grows out of and serves the needs of the human person. This notion is a basic tenet, for some the most basic tenet, of sociological functionalism. As Bonald and Maistre proposed, “[s]ocial institutions, even those that are unjust and need reform, are positively functional, fulfilling human needs directly or indirectly.” In part 2, the Compendium discusses the major social institutions in turn, and affirms the necessity of each one for human personhood. Marriage is “proper, innate and permanent” (216) in human life; the family is “the principal instrument for making each person grow in an integral manner” (227); the state is “a reality inherent in mankind” (384); human work “represents a fundamental dimension of human existence” (263); and the economy “function[s] as an instrument for the overall growth of man and society, of the human quality of life” (326), a fortiori the free market which, expressive of and, when properly regulated, “at the service of integral human freedom” (350) becomes “an irreplaceable instrument for regulating the inner workings of the economic system” (349). Notably, two fundamental institutions typically recognized by sociological functionalism—law and religion—are not discussed under their own headings in the Compendium. Law is discussed in the context of political authority, which, as noted above, is a fundamental function of society. In this context, law is an instrument of human dignity, since legitimate authority “must enact just laws, that is, laws that correspond to the dignity of the human person” (398). Consistent with its status as an official expression of Church doctrine, the Compendium treats the social functions of the Church, and by extension of religion more generally, performatively, in chapter 2 of part 1, rather than
The Social Theory of Catholic Social Teaching

objectively, in the set of institutions discussed in part 2. Catholic social teaching recognizes that the Church has an “original and irreplaceable contribution” to make to human society (51) with respect to human salvation (69), which incorporates both transcendent ends (49) and renewed social relations (54), and is, moreover, manifested in “visible organizational structures” (424) which stand over against the state.

In opposition to the Philosophes’ ideal of remaking society on a purely rational basis, the French conservatives insisted on “the essential importance and positive value of the nonrational aspects of human existence,” as expressed in civil and religious ritual, for social strength. Tocqueville argued that religion was necessary for democratic society a fortiori: “Despotism may be able to do without faith, but freedom cannot. . . . How could a society escape destruction if, when political ties are relaxed, moral ties are not strengthened?” Durkheim famously confirmed this insight that religion is necessary for society (and drew the further conclusion that society is sufficient for religion). The Compendium reflects this view in its recognition that the scope of knowledge discoverable by human reason is bounded by religion, faith, and revelation. Just as the investigations of the sciences lead to a “broader horizon” of value questions that lay beyond science (78), so revelation “open[s] up new horizons closed to human reason” (34) regarding human society. The persistent image of a horizon, a limit which continually recedes from the advance of the viewer, suggests that this faith-reason dynamic will not be abrogated by any advance of rational knowledge, but is a permanent feature of human knowledge.

Not surprisingly, then, Scripture and tradition form the “essential foundation” for Catholic social teaching (74). The questions of man’s place in society, it is acknowledged, are “essentially religious” (15). While faith adds to reason, however, it does not abrogate it. Rather “reason [is] the cognitive path of faith” (77), so that “faith includes reason” (75) and “religiousness . . . is the culmination of [man’s] rational nature” (15). The necessity of non- or extra-rational elements for society is not just abstract or subjective. Structurally, Catholic social teaching asserts the primacy of civil society—“multifaceted and irregular” and with its “ambiguities and contradictions” (418)—over the purely rational order of the political realm, and individually affirms the essential importance of the family (229) and freely active religious institutions (423) for the well-being of society.

Conclusion

As we have seen in detail, the Compendium clearly reflects certain fundamental assumptions and judgments about society that are rooted in a particular strand of Western scholarly discourse. The explicit doctrinal formulations of Catholic social teaching clearly assume the view of human society espoused by sociological functionalism, particularly as foreshadowed in the work of the French sociologists Emile Durkheim and his precursors Tocqueville, Bonald,
and Maistre. This congruence of ideas may suggest a direct influence of the early French sociologists on magisterial Catholic social thought, although we cannot know for sure. It is quite possible that both Catholic social teaching and the functionalist sociologists were influenced by similar factors. Many of the themes expressed by all of these thinkers were already present in Aristotelian thought. Bonald and Maistre were in their turn clearly influenced by Catholic teaching, yet they reshaped that teaching in new ways and are not part of the Catholic doctrinal tradition itself.

How do these external elements get integrated into the enduring thought of the Church? By its activity of synthesizing documents having different levels of authority, and by asserting new organizations and interpretations of such material, and indeed new ideas of its own, the *Compendium* invites such a question, but at the same time provides no facility to answer it. In this it exemplifies the problematic of magisterial authority in the modern setting. While addressing the issues of the modern world, often with widely-admired creativity and insight, magisterial thought in our day has not acknowledged the influence of the modern world upon its own thinking. To the modern secular (and non-Catholic Christian) theorist, Catholic doctrine thus appears to claim a privileged position, not just with regard to revealed content but also with regard to intellectual process. Magisterial social thought appears to be a fully formed, entirely self-referential body of truth that can speak to, but not learn from, the non-Catholic world. Such inward focus, a characteristic of current magisterial thought in general, is no doubt intensified in the *Compendium*, which is, after all, a compendium designed to compile, summarize, and systematize the specific teachings of the Catholic Church. In simple fact, the perception of insularity in sources is emphatically and formally true in the *Compendium*. Of the several hundred source references made in the document (the index alone is twenty five pages long), none cite any source exterior to the Catholic doctrinal tradition.

Such narrowness suggests, to the modern observer, a certain lack of critical self-awareness which does not inspire confidence in, and detracts from the intelligibility of, the substantive assertions of magisterial Catholic teaching. It also presents problems to the faithful Catholic reader. Without acknowledgement and assessment of secular influences, how can they be set in context, and their strengths and limitations made clear, in the course of the development of Church doctrine? To those aware of the increasing separation of religious and secular communities of discourse since the breakdown of the medieval synthesis, it cannot but be ironic that magisterial teaching today, which comes on the heels of a council that called for more engagement with the modern world and that increasingly sees itself as addressed to an audience beyond the Church, is in regard to sources more insular than during the Middle Ages. The chain of references in the *Compendium*, in fact, interacts directly with secular theory most often through citations of Thomas Aquinas, who extensively incorporated ideas and references from secular philosophy into his thought. In sum, the unique form and expression of the *Compendium* underscores not only
the possibilities but also the limitations of the magisterial elaboration of doctrine.

Today the Pope calls for a new assertion of reason in Western intellectual discourse, meaning a recovery of reason from blind secularism. Because the authoritative teaching of the Church has, from apostolic times, developed in tandem with secular thought, however, this recovery cannot be a task for secular society alone; there must also be a corresponding re-acquisition of reason in the developing expression of Church doctrine. The present analysis of the Compendium suggests that this project will involve, at minimum, a new or re-invigorated process in the Church of collective reasoning; a kind of new scholasticism that is able to engage the magisterium, Christian theology, and secular discourse in a way that is faithful to all three. Precisely because of its many strengths, the Compendium underscores the need for such a discourse in our day, to assess, critique, enlarge, refine, and fully appropriate what is reasonable in the thinking of this age into the enduring Christian idea.

Notes

1. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, trans. Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2005); citations will be indicated in the body of the text by paragraph numbers. Italics and notes in Compendium quotations are in the original.


7. Durkheim and Parsons are central figures in academic sociological thought. Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) was the first professor of education and sociology in France who was instrumental in establishing sociology as an empirical science that used a functionalist model of society wherein social features that contributed to the maintenance of society would persist and other features disappear. Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), professor in the Harvard University Department of Social Relations, articulated a systemic functionalism that advanced functional reasoning beyond a mere analogy with biological organisms. He was dominant in American sociology in the mid-twentieth century.

8. Louis de Bonald (1754-1840), a French noble, at first accepted the Revolution but became troubled by its excesses, eventually fleeing France for Heidelberg. Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), a Savoyard noble and attorney, defended freedom of thought as early as 1775 and initially favored the Revolution in neighboring France, but turned
against the French Republic and the Reason of the Enlightenment even before the French
Republic invaded Savoy in 1792. In exile in Lausanne he was employed as a
representative of the King of Sardinia and began authoring works articulating the
viewpoint of those who had fled the Revolution. After travel in Venice and Piedmont
(1798-9), he went to Saint Petersburn as a representative of the King of Sardinia to
Russia until returning to his homeland and family in Savoy in 1817.


11. The *Compendium* refers to urban problems only obliquely however a full
critique of urbanization is given in *Ecclesia in America* 21.


indebted to Dr. Stephen Krasan, Department of Political Science, Franciscan University
of Steubenville, for the material on Tocqueville used in this chapter.

Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), 272-273; Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, 46:
AAS 63 (1971), 433-435. [This note is reproduced from the *Compendium*.]

21. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1912. [This note is reproduced from the
*Compendium*.]

25. John Paul II, Address at General Audience, 19 October 1983 (L’Osservatore

26. The *Compendium* does cite, in three places, statements of the United Nations
that have been ratified by the Holy See. All three cites are in footnotes, not the
*Compendium* text, and serve to demonstrate the effect of the teaching and charters of the
Holy See on the enactment of universal juridical norms.

27. See Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), *Christianity and the Crisis of
Cultures*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005), and Joseph Ratzinger and Marcello
2006).

28. Just as the rediscovery of reason will involve, for secular thought, an
appreciation of its Christian influences, so it will involve, for the Church, an appreciation
of its extra-ecclesial cultural influences. The encyclical *Fides et Ratio* does just this with
regard to the philosophical and moral thinking of the Church.
Part II

Criteria for a Just Society
Chapter 3

Intellectual Method of the *Compendium* as Illustrated in Its Treatment of the Family

*Reflections on Compendium Chapters 2 and 5*

Anthony J. Blasi and James A. Montmarquet

**Introduction**

This is a study of the general method employed in the *Compendium* and a consideration of that method as applied in chapter 5, “The Family, The Vital Cell of Society.” The method itself is described in chapter 2, “The Nature of the Church’s Social Doctrine.” According to chapter 2, the Church’s social doctrine is “the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church’s tradition” (72, quoting *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 41). The Church’s social doctrine, then, is not itself a statement of faith or a recitation of received beliefs, nor does it claim to have an irrefutable certitude; rather it is a statement of the results of reflection upon seemingly empirical realities given context by faith and tradition.

**General Methodology of the Compendium**

Chapter 2 relates that Catholic social teaching reflects three “levels” of theological-moral teaching: the *foundational* level of motivations, the *directive* level of
norms for life in society, and the *deliberative* level of conscience (73). The foundational level concerns the question whether one would be moral; teaching activity that would address this would be inspirational and hortatory in nature. The directive level takes the form of law, much like the Ten Commandments, comprising a structure needed for the instruction of children and for the guiding of individuals who do not respond to inspiration or exhortation. The deliberative level is closer to the decision-making processes of people living in concrete and particular social situations. While the person may set out from motivations generated by faith and from norms drawn from Scripture and tradition, the understandings that lead to practical action are “structured by reason and [make] use of every contribution that reason has to offer” (74).

“Reason” as used in the *Compendium* is understood as founded in the “natural law,” wherein the mind of the Creator would be ascertainable from the workings of creation (140). Thomas Aquinas developed this idea by noting that a law could be a rule and measure in two ways—as that which rules and measures and as that which is ruled and measured. Creation embodies the latter. By forming the intelligence with the patterns to be found in creation, humans participate in divine law. Rightly formed reason and accurately received revelation would not stand in contradiction but would be mutually reinforcing since both originate in the same divine Mind. Moreover, revelation could present higher truths to which reason would not arrive on its own, but reason would be necessary for some level of understanding of such higher truths.

The *Compendium* explicitly applies this doctrine of natural law (140-142, 53, 89). Reasoning from natural law, it takes the fact of the subjective powers of the individual human as grounds for human rights to be respected and human dignity to be presupposed. Because the individual subject’s intellectual powers lead toward the divine and can be instrumental in fostering ethical conduct, the individual and these powers must be respected. In biblical language, humans are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27), and therefore humans have rights and are entitled to dignity.

Approaching these ideas somewhat more methodically, we can observe that some of Scripture addresses the foundational level of teaching, some the directive, and some the deliberative. Similarly, the transmission, application, and interpretation of Scripture in Church tradition address the three levels, as does the reasoned observation of creation. The *Compendium* can conceivably contain discourse corresponding to each of these nine possibilities (see figure 3.1). An example of the first type of discourse as numbered in figure 3.1, a foundational teaching in Scripture, would be a parable of Jesus that could be cited. The second type would be exemplified by a tradition of preaching, the third type by some sociable discourse in everyday life. All of these are characteristically evocative in nature. Their general effect—moving one to do good and avoid evil—is universal in the sense that doing evil and avoiding good is nowhere a value. The Ten Commandments exemplify scriptural directive teaching. Traditional directive teaching would be exemplified by the norm of participating in
Sunday worship; while the Scriptures specified Saturday, Christian practice in
the Catholic and most other traditions has been to celebrate the Resurrection by
worshipping on Sundays. Paralleling the “Second Table” of the Ten Command-
ments outside of Scripture is the sixth type of discourse, wherein the non-
believer as well as the believer knows “instinctively” not to murder, rape, steal,
and lie. Commandments and other directive statements are not universal in the
sense that they apply in a mechanical way; one need not refrain from lying to a
thief or using “lethal force” to defend oneself or others. However, one should be
reluctant to make exceptions to such directive statements.

Deliberative discourse often appears in Scripture (seventh type of dis-
course). For example, “When a man leaves a pit open, or when a man digs a pit
and does not cover it, and an ox or an ass falls into it, the owner of the pit shall
make it good; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead beast shall be his”
(Exodus 21:33). Such case law, in contrast to apodictic law stated in the second
person plural future (“You shall ...”), is simply ancient deliberation that found
its way into the writings that were later included in the scriptural canon. Again,
“I think that in view of the present distress it is well for a person to remain as he
is” (i.e., unmarried; 1 Corinthians 26). This too is deliberation that found its way
into the canon. An example of the eighth type of discourse, traditional deliber-
ation, is the principle of double effect, articulated by Aquinas in his doctrine of
self-defense. At the time he authored the principle, it was natural law, based on
his reasoning powers; however, through usage and the general endorsement of
his thought by Pope Leo XIII it has become a strand within Catholic tradition.
The ninth type of discourse, deliberative thought informed by and applied to the
environing world, is exemplified by just about every moral judgment we make
in everyday life. Deliberative thought coheres with the context in which it works
and to which it is to be applied; it is ad hoc. For example, middle-class Ameri-
cans may feel morally moved to save money in order to send their children to
college.

In order to evaluate various passages in the Compendium, it is necessary to
identify which kind of discourse it uses at any given juncture in its presentation
of the social doctrine of the Church. It is clearly intended by the authors to be a
coherent and eloquent statement—and that it is—but in the process of making
that kind of statement the three levels of teaching are not identified. Only the
sources (Scripture, tradition, creation) are regularly indicated in footnotes.

Going beyond the mere specification of types, there are issues of how they
should relate to one another. Foundational teaching, for example, should not
contradict directive, and vice-versa, but foundational teaching should go well
beyond directives. The foundational is designed to cultivate virtue while the
directive comprises a minimal standard. Thus where virtue is sufficiently preva-
lent, the law is not needed (see Romans 13:3-4a). It is not the case, then, that
foundational teaching should be limited to the support of norms or that it always
translates into norms. Some norms are revealed as such in Scripture, while oth-
ers are directives from secular authorities. Church directive teaching should be
limited to the former; Jesus did not set about adding normative burdens but
rather endeavored to spur his disciples to go beyond the normative standard. While deliberative teaching serves to situate fundamental and normative discourse into the complexities and contexts of everyday life and to show the reasonableness of fundamental and normative discourse, it should not as Church teaching generate other than auxiliary norms.

In Catholic Christian tradition, particularly after the first session of the Council of Trent, Scripture and tradition are not to be taken in isolation from one another. For example, to seize upon an isolated reference in the Bible, such as the mention of handling serpents (Mark 16:18, part of an addition to Mark that is perhaps dependent on Acts 28:5) absent any centrality given it in the ancient church, and to make a focal ritual of serpent-handling, would be tantamount to a detachment of that scriptural passage from the rest of tradition. Similarly to seize upon an isolated strand of tradition, such as devotion to Mary the Mother of God, and develop it into something alien from Scripture, such as a divinization of her as a goddess, would be tantamount to a detachment of that strand of tradition from Scripture. Both procedures would be inconsistent with the principle that tradition and Scripture should cohere.

We propose a further principle: that reason should cohere with tradition and Scripture, and vice-versa. The point of this principle is not whether a given course of reasoning is correct or incorrect but whether it is an appropriate candidate for being a Church teaching. One might not fault the logical force of Euclidian geometry, but that does not make it a Church teaching. One might disagree with that geometry, but not thereby be an infidel. Similarly the reading of the two creation stories in Genesis as natural history rather than, respectively, as poetry and myth would not be an appropriate church hermeneutic. As soon as the two specialties—higher criticism and natural science—established the unreasonableness of reading the creation stories as natural history, Church teaching needed to develop beyond a literalist reading. To disagree with higher criticism or the theory of evolution may not make one an infidel, but neither is such disagreement church doctrine.

Chapter 5 on the Family, Viewed Methodologically

Numerous citations from the Bible appear in the opening paragraphs of Compendium chapter 5. The passages that are actually quoted or paraphrased, however, are from Genesis:

“It is not good that the man should be alone.” (Genesis 2:18)
They become “one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)
“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” (Genesis 1:28)

The last of these is actually the first to appear in Genesis; it comes at the end of
the creation poem: So 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 said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.” This is part of the doctrine of creation; in terms of theological-moral teaching it adds a transcendent dimension to the deliberative level. “Be fruitful and multiply” is a command in the narrative, but its function is quite different in its implications for the reader. It is not commanding the reader to be fruitful and multiply; some readers, for example, may be celibate or unmarried. Rather it is presenting the earth and all that is in it as aspects of God’s provision for humanity.

The other two Genesis passages come from the second creation account, that of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him’” (Genesis 2:18). Then the fashioning and naming of every beast follows, but Adam could not find a helper among the beasts. Then God makes Adam go to sleep and forms Eve out of his rib. It is Adam who says, after awaking, “This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23). The biblical narrator comments, “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). There is no command in this; any literary scholar will recognize it as explanatory myth. As with the first creation account, what is presented is a doctrine that enters into deliberative discourse. As frequently occurs with Scripture, contrary teachings are preserved from antiquity so as to cause further deliberation on the part of the reader, for the first creation account has man and woman created as equals while the second has woman created as a helper for the man. Consequently, it is clear that these passages are not meant as definitive discourse.

The teaching that the Compendium draws from the biblical passages is stated as follows: “Enlightened by the radiance of the biblical message, the Church considers the family as the first natural society, with underived rights that are proper to it, and places it at the center of social life” (211). What kind of family is so central is not specified in the creation accounts, but it appears to be monogamous. The narratives appear to have been articulated in an environment in which the monogamous family was the ideal, quite different from the environment from which the Abrahamic and other patriarchal legends came. The latter environment with its polygynous family system probably prevailed earlier in the Middle East than the monogamous family system of the creation accounts. What kind of family existed historically among the very first humans is hard to say. It would not appear to be the purpose of the editor of Genesis to teach the divine endorsement of monogamy, since the polygynous patriarchs were clearly God’s friends who enjoyed divine providence.

In presenting monogamy as the familial ideal, the Compendium relies on Christian tradition. It does not present a command on the matter, but clearly idealizes a modern, well-evolved kind of family, which is “the climate of natural affection which unites the members of a family unit” where “persons are recognized and learn responsibility in the wholeness of their personhood” (212). Of
course this is not a historically universal form of the family but represents a
modern western evolution of doctrine. The *Compendium* goes on to argue that a
"society built on a family scale is the best guarantee against drifting off course
into individualism or collectivism, because within the family the person is al-
ways at the center of attention as an end and never as a means" (213). Clearly
this is modern thought that has benefited from seeing the dangers of two modern
problems—individualism and collectivism. From this line of argument comes a
general imperative: "The priority of the family over society and over the State
must be affirmed" (214). One will recognize here the principle of subsidiarity,
which chapter 4 of the *Compendium* identifies as a constant and characteristic
directive of Catholic social doctrine (185). The family allows for personal rela-
tions and is to be granted preference over the impersonal forces of larger enti-
ties.

The teaching about the excellence of this family ideal is a good example of
both Scripture and tradition cohering and reason and revelation cohering. Trad-
tion here takes the form of quotations from modern Church documents, though
undoubtedly more ancient formulations could be found. In presupposing a per-
sonalist view and linking it implicitly with the principle of subsidiarity, the tra-
dition is reasonably developed in a way that it had not been in any consistent
way in the past. While some of the language used is sufficiently eloquent to
work as foundational teaching, the presentation is generally deliberative. It func-
tions in the *Compendium* as an intellectual preparation for what follows.

There is an obvious relationship between family and marriage. Marriage in
the sense of sacramental matrimony is of divine institution, according to Church
deliberative tradition as embodied in the Second Vatican Council's *Gaudium et
Spes* (48). The Council teaching continues a long-standing Catholic tradition
that has scriptural roots: The Book of Hosea took the tested marital fidelity of
the prophet as a sign of the commitment of the Lord to the chosen people. The
third chapter of Jeremiah depicts the Lord as repenting having sent Israel and
Judah away for harlot-like infidelity and later calling them back. The book of
Ezekiel shows the Lord angry and punitive toward the chosen people for harlot-
like infidelity, but in the end affirming an everlasting covenant (Ezekiel 17:60).
A similar theme is found in Isaiah: "For your Maker is your husband, the Lord
of hosts is his name. . . . For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and
grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off. . . . For a brief mo-
moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you" (Isaiah 54:5-
7). The deuter-Pauline Letter to the Ephesians turns the analogy between mar-
riage and the divine bond with the chosen people into an imperative to maintain
marital fidelity: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the
husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body.”
(Ephesians 5:21-23a). "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church
and gave himself up for her.” (Ephesians 5:25). “This mystery is a profound one,
and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; however, let each one of
you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Ephesians 5:32-33).

Ephesians even cites the “one flesh” language of Genesis, but that is in order to argue that the members of the Church are also members of the Body of Christ, not that everlasting fidelity is inherent in human nature. This gives rise to the issue whether all marriages must on the basis of natural law be indissoluble or whether this applies only to Christian marriages. Paul does not argue from natural law but from a command of the Lord that the married should not separate (1 Corinthians 7:10-11), but he counsels that if they do separate they should remain unmarried. Then there is the interesting “Pauline privilege”; a Christian married to a non-believer is not bound by the marital bond if the non-believer wants to separate, for “God has called us to peace” (1 Corinthians 7:15). The New Testament envisioned permanence in marriage, but at least one other priority, peace, took precedence over that permanence.

The Compendium argues, “No power can abolish the natural right to marriage or modify its traits and purpose” (216). Forms of non-Christian marriage vary, but it would not be governments that can tamper with them. Specifically with respect to Christian marriage, legislation would only be able to regulate such things as inheritance and ownership: “Society cannot freely legislate with regard to the marriage bond by which the two spouses promise each other fidelity, assistance and acceptance of children, but it is authorized to regulate its civil effects” (216). Though phrased in directive language, this is at best deliberative teaching that depends upon the force of its own persuasiveness; there is no norm in Scripture forbidding governments from legislating about the very nature of non-Christian marriages. The persuasive force may well be wanting from the perspective of those who would have the modern state legislate such matters as the modalities of divorce or safety and effectiveness standards for birth control pills. It will likely be more persuasive in arguing against legislative attempts to prevent interracial marriages; in this case it would be an imposition on Christians intending to engage in or perform such marriages. With respect to non-Christian marriages, the Compendium seems to leap too readily from deliberative to directive discourse. It is unlikely that deliberative teaching can validly translate into directive language without the deliberation reasonably leading compellingly to a norm.

Should the state refrain from introducing divorce into civil legislation, as the Compendium seems to argue? (Compendium 225: “The introduction of divorce into civil legislation has fuelled a relativistic vision of the marriage bond and is broadly manifested as it becomes ‘truly a plague on society.’”). There are several aspects to the question. First, should legislation translate the moral imperative not to divorce, preached by Jesus, into juridical indissolubility? This is asked in the first instance with respect to Church legislation. The argument for such norms depends on the common good: all marriages are stabilized if the possibility of divorce does not relativize them. This raises the specter of an intrusive regulation of individuals on account of a hypothesized good for the society. If that kind of legislation is accepted for the good of the church community,
is it acceptable if legislated by the civil authority in a pluralistic society? The common good of the non-relativization of sacramental matrimony is not a good common to the whole of a pluralistic society. Thus the question arises whether it is acceptable to impose civil limitations on non-Catholics and non-Christians for a good only common to Catholics or Christians. Answers to such questions need to be persuasive; they are not to be found in Revelation. Indeed, such questions are not even addressed in the Compendium.

The Compendium takes the ideal traits of Christian marriage—totality, unity, indissolubility, fidelity, and fruitfulness—and evaluates all alternatives to it, even among non-Christians, as a result of “hardness of heart,” citing Matthew 19:8 and Mark 10:5. One could well argue that polygamy often falls short of allowing totality in mutual devotion in marriage, but in some societies, including that from which the biblical patriarchal stories came, polygamy upon the death of a male relative or close friend is an act of generosity. Absent a welfare state, it provides for widows and their children. Such a custom cannot be dismissed as “hardness of heart.” Matthew 19:8 and Mark 10:5 pertain to indissolubility; they are hortatory in nature, discouraging men from divorcing their wives, a prerogative men would have under Hebrew case law (Deut. 24:1). Similarly, unfruitfulness can come from “hardness of heart”; some people, in an “egoism of two,” are too self-centered to allow children into their lives. But it can also be the case that parents might not be able to provide for added children adequately; engaging in, for the sake of argument, natural birth control does not necessarily represent “hardness of heart.” The Compendium is trying to make a biblical passage affirm something other than what it actually says.

Due consideration needs to be given to those who have more than one spouse and who then want to become Christian; they may not have entered their multiple marriages on the basis of a “hardness of heart” but on a perceived duty to be generous to a widow and her family. There are also those who are divorced not out of the hardness of their hearts, but have been abandoned by the people to whom they had been married. Then there are those who want to limit the size of their families as an act of responsibility and who find the “natural” method to be in practice far more cumbersome, unnatural, and disruptive than an “artificial” method. Certain aspects of the modern world make these conditions more pressing than in the past—multiethnic urban societies in which polygamists and monogamists live as neighbors; societies where personal development continues in a “late adolescence” that was not part of the life cycle in the past, and where longer life spans than were common in the past both result in a greater number of marriages breaking down even if the number of successful marital years remains the same; industrial economies where children do not work the land but attend school, thereby limiting incomes to what the parents can earn on their own. Deliberative teaching that dwells upon evaluating practices against a singular ideal and that would prohibit any alternatives simply seems inadequate to the demands of contemporary society. Deliberative reasoning that allows for the
weighing of alternatives, in the manner of the “double-effect” tradition, would likely be more useful than what the Compendium offers here.

The Compendium has an interesting section opposing the legal recognition of homosexual unions. Since it is concerned with the social doctrine of the Church, it does not go into any depth about homosexual unions in themselves. It presupposes a philosophical anthropology wherein the complementarity of persons requisite for marriage requires both sexes, and it notes that the social good of generating new life and educating children in the context of precisely that complementarity is impossible in a homosexual union (224). Moreover, it argues that granting some legal status to homosexual unions would relativize traditional marriage (much in the manner that divorce relativizes it—see 225) and thereby subject the concept of marriage to “a radical transformation, with grave detriment to the common good. By putting homosexual unions on a legal plane analogous to that of marriage and the family, the State acts arbitrarily and in contradiction with its duties” (228, quoting the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith).

This is deliberative teaching discourse. On the face of it, it would seem to be an empirical question whether some legal recognition for homosexual unions would detract from the status of marriage in a society. One could well expect, for instance, that de facto homosexual unions would hold a greater capacity for detracting from marriage; in fact the Compendium itself presents such a critique of de facto unions in general (227). But curiously, the Compendium also argues that the “human being is made for love and cannot live without love,” and that “it is more urgent than ever to proclaim and bear witness that the truth of conjugal love and sexuality exist where there is a full and total gift of persons, with the characteristics of unity and fidelity” (223). If homosexually-oriented persons are human beings, they too would be made for love and would be urged to bear witness that a truth of unitive love exists where there is a full and total gift of persons.

In its teaching about laws concerning homosexual unions, the Compendium may have detached its reasoning from revelation. Scripture, for example, never presents Christian marriage as something that needs to exist in a vacuum, with no alternatives present. As noted above, the “Pauline privilege” assumes that an alternative form of marriage, not taken by a spouse to be indissoluble, is present in the church community. It is necessary to turn to scriptural passages that treat homosexuality more directly. There is in fact biblical directive teaching about homosexuality in the Book of Leviticus. A double passage prohibits a number of practices, ranging from various degrees of incest to consulting mediums, and among the prohibitions it says, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22) and “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them” (Leviticus 21:13). The context is that the various prohibited practices are associated with what other nations did, especially in connection with the worship of Molech. The commands have nothing to do with human nature and everything to do with Israeli versus foreign ritual. Modern
Catholic teaching does not take a literalist approach to such passages; for example, the death penalty for homosexual relations called for in Leviticus is not promoted in Catholic social doctrine today. It is also interesting that female homosexuality is not mentioned in Leviticus; evidently it was not part of the worship of Molech.

There is relatively little concern with homosexuality per se in the Bible. The only other writer to mention it is Paul, who considers it a dishonorable passion to which God handed over idolaters; in a much cited passage it is the idolatry, not homosexual relations, for which people are culpable; the homosexuality, both male and female, is, strangely, a divinely-caused result (Romans 1:26-27). Notably, Paul goes on to identify all manner of wickedness in a listing where homosexuality does not appear (Romans 1:28-31). This is deliberative discourse, and as with the directive teaching in Leviticus the teaching is concerned with idolatry, not homosexuality.

Thomistic tradition argues that sexual organs must not be used for acts that are contrary to nature. However, the very issue is whether homosexual relations by a person with a homosexual orientation are actually against that person’s nature. The Thomistic judgment would appear to apply at best to heterosexuals restricted to a same-sex environment, for example a prison, and to heterosexuals engaging in homosexual prostitution. The whole question of the moral status of homosexuality is germane to the social question of whether to legislate a recognition of homosexual unions; there needs to be a much more sophisticated deliberative discourse about this contemporary issue than exists in Catholic social teaching at the present time.

Specifically, the concept of “nature” needs to be deliberated upon further. The very term refers to the source and center of a being’s spontaneous activity. We have traditionally tended to speak of nature in two ways—abstractly and concretely. Abstract nature is metaphysical; it is characteristic of the human type. That which would not share in the nature would not be a human. Nature in that sense is universal, univocal, and immutable. While the ancients believed that heterosexual males were fully human, homosexual males less so, and females only half so, we have learned better from science. Consequently nobody appears to be arguing that homosexuals of either gender and women are not fully human; indeed the Compendium argues that men and women are equal. Concrete nature is a contextual and historical realization; all of a person’s being and consciousness is involved in it. The meaning of nature thus changes by time, place, and position; it is specific rather than universal, and it is changeable. It is in this world of the concrete that moral discourse (“practical reason”) is necessary. Neither of these two understandings of nature fit sexual orientation well. Orientation is a variation within abstract nature, but it transcends the situatedness of concrete nature. In this respect, it is analogous to talent, temperament, and sensitivity. Moral discourse in general, and Church moral discourse in the present instance, needs to develop a mode of capturing the relevant dynamics of
this kind of human variation before plausibly deliberating about the proper legal frameworks for them.

In another passage, the *Compendium* teaches that governments should not only permit but support Church-related schools (241). In so doing it cites the 1983 *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, and the Second Vatican Council’s 1965 *Declaration on Religious Liberty* (5). That paragraph contains only one relevant passage: “The civil authority must therefore recognize the right of parents to choose with genuine freedom schools or other means of education. Parents should not be subjected directly or indirectly to unjust burdens because of this freedom of choice.” The conciliar declaration does not go so far as the *Charter of Rights*, which the *Compendium* quotes as saying that any refusal of a state to support needy non-public schools that render a service to civil society “is to be considered an injustice” (*Compendium* 241). It is surprising that this statement from the Second Vatican Council’s 1965 *Decree on Christian Education* (5) was not cited:

The public authority, therefore, whose duty it is to protect and defend the liberty of the citizens, is bound according to the principles of distributive justice to ensure that public subsidies to schools are so allocated that parents are truly free to select schools for their children in accordance with their conscience.

Distributive justice, in scholastic tradition, is the virtue of justice regarding “the state as the distributor of the common burdens and privileges so as to make it possible for citizens to live together harmoniously” and for all to exercise their natural rights. Any connection between Scripture and long-standing tradition and this teaching is weak and remote. One could well argue that in the modern world access to education is owed to all and relate this to a concept of justice as articulated by the ancient Hebrew prophets, but to advocate the public funding of private schools absent any consideration of a government’s constitutional structure runs counter to the general respect for government and public order (see Rom. 13:1). In the pluralist setting of the United States, the legitimacy of government rests in part on its non-involvement with religion; compromising that non-involvement is not something to be taken lightly. It is also the case that government involvement in the teaching of religion can make the latter “official” and “mandatory” and thereby result in its being secularized into a teaching of comparative religions. Such issues need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, not with a sweeping allegedly-religious teaching. There does not seem to be a sufficient distinction in this *Compendium* passage between Church teaching and lobbying.

**Conclusion**

We have endeavored to take the methodological principles articulated by the *Compendium* and develop them more thoroughly and systematically. In so do-
ing, we have proposed that Scripture, tradition, and reason should not be isolated from each other but rather form a unitary whole. While reason enjoys its own autonomy and freely argues toward any number of conclusions, it is not Church teaching unless it is paralleling, applying, extending, unfolding, or grounded in Scripture and tradition. We have also proposed that foundational, directive, and deliberative teaching discourses need to be interrelated in a meaningful way. Exhortation should not become law nor law exhortation; deliberation similarly loses its nature when there is an attempt to give it normative force beyond or outside of the conclusions to which it reasonably arrives.

In general there is much good to be said about the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Its openness to new realms of knowledge and to reformulation is impressive, and its eloquence is remarkable. Moreover, it would not have been possible for us to systematize its methodological premises and apply them to various teachings had not all these textual materials been brought together in the coherent volume that the Compendium is. When we criticize particular passages or praise other ones on methodological grounds, it does not follow necessarily that we agree or disagree with the substance of a given teaching, only that it fails to teach as effectively or persuasively as it would had it been more methodologically sound.

**Figure 3.1. Possible Types of Discourse in the Compendium**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Revelation</th>
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**Notes**

4. *Summa Theologiae* II-II, 64, 7
6. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2385; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1650-1651, 2384. [This note is reproduced from the *Compendium*.]
9. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 condemns pederasty.
Chapter 4

The Subjective Dimension of Work

Reflections on Compendium Chapter 6

John Larrivee

Introduction

The approach of chapter 6 of Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church to human work can be summarized as follows. While much progress remains to be done, there have been great gains in material compensation and working conditions in the past century in the developed countries. These will increasingly spread around the world addressing many of the needs (pay, working conditions, rest, and labor relations) which have been the historical focus of social teachings of the Church. The increasing importance of human and social capital is changing the nature of work to make it increasingly one in which people can be the subject of their work and can see themselves in that light, as well as one which is increasingly social in nature. These changes highlight the dignity of work, whether in the market or at home, as well as the dignity of humans, the primary resource. The challenge for the future is for people (workers, business owners, governments) to comprehend the subjective dimension of work: the transcendent meaning of work and its importance to individual workers for living out their vocations and for growth in virtue, as well as the proper place of work in relation to familial and social obligations. Absent such understanding, people will only poorly develop the skills of heart and mind that enable them to use the newfound opportunities in the subjective dimension to give their work "the meaning which it has in the eyes of God" (Laborem Exercens 24) and businesses may make insufficient effort to emphasize such elements in their job de-
sign. What is needed, therefore, is renewed emphasis on the meaning of work, in the context of what it means to be human at all, because if, as the *Compendium* states, "this awareness is lacking, or if one chooses not to recognize this truth, work loses its truest and most profound meaning" (271).

Key to this new emphasis in the teachings on labor is understanding the economic, political, and social changes which have occurred since the publication of *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. The twentieth century was revolutionary, but not as Marx intended. In the name of saving workers from capitalist oppression, elites led revolutions and established totalitarian governments which killed 80-100 million and oppressed countless more. Instead, it was in market economies that workers gained most, as Smith had believed. Unlike Marx, who argued that capitalism would cause increasing misery of the working class, Smith predicted "universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of the population." For the market economies, which experienced the largest poverty reductions in human history as they shifted from industrial (or even agricultural) to service economies with ever greater opportunities for individual workers, the twentieth century was the time in which Smith's prophecy finally came true. The twentieth century was revolutionary, especially for poor workers, but not via communist revolution.

In Marx's defense, Smith's prediction was long in coming true. Panglosses had predicted a future of plenty for years, but at the time of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, there was still little to show for the promise. While the working classes steadily improved their lot in the later 1800s, and more rapidly in the twentieth century, gains for them had been meager and slow in coming any sooner. This was in contrast to the capitalists, whose fortunes had risen early and rapidly, contributing to increasing inequality and social tension. Workers and companies fought over basic rules on working conditions, unions, and just pay, while various communist, socialist, and pro-labor parties contended politically. The jury was still out on progress, and remained out well into the twentieth century. Despite progress looking back from today, matters were not so clear even up through early decades of the century as humanity contended with world wars, the rise of totalitarianism, the Holocaust, the Great Depression, and the advent of communism. In those circumstances, the Church continued to defend the rights of the least well off. Among other components reviewed in this volume, the social teachings have also sought to balance economic policies to promote efficiency and industriousness with guidelines fostering the capacity to see work as a vocation. For the half century after *Rerum Novarum*, this balance most needed a defense of basic conditions for living: political rights and adequate pay and working conditions for labor in any system. Thus they focused more on pay, working conditions, the role of unions, and so on, which depend greatly on the efficiency or technical nature of the system, that is, the objective nature of work.

As the twentieth century progressed, however, the oppression of communist governments and their failure to deliver politically or economically became clear. In addition, both capitalism and communism shared a common problem, even if it manifested itself differently under both systems: an increasingly mate-
rialist mindset which undermined the capacity to find meaning in life, and especially in work. For this reason the Church added ever deeper reflections on the spiritual and subjective dimension of work, that is, what work means for the worker (270-71). This began with Vatican II’s emphasis on authentic human progress in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), and extended further with the introduction of the subjective dimension and spiritual theology of work in *Laborem Exercens*, and examination of the nature of work in a free economy in *Centesimus Annus*. These teachings are intended to help people understand their vocation to transform the world, to see that by their work they emulate God the creator, and Christ who himself was a worker, to learn how to live out their work as a primary way in which they relate to God, and to make of their work a spiritual activity which has value in God’s eyes and by which they grow closer to him.

*Laborem Exercens* states that in order for work to achieve its full meaning as an act of the person, people must develop the capacity to intend that in the first place. This requires both the philosophical framework to understand that such an option even exists as well as the formation of habits of mind and will that make that possible. Just as education empowers people with human capital to make them more productive in the objective sense by assisting them in seeing better how to produce for others, teachings on the subjective value of work help people develop the spiritual capital by which they can be productive in ways valuable for themselves and for God, that is, growing in virtue and love of God and others. John Paul II writes in *Laborem Exercens* (24)

An inner effort on the part of the human spirit, guided by faith, hope and charity, is needed in order that through these points the work of the individual human being may be given the meaning which it has in the eyes of God and by means of which work enters into the salvation process on a par with the other ordinary yet particularly important components of its texture. . . . The church . . . sees it as her particular duty to form a spirituality of work which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the creator and redeemer.

An interesting parallel to this change is found in the works of Robert Fogel, who won the Nobel Prize in economics for his studies in economic history and who is perhaps the world’s greatest expert in measuring the well-being of people across time. He argues that the focus of the past battles of justice and equality (just wages, safe conditions, fair distribution of income, etc.) were appropriate for their time. However, in the developed countries (and in the developing countries in the coming century) so much progress has happened in those areas that in the future, the more important and substantial gains in well-being will come from the capacity to find meaning in life, that is, in the subjective dimension. Material consumption has been broadly distributed, paid work hours have plummeted, and time to engage in what one wants has skyrocketed. For the first time in history, these gains allow the vast majority of the population the opportunity to engage in self-realization.
But what will enable them to do so? How will they be productive in that newfound time and live for more than consumption? For that, Fogel argues people will need spiritual resources, or spiritual capital. By this, he means such basic virtues as discipline, the capacity to resist the lure of hedonism, motivation, a sense of meaning and purpose, etc. Interestingly, it is these resources that increasingly shape people's capacity to be productive in both the objective and subjective sense. Not only do they affect how strongly people work to invest in their own human capital, making them capable of more material output, they shape the ability to be productive in searching out, understanding, and living for meaning. Thus it is the capacity in this realm that will matter most in the century to come. He begins his book on this topic with the statement "the future of egalitarianism . . . turns on the . . . ability to combine continued economic growth with an entirely new set of egalitarian reforms that address the urgent spiritual needs of our age, secular as well as sacred." He also writes, "The most serious threats to egalitarian progress—the most intractable forms of poverty—are related to the unequal distribution of spiritual . . . resources", and "of all the maldistributed spiritual resources, sense of purpose may be the most important." This sounds surprisingly like Pope John Paul II.

This chapter uses Fogel's provocative writings to explain why the teachings on the subjective dimension of work are the most important development in the Church's teaching on labor, rather than, for example, those on living wages or unions. This thesis is not easy to accept given the events and intellectual battles of the past two centuries. For all the good of Rerum Novarum, it was too long in coming. The Church was too slow to respond to the upheaval of the Industrial Revolution. Today, in the face of millions around the world whose work remains toil and whose lives of uninterrupted extreme poverty differ little from those of workers a century ago, it is easy to think of an emphasis on the subjective dimension of work as a return to the pre-Rerum Novarum inadequacy; a regression, not a development. To anyone hostile to markets, and dubious of progress in them, such an emphasis is frivolous—a teaching for the fortunate few with the luxury to live in pursuit of meaning—or pernicious—a return to a religious opiate of the masses which prevents systemic reform. In light of such understandable suspicions, Fogel is perhaps the best economist for explaining adequately and credibly to Catholics and non-Catholics alike why the teachings on the subjective dimension of labor are in fact so relevant for today and for the current century.

For this reason, I follow both Fogel's general argument and his approach. This begins with understanding the extent of the progress in the market economies since Rerum Novarum. This is not to boast about the market, but rather to emphasize the tremendous gains achieved, what they mean for well-being, and the possibility for all countries to experience this development as well. This helps explain how a secular economist such as Fogel arrives at the conclusion that an emphasis on the non-material is needed for today. I then provide a parallel analysis of the development of the social teachings in the most important encyclicals over the same period to chart their development of similar points.
The following section explicitly considers the teachings included in the Compendium, with examinations of particular elements. I then turn to two important topics for further examination: human capital and labor market policies. The focus on the increasing role of human capital helps explain why the emphasis on developing personal ability, rather than reforming an exploitive system, must be the central focus today. This is particularly true in light of the substantial evidence that labor market policies that improve employment prospects without raising productivity are limited in what they can accomplish.

This approach has at least two major flaws. I have not done justice either to globalization or to the conditions suffered currently by so many in the developing countries, and even many in the developed countries. To this I offer the defense that I have only so much space and that it is not 1890. Both market and communist systems have been tried. We know now what was unknown then.

The success of the market economies, and the failure of the communist ones, demonstrates that market economies and globalization can provide tremendous gains, especially for the poorest workers. Moreover, the stunning, rapid growth of Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, and more recently China and India, show that this improvement can occur even more quickly than the Western countries experienced themselves. While the upheaval caused by market reforms in South America and Eastern Europe also demonstrates that such progress is not guaranteed, the successes prove it can be done. As with Fogel, I believe other countries will come to share in these gains and that their progress will be faster than our own. In time, far more people will enjoy the “luxury” of an era in which the main concerns are meaning in work and responding to the question “What is the good life?” For those fortunate enough to face that now, and for those who will experience it in the century to come, the teachings on work may serve the purpose whose need Fogel highlights: finding meaning in one’s life and living for it. This time the Church is not too late, but very much in time.

Economic Gains in the Twentieth Century

A fundamental dimension of the late-nineteenth-century Church teachings on labor was their origin in the deplorable economic circumstances of the time, and the ideological battles over which system would better provide for workers. Thus understanding the economic gains in well-being and work since then is important for interpreting the social teachings over the period. In the developed societies the century which followed Rerum Novarum was one of unparalleled material progress across the income scale as increased efficiency allowed people to have ever more goods and services with ever less work. Biomedical measures such as longevity, height, body mass, morbidity (which are better indicators of overall well-being than income since they reflect cumulative physical influences, both positive and negative) demonstrate the impact of these gains in well-being over the period yet more strongly. Life expectancy rose by about thirty
years. Stature increased substantially, with, for example, the average height of Dutch males rising by a phenomenal eight inches between 1850 and today.12

From a Judeo-Christian heritage which places great emphasis on the least well-off, however, the most important aspect of this growth is that these changes were especially beneficial for the poor. As Fogel writes, “The record of the twentieth century contrasts sharply with that of the two preceding centuries. In every measure that we have bearing on the standard of living, such as real income, homelessness, life expectancy, and height, the gains of the lower classes have been far greater than those experienced by the population as a whole, whose overall standard of living has also improved.”13 Two thirds of the fall in the Gini ratio (a statistical measure of income distribution ranging from zero for perfect equality to one for perfect inequality) from about 0.6-0.7 for the United States and European countries in 1700 to about 0.3-0.4 today occurred in the twentieth century.14 Since income at all levels was increasing, this means that the income of the poor was rising faster than income for the rest of the population. In the United States, the real income of the bottom 20 percent rose nineteen times between 1890 and 1990, and the income of the average family below the poverty line today would put them in the top 10 percent of the income bracket a hundred years ago.15 Again, biomedical measures confirm how the poor have gained. Life expectancy of the poor has risen absolutely from forty-one to seventy-five today. This thirty-four-year gain in one century exceeds all cumulative gains in life expectancy in human history.16 Moreover, they have even gained relative to other classes. In Britain, for example, the gap in lifespan between rich and poor has dropped from seventeen years in 1875 to two to four years today,17 while the gap in stature has fallen from five inches in the early 1800s to one inch today.18 Today only a small percentage of the population in the developed countries lives in conditions suffered by the vast majority a century ago.

The twentieth century provided stunning gains in leisure as well. People are not only working less per day and per week, they are also working fewer days and weeks per year due to increased vacation and holiday time, and the combination has substantially reduced annual hours. For example, for France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States, paid work hours per person employed fell from nearly 3,000 hours per year in 1870 to 2,800 in 1890 to 1,500-1,600 today, while for Japan and Latin America these have fallen from about 3,000 to about 2,000.19 Perhaps most startling from this are trends in lifetime hours of work and the fraction of life spent working. Historically, the average worker started young (in Britain, often about ten years old) and worked until death.20 Retirement was available to few.21 Today, people start work later, and ever longer retirement is the norm for all workers. The combination of decreased work hours during one’s working period and at its ends substantially raises non-work hours. Fogel estimates earning a living for people during working years will have decreased from 80 percent of discretionary time in 1880, to 41 percent today, to 25 percent in 2040; and people will then face yet greater free time in longer retirements.22
Fogel believes we need to introduce new terminology to describe work. He labels “earnwork” that work which one does primarily to earn a living and “volwork” the time available to do what one enjoys (a combination of leisure time and work people enjoy, whether paid or not). For most of human history, most work was earnwork. Today and in the years to come, however, opportunities for volwork dwarf earnwork time. Fogel estimates that for American males, lifetime earnwork hours have dropped from 182,100 hours in 1880, to 122,400 today, and will further drop to 75,600 by 2040. On the other hand, lifetime volwork has grown and will grow tremendously over the period: from 43,800 in 1880, to 176,100 today, to 246,000 in 2040.

This has significant implications for the social teachings on justice, equality, and meaning. Traditional concepts of justice have generally focused on outcomes largely determined by the objective dimension of work: the distribution and adequacy of wages, income, wealth, and so on. However, the massive shifts in the relative importance of volwork versus earnwork time mean that these traditional measures increasingly apply to a smaller portion of what people actually value and are thus increasingly inaccurate measures of well-being. Failure to account for this shift vastly underestimates gains at all income levels in the past, produces an erroneous picture of well-being in the present, and, if continued, will give an inaccurate sense of how to address problems of the future. As he states, “Some proponents of egalitarianism insist on characterizing the material level of the lives of the poor today as being as harsh as it was a century ago. Failure to recognize the enormous material gains over the last century, even for the poor, impedes, rather than advances the chronic poverty in rich nations, the principle characteristic of which is spiritual estrangement from the mainstream society.”

Thus a second challenge is one of meaning. As work time becomes an ever smaller portion of what people do, it becomes ever easier to think that life is for consumption rather than to find meaning; that we are made for work, which is the primary means by which we live out our vocations and grow in virtue. Ausubel and Grubler argue that the former is more likely, while Fogel more optimistically concludes that people, now freed from material effort, will spend their increasing time searching out meaning. As he writes, “I believe that the desire to understand ourselves and our environment is one of the fundamental driving forces of humanity, on a par with the most basic human material needs.”

What will help in this? While not intending to limit the possibilities, Fogel suggests what he terms spiritual resources which enable people to live for self-realization. This includes virtues such as sense of purpose, vision of opportunity, sense of the mainstream of work and life, strong family ethic, sense of community, capacity to engage with diverse groups, ethic of benevolence, sense of discipline, capacity to focus and concentrate one’s efforts, capacity to resist the lure of hedonism, and so on. It is true that he does not mean “spiritual” in a sacred sense, and his approach is perhaps too subjective. Nonetheless this emphasis on the drive to find meaning in life and self-realization as the “fullest development
of the virtuous aspects of one’s nature” corresponds with the Christian idea of self-realization as development in virtues. Fogel acknowledges the important role that religion provides in this. More important is his general approach: the huge gains in material welfare and nonformal-work time are leaving people with more freedom to engage in greater self-realization, an opportunity that in the past would have been limited to only a small portion of the population. Just as health and leisure gains were among the most important in recent centuries “in the era that is unfolding, fair access to spiritual resources will be as much a touchstone of egalitarianism as access to material resources was in the past.” When even secular economists are emphasizing the spiritual side of life, one shouldn’t be surprised to find this shift in the Church’s teachings as well.

**Historical Development of the Teachings on Labor in the Twentieth Century**

It is interesting to contemplate what Marx in 1880 would have thought of the world’s expert in material well-being in 2000 writing of “fair access to spiritual resources” as being a more pressing problem than material want; or how Leo XIII in 1890 would have felt discovering that, of all people, it was a secular economist who wrote it. At the time, many capitalists appeared little interested in the needs of workers, and communists cared little for spiritual meaning offered by the Church. Thus, Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* (1891) strongly criticized both liberal capitalism and socialism, while appealing for organically ordered relations of productive actors and emphasizing basic worker rights. The encyclical set the stage for the coming century of social teachings which seek to “link industriousness as a virtue with the social order of work,” to explore how one may become, in work, “more a human being” (*Laborem Exercens* 9), that is, balancing the need for efficiency in the system with opportunities in work that enable people to perceive and live out their vocation to work more fully. This started with addressing the basic needs and rights of workers and working conditions materially in *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) and ended with examination of human progress and the meaning of work in *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), *Laborem Exercens* (1981), and *Centesimus Annus* (1991). Vatican II emphasized the true human nature and taught that authentic human progress consisted in the development of the person toward God and in virtue. *Laborem Exercens* stated that work was not just key to the social question, but key to one’s existence, developing the objective and subjective dimensions of work and a spiritual theology of work. Finally, *Centesimus Annus* examined why free markets were preferable for economic organization relative to socialist alternatives, partly due to efficiency, but also due to the scope left for human creativity and independence. In particular, that encyclical provided the most developed exploration of human capital for productivity and how this highlighted the importance of people as the fundamental resource.
The combination of these last two encyclicals in particular provides the best exploration of how to link "industriousness as a virtue with the social order of work."

The *Compendium*

The *Compendium* follows in this heritage, but looking forward. Many traditional aspects remain because the needs they address remain (particularly in the developing world), but the shift is clearly toward the subjective dimension. It addresses seven broad categories of work: biblical aspects (255-66), the prophetic role of *Rerum Novarum* (267-69), the dignity of work (270-86), the right to work (287-300), the rights of workers (301-4), solidarity among workers (305-9), and new things in the world of work today (310-22). Section I begins appropriately by reviewing the role of work in Revelation: the duty to care for the earth (255) as well as to provide for oneself and others (264-65); that humans are destined for work due to having been made in the image of God the Creator, not as a punishment for the fall (256), and in participation in the redemption of the world (263); that God is the goal, not work (257); and the call to rest on the Sabbath as part of our duty to worship the Lord (258). These elements can be seen in the life of Christ himself who was a man of work (259), but not enslaved to it (260), thus demonstrating the need to remember the ultimate goal of life, union with God. Work must ultimately help reveal the glory of the universe God has made (262). Finally, work is an inherent part of being human; it is not a servile duty (265) but a good. Participating in both creation and redemption of the world (264) and offered to God, it becomes inherently spiritual and religious, an act of worship as in the Benedictine formula *ora et labora* (266).

Section II states that *Rerum Novarum* was prophetic for using these permanent themes from salvation history and applying them to the world of work as it was developing in the close of the nineteenth century (267). It recognized that the fundamental question at the time revolved around the nature of work, for which neither communism nor neoclassical economics contained proper visions of the human person and the role of work. It sought to address the social question by recalling the deeper purpose of work. Though the explicit challenges of communism may be past (the labor theory of value, the severity of exploitation of labor in a capitalist system), the call to work requires that whatever economic system is used must be based upon the foundational understanding of the meaning of work for mankind. The means by which *Rerum Novarum* cut through the issues of its century leads to the deeper insight today, that work "is the 'essential key'" to the whole social question and is the condition not only for economic development but also for the cultural and moral development of persons, the family, society and the entire human race" (269).

This position flows from a sense of the dignity of work (Section III). An important first step in this is making the distinction between the objective and
subjective dimensions (270-75) of work introduced in *Laborem Exercens*. This framework allows one to consider the nature of production, technology, market value, and so on, as related to but distinct from the importance of the work to the worker. The subjective dimension "does not depend upon what people produce or on the type of activity they undertake, but only and exclusively on their dignity as human beings" (270). Since work is our calling, for us, "the subjective dimension of work must always take precedence over the objective dimension" (271), regardless of its objective value (272). Section 271 makes a strong claim regarding the severity of missing the opportunities in the subjective dimension: "If this awareness is lacking, or if one chooses not to recognize this truth, work loses its truest and most profound meaning."

Alford and Naughton note that ignorance of the spiritual aspect of work affects both workers and businesses. Workers do not live their work as a spiritual activity as fully as they could if they understood it, and businesses give insufficient attention to the spiritual dimension in designing work. In addressing this, these authors demonstrate the practical benefit of the objective/subjective distinction. The system must be sustainable in the objective dimension, but that is not the end in itself. They then consider changes in work design which support the subjective dimension, while meeting the requirement of sustainability economically.

Section III also analyzes traditional questions such as increasing worker participation in management and profits (281), the importance of rest from work, especially on Sundays and Holy Days to allow people to devote time to worship God (284-86), and the relationship between private property and labor (282-83). The *Compendium* restates the principle of the right to private property, subject to the duty to use one’s property in the service of others as follows from the universal destination of goods (282), but augments this to address the increasingly important question of intellectual property (283).

However, the greatest change in this section regards the teaching on the relationship between labor and capital (276-80). While it retains the traditional emphasis on the priority of people over other inputs and addresses labor and capital, it does this in the context of a new economy in which the most important kind of capital and resource overall is in fact human capital (broadly defined). It observes that these shifts in the objective nature of work provide great opportunities to develop and live out the subjective dimension. This increasingly fulfills John Paul II’s call in *Laborem Exercens* (15) that “the person who works desires not only due remuneration for his work; he also wishes that, within the production process, provision be made for him to be able to know that in his work, even on something that is owned in common, he is working ‘for himself.’” On the other hand, the *Compendium* warns that gains from these changes hinge on the extent to which workers and owners understand the subjective dimension so that workers can more fully live out their work as vocation to God and others and an occasion for growth (280). Given the importance of these changes, they are discussed in greater detail below.
Since work is a vocation, people must have the right to work, and ought to be enabled to do so (section IV). This section condemns unemployment (287), discusses the need for education (290), the role of the state in insuring the opportunity to work (288-91), and the increasing extent to which this is an international phenomenon requiring coordination across countries. This section also considers the need for work to be balanced with family obligations (294), ending discrimination against women to allow them to participate fully in work (295), the right of people to emigrate in search of work opportunities and for host nations to insure they are neither exploited nor discriminated against (297-98), and the rapid changes in agriculture and their implications for rural areas as well as land reform (299-300). Finally, this section calls for ending extreme child labor (296). While condemning exploitation of children as “essentially a moral problem,” it acknowledges that limited work by children is beneficial for development, and that some families and countries are so impoverished that greater work by children is “at least for now... indispensable.”

This balance likely flows from the present understanding of child labor around the world. While over 100 million children work full-time, and 210 million work part-time in what would be counted as child labor, labor force participation rates for children have dropped worldwide from 27.6 percent in 1905, to about 11 percent today.\(^\text{35}\) Research in this area confirms that this is a response to poverty and that parents themselves around the world strongly prefer that their children not suffer such conditions.\(^\text{36}\) Between 1980 and 2000 the proportion of children ages 10-14 in the labor force in India and China (which have had high economic growth) dropped from 21 percent to 12 percent and 30 percent to 8 percent, respectively, while Africa saw only a minimal reduction from 35 percent to 29 percent.\(^\text{37}\) This demonstrates the primary role of economic development, which would raise families out of the poverty that makes child labor “indispensable.”\(^\text{38}\)

Moreover, people must have not only the right to work, but the rights of workers. These are included in Sections V (the Rights of Workers) and VI (Solidarity among Workers). Section VI addresses unions not just as means of raising the power of workers, but also as a means of fostering solidarity, both between workers, as well between workers and owners (305-7). Unions are also important in calling attention to issues of all workers, not only domestically (307), but also internationally (308).

From the standpoint of economics, this focus is of some interest. It avoids the highly contested question of the material contributions of unions to raising compensation (pay, benefits, working conditions) for workers overall. It has long been believed that in competitive labor markets, unions benefit their members but at the detriment of non-members. A tentative conclusion to this is that unions benefit all workers, but over time such benefits are rather modest.\(^\text{39}\) What is clearer is the potential of unions to improve relations between workers and management.\(^\text{40}\) Thus the Compendium highlights the union role in solidarity for work as a social activity and discourages seeing unions as a means by which workers fight management (and for which the effectiveness is low anyway).
Section V includes many of the concerns which drove battles over justice in work as they occurred in the 1890s and have been prominent in social teachings since that time. These include just compensation, the right to rest, working conditions, social protections such as compensation for injury and unemployment, and some coverage for retirement (301-02), as well as the need for appropriate income redistribution (303). It is not surprising that these issues are here after 100 years of encyclicals and thousands of years of revelation. What may be surprising is that these have been limited to a few paragraphs. This is perhaps an indication of the extent to which market economies have been able to address the problems of scarcity that have always faced human existence, the production problems of a century ago, as well as what has been learned regarding the effectiveness of policies for these ends. In particular, while explicit labor market policies can be helpful and are often necessary, the efficiency of the institutional arrangements in the system is perhaps the strongest force for raising up the poor. Moreover, policies which aim to provide greater remuneration to workers without raising productivity often create unemployment which excludes the least skilled and most marginalized workers. This tradeoff—finding the right policy mix for a given country and culture to support those in need and the rights of work while not reducing opportunities to work—is explored further below.

The reduced coverage in the two sections leaves perhaps more opportunity to address “The New Things of the World of Work” (Section VII) in the coming century, including global human solidarity and the subjective dimension of work. While the traditional concerns regarding material well-being continue, the challenge is adapting them to the new world of work (311-14): rapidly changing, based on service jobs (not industry), heavily dependent upon technology, and in global markets. These changes provide promise yet caution. First, they raise the awareness of belonging to a human family across the globe (310, 312, 321, 322). As Michel Camdessus, former director general of the International Monetary Fund, writes, this too is part of our development in the subjective dimension of work. In the past we were socialized by our work in our society; now we are “globalized,” that is, drawn outside ourselves, made aware of the needs of others far away and of the universality of the human family. On the other hand, this scale implies that often people will be affected by decisions made far from them and produce for markets far away, in businesses spanning many countries. This requires greater integration across countries to resolve problems as they arise and thus points to an ever greater need for global solidarity to insure everyone can enjoy humane working conditions as quickly as possible.41

The guardedly optimistic tone of this section perhaps reflects much of the recent experience with globalization. On the one hand, participation in the world system may bring rapid changes to both developed and developing countries. Examples abound of ruthless practices by businesses and difficult policies imposed by international organizations on developing countries, as well as threats to their cultural and social order. On the other hand, as Compendium section 447, quoting Centesimus Annus (33), states, countries that closed themselves off
from international trade stagnated, while those that participated in the system grew rapidly.

In general, countries that have moved toward free market systems and participated in the global economy have seen increases in the standard of living and of working conditions. Countries with freer economies have improved not only in income, but in other social indicators such as working conditions, education, health, and political freedom. As for reported increases in global inequality, this needs to be examined carefully. Wolf and Sala-i-Martin argue that the recent rise in income inequality across countries is due to the fact that those countries which have increased their economic freedom (including trade) have grown while those which have not have stagnated. Similarly, poverty and inequality, as measured across all individuals worldwide, has decreased because increasing economic freedom in India and China has raised millions of their people out of poverty. Particularly important is that developing countries can take advantage of lessons learned and technological advances of the developed countries and thus progress much more quickly. For example, Hong Kong, with no natural resources, moved to first world status in just forty years, three to four times faster than the United States and western European countries, which took approximately 150 years. Thus while proper oversight of the system is necessary, neither isolation from nor elimination of globalizing movements can be the answer to development.

Rather it is proper to begin with a fundamental understanding of the role of work in human activity. The changes in the economy increase opportunities for workers to see themselves as the subject of their work and to develop the subjective dimension of work. Thus most needed today is understanding of the purpose for work in a way that frees people to take advantage of these developments. Without this, people will be less able to grow in their work or to offer it to God. They would be more likely to fall into extremes of seeing work as, on the one hand, mainly funding consumption, or, on the other, merely a career they consume, not a vocation, and more likely to sacrifice themselves, their families, society, and their relationship with God for their work or their consumption. Nor would space be made by firms for development of this by workers. Emphasis on the spiritual dimension reminds all that people need more than material gain and calls to mind the humanity of others with whom they interact and across the globe. While the discussion does not include a sufficient development of the need for this to apply to all actions of work and to seize opportunities outside of formal employment, as Fogel’s does, the emphasis on personal understanding of the spiritual dimension to inform decisions regarding work and life in the future matches the conclusion drawn by Fogel himself. As the Compendium states: “the decisive factor and ‘referee’ of this complex phase of change is once more the human person, who must remain the true protagonist of his work. He can and must take on in a creative and responsible fashion the present innovations and re-organizations, so that they lead to the growth of the person, the family, society and the entire human family.”
Implications of Human Capital for Catholic Social Teachings on Labor

The Promise of Human Capital—Compendium 276

While Marx may have been right about a changed nature of production causing changed relation of production in his time, he was wrong about the direction it would take (Centesimus Annus 41). The shift to technologically oriented service economies has resulted in an ever greater need for human capital, a means of production the ownership of which cannot be concentrated like physical capital or land and which acquires value only in relation to its use with and for others. Moreover, the division of labor in the tasks done by human capital make each worker not an ever more easily replaceable member of the ever more homogenous proletariat, but an owner of capital the firm needs for production and who needs increasingly to be invited in and encouraged to develop it and use it in conjunction with others. This places greater emphasis on the individual worker and his contributions to the organizations in which he works, as well as on the social nature of work, with both highlighting the dignity and importance of man himself. Thus changes (human capital) in the objective/technical dimension of work have created great opportunities for positive developments in both the objective (level of pay and working conditions which are sustainable) and subjective (individual autonomy, collaboration with others) dimensions.

This new reality is reflected in the Compendium. While it cites the old teaching about the relationship between labor and capital (276-78), it acknowledges that the rising importance of human and social capital is among the most significant changes in the nature of work in the last century: “... contrary to what happened in the former organization of labor in which the subject would end up being less important than the object, than the mechanical process, in our day the subjective dimension of work tends to be more decisive and more important than the objective dimension” (278). Thus as technological progress and improved economic policies address basic questions such as productivity, compensation, working conditions, worker rights, etc., the capacity to live out the subjective dimension of work will depend more and more upon the individual’s understanding of the nature of work and its role in human existence rather than external factors.

Though alluded to by Smith in The Wealth of Nations, the concept of human capital lay largely undeveloped until the work of Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker in the 1960s and 1970s. Human capital, like physical capital such as tools, is useful for producing other ends (though it may be an end in itself), and can also be developed (via study, training, and practice). Since people own their human capital and get greater returns when it is augmented, they have an incentive to invest in raising their own productivity (and are compensated for this). They can do so via education, practice, experience, and on the job training, as well as by such other actions as migration to greater opportunities, searches to
find better job matches, and greater care of health. However, given people's differing capacity to afford such investments, especially education, society's obligation to improve individual well-being and enable all to "enter the circle of exchange, and to develop their skills in order to make the best use of their capacities and resources," requires insuring access to adequate education (289-90).

The rise of human capital (broadly defined) explains many trends in labor and earnings in the developed countries since the time of *Rerum Novarum*. First, most of the reduction in income inequality has occurred because human capital (especially necessary in a service oriented, technologically based economy; see *Compendium* 313) has risen to be more than twice as important as physical capital or land and is more equitably distributed than both. Since most of the productive capacity is owned by workers themselves, this raises the pay to workers and creates an incentive for businesses to see workers as resources, fostering the employee ownership, cooperation, and partnership that had been promoted by the encyclicals in the past century, though in an unexpected way. This has been reflected in the shift in management practices over the past century from scientific management, which focuses on control, to humanistic or human-centered management, which focuses on drawing out the resources of people by involving them in the process. While much remains to be done in management practice and job design, the changes since 1900 are substantial.

Although human capital is frequently used to refer to the full spectrum of factors that shape individuals' productivity aside from their general physical effort, additional insights can be gained by distinguishing among: human capital, social capital, and entrepreneurial ability. Human capital commonly refers to the knowledge, skills, and talents that a person can develop through study and practice. This is often in a synergistic relationship with ability (itself partly innate and partly developed), which shapes the capacity to learn. Social capital refers to the moral principles, social customs, and social connectedness of people that enable them to work together. Entrepreneurial ability is the creative capacity to assess what other people want and to organize resources for providing it. The implications of these three types of human resources (human capital, social capital, and entrepreneurial ability) are recognized in *Centesimus Annus* (32), which states that "whereas at one time the decisive factor of production was the land, and later capital... today the decisive factor is increasingly man himself, that is, his knowledge, especially his scientific knowledge, his capacity for interrelated and compact organization, as well as his ability to perceive the needs of others and to satisfy them."

Each of these elements has a particularly important role today. First, most production no longer relies on the kind of division-of-labor to the point of intellectual stunting described even by Smith and assumed by many to be the future of work. More than ever, firms must consider how to encourage workers to think for themselves and to build up and use the knowledge they have, not oppress them. Since they hold knowledge specific for their role, workers are increasingly valued due to this embodied human capital and given responsibility for making
decisions. Second, large-scale production which can draw out the use of this information requires extensive coordination of people throughout the organization and places a high value on the capacity to work together, that is, social capital. Finally, as Smith taught with the Invisible Hand principle, in free market economies people have an incentive to search out what is wanted by others and to produce it efficiently. This places great value not on physical capital, but on what can only be a human trait: entrepreneurial ability, which Schumpeter emphasized as key to economic growth. Moreover, entrepreneurship develops the virtue of creativity as we act.\footnote{53}

These changes improve opportunities for people to see themselves as the subject of their work and to see their work in relation to others, both in the production process and in output for others. In addition, they throw "... practical light on a truth about the person which Christianity has constantly affirmed [and] should be viewed carefully and favourably. Indeed, besides the earth, man's principal resource is man himself" (\textit{Centesimus Annus} 32). These resources correspond to particular facets of our human nature as made in the image and likeness of God: reason, creativity, community, and virtue. Human capital highlights our capacity for reason. Social capital depends upon our communal nature. Entrepreneurial ability, both to new ventures and inside old organizations, underscores our creativity (337). Finally, these require applying such virtues as diligence and perseverance. Thus practical observations on the sources of wealth and productivity today lead to greater appreciation of the dignity and importance of the human person.

\textbf{Reliance on Human Capital Is Insufficient to End Alienation—\textit{Compendium} 280}

Positive as these trends have been, the \textit{Compendium} warns that: "\textit{One must not fall into the error of thinking that the process of overcoming the dependence of work on material is of itself capable of overcoming alienation in the workplace or the alienation of labor}" (280). Partly this is because the human capital people acquire may not be effectively used for genuine human needs. Much more important, however, is that it doesn't solve the general problem of alienation today in which people sacrifice opportunities for personal growth in virtue, love of God and others, to live for consumption or work, rather than seeing how consumption and work may assist in authentic growth. Finally, even materially, many will not benefit from these human capital developments due to differences in circumstances, economies, cultures, and human capital itself.

First, while markets generally provide what people want and it is good that human capital can be developed as a resource toward meeting those wants, there is no guarantee that the market will provide for the actual mix of authentic human needs of people at any time. These skills instead may be turned to provision of disvalues (e.g., drugs, pornography) or over-consumption generally (\textit{Centesimus Annus} 34). In addition, human capital will be poorly developed when it
does so in response to needs that are not fully "solvent" either because those who need them lack the ability to pay for them, or because they fail to perceive their true importance (e.g., spiritual development). To the extent that a market system relies on satisfying people's wants, it may foster a utilitarian outlook, inducing people to work ever more for their own consumption (of career, status, goods, leisure, etc.) and reducing their capacity to engage in moral effort and productive activity in the world.

In all these cases, alienation occurs because people "invert means and ends," putting personal satisfaction from consumption before other more fundamental needs, both of other people and of their own need to serve God and others (257, Centesimus Annus 41). While people may have originally worked to support themselves, the vast material emphasis evident in consumerism implies many no longer view work as vocation or support for life. Instead, living for consumption, they are increasingly dominated by it and less interested in making the effort to improve in virtue, including that of work. In the end, people are alienated, dominated by the consumption they had once controlled, and no longer live for and enjoy the higher calling they have received. This is alienation in a Christian sense. People miss out on the greatest goods because they do not "transcend [themselves and] live the experience of self-giving and of the formation of an authentic human community oriented towards [their] final destiny, which is God." This alienation extends to society if its "forms of social organization, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer this gift of self and to establish this solidarity between people."

This alienation (inverting of means and ends) also occurs in work itself, either because people place insufficient emphasis on work as opportunity for personal growth in virtue, for serving God, and for serving others (including needs outside of work) or because they place too great an emphasis on work relative to other dimensions of life that it is supposed to serve. As the Compendium states, this can occur due to "over-working, to work-as-career that often takes on more importance than other human and necessary aspects, to excessive demands of work that [make] family life unstable and sometimes impossible, to a modular structure of work that entails the risk of serious repercussions on the unitary perception of one's own existence and the stability of family relationships" (280). Businesses may contribute to this by similarly failing to approach work as a vocation and undervaluing authentic human needs of workers and society, and thus sacrificing worker needs in an "unrestrained quest for productivity" (279).

Since the market organizes output and production around what people want, this alienation can be best addressed in a culture that forms those preferences correctly so that people can make wise choices. But this cannot come from the economic system itself. Pope John Paul II appears to have believed that these forces in free market economies can be resisted only if the surrounding moral and cultural environment is strong enough to shape the preferences and values of people toward authentic needs, including understanding of work as vocation. It was for this reason that he placed so great an emphasis on the primacy of culture being focused on what it means to be human.
In addition, greater emphasis on the non-material resources of the economy today does not end alienation even in a *material* sense. First, in some places or industries, work is still land– or physical capital–intensive (e.g., agriculture). Second, undocumented migrant workers and those in informal work in developing countries are often exploited because they remain outside the legal system. Third, for many people, especially the old or disabled, skills, and thus productivity, are still limited, making income low. Even if markets pay workers according to their skill levels more accurately than a century ago, this may be insufficient to meet their needs. Fourth, rapid changes due to increased competition may render one’s skills less valuable and make it difficult to put work in relation to other areas of one’s life. These all imply the importance of greater development of human capital itself as possible. For this reason the *Compendium* (290) highlights the importance of equal access to education and training to enable all people to benefit from these advances in work. Moreover, the rise in income inequality in recent decades in all the developed countries, reversing the trends reviewed earlier, raises questions even regarding the new developments in the role of human capital. Is the economy shifting in ways that disproportionately reward holders of human capital? Will those with greater access to education be able to advance while others remain behind? Might those with greater income be able to confer advantages on their children, perpetuating income inequality not via land or title (as would have occurred in earlier eras), but via human capital development in the home or private school?

To answer these questions it must be understood that many factors driving the rise of income inequality are not explicitly related to human capital differences. These include personal choices regarding work and changes in the distribution of work hours, steepening in the life-cycle distribution of earnings as people earn more when middle aged to prepare for retirement and social changes such as the rise of single parent and dual-income families. In addition, immigration and international competition may both place downward pressure on wages for low-skill workers. Also, studies of actual consumption, not income or wages, find much smaller increases in inequality. These appear to indicate that the increases in inequality are not as substantial as believed: people are spreading consumption across periods with temporarily low income, and over their life spans. In fact, in the United States, while the percentage of the population below poverty at any time is about 12 percent, the percentage in long-term poverty is only about 4–5 percent. Nonetheless, the increasing returns to human capital are a particularly important factor in wage and income inequality as production becomes more technologically oriented. Thus while human capital resulted in greater income equality for most of the twentieth century, the situation has reversed, and it is now differences in human capital that are contributing to greater income inequality. To the extent this occurs, human capital policies must be developed to address differences in access to education and training opportunities.

Interestingly, recent work on such policies sheds light on the human element in human capital development itself. Reviewing decades of such research,
Nobel Prize winner James Heckman draws attention to a few major conclusions from it. First, input-based policies (spending, class-size reduction, teacher education, etc.) and education reform policies have little consistent effect. Second, credit constraint in college access in the United States affects only a small portion (8 percent) of the population; the bigger problem is ability. Finally, government job training for adults is often a poor investment because those with more ability take most advantage of the training while those with little ability gain little.

To explain these observations, Heckman claims that education and training opportunities matter, but at high levels of spending (as occurs in the developed countries) inequalities in these are not the most important problem. Instead, the greater issue is the capacity for people to use the opportunities provided to them. He argues that non-cognitive skills such as discipline, motivation, perseverance, and purpose (many of which Fogel calls "spiritual resources") are the greatest factors affecting human capital development. These are formed early in life from one's family environment (both income and family structure, but the exact characteristics are yet uncertain) and shape the degree to which people can use the educational opportunities they receive. Those with greater discipline and motivation can benefit more at each stage. Since the skills are determined early and human capital is acquired cumulatively, delay in addressing non-cognitive skill differences is costly. Moreover, additional education and training don't reduce differences in earnings potential; they add to them. Consequently, Heckman argues that in order to address the human capital differences behind income inequality, human capital policy must address the formation of these non-cognitive skills. To be most effective, these must begin early (before children enter school), though mentoring programs may have some effect for older children.

In the face of the increasing importance of human capital, we generally accept a social obligation to provide equal opportunities for education and training to enable all to "make the best use of their capacities and resources" (Centesimus Annus 34). Heckman's research implies that this is not enough. Instead, it must be broadened to include developing the virtues necessary to use that education. Of course these skills are best taught not by programs but by families. Thus these studies highlight the important role that families have in developing the human capital so necessary for living out vocations in the work place today, and they reinforce the Compendium's emphasis on the importance of the family.

This is important for realizing that (notwithstanding section 280's warning to the contrary) the Compendium's overall positive assessment of the role of human capital is not undermined by these recent trends in inequality. These findings emphasize the nature of authentic human development that is required. A loving early family environment, oriented toward the whole development of the person including the virtues, is crucial for shaping the human capital that will enable people to work freely and to more fully take advantage of the opportunities they have to live out their vocation (in work of every kind). Reflecting points similar to those in the Compendium, Fogel also states that most of the rise of income inequality in recent years is due to personal responses to a broader
range of opportunities, not to “structural changes that threaten to reproduce the deplorable distributional conditions” at the time of *Rerum Novarum.* Since shifts in the economy leave people more responsible for their prospects than a century ago, the goal must be to give them skills to take advantage of that opportunity. As he writes,

> At very high average incomes for ordinary people, self-realization becomes the critical issue. Equal opportunity turns less on the command of physical capital now than it did at the close of the nineteenth century. Today, and for the foreseeable future, *spiritual capital,* especially commanding those facets of knowledge that are both heavily rewarded in the marketplace and the key to opportunities of volwork, is the crux of the quest for self-realization.74

For Fogel, these circumstances imply that the goal of development is less that of reforming or chaining an inherently exploitive system than one of giving people skills that are “heavily rewarded in the marketplace and the key to volwork.”

**Competing Goals? Rights to Work versus Rights of Work**

An important challenge for any economy is to provide opportunity to work and adequate compensation and environment for work to be accomplished. These are reviewed in the *Compendium* as rights to work (287-90) and rights of work (301-4). For example, governments, as “indirect employers,” have the responsibility to ensure that such opportunities exist and that structures in society do not keep people from working (288). On the other hand, people must be able to support themselves via their work; so states ought to insure rights of work: that is, a just wage; the right to adequate rest, especially on Sundays; working conditions which are not harmful physically, psychologically, or morally; appropriate unemployment compensation; pension or social insurance for old age, sickness, or accidents; proper support for mothers; and the rights associated with unions: assembly, associations, and strike (304-7). The emphasis on these two elements is understandable because one cannot live out the vocation to work when unemployment makes it hard to find a job, and seeing oneself as the creative subject of work is difficult when work conditions are poor.

The problem is that experience with many different policy approaches to these goals in the past century finds that solutions to them often conflict. Policies with greater emphasis on the rights of workers (e.g. higher minimum wages, unemployment compensation, public assistance, etc.) tend to raise unemployment or decrease labor force participation, thus reducing the opportunity for work and often benefiting those with jobs at the expense of those without. In light of this tradeoff, countries must search out the combination of policies most appropriate for their economic and cultural conditions and the nature of the unemployment they face.
Some Basics Regarding Unemployment

While the experience of the developed countries (and more recently in China and India) indicates that tremendous gains can be obtained in an efficient economy, the labor situation (e.g., opportunity, conditions, compensation) is extraordinarily difficult for many around the world. For example, the International Labour Organization estimates that 48.4 percent of the global workforce (1.37 billion of 2.85 billion people fifteen years or older) earns less than $2 US per day. While global unemployment is 6.3 percent (192 million), unemployment in some areas is much higher: 13.2 percent in the Middle East and North Africa, 9.7 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 9.7 percent in Central and Eastern Europe. Among the developed countries in the past decade, unemployment rates have been consistently lower in Japan (4.2 percent) and the United States (5.1 percent) than in many European countries such as Spain (14.6 percent), France (10.6 percent), Italy (10.5 percent), United Kingdom (8.6 percent), and Germany (6.5 percent).76

Unemployment also varies significantly within any given population, that is, by skills, education, gender, race, age, industry, region, immigration status, etc. In general, those with the most skills and education tend to experience unemployment the least since they have the greatest capacity to avoid it and recover when it occurs (289). On the other hand, the marginal members of society suffer from unemployment the most. They are generally the last to be hired and the first to be fired, have longer unemployment spells, and have the least resources for surviving periods of unemployment. Thus lower unemployment is particularly important to marginal workers.

Moreover, unemployment imposes substantial social and personal costs.77 This includes the financial difficulties of being unemployed, the psychological sense of inadequacy and stigma for being unproductive and unable to provide for one's family, social disconnect, and lost opportunity to serve God through one's work generally (289). Recent studies confirm that unemployment appears to have a strong negative impact on perceived well-being.78 In the face of so many people out of work or paid so little for it, the economic and social costs of unemployment, and concern for how the economy serves the least well off, it is not surprising the Compendium calls unemployment a "real social disaster"79 (287) and encourages policies to improve the circumstances for labor.

In addressing this, however, it is important to consider several aspects of unemployment. First, the length of unemployment spells varies greatly across people, and a high unemployment rate due to many people with very short spells differs significantly from a low unemployment rate due to a small number of people with long spells.80 Second, unemployment arises from several major causes. Some unemployment (often called cyclical) results from fluctuations in the economy over time and is the focus of macroeconomic policies. Some unemployment (often called frictional) is due to the inherent problem of workers and firms searching each other out and is a function of imperfect information,
search intensity, and desire to obtain a match. Lastly, some (often called structural) is due to mismatches between the workforce skills and economic needs. Because these frictional and structural factors are inherent to any dynamic economy without full information, employment of all working-age adults is impossible to obtain. On the other hand, both can be exacerbated by poorly designed labor market policies. Thus it is likely that the “full employment” specified in section 288 should best refer to “as much as possible given frictional and structural forces and reasonable labor and economic policies” rather than “everyone who wants a job should have the one they want when they want it.” These different sources of unemployment require a variety of policies to achieve the right balance of opportunity and earnings. While the past century may have resolved the question as to what system is the best for providing both employment opportunity and reasonable gains in compensation, the coming decades will increasingly face the issue of what types of policies are best for addressing these types of unemployment at the macroeconomic and microeconomic levels.

**Macroeconomic Policies**

Macroeconomic policy toward unemployment has shifted tremendously over the last hundred years, from little attempt to guide the economy, to active management of business cycles following the Great Depression and the rise of Keynesianism, to a more general preference for creating the right environment today. In fact, the phenomenal gains to labor described above imply that sound macroeconomic policy, including appropriate institutional arrangements, is among the best labor policies.

Keynesianism dominated the middle of the twentieth century. Stung by the apparent ineffectiveness of laissez-faire policies to end the Great Depression, economists for the next few decades widely embraced the Keynesian model of using fiscal (tax and spending) policies to achieve desired levels of output and employment. This belief was reflected in *Mater et Magistra*’s assertion (during the high point of Keynesianism in 1961):

> The present advance in scientific knowledge... puts into the hands of public authority a greater means for limiting fluctuations in the economy and for providing effective measures to prevent the recurrence of mass unemployment. Hence the insistent demands on those in authority... to increase the degree and scope of their activities in the economic sphere, and to devise ways and means and set the necessary machinery in motion for the attainment of this end.

(54)

In recent decades, challenges to Keynesian theories and division among economists have reduced confidence in the efficacy of macroeconomic stabilization policy. Despite such divisions, economists generally agree that even if macroeconomic stabilization can boost the economy in the short-run, it cannot do so indefinitely. Eventually such policies cause only inflation without spurring on
the economy to reduce unemployment. Instead, many, such as Nobel-winning macroeconomist Robert Lucas, believe that employment and economic growth are most effectively fostered by creating the best setting in which the economy may function, rather than ad hoc stimulation measures. Recent examples such as the low unemployment and high job creation of the United States and the turnaround of the Irish economy appear to verify this. Generally this means improved institutional arrangements—reasonable levels of taxes and regulation, limited government production, open trade, and stable currencies—though economists disagree greatly over what constitutes reasonable or limited. However, the structure of these policies will vary enormously from country to country, and overly rapid moves to such policies without supporting social institutions may result in greater economic upheaval, including higher unemployment (Gaudium et Spes, 69). This may have been the cause of recent problems in Eastern Europe and Latin America, where such policies may have been applied too rapidly (314). Overall, the new balance is reflected in the Compendium:

The duty of the State does not consist so much in directly guaranteeing the right to work of every citizen, making the whole of economic life very rigid and restricting individual free initiative, as much as in the duty to “sustain business activities by creating conditions which will ensure job opportunities, by stimulating those activities where they are lacking or by supporting them in moments of crisis” (291).

Microeconomic Policies

At the microeconomic level, some policy options to improve access to employment are clear. Social and legal structures that limit free access to work by particular groups in the population (e.g., apartheid) are unjust since they prevent people from living out their vocation to work and should be eliminated. This would also preclude the common practice of using “pro-labor” policies (e.g., the minimum wage) to exclude undesired workers, especially immigrants and minorities. A more difficult problem concerns tradeoffs between compensation and job security versus opportunities to work in the first place.

Companies (and economies) face a fundamental limitation in their compensation: they cannot pay more than they make from the sale of their goods or services. Thus overall compensation cannot deviate substantially from the marginal revenue product of the individual workers. This applies to the economy overall as well: only so much can be provided (of jobs and compensation) given the resources, technology, and institutional arrangements countries have. Policies intended to help workers but which do not raise their productivity (e.g. high minimum wages) tend to increase unemployment by both raising compensation above the marginal revenue product and making labor markets less flexible to changing circumstances.

The tension in meeting these goals can be seen in the labor market experience of Europe and the United States in recent decades. In general, most E.U.
members have what appear to be more pro-labor policies than the United States: more generous unemployment compensation, higher minimum wages, greater unionization and centralized wage setting, limitations on dismissals, and greater welfare benefits. On the other hand, the United States has generally had a lower unemployment rate and provided more jobs, and thus more opportunity to work, than Europe. For example, the U.S. unemployment rate has generally been around 5 percent, while that for Europe has been much higher, at 8-10 percent. The United States has also created more jobs, at all income and skill levels. Between 1970 and 2003, the number of people employed in the United States rose by 58.9 million from almost 80 million to 140 million, while employment in France, Germany, and Italy combined rose by only 17.6 million people, from about 67 million to about 84 million, with almost half of this being due to German reunification. Between 1990 and 2003, U.S. employment rose by 18.9 million, while that of those three E.U. countries rose by only 2.2 million. Finally, in the United States, about one third of unemployment spells are less than one month, two thirds are less than three months, and less than 10 percent last more than a year. For France, Germany, and Italy, this was reversed: less than 10 percent were over in a month, 10-25 percent in three months, and 35 percent to almost 60 percent lasted longer than a year. The International Monetary Fund estimates that a move to U.S. type tax and labor policies would lower unemployment by approximately 3 percent.

Some of the employment difference is likely due to macroeconomic policies: the U.S. economy has had higher growth but lower tax rates than Europe. However, much is due to labor market policies themselves intended to help workers but which perversely raise unemployment. These policies induce workers to spend less time and effort finding a job and firms to demand less labor and to look harder before they hire someone. Both increase the time until a match is made, extending unemployment spells and raising unemployment overall. What is unknown is the relative importance of these by country.

Creative policy-making, tailored to individual circumstances, may be helpful in reducing this trade-off. This can be seen in the case of the minimum wage. A just wage has long been a central feature in Christian thought (e.g., James 5:5). The Compendium continues this: "Remuneration is the most important means for achieving justice in work relationships" (302), and reiterating the argument that free contractual agreement over wages is not enough to guarantee justice and that pay "must not be below the level of subsistence" (302). Thus a common expression of this requirement of justice and charity was the call for some form of minimum compensation. Moreover, a minimum wage may be appropriate in some cases, especially when workers have limited mobility or little choice of employment (e.g., mill-towns in the 1800s, or many rural areas around the world today).

On the other hand, labor markets in developed countries are generally sufficiently competitive that such laws will tend to cause some unemployment, and it is the least skilled, most marginal workers who are most likely to be rendered unemployed as a result. For many such workers, low-wage jobs are the first op-
portunity to obtain the work experience which builds the human capital that over
time will improve their circumstances. Moreover, the more substantially the
minimum is set above the market wage, the greater the impact.93 In addition,
minimum wages are often poorly targeted means of assistance. In general, only a
small fraction of minimum wage recipients are sole earners in households. Higher minimum wages provide greater assistance to secondary workers
(spouses, children) in non-poor households, often benefiting them while displac-
ing sole earner heads of poor households.94 They even appear to be regressive
because they disproportionately raise prices for low income families generally,
while most of the increased wage goes to families who are not poor.95 As Klay
and Lunn,96 argue, the combination of worker flexibility, need for training, fam-
ily circumstances (including presence of other workers), life cycle effects, and
so on, all imply that it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of just remunera-
tion over a lifetime rather than at any given moment. Regarding the “just remunera-
tion” idea from Quadragesimo Anno, Worland97 observes that requiring a mini-
umum wage places too much responsibility on firms alone and that instead Pius
XI put the burden on all actors in society to raise the productivity of workers so
that they may earn an adequate amount. For these reasons many economists are
wary of minimum wages as being an effective means for helping the working
poor.98

A more promising approach is wage subsidies such as the Earned Income
Tax Credit in the United States.99 These provide targeted aid to people with low
earnings, based upon need (e.g., family size) without the labor market distor-
tions of other programs. The Compendium recognizes the need for this type of
approach by stating: “Authentic economic well-being is pursued also by means ...
which, taking general conditions into account, look at the merit as well as at
the need of each citizen” (303).

Other pro-labor policies have similar problems: raising overall compensa-
tion for labor without increasing worker productivity reduces the demand for
labor and raises the search time for workers and firms. Both increase unem-
ployment.100 More generous unemployment compensation (greater benefits paid
out for longer periods of time) lowers the opportunity cost of searching for work
and thus results in workers taking longer to look for employment.101 Policies
restricting dismissal induce firms to take more time before hiring workers. Cen-
tralized wage negotiations may raise compensation for low-skill workers above
their productivity, but this will induce firms to hire fewer low-skill workers. In
all these cases, greater worker protection inevitably results to some degree in
increased unemployment.

Can the same benefits be obtained at lower cost, personal and social? This
issue lies at the heart of current research on labor markets and the reform of so-
cial insurance programs generally. For example, Denmark has obtained low un-
employment by a combination of flexible hiring and firing policies, in conjunc-
tion with unemployment compensation which is generous but very short-lived,
and extensive worker retraining and relocation opportunities. While expensive,
it has maintained unemployment rates closer to those of the United States. An-
other promising option (applicable to retirement, medical, and unemployment insurance alike) is restructuring the way in which unemployment is funded: providing workers with set amounts of funds directly to their own accounts, rather than to a general insurance pool. Constructed this way, employees spend their own money rather than that of the insurance pool. They are still covered, since funds go to their own account, but remain unemployed at their own expense, thus giving greater incentive to search more effectively. Such policies may be able to achieve worker protection without the inefficiencies that have plagued current programs. Finally, greater development of early human capital may be more effective than programs to make up for lower productivity later.

While the twentieth century may have involved the question of what system to use, the answer to this question allows the twenty-first century to focus more on the particular policies within the system. As Compendium sections 288 and 320 observe, this situation places great responsibility on researchers to resolve these questions. For now, it appears that creating the proper economic environment is the best means to raise material well-being and reduce unemployment. At the micro level, the trade-off between access to employment and labor protection policies, the exact degree of which may be uncertain or vary from country to country, demands great prudence in policy making at all levels. It also underscores the importance of human capital development, that is, of understanding the subjective dimension of work rather than explicit labor market policies.

Conclusion: The New Things of Work Today

Overall, the Compendium presents teachings urgently needed for the “new things” of work today. In the past century, the social teachings have tried to “link industriousness as a virtue with the social order of work, which will enable man to become, in work, “more a human being”” (Laborem Exercens 9), that is, to balance the creation of a humane work environment and adequate pay with a system that operated efficiently enough to provide the opportunity for work and to improve compensation. These teachings have sought to combine the eternal wisdom regarding the role of human activity and the requirements of justice and love with the concrete circumstances and economic and political knowledge of the time. This was a difficult balance when even those disciplines were unsettled as to what systems, never mind policies, would work best.

Throughout the twentieth century, the social teachings responded to a century of industrialization, increasing firm concentration, and worker/business tensions by calling for provisions to protect workers—just compensation, improved working conditions, and better treatment of workers including their participation in ownership and decision-making—while retaining scope for economic freedom to trade and for private property rather than collective ownership. As the twentieth century concluded, workers in market economies
had experienced great improvements in working conditions, compensation, and material welfare. The shift from industrial to service economies and the rising importance of human capital improved worker power and the relations between companies and employees, giving workers greater scope for personal initiative, that is, to see themselves as the subject of their work. This was especially true when compared to workers in communist countries. As time progressed, this experience was repeated for developing countries, as those with greater economic freedom and openness to trade also grew faster. On the other hand, understanding of the meaning of work gradually eroded with the rise of materialist and utilitarian ideas in both communist and capitalist countries.

Thus the Compendium stresses perhaps the two greatest issues facing labor today: globalization and meaning. Given the experience of such countries as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan, the Compendium appears guardedly optimistic on the first. Connecting to the global economy offers poor countries the best chance for assisting their development as well as for developing the realization of the universality of mankind and the awareness of the needs of those in the entire human family, anywhere in the world (Centesimus Annus 42). Nonetheless, this development implies continued concern for the basic issues of justice and rights in work that have been part of Biblical reflection on economic activity since Moses and the prophets, and has concerned the social encyclicals since Rerum Novarum.

The material success of those who have taken the market path, however, implies that economic efficiency and improved lives for workers are not incompatible, but are positively linked. However, that is only in the material, objective dimension. This misses the most important part of work: not earnings to fund consumption, but development of the person in the subjective dimension of work. Economic policy and technological change have addressed the objective dimensions and expanded opportunity for the subjective dimension, but they cannot provide meaning or virtue in themselves. The greater problem today and in the future is that many people neither perceive work as vocation nor look on it as an opportunity for growth in virtue. As a result, workers do not live their work as a spiritual activity as fully as they could, and this is insufficiently considered by either workers or businesses in designing work. Fogel writes that the greatest need today is the spiritual capital by which people can not only earn greater income, but which will also assist them in seeking meaning in what they do. The Compendium reflects a similar assessment. What is needed is renewed emphasis on the meaning of work in the context of what it means to be human at all, because “[i]f this awareness is lacking, or if one chooses not to recognize this truth, work loses its truest and most profound meaning” (271). John Paul II’s emphasis on the subjective dimension helped demonstrate the poverty of the communist vision of the work of the human person. Perhaps the Compendium’s similar emphasis may do the same for capitalism today.
Notes

1. The author thanks Richard Brocato, Maria Ferreyra, Samuel Gregg, P.J. Hill, Joshua Hochschild, Joseph Kaboski, Deborah Savage, and Fr. Robert Zylla for their helpful comments and suggestions.


6. Parenthetical numerical references without further specification cite paragraphs of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church throughout.


10. Fogel, Fourth, 205.


12. Fogel, Fourth, 144.


15. Fogel, Fourth, 170.


18. Fogel, Fourth, 144.


22. Including household work. For more on home production and informal work, see John Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey, Time for Life: The Surprising Ways Americans Use Their Time, (State College, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Friedrich Schneider and Dominik Henste, “Shadow Economies: Sizes, Causes, and Consequences,”
The Subjective Dimension of Work


32. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens,* 3: AAS 73 (1981), 584. [This note is reproduced from the *Compendium.*]
41. Michel Camdessus, “Globalization, Subjective Dimensions of Work, and the “World Social Order,” presented at Work as Key to the Social Question: The Great So-


47. Centesimus Annus 34.


49. Alford and Naughton, Managing as if Faith Mattered.


52. Smith, Wealth of Nations, Book 5, Chapter 3, article 2.


54. Centesimus Annus 34.

55. Centesimus Annus 41, Gregg, Challenging, 166.

56. Centesimus Annus 41.

57. Centesimus Annus 41.

58. Cf. John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (6 March 1999), 2: L’Osservatore Romano, English edition, 17 March 1999, p. 3. [This note is reproduced from the Compendium.]

59. Centesimus Annus 41.


66. Fogel, Fourth, 220; and Mary Corcoran, “Mobility, Persistence, and the Consequences of Poverty for Children.”

67. This is often referred to as skill-biased technical change. See, for example, Daron Acemoglu, “Technical Change, Inequality, and the Labor Market,” Journal of Econometric Literature 40, no. 1 (March 2002): 7-72; Lawrence Katz and David Autor, “Changes in the Wage Structure and Earnings Inequality,” Pp. 1463-1555, in Handbook of Labor Economics, Vol. 3A, ed. Orley Ashenfelter and David Card (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1999). I do not want to minimize the fact that the past four decades have involved a greater shift to reward human capital and this has contributed to rising wage, and thus income, inequality. Nonetheless, Fogel’s points still hold. Income is not the only measure of inequality: for example by biomedical measures inequality has continued to fall, and other aspects besides technology (for example, personal choices regarding family and work hours) have also contributed to this. Most importantly, income and poverty were vastly worse in the past, and the current circumstances involve a rising inequality because those at the top earn more, rather than those at the bottom dropping further down substantially to the “deplorable” conditions of the nineteenth century. Stagnation of income for the average household below poverty would still leave them with an income in the top 10 percent of the 1890s.


73. Fogel, *Fourth*, 220.
74. Fogel, *Fourth*, 236.
84. *Centesimus Annus* 48.
88. Gersemann, 178.
89. Gersemann, 51.
92. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter Rerum Novarum: Acta Leonis XIII, 11 (1892), 131. [This note is reproduced from the Compendium.]
100. Siebert, “Labor Markets.”
103. Fogel, Fourth, 236.
Introduction

Catholic social thought consists of the application of a Gospel perspective to social life. While the modern tradition started in 1891 with Pope Leo XIII and Rerum Novarum, from the very beginning of Christianity we find the Church looking at economic, political, and social issues and problems in light of the Gospels, criticizing current practices and presenting principles by which Christians are called to live. Catholic social thought is not an alternative economic theory in the modern sense, as it is not limited to explaining how a specific or theoretical economy or society solves the universal economic problem (how societies provide for their material reproduction). Yet Catholic social thought does provide the “normative” function we find in all economic and social theories in that it presents a “vision” of a just economy and the basic guidelines of how economic justice can be obtained. Thus Catholic social thought presents the philosophical and theological foundations upon which a Christian understanding of social and economic life can be constructed. This promotes the Catholic social tradition’s ultimate purpose, to provide guidelines and advice on how one can better follow Jesus.

While it is useful to compare and contrast Catholic social thought with other social theories, we should be aware that Catholic social thought often asks dif-
different questions and uses different yardsticks to make its evaluations. Yes, there is often considerable overlap—for example, Catholic social thought’s call for the need to promote the common good is similar to the concern of most social theories with the well-being of the community in general—nevertheless we must keep in mind that the terms used in Catholic social thought always have a deeper meaning than their secular counterparts. This deeper meaning comes from the fact that the ultimate end in Catholic social thought is union with God while the ends of secular theories are, for Catholic social thought, always intermediate ends which must be evaluated from the perspective of the final end of humanity. The final end of Catholic social thought is also the beginning. Our call to union with God means that

God speaks to every reality. Whatever we are looking at whether it is an issue such as world hunger ... or an economic system such as Capitalism, God does have something to say to that reality. Our world either is or is not in accord with God’s ideal for it. Consequently it is important for us to come to know what God is saying to whatever reality we are examining. God speaks to these issues or situations in various ways: through the Bible, through the teachings of His Church, through the signs of the times and through the prophets who interpret those signs.¹

The job of the Christian social scientist is thus to unite what God has to say about social life with the reality of how we are actually living, with the hope of shedding light on how we can move from the actual to the ideal.

Chapter 7 of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church² presents in summary form what Catholic social thought has to say about the economic aspects of social life. It cannot be read in isolation from the rest of the book since what the Church teaches about economic life is based on Christian anthropology and the Catholic notion of the common good. While the Christian perspective often shares terms with secular theories, there is often a radical divide that can be overlooked if one were to take passages and terms from the Catholic social thought tradition and insert them into secular theories. This is particularly true in the case of neoclassical economic theory (the dominant school in modern economics, though certainly not the only school). My purpose will be to compare the ideas presented in the Compendium with neoclassical economic theory to explain why Catholic social thought so often disagrees with the views of modern economists.

There are two issues that must be addressed at the outset in any comparison of Catholic social thought with neoclassical economic theory: first, Catholic social thought is an explicitly “normative” approach to looking at the economy and economic actions, whereas neoclassical economic theory claims that its approach is “positive” and not “normative” and that any “scientific” or “rigorous” attempt to understand the economy needs to be “positive” as they understand the term;
second, all differences between how Catholic social thought and neoclassical economic theory view economic life originate in their differing anthropologies.

**Catholic Social Thought and Neoclassical Economics as Normative Systems**

Just about every textbook in economics makes the distinction between “positive” and “normative” economics. “Positive” economics, we are told, deals with “is” statements, that is, simple statements of fact, or the economy as we observe it. “Normative” economics is about “ought” statements, the economy as we think it should be. According to most neoclassical economists, economic theory is in the realm of “positive” economics, whereas economic policy is in the “normative” realm. The distinction between positive and normative is based on the idea that a “scientific” approach to economics on par with the natural sciences needs to be free of value judgments and ideologies. This distinction is carried forward to also mean that market outcomes are morally neutral, the result of the natural laws of the market, and thus outside the realm of moral evaluation. At one time the positive/normative dichotomy was a distinction between means and ends; choosing ends was “normative,” yet choosing means was up to the market (i.e., “positive”). Eventually this distinction became a defense of any market outcome, as such outcomes were the result of natural forces. Thus the market became both means and end. Following this logic, there was no room for morality in the economy, much less for theology.

Catholic social thought completely rejects the notion that economic activity ceases to be moral activity. The economy is a series of human actions and not a mechanical system, and all human actions, whether they are economic or not, are moral actions. Yet the fallacy of the attempt to eliminate morality from economics is the claim that there is, or can be, a “positive” economics—economic actions and outcomes that are free of values and value judgments. This claim is completely false. Neoclassical economic theory, like all economic theory, is necessarily based on a set of values and value judgments and cannot be value neutral. Economic theory is not made up of “is” statements. In fact, all economic statements are, at some level, based on values and value judgments, and thus are at root normative, for all observations are based on perspectives (a point of view) from which to observe. The statement “the rate of unemployment today is 5 percent” might look value neutral, yet it is based on two important value judgments: (1) something called unemployment needs to be defined; and (2) unemployment needs to be measured and observed. Selecting something for conceptualization, observation, and measurement are value-laden activities. Unemployment is not a natural fact, not something that we observe in nature which is independent of how we conceive it (like the stars). It is a socially constructed concept and reality. We have to make the discretionary distinction be-
tween what is unemployment and what is not unemployment, and that requires value judgments, and thus our concept of unemployment is value laden. Thus the Church's effort to bring Christian values into discussions of economic activity is perfectly legitimate because all economic activity, and every explanation of that activity, is based on values and value judgments. Catholic social thought is merely more open and explicit about its underlying value premises than neoclassical economic theory.

Two Views of the Nature of the Human Person

Rational Economic Man

The question "What is human nature?" is the starting point for all social theory, including economic theory. The view of human nature in neoclassical economic theory is summed up in the term "rational economic actor." Economic theory conceives of human nature in utilitarian terms, wherein the individual is, or should be if one is to act rationally, a utility maximizer, driven solely by narrow economic self-interest. The actor is chained, as Jeremy Bentham has so vividly described, to the twin pillars of pleasure (utility) and pain (disutility). "Just" outcomes in neoclassical economics need to be based on a rational calculation of costs and benefits, with the criterion of rationality being measured either in utility (theoretically) or in dollars and cents (in actual practice). All human action is reduced to a calculus of costs and benefits, with all decisions being made by autonomous economic actors. Interpersonal comparisons are strictly excluded from this analysis. Individuals would only consider their own autonomous preferences and their initial endowments (what they have to trade). There are no social or cultural influences allowed because of the strict methodological individualism adopted by economists. It forces one to exclude historical and social context from economic analysis, for these are influences that cannot be reduced to the level of the individual.

This narrow and mechanical view of the human person thus allows neoclassical economic theory to create deterministic models of human activity that generate economic order (equilibrium), which allows economists to use mathematical formalism as the primary language of economic analysis.

Maximization provides the moving force of economics. It asserts that any unit of the system will move towards an equilibrium position, as a consequence of universal efforts to maximize utility or returns. Maximization is a general basic law that applies to the elementary units and, by the rules of composition, to larger and more complicated collections of those units.
Economists do not use the “rational economic actor” as a mere ideal type to compare actual behavior; it is very much a normative criterion. Economic order and optimality require that individuals act as rational maximizers. Often the theory switches planes, and rationality becomes whatever the individual economic unit chooses (regardless of economic gain or loss). Here the inherent tautology is exposed. Economic actors are rational because the choices they make are rational, and their choices are rational because the actors make them. The “rational economic actor” ideal type is also important for ideological reasons in that it provides the ultimate support of free market capitalism (it supports the final end or ultimate value of neoclassical economic theory—consuming utility through market exchange).

It is interesting to note that the rational economic actor has no free-will. This is because rationality presupposes that there is one choice that best maximizes the individual’s self-interest (given a set of prices, preferences, and initial endowments), that is their consumption of utility. The choice isn’t a choice at all; it is merely the working out of a mathematical equation. Thus, in one of the great ironies of intellectual history, the theory of free markets based on free choice requires that the individuals who make up the economy and society display deterministic behavior, that is have no freedom to choose. If one wants to show that a market economy produces optimal equilibrium outcomes, then one has to exclude human choice.5

Furthermore, the only values that matter in this analysis are market values (which are the result of the “choices” rational economic actors have made). Gross Domestic Product is used to measure the well-being of society because it includes all transactions at their market prices, and these transactions (consumptions of utility) are all that really matter. Only the material aspect of human activity is considered in this analysis; the social and spiritual aspect of the human person is not allowed to enter the discussion. We would not want to suggest that economic actors do not attempt to estimate the costs and benefits of their economic actions, or that they do not attempt to increase their gains and reduce their losses. What is objectionable is the idea that humans can make choices that actually promote their own interests without considering non-economic factors, and without considering how their choices will affect others. We can add to this the impossibility of such an economy actually working, for it assumes that economic actors make their calculations with perfect information (which is necessary for utility maximization) in perfectly competitive markets. Yet information is always imperfect, which is why we rely so heavily on social and historical context in making our decisions, and markets are not perfectly competitive, which is why there is a necessary role of command in the economy (government regulation and intervention) and economic activity is always working with others, thus a concern for others is a necessary economic consideration. While some individuals might fit the “rational economic actor” model, society’s existence is based on the fact that most do not.
Christian Anthropology

The most revolutionary aspect of Catholic social thought (in terms of its contribution to social theory) is its conception of the human person. Christian anthropology asserts that: (1) all persons have dignity and thus have rights; (2) all persons must live in community and thus have responsibilities; (3) all persons have reason and free will, and thus are moral agents who are responsible for their actions; (4) all persons are created by God, have a natural longing for God, and thus our ultimate end (our ultimate happiness) is union with God. All four of these attributes are derived from the fact that we are created by God, and that we are created in God’s likeness and image. As Pope John Paul II stated:

The dignity of the human person is a transcendent value, always recognized as such by those who sincerely search for the truth. Indeed, the whole of human history should be interpreted in the light of this certainty. Every person, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26-28), is therefore radically oriented towards the Creator, and is constantly in relationship with those possessed of the same dignity. To promote the good of the individual is thus to serve the common good, which is the point where rights and duties converge and reinforce one another.

The Christian view of the human person emphasizes that each person is unique and has rights based on his or her humanity, but also that humans have a social nature, that is, that their nature requires them to live in society. At one level this is recognition of the interdependence humans have, but it goes much deeper than this. As Jacques Maritain noted, the “person requires membership in a society in virtue both of its dignity and its needs.” This includes the basic physical needs (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) but also social needs (the companionship of others). But of equal importance is the role that life in community provides for character development and the other characteristics necessary to promote moral development. Pope John Paul II developed Maritain’s insights to show that the development of the human person, and especially the self-actualization of the person, requires life in community. According to John Paul II (as Karol Wojtyla), solidarity is grounded in the processes by which a person seeks self-actualization (highest level of happiness) through working “jointly with others,” and that we become our most authentic selves when we give ourselves, in love, to others. Participation is fundamental to the development of the self, and requires working with others. John Paul II criticized “individualistic” systems, such as neoclassical economic theory, because they looked at the person as existing in opposition to others.

Individualism accomplishes this isolating the self ... to itself and to its own good, that is, a good that exists in isolation from the good of the others and from the common good. In this system, the good of the individual has the quality of being opposed to every other individual and his good. This kind of indi-
individualism is based on self-preservation and is always on the defensive, and is also defective. Acting and existing jointly with others is, according to this individualism, an imposed necessity to which an individual has to submit. But there is no positive aspect in this necessity. It does not serve the development of his individuality. “The others” are for the individual only a source of limitations and may even be opponents and create polarizations.

We achieve our development as mature persons only through participation in community, and we achieve our happiness only through participation in community. It is also just as true that our economic actions are only possible in community, and it is to the success of the community that we owe our own individual success. Our individual well-being is a function of the community’s well-being. It is ironic that utilitarian ethics and economics, which was supposed to be based on the greatest happiness of the greatest number, starts off with an understanding of the human person as a mere individual, separate from the community. The individual is in fact in opposition to the other members of the community, whose main form of social interaction is to bargain with others with the goal of gaining the most and giving up the least. This is as sure a path to unhappiness as one could imagine. This view of the human person fails to lead to a view of the common good that is grounded in authentic human happiness and development, and is not reduced to solely materialist terms. As David Hollenbach has said,

The common good is a social reality in which all persons should share through their participation in it. It is not simply the arithmetic aggregate of individual goods suggested by the utilitarian formula “the greatest good for the greatest number.” In a utilitarian understanding, increased aggregate social good (e.g., gross national product) is compatible with the exclusion of some persons from participation in it. Emphasis on the participation of all in the common good is particularly important.

Lastly, Christian anthropology recognizes that humans have a natural desire for the infinite, and that their highest level of happiness is only found in God. This desire for God comes from being created by God; it is part of the purpose of our creation. In many ways the neoclassical economic idea of unlimited desires is really a distortion of the human desire for the unlimited.

Neoclassical economic theory views only the material aspect of the human person, leaving out the spiritual. Yet this is not merely leaving out faith and religion, for it is from the spiritual aspect of the person that we get culture and creativity, language and the arts; in fact most of what we list under the heading of civilization comes from human efforts above and beyond their animal nature. Leaving out historical and social context greatly weakens neoclassical economic theories’ explanatory power, making it, in most cases, merely an ideology. Including the whole person, which means including historical and social context, is a step toward more realistic and applicable economic analysis. Thus, while this is not its main purpose, Catholic social thought promotes a more realistic and em-
pirically valid understanding of the economy, perfectly in line with Leo XIII's pronouncement: "Nothing is more useful than to look upon the world as it really is, and at the same time to seek elsewhere . . . for the solace to its troubles" (Rerum Novarum 18).

Biblical Aspects

It is important to note that the Catholic social tradition, both broadly defined (which is 2,000 years old), as well as the modern contributions (consisting of papal encyclicals and other official documents), has always been based on faith and reason. That is to say, it explicitly builds on the revealed truths from the Bible as well as what human reason can contribute to our understanding of social life. It is a continuation of St. Thomas Aquinas' view that discovery of the natural law is a step in the direction of the divine law. The chapters in part 2 of the Compendium (chapters 6 through 11) start off by stating the Biblical foundations of the Church's social teachings, thus emphasizing its grounding in the "word of God." Yet the significance of the Biblical Aspects sections is not merely to link Catholic social thought to its foundations, but it is also to highlight that Catholic social thought views the economy through a Gospel perspective. Thus the definitions of many of the key terms in economics (in this chapter "wealth" and "poverty") are fundamentally different from how modern economists define them. Both of these terms, in Catholic social thought, are understood in terms of the Christian understanding of the human person, which, as we saw above, contrasts greatly with how economic orthodoxy views human nature.

Chapter 7 rightly starts off with a discussion of "wealth," since wealth is a critical term for understanding the economy and for understanding the difference between a Christian understanding of the economy and modern economic orthodoxy. It is worth noting that

Wealth is a term overflowing with contradictions. One the one hand, it holds out the promise of abundance, while on the other hand its actualization (for individuals) is tied to a reality of scarcity. Furthermore, while it is linked to happiness and well-being on the one side, after a minimum level is acquired it bears very little correlation to either happiness or well-being.11

How one defines and conceptualizes wealth greatly determines how one views economic life. Catholic social thought understands wealth in relation to God's promise of abundance. Neoclassical economic theory, in contrast, understands wealth in terms of scarcity. The "wealth of nations" God promises in Isaiah 65 is a reward for living according to God's law (living in solidarity with others, that is sharing economic goods, and self control in one's desires), while the "wealth of individuals" in neoclassical economics comes from violating God's law, that is from excluding others from the benefits of production and from unlimited de-
sires. As one of the three founders of the marginal utility theory of value (which is the core idea of neoclassical economics) noted: "if there were a society where all goods were available in amounts exceeding the requirements for them, there would be no economic goods nor any 'wealth.'"12

Neoclassical economic theory defines wealth as any asset that yields an income (purchasing power) or can be exchanged for income. It is almost completely neutral as to how wealth is created, the sole exception being that it must be the result of voluntary exchange (no involuntary transfers of private property). All aspects as to the creation, distribution, or use of wealth, beyond following the laws that protect private property, are outside its scope. A Christian perspective on wealth could never accept such limitations. Catholic social thought asserts that the creation, distribution, and use of wealth are all moral acts and thus are subject to moral analysis. Specifically, Catholic social thought asserts that the creation of wealth must not be at the expense of the poor and marginalized, nor can it be the result of an artificial creation of scarcity, the shifting of costs, or other forms of exploitation. Quite often wealth is created by either reducing supply, artificially increasing demand, or by privatizing what was public. To give an example from history, the Reformation and Enclosures created a massive amount of private wealth, while at the same time lowering the average standard of living.13 The redistribution of land promoted by each entailed stealing land from the Church which had been used, at least partly, for the benefit of the poor, and giving the land to the already affluent, who then further enriched themselves. Thus massive wealth and poverty were simultaneously created. This ancient method of wealth creation at the expense of the poor is a common theme in the Old Testament, as Gustavo Gutiérrez has noted.14

The prophets condemn every kind of abuse, every form of keeping the poor in poverty or of creating new poor. They are not merely allusions to situations; the finger is pointed at those who are to blame. Fraudulent commerce and exploitation are condemned (Hosea 12:8; Amos 8:5; Micah 6:10-11; Isaiah 3:14; Jeremiah 5:27; 6:12), as well as the hoarding of lands (Micah 2:1-3; Ezekiel 22:29; Habakkuk 2:5-6), dishonest courts (Amos 5:7; Jeremiah 22:13-17; Micah 3:9-11; Isaiah 5:23; 10:1-2), the violence of the ruling class (2 Kings 23:30, 35; Amos 4:1; Micah 3:1-2; 6:12; Jeremiah 22:13-17), slavery (Nehemiah 5:1-5; Amos 2:6; 8:6), unjust taxes (Amos 4:1; 5:11-12), and unjust functionaries (Amos 5:7; Jeremiah 5:28).

There are numerous examples of these practices, often carried out as a matter of public policy, continuing in our own times. One example is the largesse in public money that goes to the already rich through subsidies, tax cuts, or other preferential treatments (in the United States of America the federal government subsidizes the home ownership of the wealthy much more than it funds programs for the homeless). Laws and regulations like limited liability also shift risk (and thus costs) away from the large corporations and onto consumers, workers, and taxpayers. Thus many unjust practices are still being used to create wealth.
Moreover, the distribution of wealth has to follow the principle of the universal destination of goods: "God destined the earth and all that it contains for the use of all people and peoples. Furthermore, the right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone" (Gaudium et Spes 69). This recognizes that the distribution of wealth has both economic and ethical implications. Many economists have noted the damaging impact of income and wealth inequalities. We should note that the most important economist of the twentieth century, John Maynard Keynes, also found such inequalities harmful for the economy: "The outstanding faults of the economic society in which we live are its failure to provide for full employment and its arbitrary and inequitable distribution of wealth and incomes." Furthermore the ethical questions raised by wealth and income inequality get to the heart of exploitation and participation. "Excessive economic and social inequalities within the one human family, between individuals or between peoples, give rise to scandal, and are contrary to social justice, to equity, and to the dignity of the human person, as well as to peace within society and at the international level" (Gaudium et Spes 29).

Since Catholic social thought recognizes the spiritual aspect of human nature it is able to offer a critique and evaluation of the use of wealth and speak out against consumerism and other forms of wealth worship. Given the rise in the preaching of the gospel of prosperity (which fills the airways on Sunday mornings) it is important to note that God's promise of abundance does not mean a Gucci handbag on every arm and a SUV in every driveway. As St. John Chrysostom argued, "if we are to tell the truth, the rich man is not the one who has collected many possessions but the one who needs few possessions; and the poor man is not the one who has no possessions but the one who has many desires." John Paul II often noted that at the root of many of the problems in the rich countries is the prevalence of the desire to have over the desire to be. We are warned about worshipping wealth numerous times in both the Old and New Testaments. To give just one example, in Ecclesiastes 5:10-13 we are told:

Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them? The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep. I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner.

**Morality and the Economy**

The rejection of the moral aspects of economic activity often shows up in what
economists call the "Equity or Equality/Efficiency Trade-Off." In his book *Equality and Efficiency: The Big Trade-Off,* Arthur Okun claimed that efforts to increase equality necessarily cause market inefficiencies. He argued that redistributing income to achieve greater equality is like transporting water from one area to another in buckets; inevitably some water will spill out of the bucket during the transfer. His basic argument is that markets produce efficient outcomes through sending accurate price signals, which necessarily means that incomes will be unequal. Efforts to redistribute income distort market signals and thus cause economic inefficiencies. Ironically Okun wrote his book to argue that the United States economy was wealthy enough to afford the small loss in economic efficiency to achieve the higher goal of equality, but his theory has been used to argue against any effort to lessen income inequality. Better, we are told, to increase the size of the economic pie than change the size of the slices. However, there are two fundamental faults in Okun’s argument, one empirical and one theological. The empirical fault is that greater efficiency (as economists measure it in terms of economic growth) can often be achieved through redistribution and other efforts to promote equality. Free public education has done more to promote equality than any other equality-promoting policy, and it has also done more to promote economic growth than anything else governments have done (after the provision of security). Furthermore, during the period of the development of the welfare state, which was designed to create greater equality, there were faster levels of economic growth than at any other time period in human history. From 1945 to 1973 the advanced capitalist economies all achieved greater levels of economic growth and all had falling levels of inequality, and the latter play a strong role in promoting the former. The reason that Okun’s theory cannot so easily be applied to the real economy is the fact that many so-called market prices are not the result simply of the forces of supply and demand, reflecting relative scarcity. They are administered prices due to the market power of large corporations and other market failures. Government interventions into prices can often lead to more accurate pricing (that is, prices that better reflect the total social costs and benefits of a good or service).

The theological problem with Okun’s theory is that its definitions of equality and efficiency are based on the "rational economic actor" model. This, as we have seen, is highly problematic. From a Christian perspective efficiency must be understood in terms of promoting the development of persons (the common good) and not merely in terms of increased market transactions. A Christian perspective would note that there are many activities that promote increasing economic transactions (such as divorce, crime, and disease) but which do not promote human happiness and development. The fact that something is profitable does not mean that it is right or good. Furthermore, a Christian notion of the concept of equality could not be limited to income differences. As section II of chapter 12 of the *Compendium* correctly points out (564), participation is the way we promote human development, and efficient outcomes are ones that maximize participation. Moreover, as poverty and inequality are caused by ex-
clusion, participation is the main antidote for these two economic ailments (342). The central role of participation, stemming from a Christian view of the human person, places man at the center of the economy. "For man is the source, the center, and the purpose of all economic and social life" (Gaudium et Spes 63; Compendium 331). Thus moral economic activity needs to lead to the participation of all so that it can promote the human development of all.

Catholic social thought thus gives us a different yardstick with which to evaluate existing economic structures and institutions. It is worth remembering that the Catholic social thought tradition, broadly considered, has been around for 2,000 years and capitalism, as a social and economic system, for a little over 200 years. What is important, from a Christian perspective, is whether economic practices and institutions promote Christian living and a move toward God or whether they retard it. Pope John Paul II's often quoted comment on capitalism is frequently misunderstood because it is seen through the eyes of economics and not theology.

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 affirmation, even though it would perhaps be more appropriate to speak of a "business economy," "market economy" or simply "free economy." 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. (Centesimus Annus 42)

Clearly it is possible that the freedom inherent within a "capitalist" economic structure can allow for virtuous behavior and promote human development and movement toward God, and we should never forget the possibilities of this freedom. Yet the reality is that often it does not promote such behavior. The question, which Marxists and libertarians almost always fail to see, is not who owns the property, but whether it is being used to promote the common good. While ownership often does have an impact on this issue, more important are the values of the individuals who are directing the use of the property. We should remember the Polish joke about the difference between capitalism and communism: Under capitalism you have one person exploiting another person, whereas under communism it's the exact opposite. For market activity to promote authentic human development it needs to be regulated by values that come from outside the market (just as state activity cannot be driven by the logic of state power). The market promotes hedonistic values that lead economic actors to promote their own interests at the expense of the common good. The selfishness promoted by an unchecked logic of the marketplace causes a problem of sustainabil-
ity for market economies (as selfish behavior causes high transaction costs) as well as being a significant barrier to union with God.

**Private Initiative and Business Initiative**

Starting with a view of the human person that emphasizes the authentic development of the whole person and of all people, it is natural that the right of participation, of being able to work with others toward the common good, is a central principle of Catholic social thought. It is in this light that we need to consider what is said about the right to economic initiative. "Everyone has the right to economic initiative; everyone should make legitimate use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all, and to harvest the just fruits of his labor" (Compendium 336, quoting the Catechism of the Catholic Church 2429). Economists have often recognized the right to economic initiative, especially Adam Smith, but their understanding of this right is based on the needs of the market and the material needs of the person. In Catholic social thought the right to economic initiative is based on the nature of the human person and the reality that we grow as persons only through social participation. This is an essential aspect of the common good, the conditions that best promote the development of persons.

This view of the centrality of the person informs how Catholic social thought views the nature and purpose of business. The debate in business ethics is often limited to whether the business enterprise should be managed for the benefit of the shareholders (the legal owners of the corporation) or for a wider circle of those with an interest in the success of the firm, called stakeholders (owners, managers, workers, customers, and the communities in which the firm does business are the typical list of stakeholders presented). The Shareholder Model is based on the "rational economic actor" model of human nature mentioned above. It reduces all economic actors to "rational maximizers" and assumes that the "invisible hand" of the market will guide their self-interested actions toward the common good of maximum production and profitability. Because the "invisible hand" of competition requires that all economic actions be rational (maximize profits) to ensure efficiency, any action that does not pursue this end retards the efficiency of the firm and the economy. Thus when Milton Friedman asserted famously that the social responsibility of business was to maximize profits he said this in the context of Adam Smith's theory of the "invisible hand."

In effect, Friedman was arguing that managers really have no choice but to maximize profits, because firms that do not maximize profits are purposefully inefficient and will be eliminated by the "creative destruction" of market competition. The Shareholder Model is not really a model of business ethical decision making since it assumes (requires) a competitive environment that forces manag-
ers, in the long run, to act in a profit-maximizing manner. Thus they are not really seen as moral actors. The weakness in the Shareholder Model is its assumption that businesses compete in perfectly competitive markets, and thus managers have no real discretion. The reality is that they do have discretion (though not unlimited)—they do make choices and thus are moral actors. Furthermore, the long recognized separation of control and ownership within large corporations (and the subsequent Agency issues it raises) further highlights the need for moral discernment in the decisions of business managers. Thus the Compendium argues that “[a] business' objective must be met in economic terms and according to economic criteria, but the authentic values that bring about the concrete development of the person and society must not be neglected” (338). The Compendium is clearly arguing for a move away from the Shareholder Model.

As noted, the most common alternative to the Shareholder Model is the Stakeholder Model. The development of the Shareholder Model is a move toward realism, as it highlights the fact that businesses must negotiate with numerous Stakeholders in order to achieve both the business' and their many collaborators' common goals. Yet, the Stakeholder Model still suffers from an overly narrow view of the human person (it merely includes more self-interested individuals in the decision-making process). As Helen Alford, O.P., and Michael Naughton note in their seminal book on this issue, Managing as if Faith Mattered, businesses are communities made up of persons, and thus their goals need to be based on the nature of the human person, which includes, as we noted, a desire for unity with God. Alford and Naughton, following a long history in the Catholic social thought tradition, make the important distinction between foundational and excellent goods. Foundational goods are those that we need in order to pursue other goods (such as money or food). Excellent goods are ones we pursue for themselves. The pursuit of profits by the firm has to be seen as a foundational good, as it is necessary for the survival of the corporation. Yet it cannot be the final end of the business enterprise, for final ends must be excellent goods. Union with God, of course, is the most excellent good, with other goods being based on whether or not they promote this. One way this can be accomplished is in the structuring of the work environment to promote not only safe and healthy working conditions, but also healthy families and communities.23

**Economic Institutions at the Service of Humanity**

Economists often treat markets as if they were natural phenomena, yet they are fully social institutions, created and sustained by human actions. One aspect of how markets are constructed is the level of competition (how many actual or potential competitors). Adam Smith argued that the “invisible hand” of competition forced individuals and companies to do what is in the best interest of soci-
et. He viewed the market as limiting the exercise of economic power. The Compendium notes:

A truly competitive market is an effective instrument for attaining important objectives of justice: moderating the excessive profits of individual businesses, responding to consumers' demands, bringing about a more efficient use and conservation of resources, rewarding entrepreneurship and innovation, making information available so that it is really possible to compare and purchase products in an atmosphere of healthy competition. (347)

How much competition there actually is in any specific market is determined by numerous factors, many of which the state influences or controls (but many of which it does not). It is worthwhile, however, to look briefly at Smith's theory.

Smith begins with the assumption that each economic actor pursues personal self-interest.

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.

The key to Smith's belief that the self-interested actions of individuals will lead to the public's benefit is summed up in the phrase “the invisible hand.”

As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can both to employ his capital in the support of domestic industry, and so to direct that industry that its produce may be of the greatest value; every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. . . . [He] is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good.

Smith’s doctrine of the “invisible hand” is the basis of the argument that markets bring individual self-interest in line with society's interests. Yet Smith's analysis of self-interest is predicated on a view of humans who control their behavior so as not to take advantage of others. Thus Adam Smith's system is based on economic self interest restrained by morality. Smith's first book was The Theory of Moral Sentiments, in which he argues that individuals develop a basic morality that causes them to restrain their behavior so as to not act in a manner that is harmful to others. As he states in the opening paragraph.
How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. . . . The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it.

Thus individuals are not driven by self-interest alone, but by a restrained self-interest. And what is it that prompts us to go against our self love, our self interest? Smith answers

It is a stronger power, a more forcible motive, which exerts itself upon such occasions. It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct. It is he who, whenever we are about to act so as to affect the happiness of others, calls to us, with a voice capable of astonishing the most presumptuous of our passions, that we are but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it; and that when we prefer ourselves so shamefully and so blindly to others, we become the proper objects of resentment, abhorrence, and execration. . . . It is he who shows us the propriety of generosity and the deformity of injustice; the propriety of resigning the greatest interests of our own, for the yet greater interests of others, and the deformity of doing the smallest injury to another, in order to obtain the greatest benefit to ourselves.

Thus, when we read the following in the Compendium, we see, in many ways, a step back to the approach of Adam Smith.

The free market cannot be judged apart from the ends that it seeks to accomplish and from the values that it transmits on a societal level. Indeed, the market cannot find in itself the principles for its legitimization; it belongs to the consciences of individuals and to public responsibility to establish a just relationship between means and ends. The individual profit of an economic enterprise, although legitimate, must never become the sole objective.

This view is based on a view of the whole person, which Catholic social thought asserts in the strongest terms, and which is often excluded from modern neoclassical economic theory. As Pope John Paul II noted

Economic freedom is only one element of human freedom. When it becomes autonomous, when man is seen more as a producer or consumer of goods than as a subject who produces and consumes in order to live, then economic freedom loses its necessary relationship to the human person and ends up by alienating and oppressing him (Centesimus Annus 39).

The Role of the State

Catholic social thought has always understood that the market is a human institu-
tion and that it must be constrained so as to ensure that it promotes the interests of humanity. Without constraints the market quickly becomes a tool of social and economic control, used by the powerful to exploit the poor and marginalized. We have seen that two ways the market can be constrained is through intense competition and the self-control of morality. However, often concentrations of economic power are so great that more intense regulation of economic power is required. Here it becomes necessary for the state to step in. It is this rise of economic power, and the negative effects it caused, that prompted Pope Pius XI to write *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931. The recognition of the need for the state to play a role in controlling economic power is the source of the charge that Catholic social thought is “statist” and hostile to markets. We should recognize that such attacks on Catholic social thought are grounded in an ideology that worships the market and not in a Gospel perspective of economic life. It is also based on a misreading of Catholic social thought and more importantly, a complete misreading of “the signs of the times,” that is, the nature of the economic system Catholic social thought is addressing in the twentieth century. The economic power of large corporations is a fact of life. Many are more powerful than sovereign nations. To ignore their power would be bad economic analysis.

Furthermore, while Catholic social thought recognizes the need for state intervention into the economy, it also establishes principles by which this intervention will promote the common good and not itself become a source of economic power and exploitation. The principle of subsidiarity states that no social organization should take over the duties and functions of smaller organizations as long as such smaller organizations are capable of carrying out their necessary functions.

> [I]t 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. So, too, 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 by lesser and subordinate bodies. Inasmuch as every social activity should, by its very nature, prove a help to members of the body social, it should never destroy or absorb them (*Quadragesimo Anno* 79).

This principle of subsidiarity (see *Compendium* chapter 4, section 4) is based on the fundamental right and need of social participation in the development of the human person. It recognizes that there are times and situations when larger entities must act, but that the first impulse of the larger entities should be to help smaller organizations, and only when this is not possible, the larger entity must take over and ensure that necessary functions are adequately carried out.

We should note that the principle of subsidiarity should apply to the private sector as well as to the public, that is economic functions that can be carried out by smaller bodies should be supported and not taken over by larger companies.
The principle of subsidiarity supports the formation of intermediate organizations, such as cooperatives and labor unions, because it recognizes that the individual economic actor cannot successfully promote their interests without coming together with other individuals and cooperating toward a common goal. This is especially the case for workers and for small businesses that compete in markets with large corporations with considerable economic power. These intermediate bodies are the examples of the social participation that human development calls for. Furthermore, the actions of the state and of the intermediate bodies need to be in the spirit of solidarity; that is, one of their primary roles is to promote the interests and well being of the poor and marginalized, to ensure inclusion for those who are otherwise excluded.

Even the activities of consumption, saving, and investing must be seen in light of the whole person and the common good. One of Pope John Paul II’s common themes was the divide between having and being. The culture of the wealthy countries often supports the view, which is based in the view of the human person in neoclassical economic theory, that the sole purpose of human activity is the consumption of utility though market exchange. This is put crassly in the well-known bumper sticker “He who dies with the most toys wins.” All economic actions, we are reminded, are moral actions. Our consumption is a reflection of what we value, and those things have ramifications on the lives of others. This is particularly true for the affluent. Adam Smith noted that the power we have over others’ labor comes through our purchasing power. The “conspicuous consumption” of the affluent often has negative effects on the poor in that it reduces the availability of goods and services for them and it shapes the morals of the society toward hedonism and away from virtue.29 “Purchasing power must be used in the context of the moral demands of justice and solidarity, and in that of precise social responsibilities” (359).

The “New Things” in the Economic Sector

Each era calls for a reading of the “signs of the times”; that is, Catholic social thought, while being based on universal values and principles, has always recognized that applying these values and principles requires an understanding of the historical and social context of economic life. Just as St. John Chrysostom’s30 sermon “on almsgiving” begins with an analysis of the causes of the increased poverty he observed in fourth century Constantinople, so too has the modern tradition responded to new economic challenges: *Rerum Novarum* responded to the Industrial Revolution; *Quadragesimo Anno* to the Great Depression; *Pacem in Terris* to the Cold War and the threat of nuclear war; *Populorum Progressio* to the blight of the Third World; these are just some of the examples of this. At the dawn of the third millennium the new economic context that has to be addressed is globalization. While it can be argued that many of the most well-
known and discussed aspects of globalization are not very new, but mere continuations of past trends, nevertheless there is something substantially different in the "new economy."

Few institutions have a better perspective to view issues of international integration than the Catholic Church, which for two thousand years has been expanding to spread the Gospel to the peoples of all nations and continents. However, while the Church spreads the truth, globalization spreads the logic of the market as if it were the truth. Thus many inhuman and horrible actions are carried out and justified based on the argument that it is merely the workings of the market (as if that were same thing as saying that it is the result of gravity or other physical laws of nature). While increased trade and global development offer many promises, a Christian understanding of economic life can never accept the proposition that morality and ethics no longer have a role in economic actions or decision making. We need to always remember and express the fundamental truth that the benefits of globalization are always, at best, foundational goods and not excellent goods; they are means and not ends.

From a purely economic perspective the benefits of globalization are due to the increase in economic efficiencies due to expanded trade and specialization. Based on David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage, economic theory argues that as countries and regions increase their trade, and have their internal economic markets subject to the forces of international competition, there will be greater overall efficiency and a "rationalization" of world production. Yet the benefits suggested by Ricardo's theory are based both on the narrow "rational economic man" model of human nature and on the assumptions of perfect competition. It is thus imprudent to take the theoretical advantages as the basis of actual trade liberalizations, for the real world is peopled with persons who are more than mere economic actors, and the conditions of perfect competition are not those that generally prevail. Thus "free trade" has become an ideology and is seen as an "excellent good" in that it is promoted as a good in and of itself, when in fact there aren't many examples of actual free trade, and the treaties that are proposed based on the argument that they will promote free trade are, in fact, merely a changing of the current rules of international trade to the benefit of the owners of capital at the expense of workers, consumers, and citizens. A clear, and embarrassing, example of this is the fact that these trade agreements force the poor countries to open their markets yet allow the rich countries to protect the agricultural sectors of their economies (the ones that the poor countries could compete with).

All totaled, the rich countries subsidize their agricultural industries to the tune of more than $300 billion annually. These subsidies consist of payments directly to the industry as well as various methods to keep their domestic prices high and to insulate their agricultural industries from foreign competition (indirect subsidies). . . . Thus we have a situation in which, according to the World Bank's Chief Economist, the average cow in Europe is subsidized $2.50 a day
(in Japan cows are subsidized at a rate of $7.50 per day), while 75% of Africans live on less than $2 a day. The U.S. gives three times as much assistance to American cotton growers than it gives to Africa. These subsidies are so harmful because they encourage overproduction by U.S. and European agribusinesses (as they are based on production levels) causing a massive surplus that is then sold on world markets, depressing world agricultural prices and thus driving third world farmers out of business (making these countries even more dependent on international aid).³²

Thus we need to always heed the wise advice of John Paul II:

There is an economic globalization which brings some positive consequences, such as efficiency and increased production and which, with the development of economic links between the different countries, can help to bring greater unity among peoples and make possible a better service to the human family. However, if globalization is ruled merely by the laws of the market applied to suit the powerful, the consequences cannot but be negative. These are, for example, the absolutizing of the economy, unemployment, the reduction and deterioration of public services, the destruction of the environment and natural resources, the growing distance between rich and poor, unfair competition which puts the poor nations in a situation of ever increasing inferiority (Ecclesia in America, 20).

The developing world financial system is also an area where principles based on Christian ethics need to be included in our analysis. In no area has the narrow perspective on “positive” economics been given more of a free hand than in the world of finance. Given the greater mobility of money as opposed to other economic goods and resources, it is understandable why this field has adapted the “moral neutrality” perspective of the free market ideology. Yet we have seen that financial liberalization has caused great problems, usually in poor countries. What has developed is an international casino in which financial managers (working for the very wealthy) move money around the globe hoping for the highest return they can get, regardless of any long-term consequences. Given the herd mentality that almost always drives speculative markets, capital flows into and out of countries at speeds and in quantities that have no relationship to the actual economic performance or activity being invested in. The overflow of funds bids up prices, causes inflation in the pricing of capital assets, and forces the local economy to increase its speculative activity (and risk) to compete with these high expected rates of return. When these grossly exaggerated rates of return do not materialize, the money leaves the country, leaving a path of financial chaos and dislocation. All of these problems are caused by a financial system fixated on short-term profits. Often these “investments” are flowing into currencies and not into productive investments (which will increase output), increasing the speculative nature of these activities. Finance is supposed to serve the needs of the economy (where it has an important and legitimate role), yet here the op-
posite happens; the real economy (the production of goods and services to meet real needs) is forced to serve the needs of finance.

Conclusion

If there is one phrase that sums up the approach Catholic social thought takes to the topic of economic life, it would be “the economy exists to serve the needs of the people; the people do not exist to serve the needs of the economy.” By placing the person at the center of how we understand the economy, it thus becomes central to the questions we ask and to how we evaluate the answers we get. Catholic social thought consists of both theological and philosophical foundations for this person-centered approach, and its principles are designed to create a dialogue with the social sciences and business disciplines so that the best interests of persons are central to the analysis of economic issues. These principles can be, in fact are, accepted by many cultural and religious traditions besides Christianity, and they can be discussed and debated on non-theological grounds. This is what allows Catholic social thought the ability to dialogue with non-Christians. Yet we must remember, they are an essential aspect of the Christian vision, and the rejection of a person-centered approach to economic life is a rejection of the Gospel perspective. This is another way of saying Christians are called to base their business and economic lives on Christian morality, just as they are every other aspect of their lives.

Notes


5. Furthermore, one has to exclude time and learning, and one must assume individuals with perfect knowledge and an economy with no money or production. Thus the model designed to demonstrate that markets are efficient excludes all the most important characteristics of a market economy.
18. However, it certainly is not automatically the case that government intervention in the economy is for the common good or that price interventions are to correct for market failures. Often it is to promote the interests of small groups with political power, such as is the case with United States governmental interventions in the pricing of sugar and cotton.
23. Alford and Naughton, Managing as if Faith Mattered, chapters 5 and 6.


32. These policies encouraged Latin American and other third world farmers to turn to crops that are not affected by U.S. and European agricultural subsidies, such as illegal drugs. This has turned large numbers of Latin American farmers into international criminals, all because U.S. and European agricultural policies will not let them make a decent living legally, devastating Colombia and many other Latin American societies. Comments by economists at the World Bank are available at the following website: http://web.worldbank.org/WEBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20076448~menuPK:34463~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html
Chapter 6

Serving the Person through the Political Community

Reflections on Compendium Chapter 8

Michael L. Coulter

I

According to the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,¹ the state and its related political institutions exist to serve the human person. The human person is existentially prior to the state and more important than any particular political institution. Promoting the dignity of the human person, however, should not be taken to mean that the political institutions described exist only to serve a conception of political life that is radically individualistic or that only the narrow self-interest of individuals is what matters to a political order. The state should promote a genuine concern for the common good. The common good is believed truly to exist; it is not merely the aggregation of the particular goods of individuals. The state should work to enable authentic human life—a human life where one can serve God, one's family, and other human beings and where one can have the freedom to exercise one's talents and have political structures that will safeguard those freedoms. Political life is to serve all the elements of civil society, including the family and private associations, because those elements serve the authentic good of persons. The political actors do not determine the good for human beings; rather political life should help human beings attain the good that can be known through reason and revelation and is promoted by the Catholic Church. In this respect, the state is not neutral with respect to the good; therefore this teaching on politics differs from the leading lights of modern liberalism, such as John Rawls (1971) and John Dewey (1999), who have argued

¹ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (2004).
that the state does not promote any particular vision of the good. The state is essential, but it should not be totalitarian in its activities and should not assume itself to be sovereign in human affairs. This teaching on political life rejects both totalitarian political ideologies, such as Marxism and fascism, as well as those of libertarians who see the exercise of all, or nearly all, state power as problematic.

Like most chapters in part 2 of the Compendium, chapter 8 begins with a section examining significant passages from Sacred Scripture that consider political life. This section begins by examining passages from the Hebrew Scriptures, and there are references to passages from the historical writings (I and II Samuel, I and II Kings), the prophetic literature (Isaiah and Jeremiah), and the wisdom literature (Psalms and Wisdom). The work discusses the establishment of a kingship in ancient Israel. The biblical guidelines for a king are that he is "to be the defender of the weak and the guarantor of justice for the people" (377). Political structures are to serve the people, not the other way around. The essential purpose of a political order is always seen as having the same fundamental purpose: serving the good of the human person. The wisdom literature in the Bible exhorts those in political authority to love justice and do mercy. The prophets denounce political rulers who fail to do these. The Compendium's discussion of passages from the Hebrew Scriptures is limited. It does not try to claim that democracy or ideas of human rights could be found there. It does not directly argue against such a position, but it implicitly rejects the notion that the political structure and the laws of ancient Israel should be seen as a model to be imitated in later ages. Moreover, the Compendium does not try to link any particular policies, such as welfare spending or debt relief, to passages in the Hebrew Scriptures. It simply acknowledges the importance of political life and the duty of political actors to serve human beings.

Paragraph 379 considers Jesus' most famous comment on politics: the assertion that we are to render to Caesar what is Caesar's. The Compendium does not offer a detailed analysis of the text; that is left to the commentaries on the Gospels. It argues instead that Jesus taught that there is a place for political life, but that the greatest claim on human beings comes from God. Therefore, Jesus can be said to reject "political messianism"(379), which is the belief that somehow perfection can and will come through the temporal order. Political messianism has been, in particular, the temptation of modern totalitarianism.

This section also considers how the early Christians regarded political life by citing passages in the Christian Scriptures books that follow the Gospels. Citing Romans 13:5, paragraph 380 states that there is a proper obedience to political authorities, including laws regarding behavior and the payment of taxes. The Compendium cites St. Paul exhorting early Christians to pray for political leaders as they carry out their duties. To be asked to pray for someone who carries out a duty certainly implies that that duty is legitimate. Other passages such as Revelation 17:6, which speak of martyrs, are also cited, showing that political life can be dangerous to the practice of Christianity.

The Compendium argues that one can derive from Sacred Scripture clear moral responsibilities for political actors. Human authority is "always tempted
by the desire to dominate” but political rulers should see political life’s “authen-
tic and complete meaning as service” (383). Political power is said to come
“from God and is an integral part of the order he created . . . [and] finds its ful-
fillment in the truth, justice, freedom and solidarity that bring peace” (383).

II

The second section of the chapter considers the “Foundation and Purpose of the
Political Community.” In this section, one can see the Personalist-Thomistic
synthesis so prominent in the work of Pope John Paul II. Personalism, which can
be traced to the anthropological insights of phenomenological philosophers such
as Max Scheler, can be seen in the first statement of this section: “the human
person is the foundation and purpose of political life” (384). The Church then
adopts the idea, which was developed by Thomas Aquinas but ultimately came
from Aristotle, that humans are by nature political animals, and thus rejects such
social contract thinkers as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, who see human beings
as naturally asocial. According to the Compendium, the impetus toward social
life is not that social life merely provides a utilitarian good, that is, it is better
simply to live together and agree to certain rules for social life than live on one’s
own. Rather, according to the Compendium, we are called together to live in
social life in accord with the moral and religious order “which God has im-
printed in all his creatures” (384). God thus intends that we live together in hu-
man community. While there is an order we are a part of, we remain responsible
for our individual actions. We are not simply part of mass movements, con-
trolled by social environments, or determined by the economic structures in our
societies.

While all human beings are drawn toward political life, all are not intended
to be in the same political order. That is, there is no call for a universal govern-
ment. The Compendium suggests that “for every people there is in general a
corresponding nation” (387). A “nation,” which could be large or small, is the
natural governing unit. Such a nation shares more than just geography; its mem-
bers have “communion on the spiritual and moral level” (386). There is a shar-
ing of culture that connects a people. In this shared culture, there is usually a
shared sense of the good that is expressed in social and political customs. This is
not a nationalism that exalts one nation at the expense of another, but one that
celebrates the shared good of a people and seeks to enable that people to be self-
governing.

While particular peoples can and should be self-governing, their political
entities must give equal protection to those who are not part of the dominant
social group. The rights of minorities, whether those individuals live in a par-
ticular area or are distributed throughout the political territory, must be pro-
tected. They thus must be enabled to exercise freedom in economic and religious
matters, while still supporting the common good of the political entity in which
they live. The ruling group should allow some autonomy for a minority group that is concentrated in a particular area, and the minority group members should act justly when they seek some measure of political autonomy. Terrorism, which is described as the use of violence by minority groups against innocent civilians, is ruled out as categorically illegitimate.

To illustrate the place of a minority group with a larger nation-state, one can consider the case of the Kurds in Iraq. The Kurds are a different ethnic group than are other Iraqis as they have different cultural customs and a different language, although they do share a common religion with some other Iraqis. The Kurds have also a long attachment to a particular geographic area. The principles of the *Compendium* would suggest that this group should have some relative autonomy while still being bound to support the common good of the larger political order. This could mean the so-called devolution of power to semi-autonomous regions. Another example that could be used for understanding these principles would be the case of the Kosovars in Serbia and Montenegro (the name for the former Yugoslavia). The contention is that the political community should grant some autonomy to them or even let them be a self-governing people. Whatever the particular arrangement, the human rights of this minority group should be protected and the good for the human person always be served.

This section asserts that a fundamental purpose of political life is to protect and preserve the individuals who live within that state. "In our time the common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained," states the *Compendium* (388), quoting John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris*. The common good is the end; accepting the language of rights and setting mechanisms to protect those rights is the means by which the common good is achieved. The *Compendium* assumes that using the language of rights, which is a recent development, does not commit the church to enlightenment principles of politics or to the individualism so often associated with modern political liberalism. In the language of contemporary international politics, a human rights "regime" should be in place in all political orders. That is, the political order should have as one of its primary aims the protection of rights. This would require legal and political structures and practices that recognize and seek to protect those rights. Moreover, the rights protected are not just "negative" rights, that is, the freedom from government interference in one's life, such as the right to free exercise of religion or free speech. The government must also engage in positive action to protect human beings and encourage a fulfilling human life. This is usually called positive freedom or positive rights and would include, among others, a right to an education. The *Compendium* notes that both negative and positive freedom can co-exist, but does not address what happens when there is a conflict between negative and positive freedom, for example, when efforts to prevent discrimination result in reverse discrimination.

Some critics of modern liberalism, including traditionalist conservatives and communitarians, criticize some liberal theorists for only emphasizing rights. Such a criticism cannot be made against the *Compendium*, which states that "life
in society takes on all its significance when it is based on civil friendship and on fraternity” (390). While there is an important place for rights because they generally serve the good of human persons, there is an equally important place for “selflessness, detachment from material goods, [and] giving freely and inner acceptance of the needs of others” (390). This notion is taken from Thomas Aquinas, who in turn saw the concept in Aristotle, who said that political communities should be seriously concerned with friendship. Incorporating a notion of civil friendship leads to a much richer conception of the political community than is generally found in modernity, although some communitarians such as William Galston or Amitai Etzioni speak of similar concepts. Certainly, one will not find substantive discussions of civil friends in either liberals such as John Rawls or economic conservatives such as Milton Friedman. The Compendium connects this notion of civil friendship with a term popularized by Pope John Paul II in the encyclical Evangelium Vitae—that of building a civilization of love. It seems self-evident that a political community where there is significant civil friendship will be a humane society and thus more likely to enable human beings to achieve the good.

While civil friendship certainly supports the common good, the more difficult question regarding civil friendship is how it is actually cultivated in the lives of human beings. This question is not addressed in this section of the Compendium, but it is addressed in the final chapter wherein charges are made to the clergy and laity regarding the role of the formation of Catholics. Civil friendship is an activity that must be learned and practiced, and the Church can play a great role in teaching these duties and helping its faithful acquire the habits of civil friendship. The church does not claim to be the only entity that can credibly promote civil friendship. The family, properly constituted, can be said to be a school of civil friendship. Other associations can also promote it. The Compendium is thus clear that healthy political life depends on more than proper political institutions, although these are needed; one needs citizens who have goodwill toward others and see their fellow citizens as their neighbors.

III

The third section of this chapter examines the place of political authority. Political authority is ordained by God as necessary for human life. Following Thomas Aquinas, one does not need political authority simply because of the fall. Rather, political authority is needed to direct the community in its actions. Aquinas wrote that “a social life cannot exist among a number of people unless under the presidency of someone to look after the common good.” It thus follows that political authority is not a necessary evil, a position held by some contemporary conservatives and libertarians. The Compendium would also certainly reject the views of some libertarians, who are sometimes called anarcho-capitalists, who argue that the state is nothing but legitimated violence against individuals and is
unnecessary. Rather political authority “must guarantee an ordered and upright community life without usurping the free activity of individuals” (394).

Political authority must necessarily be carried out with great concern for justice, and this justice is not simply equivalent to the decisions reached by a majority of citizens or elected officials. Not only does this reject simple majoritarianism; the Compendium would also reject Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s idea of the General Will as that which should direct political life. It is the moral law or the natural law that must guide all political authorities in the exercise of that authority. In this section one can see more of the Personalist and Thomist synthesis. Therein the Compendium asserts that the political authority must enact “laws that correspond to the dignity of the human person to what is required by right reason.” Thomas Aquinas never spoke of human dignity, but the remainder of this paragraph with its discussion of the laws being discovered by reason and in conformity with the moral order sounds as if they could have been taken directly from the Treatise on Law in the Summa Theologica.

While there is a legitimate place for political authority and the laws made by that authority, this does not lead to the view, often known as Erastianism (a view associated with early Lutheranism), that all laws should be always obeyed by Christian subjects. First, there always remains the right to conscientious objection to the law. A faithful Catholic, for example, cannot and should not materially cooperate in evil acts, even if the law would require it, because the individual is always responsible for the actions that that person chooses. It is not only a moral duty for individuals not to engage in objectively wrong acts, but it is the duty of the state to recognize that some people cannot and will not participate in certain acts that they believe to be morally objectionable. Allowing some individuals the freedom to be exempt from some requirements protects the sphere of conscience for a person. Being coerced by a law that requires an evil act is different from a law that allows a morally objectionable act, such as those that permit abortion or pornography. In this section, the Compendium has in mind laws that would require one to have an abortion or engage in euthanasia or infanticide.

The Compendium does not address the complexities of applying this principle in a religiously diverse society. In general, an individual should be given a sphere of freedom in which to conform to moral principles. For example, someone should not be required to participate in abortion-related training in order to receive a medical license. This would violate the conscience of Christians and many other persons of religious faith. An individual should not be forced to work on the day called to be a day of rest by the individual’s religious tradition. These are cases that might arise in cultures that are at least residually Christian, but how a state shows respect for other faith traditions raises difficult questions. What if, for example, the majority desire humane treatment of animals and the mandated practices offend a religious practice? Such a case occurred in Germany. The Federal Constitutional Court in Germany in 2002 heard a challenge to its law requiring that animals be electrocuted before they were butchered. Some Muslims objected to this law on religious grounds, asserting that Islamic
religious practice dictates that animals' throats be cut as the means by which they are killed. The Court ruled, because of The Basic Law's provision regarding religious freedom, that the Muslim butcher should be exempt from the statute so that meat could be butchered in a manner conformable to Islamic religious dictates. This decision allowed for one to object conscientiously to the law without fear of punishment. The logic of the Compendium would support the Court's decision because enabling one to act in accord with one's conscience is of more significance than preventing an animal from feeling pain.

The Compendium also addresses the right to revolution arguing that a right to resistance exists provided that the necessary conditions are met before active resistance is undertaken. These conditions are essentially those that would make military action legitimate, such as it being a last resort and being conducted in a legitimate manner. The Compendium favors negotiation and passive resistance rather than active rebellion. To cite again the status of the Kosovars in Serbia and Montenegro, the Kosovars should seek independence through direct negotiation. If negotiation does not work, passive non-violent direct action might be the next step. Kosovars could also call on the assistance of an international organization such as the United Nations or the European Community to assist in its negotiation efforts. Only after all possible peaceful avenues have been exhausted should they take up arms in order to win their independence from Serbia and Montenegro.

The final portion of this section addresses the role of criminal punishment. There is a moral responsibility for the state to have a two-fold approach to criminal punishment; it has a moral responsibility "to discourage behavior that is harmful to human rights and the fundamental norms of civil life" (402). This is the traditional role of punishment and its most obvious function. The evil doer is punished so that society might be protected. The additional task of punishment is "to repair, through the penal system, the disorder created by criminal activity" (402). The next paragraph expands this idea, stating that punishment is also "an instrument for the correction of the offender" (403). Repairing or rehabilitating criminals could rightly be called a development in the social doctrine. Thomas Aquinas sees the function of human law as simply to restrain behavior that is harmful to social life (Summa Theologica I-II.94a1). The notion of criminal rehabilitation is not seen in any of the social encyclicals, but it is referred to in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (section 2266). The Social Agenda: A Collection of Magisterial Texts, which was published by the Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice in 2000, collected statements from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, encyclicals, and papal statements about social matters. There is not a word about a restorative element in the punishment of criminals. Perhaps as the leaders of the Catholic Church have learned that some criminal acts may have their roots in the psychological condition of the perpetrators and as more may have been learned about the possibility of psychological improvement while at the same time having reflected more seriously on the fundamental dignity of human beings, it can now be required that rehabilitation should be part of the criminal justice system. This approach to criminal justice might be character-
ized as restorative justice, or at least having a component of restorative justice. In this approach, there is concern not only for society, but also for the criminal. The Compendium speaks of “fostering a justice that reconciles, a justice capable of restoring harmony in social relationships disrupted by the criminal act committed . . . .” (403). Instituting such a scheme is not particularly easy; it would require modification of the criminal justice system for both juveniles and adults and at both the state and federal levels in the United States. Canada and New Zealand have experimented with restorative justice, and there are some jurisdictions in the United States that have used this approach in some property or minor crimes.15

With respect to criminal justice, the Compendium strongly asserts that there must be proper treatment of the accused in the criminal justice process. It asserts that torture is never permitted in any circumstance because torture is also an affront to the dignity of a person. There is no reference to the earlier acceptance of torture (see, for example, Augustine’s City of God XIX.6, where Augustine states as a matter of fact that a judge may have to use torture and still end up punishing an innocent man), although it should be clear that official church documents never justified torture. The precept of the inviolable dignity of the persons also prevents prisoners from being held on the sole condition that they might have information desired for a trial. The Compendium cites a speech by Pope John Paul II in 2000 where he sets forth such a principle, and so this notion did not arise first in regard to the United States treatment of prisoners either in Guantanamo or in Iraq. Detaining individuals indefinitely is prohibited, but it is not clear how long is too long. Here the Compendium offers only a moral precept rather than specific guidelines. Reason must guide us in determining the specifics. There follow further statements on the morality of due process because “due discretion in the investigations” is required as well as “the principle of the presumption of innocence.” There is even a provision for compensation due to errors in the criminal justice process. The section on criminal justice appears to be the most significant, developed, and systematic account of the subject in the documents of the Church.

The final paragraph of the portion regarding punishment concerns the death penalty. The issue has been examined at some length in recent documents of the Church, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Section 2267) and Pope John Paul II’s encyclical, Evangelium Vitae. This section of the Compendium is a useful and accurate summary of the church’s position on the death penalty. The Compendium acknowledges that capital punishment is still legitimate when it is the only possible defense of society. However, “bloodless methods of deterrence and punishment are preferred” because they are more respectful of the inherent dignity of the person. This position has largely been a development in the pontificate of John Paul II, and some see it at odds with statements from earlier popes who spoke in defense of capital punishment. Some opponents of the death penalty would prefer that the Church adopt the position that the death penalty is inherently wrong and should never be permitted. There has been no such “development” toward this position.
IV

The fourth section of the chapter examines the democratic political system. Here the Compendium endorses democracy not simply because it is good in itself in all cases, but rather endorses democracy because that system is more likely to respect the dignity of persons and more likely to hold governing leaders accountable. That is, democracy as a political process is not good simply. It is a good insofar as it is most likely to support the good of persons. This position regarding democracy is in many respects a recent development. Certainly, Augustine and Aquinas were not proponents of democracy, as Robert Kraynak (2001: 89-104) strongly argues. Now the Compendium does not recognize all practices of democracy as equally good. Following Tocqueville, there can be good and bad practices of democracy. A proper democracy is one that establishes the rule of the law, operates with a proper conception of the human person, and recognizes the value of persons. In contradistinction to these proper values of the person, the “Church’s social doctrine sees ethical relativism, which maintains that there are no objective or universal criteria for establishing the foundations of a correct hierarchy of values, as one of the great threats to modern-day democracies” (407). A political order is not just about the arrangement of institutions or the delivery of services. Rather a healthy authentic democracy draws upon the Aristotelian notion of a political order having a shared sense of justice and the good.

In addition to shared values, a proper democracy will have authentic participation and shared responsibility of citizens in the operation of the political institutions of a state. Those who actively participate will be accountable to the entire people. The Compendium specifically cites elections as a mechanism for accountability. For those accustomed to democratic practice, this would appear to be self-evident. However, even where there are regular elections, those elections may not be meaningful because participation may be discouraged. Perhaps in the case of American democracy there is a moral obligation to encourage competitive elections because that will ensure accountability. Perhaps electoral districts should not be so strongly gerrymandered as to give one party a great advantage which will discourage competition. One would also want barriers to forming parties and getting on the ballot not to be so great as to limit electoral competition. There is also an obligation for those who serve to share information with those who are governed. This information should be freely offered, not of necessity extracted through legal actions, such as Freedom of Information Act requests. To use one of the catch phrases of governmental reform, government should be transparent; that is, it should be easy for citizens to see what their governments are doing. The Internet and other advanced technologies make that a more attainable goal.

For those who serve in public office there is significant moral responsibility. Public officials must serve with “patience, modesty, moderation, [and] charity” (410). There are no legal means by which to encourage or enforce these
moral attributes; however, the Church in its teaching capacity can encourage those in public life to live in this manner. Along with emphasizing political virtue, there is a corresponding prohibition against corruption. The *Compendium* asserts that corruption in a democratic society is worse than public corruption in other forms of government because corruption in a democratic order not only undermines the proper functioning of government, but it also undermines confidence in the very institutions that must govern. This is a useful insight, and one often forgotten in public life in democratic societies. Now not only do elected officials have a moral responsibility, but so do those who work in public administration. The *Compendium* criticizes "excessive bureaucratization" and "impersonal functionalism," and desires that bureaucracy "be conceived . . . as an act of generous assistance for citizens, undertaken with a spirit of service" (412). It would be wonderful if this could be the case, but this would appear to be quite unworkable because the very nature of bureaucracy in a democratic order is that it is impersonal insofar as it treats all the same. Everybody waits in the same line at the driver's license office and everyone is bound by the same rules when distributing social welfare benefits. This is done so that there is no favoritism in the process. Now perhaps the moral precepts of the *Compendium* would be satisfied if there were limited discretion given to those in the bureaucracy and if decisions would be made for the best concern for human beings. This kind of discretion is best suited to those who operate private social assistance organizations.

The *Compendium* also briefly comments on parties and citizens' voting in elections. Demonstrating some thoughtful understanding of the functioning of democratic societies, the *Compendium* recognizes the importance of political parties. Political scientists have held that parties serve the important functions of aggregating and articulating the views of citizens. When parties are performing those functions, they are to have a concern for the "common good," offering citizens the effective possibility of contributing to the formulation of political choices" (413). The *Compendium* also affirms that democratic orders could give citizens the opportunity to vote directly on political questions. The *Compendium* refers to referenda, but this would include voting both on matters put before the people by a legislature—what we could call a referendum—as well as citizens placing an issue on the ballot through the initiative process. This direct democracy is morally permissible, but it is not required for political life. Prudence would be needed to determine where direct democracy would be appropriate.

The final portion of this section regards the relation of the news media to the institutions of government. The news media has an important role in watching the activities of government and informing citizens. The *Compendium* cautions against concentrated ownership of media organizations. Perhaps the authors have in mind the media consolidation that has occurred in the United States and in other democratic nations. There is a moral responsibility for government to encourage a variety of active media organizations. The media in carrying out its activities has a responsibility to be organizing not only for profit, but also for concern for truth and the dignity of the human person.
The fifth section of this chapter briefly considers the relation between the political institutions and civil society. The institutions of civil society—such as the family and private organizations—play an essential role in public life. The political society should not destroy those associations by being totalitarian. They should also not completely ignore their health and presence as if political life were concerned only with individuals. Political institutions should recognize and nurture in an appropriate ways these social organizations. In fact, the political order should be in the service of those entities. The Compendium offers a few ideas about how this might be done. For example, "the State must provide an adequate legal framework for social subjects to engage freely in their different activities and it must be ready to intervene, when necessary and with respect to the principal of subsidiarity" (418). An application of this principle would be making separate provisions for taxing and regulating non-profit organizations that engage in social service. An example of undue interference might include some of those anecdotes presented in Philip Howard's The Death of Common Sense, such as the case of the Missionaries of Charity being required to install an elevator in a building that was to be used as a homeless shelter so that it would be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The cost of that installation led the nuns to abandon the project. The section encourages the political sector to support civil society. This moral principle could lead to supporting faith-based organizations, provided that that support did not undermine the operations of those organizations.

The final section of this chapter of the Compendium addresses the relationship between the state and religious communities. This section begins with the fundamental premise that there is a right to religious freedom. The state as much as possible should encourage religious practice. Citing Dignitatis Humanae from the Second Vatican Council, the Compendium asserts that this freedom is "willed by God and inscribed in human nature" (421). Permitting religious freedom is not the same as saying that there is no religious truth, but it must be admitted that religious relativism could be a social consequence of religious pluralism. Not all religious choices are legitimate, but individuals should still be permitted to make those choices. It is not explained how, or even acknowledged that, this moral precept has developed over time; that is, at one time the Church did not assert that political regimes should recognize the freedom of religious practice. While religious freedom should be protected for all, this does not preclude some political orders from giving a privileged status to a particular religious group. That is, a particular religious group could be "established" as the
religion of the state so long as that particular state does not prohibit peaceful religious expression by others.

The *Compendium* rightly recognizes that some could claim to practice religious practices that would be dangerous to the operation of the political community. Thus, while religious freedom is essential, it is also essential that political order be maintained. Therefore, "the just limits of the exercise of religious freedom must be determined in each social situation with political prudence" (422). No one could then use religious pretexts to justify violence against others because there is a "need for the adequate care of genuine public peace" (422).

With respect to religious communities and the state, there is a brief discussion of the relationship between political regimes and the Catholic Church. Political orders have the moral duty to allow the Church to determine its own internal matters. For example, Chinese political authorities should not authorize bishops for the Catholic churches in China. While each entity should exercise its proper autonomy, the state should be willing to cooperate on matters of common concern. This might include charitable efforts or operating schools or adoption agencies.

**Conclusion**

The chapter on the political community in the *Compendium* is not—and was not intended to be—an exhaustive guide to political life, nor is it a complete account of Catholic political theory. The *Compendium* does, however, provide many moral precepts that can guide sons and daughters of the Church as they work in government or advocate particular policies for government. These moral precepts could also prove quite useful in interfaith cooperation. These moral precepts are not the same as a party platform, but they could inform platforms or programs of action. These moral precepts do not lead one to a named political ideology. They may lead one to align with a party or a candidate, but that is done only insofar as that party or candidate has aligned him or herself to the moral precepts of the Church. This *Compendium* can and should be regarded as a great gift to the whole Church and particularly to those active in social life; it is a work upon which we should carefully meditate as we work in this world. This work can help us think carefully about the needs of political life so that citizens might act not for the sake of expedience or personal gain, but in a way that is pleasing to God and in service to human beings.

**Notes**

2. Some contemporary Christians have linked passages from the Hebrew Scriptures to particular current public policy issues. See, for example, Ronald J. Sider, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 2005), who links discussions in those scriptures of the tithing and the Jubilee Year to social policies in the contemporary world.

3. The phrase “Political Messianism” was popularized by Jacob Leib Talman, Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase (New York: Praeger, 1961), who argued that modern totalitarianism had at its root a utopian desire.


8. There is some agreement between the Compendium and Isaiah Berlin’s classic discussion of positive and negative freedom in “Two Concepts of Liberty” as found in Four Essays on Freedom.

9. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, Sententiae Octavi Libri Ethicorum, VIII, lect. 1: Ed. Leon. 47, 443: “Est enim naturalis amicitia inter eos qui sunt unius gentis ad invicem, inquantum communicant in moribus et convictu. Quartam rationem ponit ibi: Videtur autem et civitates continere amicitia. Et dicit quod per amicitiam videntur conservari civitates. Unde legislatores magis student ad amicitiam conservandam inter cives quam etiam ad iustitiam, quam quandoque intermittunt, puta in poenis inferendis, ne dissensio oriatur. Et hoc patet per hoc quod concordia assimulatur amicitiae, quam quidem, scilicet concordiam, legislatores maxime appetunt, contentionem autem civium maxime expellunt, quasi inimicam salutis civitatis. Et quia tota moralis philosophia videtur ordinari ad bonum civile, ut in principio dictum est, pertinet ad morale considerare de amicitia.” [“Namely, natural friendship is between those who are one nation in as much they share in custom and intimacy. The fourth reason is: on the one hand it seems that the state secures friendship, and on the other hand that by means of friendship the state is secured. Because of this, legislators desire more to maintain friendship among citizens than justice, since whenever friendship is lacking, penalties have to be introduced to prevent dissension. This even extends to agreement which is only a pretense of friendship. Indeed, legislators greatly desire any type of agreement, as they seek most of all to eliminate controversy among citizens as being inimical to the health of the state. And because all moral philosophy is ordered to the good of the citizens, as was said in the beginning, it
is concerned with a moral examination of friendship.”] [This note in Latin is reproduced from the Compendium. Translation by the editor.]

10. Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2212-2213. [This note is reproduced from the Compendium.]

11. See particularly Book VII of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics.


13. Murray Rothbard, an economist who has promoted the work of Ludwig Von Mises, is the best-known proponent of this view.

14. Germany’s Basic Law states that “Freedom of faith and of conscience, and freedom of creed religious or ideological, are inviolable” (Article 4).


16. Paul Sigmund, “The Catholic Tradition and Modern Democracy,” The Review of Politics 49, no. 4 (1987): 530-548, shows that beginning in the twentieth century Catholic intellectuals and members of the Catholic hierarchy began to endorse democracy; Jacques Maritain and Yves Simon were two of the most important Catholic defenders of the democratic system.

17. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 75: AAS 58 (1966), 1097-99. [This note is reproduced from the Compendium.]
Chapter 7

Toward a Caring International Community

Reflections on Compendium Chapter 9

J. F. X. Paiva

This essay first summarizes the four sections that appear under the main title of chapter 9 in the Compendium, "The International Community." This is followed by a discussion of some of the concerns that arise, as issues, notes, and observations focused around selected issues in the progress toward an international community. Finally, there are some concluding notes on the United Nations with some observations on the implications for the lay members of the church.

Chapter Summary

Biblical Aspects (428-32)

Chapter 9 of the Compendium begins with a biblical foundation, presenting a basic theological anthropology with related moral priorities. Three basic biblical themes are articulated:

A. Unity of the Human Family

The concept of community and the need for an international community is drawn from the very nature of the Blessed Trinity. The Three Persons and the relationship among them constitute the basis for a community. The caring relationship, albeit the loving relationship that prevails among the Three Persons, has all the essential ingredients for a desirable community at any level, progressing toward an international community. Both in the case of Noah and Abraham,
we get the picture of God providing the impetus to love and be loved. Whatever humans need for full development and fulfillment is provided for them, and humans are encouraged to keep close to the Source of all love and creation.

B. Jesus, Prototype and Foundation of the New Humanity

Jesus is the prototype for all human beings as he became human in the image of God, just like the rest of humanity. In his sacrifice of love for the humanity that strayed away from him, he seeks to bring everyone together again in his embrace of love after the debacle at Babel. The human family is thus called to rediscover its unity and recognize its richness in attaining a full unity with Christ.

C. The Universal Vocation of Christianity

This vocation is for all mankind to be brought into one fold. This unity is to be achieved after the model of the unity that prevails in the Blessed Trinity (an awesome thought to contemplate!). As Christians we are to be aware that the Source of all love impels us to unite as people needing to be together for one another—a supernatural calling—more than uniting with the mechanics of humans getting together for economic, political, social, or other reasons for forming community.

The dynamics of a world community need to be understood and presented as being needed to reflect the unity desired by our Creator. The “unity of the human family has always existed, because its members are human beings, all equal by virtue of their natural dignity. Hence, there will always exist the objective need to promote, in sufficient measure, the universal common good of the entire human family” (Pacem in Terris 292).

The Fundamental Rules of the International Community (433–39)

A. The International Community and Values

The centrality of the human person and the mutual inclination of persons to form relationships are fundamental to building the international community (433). However, the Compendium notes that such a unity has not yet been achieved. There are obstacles—materialistic and nationalistic, the selfishness of nations, discrimination and other serious issues. Truth, justice, active solidarity, and freedom are all values that bring people together and are valid among the nations as well. For international law to be of benefit, relations among the nations need to be guided and directed not only according to principles of law, but also according to values and virtues of reason, equity, negotiation, and without recourse to war or discriminatory practices. International law is needed for international order (434). In seeking the common good, the good of the human family in all its dimensions needs also to be included and cannot be separated from that of relations at the international level.
National sovereignty is fully appreciated as an expression of freedom, and this freedom is not to be curtailed when extended to the international level (435). Culture is an important element in establishing the identity of a people or nation. However, national sovereignty is not absolute; some rights may be renounced in favor of the greater good of the family of nations. This issue of the rights of nations is still to be addressed at the international level.

B. Relations Based on Harmony between the Juridical and the Moral Order

To bring about international order for peace the same moral law that governs the life of humans must also regulate relations among the nations. Legal structure must be based on a moral order that respects the unity of the human race, the dignity of every nation and its people, a rejection of war, cooperation for the common good, the need to be faithful to agreements, and a respect for the force of law rather than the law of force. The Charter of the United Nations not only bans the use of force but also the threat to use force.

The magisterium identifies indispensable factors for a renewed international order: the freedom and territoriality of each nation, the rights of minorities, an equitable sharing of the earth’s resources, rejection of war, an effective plan of disarmament, and an end to religious persecution. The principle of mutual self-confidence is important for consolidating the primacy of law. Normative instruments for a peaceful resolution of conflicts are a necessity. This requires appropriate structures and processes for dealing with conflicts and lends credibility to the enforcing power of the United Nations. International law must ensure that "the law of the more powerful does not prevail" (Pope John Paul II, 2004, 120).

The Organization of the International Community (440-45).

The Church—at the ecclesiastical level—assumes the role of a humble pilgrim, a companion traveling with others toward the goal of the international community. It acknowledges the United Nations as a necessary and important public authority that has emerged to rally the countries of the world for peace, for development, for dealing with the dynamics of relationships from conflict to its transformations, for solidarity, and for other activities for strengthening the moral conscience of the world and the ensuing international law and order.

There is a continual need for "preparing the cultural and institutional soil" for peace and development. The approaches of the international community are not always appreciated by the Church as in the case of population policies, preventing certain diseases or medical problems, or in dealing with the situation of oppression of the poor by the governments in collusion with the rich and powerful, not excluding those from ecclesiastical authority. Nevertheless, the march must go on to find acceptable solutions.
The Church’s concerns are quite valid in dealing with the issues stemming out of globalization. Human needs and rights must be protected at all costs; without that, co-existence among nations on the basis of equality and justice may not be possible. Secondary partners with the Church may be as important in shaping human rights in the progression to development, such as non-government organizations, institutions, and groups of people representative of the stake they have in the issues that challenge community.

The Holy See is an important partner in this process, not only to safeguard the freedom of the church but also to maintain the importance of human rights, freedom, and the progress toward peace and justice. Dialogue is important on the part of relevant church groups with the key actors. In this process, serious violations may be detected against human rights. These issues have to be shaped before the bar of public opinion to remedy what is lacking in the institutions that safeguard peace and justice while pursuing the common good.

**International Cooperation for Development (446-50)**

All nations, whether competing or in a position of economic, military, social, or political dominance, must ensure development for all as a right, duty, and responsibility. This is a difficult challenge for some countries in today’s world. Nevertheless, for peace and justice to prevail, and for human rights and dignity to be respected, the countries with power and resources must be willing to negotiate with and encourage others to work for a better world order. Such a stand is necessary because a large part of the world is suffering from poverty and from an array of human miseries due to wrong choices made by governments or by the people themselves. Apart from wrong choices, there are other factors: economic and financial challenges, shortcomings in the social mechanisms for the development, and inherent conditions in the social structures that thwart the hopes of the people. Human rights and development objectives must be diligently pursued as a right and responsibility for all, beginning with the basic needs that must be met at the level of the human family.

As a partner in the global effort, the Church is vigilant in encouraging fair access to international markets for all in the cycle of goods production, distribution, and consumption. The Church with other civil bodies takes the responsibility of defending the people, when governments do not consistently fight against illiteracy, for the attainment of food security, or take measures to remedy weak administrative and ineffective service structures due to corruption or other reasons.

The *Compendium* ends this chapter with a reference to international debt. There are some wealthy countries that are reluctant to free the poor countries from their burden of debt even to a partial extent. This is another area for asserting the right to development for all. The Church advocates a strong policy to assuage this situation.
A Brief Introduction to Some of the Issues

On reading the entire *Compendium* and the above summary of the sections on the international community, several persistent themes stand out: the inherent dignity of humanity, human rights for ensuring peace with justice, and the common good for all. These are developed across different levels of social analysis: the family, the community, the state, and the international community. The impetus for all this movement and development comes from no less a source than the Trinity—the foremost Community held together by a dynamic relationship of mutual love and caring for one another. The *Compendium* often sounds like a paean of hope that provides the motivation to keep marching toward the goal of loving family relationships, and extending that to community and beyond that to an international law and order in the shaping of the international community. While the *Compendium* takes the reader to great hopes and heights it is also not unmindful of humanity's failures and sufferings in wars, ethnic conflicts, the exploitation of the weak, the unbalanced growth of the poor and weak, side by side with the rich and powerful and failures at community building at local and international levels. It is not with any exaggeration that Congar declares, "The current issues in world problems are monumental and extremely difficult."

The present essay is being written in the context of great human tragedies—the trampling down of the poor and powerless, while some nations look on and other nations exercise their superpower and claim their right to pre-emptive war, almost claiming that might is right. It is a dismal and heartless situation that demands redress through the moral conscience of the community in establishing law and order in the international community. Somewhat obliquely, the impression is conveyed that strength for all these tasks may come from the Triune God. Curiously, the word prayer does not occur anywhere in this chapter, though it is implied in the references to the Trinity. People with much formation in spirituality accept that prayer is most important not as an effort to advise God of a problem but as an experience that contributes to the conversion and powers of interiority within the person praying.

**Issues, Notes, and Observations**

*A. Reaching out to Believers and Non-believers*

The effort to reach to the entirety of humanity is in keeping with the concept of integral salvation. It is a challenge to bring together the various groups that constitute our churches in the various parishes. It is even a greater challenge to try and reach those who are not in these churches. The message needs to be communicated to all, that we need to come together because we are blessed with a common heritage. For those who believe, this may be acceptable. But for others the appeal may have to be made via the common goal of happiness and self-fulfillment. When Cain was asked: Where is your brother? Cain's answer was:
Am I my brother's keeper? That perhaps was an instinctive admission that he indeed was Abel's keeper. The *Compendium* makes it clear that in fact all have this responsibility and duty.

When disasters strike, people do come together and try to help one another. But even here, there could be variations. Once when a relief wagon of one particular ethnic group went to the help of another in the wake of an earthquake, the relief was refused and rejected, and it was asked that it be taken back. The two groups were in enmity for a long time. Even a tragedy of this nature could not bring them together. When the tsunami struck, though the victims in one of the islands helped one another initially, soon they were resuming their old hostility. It is true that the *Compendium* says that there is a natural desire for kinship at the simple family or community level, and that this same unity could be extended to higher levels of international cooperation as well (432). While most desire to unite—a natural family instinct—others however want to be different and make the task of bringing all together a difficult one. Such situations call for a studied response taking into account the characteristics of the situation.

The United Nations was brought together by the desire not to perpetrate the tragedy of war again. The leadership of some, a few, played a great part in the achievement of bringing all together. The same few could exercise their powers of veto to make the nations not act together.

To give another example of the difficulty of bringing people together: After Vatican II ecumenism was accepted as a very much desired objective, and many wished to go even beyond ecumenism. In fact its chief exponent, Yves Congar, who had once been “banished,” presumably for his views, was brought back again by Pope John XXIII to be the leading light on ecumenism. Now, after so many years the ecumenical movement waxes and wanes according to the convictions and conveniences of bishops and priests. So, even among the believers of the gospel message there is inconsistency in coming together. It appears that the light of ecumenism burns more brightly in the older churches of the Reformation than elsewhere.

What we read in the *Compendium* about the international community is no doubt the ideal. However to achieve that ideal there has to be a better understanding of society and its problems. For this, resources of time and talent are needed to bring believers and nonbelievers together for ushering in a better international order. We need new leaders to do that. The *Compendium* seems to limit itself to some well-known resources. While the world is grateful for Popes John XXIII and John Paul II, there are other thinkers as well: Karl Rahner, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and Leonardo Boff. Much wisdom is to be found in groups like the World Council of Churches, the Christian churches especially in Africa and Asia, as well as numerous other groups in the Church itself. The United Nations helps. But it is the common people who will have to “till the soil and prepare the ground” for the seeds of hope with faith in the vision of a better world.
B. Peace and Conflict

The issue of war is very easily understood as the devastations that come with it for women, children, and the whole family and community. But equally devastating are ethnic conflicts which are no longer confined to internal areas of a country. As the wounded and vulnerable flee to safer shores there are problems of migration that affect both neighboring as well as more distant countries in the region. The problems are even more complex when the affected country is contiguous with the mainland.

The Compendium is most eloquent in describing the necessity for peace and justice. There is a very inspiring paean of hope throughout the book. To keep such hope alive, there is faith: faith in the essential goodness in all beings made in the likeness of God or in other cases, an independent faith in the essential human nature of wanting to help one another when challenged by need or disaster. However, the fiercest of battles have taken place in defense of ethnicity and culture. While the fight over territory is related to the basis of economic productivity, territory is also regarded as an important means of cultural expression and identity. The bond between land and the people results in a cultural trait that distinguishes one group of people from another. Language and religion are also expressions of cultural features that people are ready to defend with their own lives. Often there is also hatred of the other.

To promote peace and justice between such conflicting groups is most often a thankless and fruitless task. In these situations, where humans are inhuman to one another, the involved parties are incapable of initiating efforts for peace. Very often a third party becomes the intermediary. Normative institutions or persons with the charisma of inviting trust are usually the actors who try to bring about peace. Often churches are the only hope, but not all churches seem to accept this vocation readily. For example, in some developing countries of Africa or Asia, unlike in Latin America, there is little outstanding leadership by religious groups or leaders ready to seek the understanding of issues and to initiate the paths to peace. Bishop Desmond Tutu has been an outstanding exception. Many cultural factions in third world nations have continued to fight one another till death while the churches have looked on or sometimes taken sides or refused to cooperate with other churches to initiate peace and reconciliation. Wars of all kinds, national and international, are inherently evil and destroy faith in humanity and sometimes hope in God. One basic fact seems to emerge—cultural groups often seem unable to be reconciled for negotiating peace. It does not come unless there is peace and forgiveness, as demonstrated by the South African experience. If the churches cannot offer leadership in this area, who can?

Visions for a renewed international order and the means to realize them are still possible where political or economic institutions are not able to bring them together. In this complex age of conflicts, if it is to be admitted that the churches have a special role in bringing about peace, then what are the implications for the curriculum content in the training of priests and in the adult faith formation
of lay persons? Changes in human attitudes and acquisition of skills in situational analysis, in negotiating peace, and in the transformation of conflicts—all these and more should be an important requirement for persons interested in the future of communities.

C. Community and Solidarity

Today, community may appear elusive when, in whole or in part, social, economic, and industrial peace is in disarray, not to mention war and its consequences. But without the goal of solidarity, community and human relations, the international community cannot come into being. There is always a constant threat to commitment and a challenge to reassemble as community—without this process the United Nations may not be achievable.

The world continues to be as complex as ever and made even more complex by the issues that keep coming back. The defense of minorities in building community is challenging enough. But then there are also groups who are being driven to the bottom through discriminatory structures of poverty and personal failure, as well as discrimination against homosexual groups, same sex partners claiming the benefits of marriage, and minorities that pursue advocating technologies to respond to the horror of HIV and AIDS. How is it possible to make community as the Compendium generally advocates, and to establish a basis for international cooperation, while the church—the ecclesiastical segment at least—has yet to make efforts to accommodate groups of diverse beliefs and practices? No approach has been made as a universal church corresponding to the gesture the founder of the church made when he was with prostitutes or with many other public and private sinners. The quality of mercy and the embrace of the prodigal have yet to be heard or experienced in all sectors of the church. The Compendium does not take these situations into account.

There is something of value to be gained from a consideration of Douglass C. North’s Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance. North maintains that the community and institutions must always be in a dynamic interrelationship of continuous growth in the achievement of desirable goals. Leadership and initiative must come from both ends of the interrelationship, whether the subject pertains to values, concerns, or issues in finding solutions to a problem. Though North is thinking in an industrial context he also states that the concept is applicable to other situations as well. Communities and institutions nourish each other to achieve community and larger societal goals.

However, the process of building community needs understanding and skills. Each community at the parish level needs to provide methodologies for bringing together institutions and communities for building the blocks for an international community. This is one strategy for dealing with problems of community formation and protection of human rights and needs.
D. The Challenge of Poverty, Underdevelopment, and Development

Development implementation and the response to underdevelopment and poverty raise more complex issues. The people themselves, the “haves” and the “have-nots,” try to overcome what has become a parallel concern for the international community in addition to dealing with the issues of war and peace.

The United Nations has successively tried various strategies for development to aid the poorer countries. They first emphasized the economic, then the social, and later they tried an integrated approach. But progress needs to be made on many other fronts as well: the political, financial, institutional and so on. Participants affected by the program became an important issue. Technocrats tended to ignore these poor and marginal people, very likely because they did not know how to reach out to them, think with them, and work alongside them. The following example may be considered typical. It is the case of an international agency that came to a third world country to find out why young farmers were abandoning their rice fields for the city in the middle of the cultivation season. In spite of many resources being poured into the program, the young farmers kept abandoning their fields. The international agency interviewed politicians, economists, and technocrats. Last of all, as an afterthought, the young farmers themselves were interviewed. Apparently participation in the agricultural system alone was not enough; they needed to be involved in other relevant systems too. Too often the recipients of programs or services are the last persons from whom information is sought.\(^3\) There is much to be learned from the people themselves who, as consumers and participants, are the first experts, not the last. Often non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have experimented with more successful programs because they had less bureaucracy to haggle with and fewer subsystems to work with. The challenge still remains to learn techniques gained at a comparatively micro level for application at the macro level.

It may also be helpful to note that

\[\ldots\text{sustainable development is a long-awaited call for political recognition of environmental decay, for economic justice, and for limits to material growth. It therefore represents an opportunity for humanity to correct a historical error and begin a more benign, balanced, and stable relationship with the natural world. This view of sustainable development also raises moral considerations such as the need in a finite world for an equitable sharing and conservation of its natural bounty.}\(^4\)\]

Rees also presents in his principles of sustainable development facts about the disproportionate consumption of the majority of the world’s nonrenewable resources by the wealthiest 26 percent of the world’s population.

In a finite world, reducing the gap in living standards between the rich and the poor requires that any capacity for future material economic growth be redi-
rected to the third world. Forgiving international debt, aid to rehabilitate tropical ecosystems, the programs to develop ecologically appropriate technology for the developing countries are examples of strategies the developed nations might implement to help redistribute global wealth.\(^5\)

If such principles are implemented it will be a significant contribution to dealing with the challenges of development.

In the case of underdevelopment and poverty, the challenge is to penetrate a situation where there have been many years of exploitation, ignorance, and neglect by a government. Indebtedness at the local level is as serious as at the international level. When bad nutrition and vulnerability to disease caused by an unhealthy environment are added to the already existing structures of poverty, underdevelopment presents itself in all its many different layers, each one of which is a challenge to meaningful penetration. A multi-system approach to remedy the situation is both expensive and difficult. More success is gained with intervening at a critical point in the system, with the potential to yield favorable responses from many subsystems. This strategy involves good leadership, cooperation, and selective holistic methodologies.

**Final Note**

The ecclesiastical sources used by the *Compendium* are not the only ones for the arguments it makes for progressing toward a better international order. Its ideas are confirmed by other thinkers as well, who come from outside the Church’s ecclesiastical apparatus.

The concept of a representative central authority working in the interest of all the people, even of one nation, has taken many centuries to evolve and longer still to become an effective reality. The rivalries of the feudal nobility periodically dislocated and laid waste the life of medieval Europe for hundreds of years before the common interest of the majority of the population in order, justice, and peace was able to assert itself through effective central authority. In our time we are witnessing a somewhat similar development on the international level. The twentieth-century world has dwelt in the shadow of great-power rivalries and conflicts which have twice erupted into world wars of an unprecedented horror and destructiveness. While these disasters have greatly stimulated the natural desire of the majority of nations for peace, the achievement of a representative world order, working in the interest of all states and peoples, is still almost as distant a possibility as orderly central government must have seemed to the hard-pressed townspeople and peasantry of medieval Europe.

The impetus given by two world wars to the search for an effective international order has been intensified by two effects of the technological revolution: the increasing interdependence of nations and the active possibility of an instant and comprehensive disaster caused by weapons of mass destruction. A third effect, the threat to the environment, has lately joined the first two as a powerful incentive to international cooperation.\(^6\)
The above is so very much like what has repeatedly appeared in the *Compendium* and in the chapter on the international community. This is not a voice from the Church apparatus but from different but nonetheless relevant voices.

The following lines by Hammarskjöld might also be of interest since the *Compendium* does reflect the frustrations of trying to come together as a community while also hoping for an ultimate solution prompted by faith in God and humankind.

There is much talk about that rare quality: maturity of mind. . . . It is reflected in an absence of fear, in recognition of the fact that fate is what we make it. . . . The dignity of man, as a justification of our faith in freedom, can be part of our living creed only if we revert to a view of life where maturity of mind counts for more than outward success and where happiness is no longer to be measured in quantitative terms. . . . There is no formula to teach us how to arrive at maturity and there is no grammar for the language of inner life. . . . The rest is silence because the rest is something that has to be resolved between a man and himself. . . . You may be surprised by an approach to international service and to the problems raised by present-day developments in international life, which, like mine today, is concerned mainly with problems of personal ethics. The so-called realists may regard what I have tried to say as just so many fine words, only tenuously related to everyday life and political action. I would challenge this criticism. The thoughts I have shared with you about international service are conclusions from a most practical experience. Politics and diplomacy are no play of will and skill where results are independent of the character of those engaging in the game. Results are determined not by superficial ability, but by consistency of the actors in their efforts and by the validity of their ideals. Contrary to what seems to be popular belief, there is intellectual activity which more ruthlessly tests the solidity of a man than politics. Apparently easy successes with the public are possible for a juggler, but lasting results are achieved only by the patient builder.7

The “maturity” referred to may be an uncommon virtue. But it is imperative that it be pursued for the greater good of humanity.

We live in a time when there is so much of criticism and expression of disappointment with the United Nations. What many forget is that all the problems of the nations are carried into it. It is not a place devoid of the politics, the wrangling, or even the corruption that may be found at national levels. It is one gigantic but human institution! But the ideals that bring the nations together will ultimately urge us to do something important and necessary for the peace of families and individuals everywhere and for the task of helping to create a better world.

Meanwhile, it is to be noted that lay members of the Church form its biggest sector. This fact alone should move the lay Church to respond to challenges that in conscience cannot be brushed aside for others to undertake. Led by a Church passionate in its zeal for a renewed social order, the duty to study, to organize, and to act will always be a continuing responsibility in association with others.
Notes

5. Rees, “New Natural Selection,” 120.
Chapter 8

An Invitation to Inclusive Environmental Reflection

Reflections on Compendium Chapter 10

Stephen Scharper and Andrew J. Weigert

I. A Brief Summary of the Compendium on Environment

At the outset, we want to locate the genre and weighting of the Compendium's material within a larger ethical domain that includes three “Ts,” namely, Teachings, Tradition, and Thought. Catholic Environmental Ethics arises from the resources and applications of these three Ts, as well as from sources cited in the Compendium.

Teachings: generated by Church authorities and characterized by continuity and gradual extension to new issues based on moral imperatives such as the “universal destination of creation’s goods” to meet the needs of all, and the concomitant imperatives of personal dignity for the social individual and the common good for the needs of a well-ordered community, such as justice and peace.2

Tradition: carried by Catholic communities beginning with the Apostolic communities who in part shared goods to meet the needs of all, to a contemporar y call for an ethic informing a “civilization of poverty” that meets the material needs of all.3 The universal application of material goods in a “civilization of poverty” is to meet everyone’s needs, rather than enhance the profit and aggregated wealth of a small subset of the community. Local activists find motiva-
tion from, and apply the Catholic social Tradition to, needy communities, agencies, and neighborhoods.4

Thought: generated by Catholic intellectuals such as lay, clerical, and religious ethicists and moral theologians to address continually emerging res novae or new empirical conditions that then enter into the substance of the quest for moral action. Res novae need to be interpreted both in continuity with Teachings and Tradition and yet also make use of new starting points and contextual applications.5 A new moral context of crisis, demanding new principles and/or applications, emerges from circumstances such as: a more than six-fold increase in population in 200 years; an atmosphere generating increasing data that extrapolate to significant changes in temperature, precipitation, storm strength, and ocean levels that would push perhaps hundreds of millions of humans and other life forms out of their coastal territories; and a nexus of data accumulations and extrapolations that will require new patterns of human responses to avoid conflicts arising between winners and losers from significant environmental changes and migrations of those beginning to flee drought, desertification, poverty, and environmentally caused violence.

II. Need for an Inclusive Starting Point for Environmental Ethical Reflection

The Compendium text moves the reader toward a universalizing of environmental ethics, but occasionally makes dogmatic distinctions that condemn another group’s intentionality or motives. For example the Compendium claims that scientism without transcendence leads to nihilism; that “to divinize nature or the earth, as can readily be seen in certain ecological movements” reduces the worth of the human person; and that the magisterium is opposed to “a concept of the environment based on ecocentrism and on biocentrism” because they eliminate the “ontological and axiological difference between men6 and all other living beings (462-64).

These ortho-dogmatic moves separate environmental actors according to a priori and exclusivist dogmas and thus rank Catholic doctrine as superior to others’ approaches, even while claiming to speak for and to all and asking all for environmental cooperation. These dogmatic moves raise a key issue: How can dogmatic religious formulations that are divisive address all persons of good will and yet remain true to Teachings and Traditions even while subordinating dogma to pragmatics by being intended to inspire all to work together for sustainable environmental policies and collective as well as individual sustainable activities?

We note, for example, the difficulty in reading universality into the Compendium text when it does not use inclusive language. The text uses “man” and “men” when we assume, but cannot know for sure, that the redactors are intend-
An Invitation to Inclusive Environmental Reflection

ing all human persons. In a word, we see a need for a narrative addressing all persons of good will that provides a basis for cooperating in orthopraxis as the ethical goal, not religious and institutional orthodoxy. We suspect that redactors of the Compendium and the authorities whose writings they codify may be uneasy with a doctrine that intends orthopraxis.

Furthermore, we suggest that current Catholic and other Christian leadership are already reaching beyond the doctrinal approach codified in the Compendium. Grazer’s more recent sampling notes a somewhat more inclusive Catholic approach to environmental issues with local applications in the ten years since the United States Catholic bishops set up a program in environmental justice. We may point to direct action within a broad understanding of Catholic Social Tradition by a local group that helps pull forty-eight cars out of the Bronx River in New York City and fights for environmental justice along the river banks that link a poor community’s downstream ills with the benefits of wealthier upstream neighborhoods.

Recent statements by Pope Benedict XVI and Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople suggest that caring for the earth is a more central and inclusive message of the Christian faith than previously understood. Such ever widening Christian calls are echoed in an emerging group of American Evangelical leaders who speak to a shift in the message of the Gospels to include “creation care” as an imperative within their ethical teachings, a shift which may lead to a realignment of their political leanings. For example, the Evangelical Reverend Jim Ball drives a deep blue Prius with the challenging question: “What Would Jesus Drive?” There appears to be a general “greening” trend among major religions around the globe, perhaps another manifestation of the multiple modes of modernization.

III. Beginning an Inclusive Ethical Response to Emerging Environmental Issues

As Drew Christiansen, S.J., mentions in the voice-over for the documentary film, “Keeping the Earth,” made by National Religious Partnership for the Environment and Union of Concerned Scientists in 1996, the command to “keep the earth” is given in Genesis. Stewardship of the earth is emerging as fundamental for a biblical tradition in today’s world.

To help avoid anthropocentrism, commentators point out that Genesis does not direct only humans to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). The Creator earlier stated that the fish in the sea and birds in the air are blessed and told to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth” (Gen. 1:22). Any “command” for humans to multiply, biblically speaking, is in the context of other beings multiplying as well. The command for
humans to lordly "dominate" the Earth sounds in today's circumstances like a call to stewardship, a "keeping of the garden."

Two decades ago Thomas Berry called Catholic thinkers to the need for a "new story" for understanding humanity's environmental ethical demands. Briefly, he argues that the first and foundational Revelation of the Creator to humans is Creation itself. We are to continually "read" material creation and use an earth-grounded hermeneutic to interpret the Scriptures that followed.

Change in Roman Catholicism's Social Teachings, even at the most authoritative levels, is a historical reality and sign that emerging circumstances and reinterpretations of the sources and directions of moral reasoning need to become ever more focused on the good that is sought. An age of globalization and significant ecological changes that emerging data document calls us to apply social doctrine as presented in the *Compendium*.

For example, rates and depths of changes in the biosphere and in the social, economic, political, and military institutional arrangements of global populations change what we find in the perennial construct of the "common good." The good that is common is no longer limited to exclusivist communities bound by orthodoxies that may have lived within ecosystemic boundaries in the past, and thus could sustain themselves by their own collective actions regardless of what others were doing. The Doctrinal "common good" is increasingly recognized as a global biospheric common good, not a local ecosystemic common good.

(466)

Analogously, given the empirical conditions of population, ecological pressures, and environmental degradation, the central construct of personal dignity goes deeper than the social, psychological, and interpersonal goods that inhere in socio-cultural dignity. In a word, human dignity starts with healthy air to breathe, potable water to drink, non-toxic food to eat, and a dry terra firma on which to dwell (484-85). Each day's news seems to bring yet another reminder that millions of humans breathe asthma-inducing air, drink water that brings diarrhea and death, eat food contaminated with toxins, or flee encroaching waters, winds, or sandstorms.

There is a need to extend the scope of understanding of "personal dignity" and "common good" to include all. Personal dignity and common good are firstly grounded in environmental conditions that are shared by all earthlings, not only and certainly not primarily, those who believe as I do. Environmental conditions provide the universal and inclusive material means for a person to live with dignity and a global community to live sustainably, justly, and at peace (481-82).

Furthermore, awareness of current environmental, ecological, and population issues call for re-imaging of Divinity Itself. Images of God such as Mother, Friend, or Lover are linked to positive environmental attitudes more than traditional images of God as Father, King, or Judge. Social psychological aspects of meanings of Divinity Itself are apparently related to, if not causally influenced
by, the images and labels and names we use to reference the God of Creation. The call for a new story of Creation has implications for narratives of Divinity as well as for right environmental attitudes and action.

IV. A Vocation to Act Sustainably

In short, an adequate environmental ethic evokes a new vocation to be a faithful Christian. The United States’ Catholic Bishops begin their pastoral statement on the environment, *Renewing the Earth*, with the words: “At its core, the environmental crisis is a moral challenge. It calls us to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth, what we pass on to future generations, and how we live in harmony with God’s creation.” The bishops conclude, “The environmental crisis of our own day constitutes an exceptional call to conversion,” that is, “a change of heart to save the planet for our children and generations yet unborn.”

Pope Benedict XVI appears to share concerns with Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople who is quoted in 2002 as urging Christians “to act as priests of creation in order to reverse the descending spiral of ecological degradation”. This Papal stance reverberates through the words of Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Vatican United Nations Nuncio, who advises a new ethos of “working less, wanting less, spending less.” He emphasizes “the Holy See’s position on the need for Catholics to heed the environmental dangers the planet faces” so that Catholics work to protect creation and follow the Church’s social doctrine. These comments reflect a current Catholic response to humanly caused climate change based on “Genesis’ call to humanity to oversee creation while protecting it, and the church’s social doctrine.”

We interpret this call as a new ecologically based Christian vocation that everyone should follow, regardless of one’s secular calling. For example, there are widening initiatives within the vocations of Catholic women religious who see the need for hope and more inclusive identities grounded in the primordial facts of agriculture (contrasted with “agribusiness”). A salient instance is Genesis Farm and the work of Sr. Miriam MacGillis, OP, who calls many neighbors, students, and sister religious through the experiential learning and resultant hope that arises from growing and eating local food.

Doctrinal Teaching develops within larger human Traditions and uses the tools of the best Thought humans can generate. The New Story, then, will be empirically “cat-holic,” that is, with a global reach that includes all of creation as well as of global society. The new story emerges from the bottom up as well as contributing toward top down doctrinal codification. Catholics continue to re-think the sacramentality of creation, the sacredness of personal dignity, and processes for a more inclusive global common good that includes the environmental signs of the times, that call forth vocations to an environmental morality.
V. Toward a New Story

Our sense is that the current ecological moment is of such magnitude and on such a profound scale that it is compelling not only for the Roman Catholic community, but for all of us, to rethink the basic question of what it means to be human-on-Earth. This issue touches us at the core of our being, a being which is not only rational but psychological, emotional, phenomenological, and, indeed, spiritual, and which must act.

The 2005 United Nations Human Development Report indicates that 53 percent of the world’s population lives below the world’s poverty line, and gaps between wealthy nations of the North and impoverished nations of the South have widened significantly over the past twenty years. Poverty growth rates within industrialized nations such as Canada and the United States have also seen a marked increase in this period. The richest 1 percent of Americans, for example, possesses more wealth than the poorest ninety percent of the U.S. population, leading to what some scholars claim is the greatest income disparity in U.S. history. Furthermore, the United States is now the leader in income inequality among industrialized nations.24

In addition to air, water, and soil pollution, trends such as destruction of wetlands, deforestation, fish stock crashes, and global climate changes, especially in the Arctic, continue to diminish the world’s ecosystems’ abilities to sustain themselves. The rise in frequency and intensity of natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and tsunamis lead some analysts to intimate that human interventions, including the depletion of aquifers, along with oceanic and atmospheric warming, may play a role in such natural calamities.25 As we shortsightedly and systematically change our climate with fossil fuel emissions, eliminate thousands of species, chop down remaining old growth forests, and witness thousands of children who die daily owing to contaminated water, we are confronted with arresting questions, questions of a deeply philosophical and spiritual nature.

What role do the redactors and authorities in the Compendium share with us all? What is the vocation of the human as a species? What kind of world do we wish to leave future generations? What is the goal of civilization if it advances at the expense of the world’s ecosystems that support life? What is the proper religious response to this time of ecological devastation? What on earth are we doing?

We believe that, in light of these momentous developments, there is need for a new orthodoxy in a new story starting with creation itself (464, 481). The social teaching of the church is being summoned, we suggest, in light of dire
global economic injustice and unprecedented global ecological devastation, to reorient itself in order to respond faithfully and adequately to such signs of the times, and to embrace in a newly integrated fashion the compelling insights from both the social justice and cosmological perspectives (486). This contextualization of the issue suggests more than fine-tuning or mere updating of existing social doctrine, but rather a profound recasting of social doctrine with a new starting point and within a new framework.

Our perceived role of humanity as master and lord over nature, which in some cases has ancient religious provenance but was given a hearty boost through modern industrialization, is now paired with an increasing sense of our interrelationship with and dependence upon the Earth's natural systems, and with the nonhuman animals which form an integral part of those systems. What is our proper place, then, between the rock of our technological prowess and the hard place of our biological vulnerability and profound interconnectedness with the rest of creation?

It is not clear that the *Compendium* is asking these questions at the foundational level at which they need to be asked. The social doctrine of the church has articulated human justice concerns through an array of well-developed critical and fruitful principles, such as subsidiarity, the rights of labor vis-à-vis capital, and the preferential option for the poor in addition to personal dignity and the common good. As stated earlier, we are challenged to reinterpret such concepts as the common good, not only as a good for all persons, but a good for all of creation. (166)

As the *Compendium* intimates (463), these social teachings root a Roman Catholic environmental ethic in the realm of social ecology, rather than a more biocentric strain of the multi-layered and highly diversified approach of deep ecology. A social ecology, in contrast to one strand of deep ecology based primarily on wilderness preservation, takes poverty and people's historical relationships with their environment seriously, and strives for ecological integrity and social justice in the same steps, and as it were, with the same breath.

A brief overview of the shifts from anthropocentric to biocentric to cosmocentric ethical perspectives that have marked environmental discourse sheds light on our reflections on the *Compendium* and opens pathways for a new story.

**Anthropocentrism**

Within Christianity, the ecological debate was in many ways jump-started by Lynn White, Jr.'s incendiary 1967 article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." In his polemic, White, a medieval historian and practicing Presbyterian, claimed that Christianity was the world's most anthropocentric religion. Its emphasis on human salvation in the afterlife rather than human stewardship of the earthly life led to the development of environmentally baleful Western technology and its applications. The antidote, he suggested, is a faith that takes
stewardship and ecosystems seriously. White’s argument claims that by focusing on human salvation from this world, Christians have denigrated non-human aspects of this world. In short, Western anthropocentrism, cultivated in the Christian soil of Europe, led to an ethic of domination and abuse of nature.

White’s article instigated first a trickle then a torrent of Christian ecological reflection, causing him to quip that he might well be regarded as the “father of ecological theology.” While some of these responses were a bit defensive, asserting that White misinterpreted the scriptural tradition or short-shifted Christianity’s complexities, others responded in a more dialectical manner. These responses, including those of theologians Douglas John Hall of McGill University, Walter Brueggemann, Jurgen Moltmann and Rosemary Radford Ruether, all acknowledged that indeed salvation had achieved ascendancy over creation in much of Christian theology. Yet they also averred that the prospect of a positive environmental theology remained embedded—if underdeveloped—in Christian notions of stewardship, communion with nature, a critique of oppressive power structures, a liberative doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and the notion of Sabbath rest for the land. This conversation, despite the different directions it took, represents an important moment in Christian ecological theological reflection as it engaged with a hitherto unexamined anthropocentrism. By recasting this anthropocentrism in terms of human-earth relationships, these theologians began to place ontology at the core of Christian ecological reflection.

Biocentrism

While some Christian theologians and ethicists were attempting to reformulate an anthropocentric worldview, others were fashioning a different paradigm. In philosophical and conservationist circles, Aldo Leopold had already initiated a shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism with his foundational 1949 essay “The Land Ethic.” Noting that ethics, like ecosystems, evolve over time, Leopold argued that ethics have to move beyond simply the human community to embrace what he called the “biotic community.” Indeed, this biotic community became the standard for his ethical contention that “a thing is right when it maintains the integrity, beauty and stability of the biotic community and wrong when it does otherwise.” Concomitantly, Leopold argued that the land ethic must not only be rational, but affective; in other words it had to be an ethic of the heart. It must include what he termed an “ecological conscience” and inculcate a “love, respect, and admiration” for the land and its dwellers.

In Christian conversations, Leopold’s biocentric ethical challenge was taken up most robustly by process theology, which builds on the insights of pioneering British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), author of Process and Reality (1929). Process theology seeks to emphasize the intrinsic value of all reality, noting that, as Leopold suggests, not only our ethics and our ecosystems but the entire universe itself is in process. The theological
work of John B. Cobb, Jr., 34 Jay McDaniel, 35 and Catherine Keller 36 build on the process perspective by positing radical inter-relationships between the human and non-human worlds. In their work, a deep integration characterizes the human-nature relationship; they further intimate that the divine, in some sense, is present in all matter and governs this relationship. In this, they develop a panentheistic (God in everything) rather than pantheistic theological understanding (everything is God).

Cosmocentrism

While the anthropocentric debate compelled theologians to sift through and re-interpret their human-centered texts and traditions, and biocentric debates prompted an attempt to take nature and the created world seriously, the cosmocentric conversation suggested a different ethical context. The framework adopted here is not human-to-human or human-to-non-human relations, but rather the human in relationship with the entire cosmos itself. Developed principally by Roman Catholic priest and “geologian” Thomas Berry and mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme, co-authors of The Universe Story, 37 the cosmocentric perspective suggests that unless we understand our role as humans within the greater unfolding of the universe itself, not only our imaginations but our ethics will be truncated, and any ecological stratagems of healing earth-human relations will be incomplete.

For Berry and Swimme, the task for the Christian theologian, and indeed for all religious seekers, is to understand that the universe is primary and the human species is derivative. They emphasize the awe, wonder, and celebrative joyful beauty of the unfolding universe. Thus, they argue that the primary source of revelation lies not in scriptural texts but in the emergent cosmos. Consequently the cosmocentric perspective embraces contemporary physics and astronomy to help ascertain the nature of the universe and read revelation. While accenting the awe, mystery, and wonder of the cosmos, Berry and Swimme in a sense call for a new wisdom tradition, one that brings the world’s religious traditions and contemporary scientific exploration together in a unified quest for meaning and ecological integrity—a healing of human-earth relations.

In light of such grave social and ecological realities, Berry roots his reflections squarely and deeply within the universe itself, an approach that is suggestive for Roman Catholic social doctrine. The universe is thus a unique and primary source of revelation, a “first act” of Divine manifestation.

Part of the contemporary problem lies in the fact that we in the Western imagination, aided by both modern technologies and truncated readings of religious and cultural heritages, have de-emphasized this cosmological basis for ethical and theological reflection. Carriers of this mode of modernity have considered themselves masters over rather than, as Aldo Leopold noted, “just plain citizens” of the life community on the planet. Such a stance has contributed to a
most radical moment of destruction of the world's ecosystems, one that is, according to Berry, jeopardizing the past 65 million years of earth's development toward a hospitable life-sustaining habitat, and through global climate change, altering the very foundations upon which life has evolved and flourished. By unstintingly placing our ecological story within the larger context of an unfolding cosmos, or "cosmogenesis," Berry is attempting to weave a new wisdom tradition out of the discoveries of contemporary sciences and the insights of traditional religious cosmologies. Neither of these lines of reflection, on its own, he argues, can adequately deal with our contemporary challenges, but, intertwined, they may provide a life-line for both the human species and the life systems of the planet.  

For a new cosmological perspective, the universe story is the primary story that must be taught from kindergarten through doctoral programs and form the organizing narrative of our economic, political, cultural, religious, and ethical life. Significantly from a social point of view, both Berry and Swimme include a critique of consumer culture in their efforts to establish a cosmocentric ethics of the environment (360). They claim that a consumer cosmology has become the world's reigning worldview and that we are socialized from an early age to view the universe not as a communion of subjects, but a collection of objects, to be bought, sold, used, and discarded.  

All three of these approaches—anthropocentric, biocentric, and cosmocentric—are wrestling with the foundational ontological challenge of the present environmental situation. All three strive to find a proper role and vocation of the human person in light of our dire ecological forecast. What the social teachings of the church add to the cosmocentric discourse is a political theological vantage point, one which is concerned with issues of justice, particularly those which were developed by liberation theologians addressing North-South inequities. Thus, the ecological impetus to a new understanding of Catholic social teaching, for us, is a question not just of place but of places of the human, and the need to be attentive to our world's unequal ecologies in the search for a new and sustainable way of being human.

What we want to suggest, therefore, is that there is a place for all three perspectives, which can interface in a dynamic, non-eclipsing fashion. Yet a primary element of this dynamic is a notion of social justice and need for social peace, a grounding in the preferential option for the poor, and a sense that the environmental crisis is at root a political, economic, and cultural crisis as well as an ecological one. The work of Brazilian theologians Leonardo Boff and Ivone Gebara, and Argentinean liberation philosopher Enrique Dussel have been influential in this regard, showing the connection between the burning of the Amazonian rainforest and the razing of the autochthonous groups who inhabit it. A dual oppression, of the land and those who live most closely to it, they argue, calls for a dual solidarity with the earth and with those most vulnerable within it un-
der the present regimen—native communities, the poor and powerless, minorities, women, and the disabled.40

At the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), in which Pope John XXIII “opened the windows” of the Church to the contemporary world, the community of believers became defined as the people of God. This understanding suggests that all persons, not just the privileged or powerful, are endowed with dignity and embraced equally by divine love. And among the people of God, those who are the most vulnerable, such as the orphan and widow of Isaiah’s day, or the economically, socially, and politically oppressed and threatened of our own time, merit special ethical and ecclesial concern.

Amidst the severe poverty and social injustice found in their lands for generations, the Latin American Bishops, at their 1968 meeting in Medellin, Colombia, declared that the Church must adopt a “preferential option for the poor.” This notion has since become a cornerstone of Catholic social teaching, affirmed in magisterial pronouncements around the world, in Pope John Paul II’s 1991 encyclical Centesimus Annus, and in the Compendium (449). Thus, when reflecting on the social and ecological impacts of our contemporary landscape, the Church, as the people of God, is compelled to view these impacts “from the underside,” as it were, and to attempt to read these processes through the prisms of the poor, who now, according to the World Bank, tragically account for 53 percent of the human family.

As Jesus reminded us, a house divided against itself shall not stand (Matt. 12:25); our world cannot survive half rich and half poor; nor can many other species and we survive in a world that pits the earth's ecosystems against economic, political, scientific, and religious systems of interpretation, intervention, and control.

In reviewing the anthropocentric, biocentric, and cosmocentric theological approaches to our current relationships with the rest of the created world, it becomes manifest that the questions we face are of a different order of magnitude. Our situation eschews a quick technological fix, a simple fine-tuning of our global economy, or even a mere updating of our ethical and religious social teachings. The nature of the required change goes to the heart of our collective self-understanding and our relationship with the cosmos itself.

In finding our place, we acknowledge that in reality there are many places that have to be found, based on a wide array of economic, cultural, and political differences. This ecological moment, however, demands not only a recognition of our complex variations, but also the need to direct our diversity toward “working commonalities” in the quest for a proper way of being in the world. As we have suggested here, a central commonality revolves around an ethic of social justice, one which shows the nexus between indigent persons and impoverished ecosystems. The quest for an ecological Catholic social ethic, therefore, is a seamless garment of ontology and political engagement. Our new ontology must take structured oppression of persons and ecosystems seriously, and find a
way to listen simultaneously both to the cries of hungry children and the winds that blow through ancient forests.

Here Roman Catholic environmental reflection can benefit both from the social ecology being advanced in nations of the South, and the environmental and ecological justice movements gaining support in North America. The latter is evinced by the United States Catholic Conference's work against environmental racism and the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace's multi-year campaign to prevent water from becoming a privatized, tradable commodity and thus potentially withheld from the poor who cannot afford to pay for it.

Conclusion

Of the challenges remaining, the fundamental need is for a more inclusive ethical and practical grounding for Catholic Tradition and Thought that justifies Catholic environmental Teachings. Catholic social Teachings find an ethical foundation in an emerging dogmatic perspective that begins with the first revelation, creation itself. We suggest the need for an incarnational environmental understanding to complement the Compendium's social doctrine starting point and approach, and to ground a more compelling and inclusivist orthopraxis.

With respect to the development of environmental and social Teachings, we find powerful adumbrations in recent Papal encyclicals, many letters from bishops' conferences, and the thinking of other current Christian leaders. For example, Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 World Day of Peace makes significant mention of human-environment relations under the rubric of "ecology of peace" resulting from the three ecologies: the ecology of nature, human ecology, and social ecology. Peace demands that humans become "increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology" because "(e)xperience shows that disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence, and vice versa." Benedict XVI goes on to use "peace" analogously and states that it is "more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men." He makes application to the rush for energy sources and the resulting damage to sustainable links between the natural and human ecology.

Pope Benedict XVI's analogous modeling of three ecologies suggests movement beyond Catholic Social Teaching as a starting point for Catholic ethical reflections for addressing environmental issues. The idea of three ecologies starts with the ecology of nature as a foundation for an authentic human ecology mediated by social ecology. The last phrase is a term relevant both to social scientific traditions and the more radical perspective of social ecologists as a reform movement for understanding all human relationships, natural-local-global, as grounded in a cosmopolitan community. These Papal remarks appear to hint
at some of the main issues in our trilogy of anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and cosmocentrism. As such, the potential for further ethical and theological reflection is encouraging.

With respect to emerging Thought, we find a fruitful lead in Sister Pamela Smith's interpretation of the nature writings of Annie Dillard as suffused with ambivalence.\textsuperscript{33} We interpret this ambivalence as leading to a theological location of understandings of human-environment relationships and the possibilities of a divine sacramentality as ultimately a mystery. If this is plausible, ecologically grounded revelation is as mysterious as scripturally grounded revelation. For example, Smith notes that Dillard's ambivalence about our understanding of God is based on a non-sentimental look at the irrationality of ecological relationships. Natural ecological dynamics appear to place no value on an individual organism's life in a system based on overproducing individuals to feed other created life forms such as predators or parasites. Dillard summarizes her empirically grounded and non-sentimental understanding of God's created nature as one big "chomp."

Ecologists may speak of food chains or trophic levels: every living being assimilates (that is, eats) something else. The lion and the lamb are created predator and prey, unless one wishes to attribute the lion's choice of food source to Adam and Eve's Fall in Eden. Dillard concludes that ecology plus God equals a mystery: there is no rational or devotional reconciliation of the violent excesses of evolutionary dynamics and the faith postulate of an omniscient and all-loving Creator. It is not only Sacred Scripture and infallible dogmatic teachings that are sources of mysteries. So too is the primary revelation of the ecological order of creation, in which a great foundational mystery is put to Christian believers. Thus we see a need for a new orthodoxy to ground environmental reasoning.

As ethical actors in the context of these issues, Tradition continues through Catholic religious women who announce versions of this "new story" in local venues. Sisters of the Congregation of Holy Cross at St. Mary's College, for example, exhibited "31 hand-embroidered banners depicting the Universe Story [by Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme] on Earth Day." These "new story" banners were designed by "Sheila Flynn, a Dominican Sister.\textsuperscript{44}

A living Church as an earthly community cannot derive adequate ecclesiastical understandings of human-environment relations exclusively through a deductive top-down model of moral reasoning. As Aquinas taught, a moral syllogism always has an "ut in pluribus," or prudential for-the-most-part empirically based second proposition, for generating real-life applications. Currently, Church leaders are urging a revived insistence on prudence as a necessary perspective in environmental policy making. We suggest that prudence requires a synthesis of Teaching, Tradition, and Thought in an ever-increasingly critical mix of personal, national, and global sustainable action with, not toward, Creation.
Notes


5. See Coleman and Ryan, *Globalization*.

6. John Paul II, Address to participants in a convention on “The Environment and Health” (24 March 1997), 5: *L’Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 9 April 1997, p. 2. [This note is reproduced from the *Compendium*.]


19. Allen, “Greening.”
21. Schärper, "Cultivating Hope."
22. See Weigert and Kelley, Living, and Coleman and Ryan, Globalization.


44. Scharper, “Cultivating Hope.”
Chapter 9

The Promotion of Peace

**Reflections on Compendium Chapter 11**

Carroll J. Bourg

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* is a useful reference book, containing what Church leaders have learned and thought in addressing social situations throughout the 114 years from Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum* to the final year of Pope John Paul II’s life. The more immediate historical context for the Compendium’s teaching on peace-making begins with the final document of Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World), promulgated in December 1965. In 1967 Pope Paul VI set up the Pontifical Commission (now called Council) on Justice and Peace, which published the *Compendium* in four languages in October 2004. The American printing became available in March 2005 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The *Compendium* does not contain or refer to major statements by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, notably *The Challenge of Peace*, 1983, or *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*, 1993, the tenth anniversary reflection on the 1983 letter on peace. Rather, the *Compendium*’s chapter contains what Vatican officials and spokespersons have presented about peace in oral and written forms to a wide range of audiences and readers. I think of it as a sequel to *Gaudium et Spes*.

An important preliminary question is: what kind of literature is Catholic social thought? Does it continue to develop in new ways? In 1949 Herder published a book by Johannes Messner, *Social Ethics, Natural Law in the Modern World*. The foundation of that book was moral philosophy on the nature of man, social philosophy on the nature of society, and legal philosophy on the order of society. The social question was discussed in its multiple forms. Then there was discussion of the ethics of society, the ethics of the political commu-
nity, and the ethics of social economy. The procedure was one of deducing un-
changing principles, largely framed in terms of a national society, by which em-
pirical situations could be evaluated. By the end of the twentieth century, Catho-
lic social thought had developed well beyond that approach, to include a greater
appreciation of historical changes throughout the world, the growing interde-
pendence among peoples, the closer connections through communications, the
growth of technical knowledge, and the greater array of social sciences provid-
ing extensive knowledge of the variety and diversity of human cultures. New
questions arise, but new and better solutions also become possible. While re-
main ing primarily a social ethic, Catholic social thought can be more ambitious
because the potential for changes to improve the lives of peoples everywhere is
not utopian dreaming but ethical realism. When it becomes possible, it becomes
a duty.

The literature of Catholic social thought has become richer because it con-
sults philosophical and scientific knowledge from multiple disciplinary inquir-
ies. It fosters a biblical vision of what can be realized in the contemporary
world. It helps clarify what is ethically possible and feasible. And it does not
ignore the obstacles that delay achievements because it recognizes that the struc-
tures of power can and must give way to structures of cooperation.

The Promotion of Peace

"The Promotion of Peace" is the final chapter in part 2 of the Compendium. It
follows chapter 8 on the political community and chapter 9 on the international
community, the two communities that have been responsible for peacemaking
and peacekeeping as alternatives to war. The irony is that it also follows chapter
10 on safeguarding the environment because the destructive power of war often
devastates the environment and the villages, towns, and cities that people have
built, sometimes over a long period of time. It is important, however, that we do
not immediately couple war with peace or peace with war. Peace encompasses
more than the absence of war or military. Peacemaking and peacekeeping are
pertinent in all the social groups humans participate in and belong to. Peacemak-
ing has both a private and a public character. The skills to be proficient in each
kind of activity can be learned gradually.

There are four sections in the chapter on peace: (1). Biblical aspects from
the Old and the New Testaments, the religious dimension; (2). Peace as the fruit
of justice and love, or peace as both a value and a universal duty founded on a
rational and moral order of society; (3). The failure of peace as war or violent
conflict in the relationships among humans, peoples and nations; (4). The con-
tribution of the Church to peace, or an ecumenical call to develop a chorus of
religious peacemakers. I identify these four sections in order to bring out the
multidimensional character of Catholic social thought. It is not simply a matter
of an isolated citation of a biblical phrase or passage but is a matter of the attributes of God and a vision of the human person and the diverse relationships in human society. It is not an isolated religious belief but is connected with a rational and moral order that is to be cultivated and made concrete in civic and social life. This represents an advancement on the part of Catholic social thought beyond the approach toward war and peace taken in the manuals of moral theology that were used for training Catholic priests before Vatican II. In the manuals, what was at issue was whether the command in the Decalogue against unjust killing would be violated in a given case. Rather than beginning at the point of decision-making, the Compendium provides an encompassing theology. In this theology, peace is what prevails within the Triune Godhead, is what is meant to prevail in the created order, and is what should be the natural outcome of social life properly lived.

Questions of war and the military pertain to both the religious motivation to be peacemakers, and rules and standards regarding going to war and proper conduct in war. Ideally the rules and standards are embodied in international law for nations and their military to recognize, with the consequent moral obligations to be peacemakers and peacekeepers even in bellicose conflicts. Section 3, on the failure of peace ending in war, does not ignore the rules of war nor the military’s task to respect and protect the enemy in the conflict and to limit violence against civilians and allow the enemy the opportunity to surrender and stop the destruction.

In the fourth section, the contribution of the Church includes a call to action in cultivating and recruiting religious peacemakers, through multiple dialogues with other Christians, to be peacemakers in conflicts among peoples. It requires considerable action to seek forgiveness and reconciliation, as well as courage to seek mutual forgiveness for the conflicts and cruelty of past conflicts.

In brief, the promotion of peace in the Compendium searches for ways to prevent the initiation of hostilities between or among nations as well as to recognize that the combatants must follow rules and standards embodied in international law and ethical responsibilities. But words are not enough. The Church will contribute to peacemaking and peacekeeping by taking the initiative with other religious believers to heal the divisions of earlier historical conflicts, to seek forgiveness and reconciliation, and to prepare for cooperation in a common chorus of peacemaking. Promoting peace also means participating in relevant and pertinent ways to prevent war and, during current conflict, to seek a rapid cessation of violence in order to be able to restore peace.

Yet one would want to go further than the Compendium goes. The technological developments in waging war have increased the destructive power and resulting devastation to human life and human habitats and environments. But there have also been new developments in the twentieth century of non-violent alternatives to violence. The social sciences have identified and developed new modes of conflict resolution to avoid the rush toward military hostilities. Once having gone beyond a certain point it becomes more difficult to defuse and pre-
vent military action. Peacemaking to prevent war must involve reading the signs of the times long before the talk of war begins to be on the agenda.

In *The Challenge of Peace* (1983) the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops recognized that nonviolence and nonviolent alternatives now compete with just war criteria in preventing or reducing to rare instances justifications for authorizing military action. The tenth anniversary letter, *The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace* (1993), explored in greater detail the emergence of nonviolent alternatives as a mode of preventing war. Gene Sharp, in *Exploring Nonviolent Alternatives,* gave an extensive list of nonviolent alternatives that have been used in historical settings or contexts. He also cited an abundant and growing literature describing nonviolent alternatives while encouraging ambitious research to expand the list and nourish the imagination. Some were effective and found support among the people and citizenry. The problem, however, is that historical contexts are often unique and not repeated at a later date. Still, it is possible to educate peacemakers to diagnose the circumstances in choosing modes of resistance that are likely to have beneficial results. A political analysis is needed to recognize which nonviolent alternative, according to the issues in the conflict, will be effective, given the interests and commitments of those protesting the injustice or inequality of treatment.

It is difficult to recommend a single strategy or tactic. One must know the situation, the mood and courage of the people, the truthful recognition of the unfair setting. Sometimes resistance is a tactic to get representatives of the aggrieved party to move from walking in protest to sitting at the table for dialogue and negotiations. Personal skills become more important for this type of peacemaking. Adam Curle discusses the importance of such personal capabilities, especially in one-to-one dialogue, as learning to listen attentively and respecting the other party to the negotiation in ways that he or she recognizes. A major problem is presented for such dialogue when participants are from different cultures, at different levels of education, or have diverse abilities to articulate the issues, grievances, and proposed solutions to the problem at hand. It can be difficult to listen carefully and attentively, to pay attention with respect, and to advance the conversation toward possible resolutions. The public forum may require different etiquette and confront variant interpretations of candor, humor, playfulness, or ability to appreciate the limits beyond which it is difficult to go when there is resistance on both sides to a resolution of the differences.

It takes time to deconstruct structures of power and to build structures of cooperation. Yet that seems to be the primary task in resolving divisive issues that separate one person or group from another. There may be memories of inhumane treatment or ridicule that cannot be forgotten and thus obstruct the ability to approach greater equality in the discourse. Listening is critically important in negotiations. The skills of listening and learning from the other party may be even more demanding because the terms of the disagreement may be hidden from one party and misunderstood by the other party. Listening requires the reading of gestures, tone of voice, the tense or relaxed manner of the other party,
and the evident candor and attention paid to facilitating the agreement; and in-
cludes assisting, where needed and desired, the communication of the results of
the negotiations to constituents who may have different interests and under-
standings of the dispute.

Such peacemaking skills must be developed in civil society, beginning with
the family and dialogues about the common good of the family, then extended to
the schools in resolving disputes between students, or moderating debate and
discussion according to more formal rules, so that speaking clearly and making
cogent arguments become customary methods of persuasion. If the audience
wants merely to be entertained rather than convinced of the merits of the argu-
ment, then they will not listen attentively to weigh the merits of the logic and/or
evidence in coming to a judgment about the case.

In the United States there is a growing divide among citizens, who often use
a few beliefs to interpret all issues and turn a deaf ear to arguments and evidence
that challenge those beliefs. Faith or belief usually claims a certitude that is dif-
ficult to dissuade or to reject as being inadequate to the task at hand. Knowledge
usually seeks certainty if the evidence to support the proposition or resolution is
strong and the contrary evidence is weak. It frequently happens, however, that
probability may be the strongest support available because the evidence is mixed
or weak. Conversation is difficult between a person who relies only or mainly on
beliefs and a person who relies only or mainly on knowledge based on evidence.

A major difficulty in the conflict between belief and knowledge occurs
when the issue becomes more complex in its particulars. Disagreements and
conflicts often occur when a simple solution is rejected because the issue is
more complex than the parties in dispute can agree upon. One claim may be that
the belief is all one needs to grasp the issue; or that the knowledge supports the
simple proposition and that is all that is needed. In these instances resolution of
the conflict may be impossible at the moment. An argument can quickly become
a mere quarrel if there is no agreement on critical issues that are pertinent to the
argument.

Tzvetan Todorov, in his recent book *The New World Disorder*, proposes
tranquil or soft power, a politics of induction gradually bringing peaceful
change. While it usually takes longer, we must avoid forced choices. Todorov
refers to World War II in arguing that we should not be obliged to choose be-
tween Munich (cowardly capitulation) and Dresden (murderous bombing). For
him, the refusal of forced choices is the source of contemporary Europe’s radical
promise. Soft power is cooperation while seeking nonviolent resolutions. It calls
for diplomacy when facing conflict and cooperation when resolving conflict. It
implies that the parties at the table are equal in attempting to avoid war.

In the United States, the Catholic Church and other religious bodies are
members and participants in civil society. For these groups, peacemaking means
discarding any theocratic ambitions to obtain greater influence than other reli-
gions with a branch of the tripartite government. They need to learn better how to
be active participants and to make their opinions and judgments known in at-
ttempting to be peacemakers. Members of civil society contribute actively to
peace by expressing the will and the desires of their participants in appropriate language. The Catholic Church has had a long history of privileged position among ruling families or as advisors to royalty. Does the Church have to learn better how to be partners with other religions so that it can become a more effective and more harmonious voice in a chorus of religious peacemakers?

Catholic social thought combines biblical visions and ideals, rational analyses, and moral philosophy. It also consults current knowledge, and as spheres of knowledge continue to multiply and grow, Catholic social thought becomes more multidimensional and more complex.

**A Textual Analysis and Critique**

I will now look at the textual details in discussing what has been traditional and what is inventive in the Vatican's promotion of peace at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Chapter 11 of the *Compendium* is only fourteen pages long in four sections: (1). Biblical Aspects; (2). Peace as the Fruit of Justice and Love; (3). The Failure of Peace: War; (4). The Contribution of the Church to Peace.

**Biblical Aspects**

The six paragraphs of this section (488-93) include phrases and sentences from both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. The use of the word peace is highlighted in multiple contexts that I found to be broad points for meditation or contemplation or prayer: peace is an attribute of God; creation aspires to peace; peace is a gift of God to humanity; humans' voluntary act altered the divine order and interrupted peace. Then violence entered into interpersonal relationships and social relationships; where there is violence, there is neither God nor peace. Then peace as fullness of life; shalom as completeness; as a gift from God, peace brings fruitfulness, well-being, prosperity, absence of fear, and profound joy. Peace the goal of life in society. Peace embracing all of nature. Where peace, no fear; where justice, peace abounds. Psalm 85:11—righteousness and peace will kiss. Like poetic allusion, it is to be heard, not merely read, responded to as insight and understanding emerge and grow.

Peace is more than the absence of war. Peace can grow in the nurturing communities of family, school, and religion; it can accompany one to work, and participate in a variety of groups in civil society. The more peacekeepers and peacemakers are active in civil society, the more likely the citizenry will pursue peaceful, non-violent alternatives in resolving conflict. One is reminded of the program published by the Franciscan Peace Center in Las Vegas, Nevada, called *From Violence to Wholeness*, which introduces a spirituality of nonviolence by
helping participants to recognize the multiple forms of violence in personal and civic life.

**Peace as the Fruit of Justice and Love (494-96)**

Peace is a value and a universal duty, based on a rational and moral order of society. It is based on a correct understanding of the human person and requires order based on justice and charity. Peace is threatened when the human person is not respected and civil life is not directed to the common good. Another word for peace is development. The promotion of human rights includes assisting persons to acquire the knowledge and skills to develop the wealth of their society for all citizens to share in the goods produced. Justice does away with obstacles, but love is an action that brings peace.

Everyone is responsible for peace. An authentic culture of peace occurs where there is harmony and respect for justice. Peace begins in each person and spreads to the family and other groups in society. Peace grows from below by sharing minds and talents. Violence is never a proper response because violence destroys what it claims to defend. Today we need the witness of prophets of peace.

Both the biblical references to peace and the rational and moral analysis of the societal order go beyond a mere consideration of war. Do the citizens support war because they are used to resolving conflict in civil society through violent means? What would happen if peacemakers were everywhere in civil society?

**The Failure of Peace: War**

There are three introductory paragraphs (497-99) that treat how peace intrudes upon war. The savagery and scourge of war are not the way to resolve problems between peoples and among nations. Nothing is lost by peace; everything may be lost by war. It is the collapse of all true humanism, a defeat for humanity. Seek alternatives, long-lasting solutions to correct the injustice and inequality. Another word for peace is development, of persons, peoples, nations, and society. Seek cooperation, recognize the bonds among human persons, and look for them in negotiations.

Peacemaking and peacekeeping and peace itself intrude upon war and the preparation for war in six areas. In each area one can draw contrasts with peacemaking through nonviolent alternatives. The irony is that war and peace are not merely two ways of resolving conflicts. War has become a business opportunity for large numbers of companies. There then follow in section C, six topics in which responsibility for defending and promoting peace occur.

*Legitimate defense* (500-501). In Catholic social thought today only two authorizations for going to war are legitimate: (1). when a nation has been attacked
and a competent authority authorizes it according to just war criteria; and (2) when the U.N. Security Council authorizes action according to its mandate.

The legitimacy of war grows narrower as justifications dwindle because there are nonviolent alternatives under development. In civil society, the authorities in social institutions and in voluntary communities set up nonviolent procedures to hear grievances and to enable members, workers, or citizens to bring grievances before their peers for redress. Legitimate defense is available through the nonviolent means of law, rule, and custom. In global society, the structures of power must be changed into structures of cooperation through rules, agreements, dialogue, negotiations, and working together. Most peoples are moving in that direction; some more powerful nations resist the development.

**Defending peace** (502-3). Armed services should be at the service of peace by defending the security and freedom of the nation through a commitment to good, truth, and justice. A United Nations multinational force may be called upon, but they too are fully responsible for any violations of rights or norms of humanitarian law.

In civil society, there are laws under various jurisdictions regulating the disruption of peace and specifying procedures for redress of grievances. These are nonviolent actions requiring reports to the proper authority or office. Voluntary associations can create their own rules and procedures in resolving conflicts. Members/citizens learn the rules and requirements. These are peaceful ways to resolve conflicts. In global society, the United Nations is the major international forum for pursuing the tranquil power of cooperation.

**The duty to protect the innocent** (504-6). This duty is a responsibility of armed forces under international humanitarian law. With the increased destructive power of weapons systems, there is a need to find a new consensus of humanitarian principles to protect the innocent, who become the victims of atrocities and abuse. Growing numbers of refugees flee the violence.

In civil society, there are victims, newcomer immigrants, and many refugees fleeing devastation in their previous homeland. There are also greater numbers of illegal immigrants who confront conflicting laws in travel from state to state. They need protection, but also help in filling the necessary forms, in satisfying the legal requirements, and in avoiding exploitation and discrimination. Help is needed to assist victims of violence to correct abuse. Thus a variety of nonviolent means aid actual and potential victims.

**Measures against those who threaten peace** (507). Disputes between neighboring countries often occur in global society. Regional organizations are often best suited to understand and to mediate for resolution of such grievances. If needed, the United Nations Security Council is ready to assist. Sanctions are a current way of trying to bring nations to dialogue or negotiations with other nations or representatives of the United Nations itself. The sanctions should not penalize
the citizens, however, especially if the sanctions are economic ones affecting basic necessities.

In civil society, there are penalties for breaking the law, but also growing numbers of agencies that can help newcomers and even older citizens obtain the help they need. It is often in social services or health care that there is help to facilitate making useful contact with the appropriate agencies to redress grievances. People needing assistance are often faced with delays, irritation, and fear of rejection. Providing help in such areas depends on the staff having the training to respect the dignity of the applicant, and to help with the paper work, especially for someone who does not clearly understand the language of the paper work.

Disarmament (508-12). One goal of Catholic social teaching is general, balanced, and controlled disarmament according to the principle of sufficiency. Every nation has the right to have a defending army if it so chooses. But excessive military development cripples the domestic budget. Stockpiling and trade in arms, large or small, gives too much power to the military. Deterrence with nuclear weapons is dangerous. The best practice is to disarm through continuing dialogue and negotiations.

In civil society, there are often laws that discriminate against portions of the population who cannot afford legal redress in defending themselves. Such laws should be discarded when many citizens are unable to afford legal protection. While nominally a nonviolent tactic for peace, the criminal justice system in practice often harms the innocent or punishes the guilty more severely than it should.

The condemnation of terrorism (513-15). While trying to prevent terrorism, which some consider to be a new strategy of war, one must look at the causes and often the desperate situation of suicide bombers. They should not be honored or made into martyrs, but their grievances have to be better understood. There is a duty to change the conditions where it arises, often in situations of long-standing injustice. All religions must work together to remove such causes and to promote friendship and hope.

In civil society as well there is the dynamic of criminal behavior and policing. So much that is recommended about terrorism could also be proposed for civil society. Crime often stems from long-standing injustices for some citizens, in some sections of cities and towns. Instead of military action against crime, there are nonviolent means and the potential for a better criminal justice system in reducing crime. Moreover, the number of citizens in prison can be lowered. The prison system itself could be more rehabilitative and sentences could be shorter if the prisoners could complete education and learn a skill. There would be greater peace in cities and neighborhoods if nonviolent alternatives could be identified for those not functioning well in society.

Civil society could improve greatly if more could be done to improve the situation of families without work and therefore without adequate means to live
a decent life. Global society would develop and produce greater wealth for its citizens if the military were reduced to the minimum needed for defense. Indeed, if the structures of power became transformed into structures of cooperation, all human persons would benefit, a truly global common good would develop, and the dignity of every human person would be recognized.

The Contribution of the Church to Peace

The principal task of the Church in peacemaking is to create peace with other religious bodies. The ecumenical movement began early in the twentieth century and was promoted by Vatican II in the 1960s. The goal of this movement is greater unity among all Christians. Yet it also includes a global approach, cultivating friendship with other religions in the task of peacemaking. I think the Church is seeking a new voice at the beginning of the new millennium. It makes more sense than ever before to dialogue and negotiate with other religions in matters of peace in various parts of the world. It is an ecumenical call for a chorus of peacemakers.

A major task appropriate for religious peacemakers is to seek forgiveness and reconciliation for past cruelties. Bishop Desmond Tutu was the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Program in South Africa. The agenda was to seek reconciliation for apartheid over many decades. It is an appropriate model for a single nation to have an internal Truth and Reconciliation program. In the United States someday there may be truth and reconciliation about the destruction of Native American peoples and the slave trade of African peoples. The United States still has no public repentance about the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

An ecumenical chorus of peacemakers requires its own dialogue and negotiations. If religions are in harmony on some issues, they will set up a persuasive model of cooperation in promoting peace by resolving conflict without war. A global chorus would be extraordinary, crossing cultural and civilizational boundaries. It would be a remarkable example of the globalization of solidarity.

Notes


2. Johannes Messner (b. 1891) was an important Austrian Catholic thinker in the neo-Thomist tradition. He was also an associate of Chancellor Englebert Dollfuß of Austria, whom the Nazis assassinated. While his method differed from that of the *Compendium*, many of his arguments and sometimes even his wording appear in it.
Chapter 10

Women and the Catholic Social Tradition

Deborah Savage

With few exceptions, the documentary heritage of Catholic Social Thought has traditionally included papal encyclicals and other writings concerned primarily with issues of justice in the economic sphere. As a result, scholars of the tradition have tended to focus their reflections on this arena, resulting in a vast, if somewhat bracketed treasury of thought about how the human community might come to “live in peace secured by justice.”

But the publication of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace illuminates the fact that the Catholic Social Tradition encompasses not only concerns for human dignity and community in the sphere of economics but also extends its scope to the role of the family and the unique contributions of women in bringing about a just society. Documents such as Pope John Paul II’s apostolic exhortation on the family *Familiaris Consortio* (1982), as well as both of his letters to women—the apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988), and the Letter to Women of 1995—are referred to at some length. The *Compendium* appropriates for the Church’s social tradition not only the topic of women and their fuller participation in the workplace (248-51), but also the equality and complementarity of men and women (147), human sexuality and reproduction (231-33), and the particular role of women in promoting the culture of life (231, quoting *Evangelium Vitae* 93).

The inclusion of these topics opens the door to a deeper reflection on the ways in which women might participate in advancing the aims of the Catholic Social Tradition. It seems self-evident that women occupy a critical place in the effort to spread the moral and social virtues necessary to a humane social existence (*Gaudium et Spes* 30). As the “first teacher of the human being,” woman holds a special importance, indeed has a “specific precedence over the man”
(Mulieris Dignitatem 19) in the jointly held responsibility to serve as "the molders of a new humanity" (Compendium 19; Gaudium et Spes 30) that could achieve such an end. The fact that the Compendium invokes the teachings contained in the documents on women should not be minimized. Whether or not its authors consciously intended to give women a more prominent place in such considerations, their inclusion paves the way to a more realistic grasp of how to bring the social doctrine of the Church to fruition. Indeed, what is at stake is the role of women in realizing the Kingdom of God on earth.

There is a great deal of work to do to explore fully the implications of the broader horizon suggested by the Compendium. The aim of this chapter is fairly narrow. Its purpose is to bring to focus the question how the "feminine genius" (Letter to Women 9; Evangelium Vitae 99) might be better enlisted in the creation of the conditions envisioned by Catholic social teaching, conditions that would "make life more human" for all (Gaudium et Spes 38).

A couple of preliminary remarks are in order. As the sources relied on by the authors of the Compendium reveal, it was not until the papacy of John Paul II that the Magisterium reflected so explicitly the role that women are meant to play in the unfolding of the Church's social vision. His writings on women, in particular Mulieris Dignitatem, will therefore provide a primary point of departure for our deliberations in this chapter.

It can be argued that John Paul II's work in this area is due in part to the historical milieu in which he wrote. Clearly, it would be an understatement to say that a lot has changed since Pope Leo XIII formally inaugurated the Catholic social tradition with the promulgation of Rerum Novarum in 1891. Few elements comprising the social and economic fabric of Western culture have been untouched by the forces unleashed by developments subsequent to the industrial revolution. The role that women have come to play in modern culture has been the subject of much study, argument, and hope. Certainly John Paul II's writings and his innovations with regard to such issues were necessitated by the dramatic developments in the social context of our times.

But before John Paul II was a pope he was a philosopher, and he brought an unprecedented wealth of philosophical insight to his papacy that included an intellectual commitment to personalism and a firm conviction concerning the dynamic potential of all human persons. The starting place of his account of personhood is the lived experience of the historical human person, not an abstract notion of human nature; this fact makes an enormous difference in both his method and his results. It is not surprising that the Holy Father reminds both women and men of their obligation to become the persons God intends them to become. His teaching on women reflects an enormous respect for the unique nature of female personhood.

My aim here is not to offer an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the several documents containing his insights on women; that has been done quite well elsewhere. My intention is to consider the implications of that teaching for the social vision of the Church. I will begin by briefly establishing the state of the social question itself, pointing out that some scholars of the Catholic social
tradition have argued that it has always included the broader horizon reflected in the *Compendium* and of concern to us here. Then I take up Pope John Paul's first encyclical on the social question, *Laborem Exercens*. I will demonstrate that its significance and meaning cannot be grasped without reference to the philosophical anthropology presupposed by its author. Pope John Paul's understanding of the anthropological dimension of human work will provide the point of departure for an exploration of the personhood of women and the role they are to play in the social order. Finally, I will turn to a consideration of *Mulieris Dignitatem* and the meaning and implications for the social tradition of the now famous "feminine genius."

The State of the Question

For most of its history, but in particular over the last hundred years, the social question has been spoken of primarily in the singular, a curious phenomenon when one considers the wide range of social issues taken up by the Church since Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) conceived of the modern encyclical. But according to noted scholar Michael J. Schuck, the "social question" actually refers to a complex set of questions that has taken on different shapes depending on the issues that present themselves in each era. It can be articulated in different ways depending upon which dimension of community life one is addressing. Schuck argues that the "conventionally designed social encyclical" must be read in conjunction with the "total encyclical corpus" of each Pope. This larger context reveals that the papal social tradition has considered this "social question" in terms that offer both a social critique and clearly articulated guidance concerning social practices in five distinct categories: the religious, political, familial, economic, and cultural dimensions of community life. He demonstrates that the papal social tradition goes beyond the economic concerns by which scholars have traditionally characterized it to include these political, religious, family, and cultural dimensions.

So the challenge of articulating the social question must be approached with an awareness of this complexity and a deliberate refusal to reduce it merely to the "question of the rich and the poor." William J. Byron, S.J., states that, at the most general level, the social question can be stated as follows: "How can the human community of persons and nations live together in peace secured by justice?" Certainly, there is more than economics at work in attempting to establish social structures that allow the human community to live "in peace secured by justice." The economic sphere does not exist in isolation from the other dimensions of society, and justice in economic terms cannot be realized without the existence of right relationships in these other arenas. They interpenetrate one another and are mutually interdependent. It should be clear that the eco-
onomic realm depends upon sound moral foundations, appropriate political structures, thriving families, and healthy cultures (Centesimus Annus 13).

Schuck demonstrates that, while each Pope dealt with different problems presented by the social context of his era, "papal teaching coheres around a theologically inspired communitarian social ethic" that gradually expands from a narrow, territorial horizon to one that is worldwide. Or, as Byron puts it, commenting on Schuck's analysis: "[p]apal social teaching expresses . . . a communitarian view of both self and society." Thus, there is an overarching theme that provides important continuity within the tradition; it is concerned with providing both a social critique of the contemporary context in each passing era and offering recommendations consistent with affirming the social nature of the human person and the necessary elements of community life.

But while the communitarian ethic does appear to represent a central and consistent theme, providing a "rubric or canopy" for a host of issues, Byron also argues that the social question takes on a particular meaning in each passing era and must be restated continuously in order to protect human dignity at all times. Each papal document does so, whether that be a necessary response to the labor question brought on by the industrial revolution, as in the case of Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical Rerum Novarum, or the need to put the question on a more global footing, as was finally recognized in 1967 by Paul VI in Populorum Progressio. It is the responsibility of all in the Catholic faith community, but especially of those "whose minds are trained to 'see' significant social problems" to formulate the social question in ways relevant and meaningful to our times.

With the publication of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, we witness the Church's own systematic reflection on the social tradition. The stated intention of the Compendium is to present, in a complete and systematic manner, "the most relevant theological, philosophical, moral, cultural and pastoral considerations . . . as they relate to social questions" (8, italics in original). The authors state explicitly that the current social reality reflects a host of issues "which must be considered as a whole, since they are characterized by an ever greater interconnectedness, influencing one another mutually and becoming increasingly a matter of concern for the entire human family" (9). Their exposition of the social doctrine is also intended to demonstrate the mutual interdependence of the principles that comprise it, which are themselves "an expression of [the] Christian anthropology" that grounds the entire body of the Catholic social tradition (9).

Thus the trajectory of the tradition is established as one which calls for reflection on the interrelationship of the various dimensions of human living so that "the full truth of [human] existence" (82, quoting Redemptor Hominis 14) and a "complete form of humanism" (82, quoting Populorum Progressio 42) can be realized and lived. In what follows, I will argue that the foundation of this quest is a correct and complete vision of the human person, one that includes both the equality of men and women and their complementarity. Only when the
full truth of the complementarity of men and women is acknowledged, will women be free to occupy their true place in realizing a just society.

I turn now to John Paul II's first encyclical on the social question, *Laborem Exercens*. Any adequate treatment of his social teaching must include it. But more importantly for my purposes here, it provides an important insight into his account of human personhood and the anthropology that will provide a point of departure for his thinking on the place women occupy in the social order.

**John Paul II and the Key to the Social Question**

It is unsurprising that in the chapter on human work, the *Compendium* refers to *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work) more than to any other magisterial document. The document is a landmark in the CST. Writing in 1981, just three years into his pontificate, Pope John Paul II makes an important and arguably radical claim. He states that "the key, maybe the essential key to the social question," is the phenomenon of human work. In other words, the key to the question of how to live together in peace and justice is to be found in a deeper understanding of the meaning and significance of human work. This claim is at the heart of *Laborem Exercens* and, when properly understood, represents a critical point of leverage in the ongoing quest to realize a peaceful and just society. For here work is not reducible to remunerative labor; the reference is to "any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances; it means any human activity that can and must be recognized as work" (introductory paragraph). Work is a universal phenomenon and a fundamental dimension of human existence, a defining characteristic of our personhood that existed before the fall of Adam and Eve, one that reflects the image of the God who creates.19

While writing in continuity with the previous CST, in particular Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes*, Pope John Paul’s proposal constitutes a new and critical development in it. It is grounded in his philosophy of the acting person, articulated when he was known as Karol Wojtyla; in fact, the significance of the encyclical may only be understood fully through reference to the philosophical anthropology presupposed by its author. The evidence for this is found in the document itself where he states that work in its “subjective aspect is always an ‘actus personae’,” involving the whole person (*Laborem Exercens* 24). This statement is but a clue to the deeper meaning to which it points, found in Wojtyla’s earlier philosophical works, in particular *The Acting Person*. Wojtyla’s philosophical anthropology is a complex and creative synthesis of the Thomist metaphysical tradition and phenomenological method. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go deeply into it here. But unquestionably, John Paul’s argument in *Laborem Exercens* takes on additional significance when considered in light of Wojtyla’s philosophical convictions, in particular his starting place. For the point of depar-
ture for his anthropological framework is not abstract human "nature" but the lived experience of the historical human "person."

According to Wojtyla's account of personhood, work understood as an "actus personae" is a reference to an act in which the person experiences herself as the efficient cause of her actions, as a conscious, self-governing, self-determining being. It is part of an ongoing process of self-realization directed at the full becoming of the person. To experience oneself as the actor, as the efficient cause of one's own action, is also to experience oneself as the cause of one's "self actualization as a subject"; one is responsible for one's own becoming, and one senses the moral and ethical meaning of that responsibility. This is the meaning of self-determination, that at the same time one determines one's actions and the objects of them, one also determines oneself. One is characterized by both potency and the capacity to act and, in the transition from potency to act, the structure of the dynamism inherent in all being is manifest. The transition is an actualization of becoming, from within the inner structure of an already existing being. Thus the person is simultaneously both the object and the subject of action; the one as well as the other is the ego. This is the framework that he is invoking as Pope John Paul II when he states in Laborem Exercens that work as an "actus personae" is an act by which the person "achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed in a sense becomes more a 'human being'" (9). Thus, in Laborem Exercens, the key to the social question is identified—not with the theological equivalent of a jobs program, so to speak—but with the process of self-transcendence made possible, in a unique way, through the work that we do. This "work" is not limited to the so-called professional life; implicated in Pope John Paul's argument are all forms of work, whether that is writing a report, serving a customer, changing a diaper, or mowing the lawn. It is, in part, through work done with love that we become whom we are meant to be.

Laborem Exercens also establishes the starting point for any further reflection on the different gifts that both men and women bring to the realization of the Church's social teaching. For all are persons and characterized by both potency and the capacity to act to fulfill their own potential. In addition, if it is through work that we become "more a human being," then any attempt to limit a priori the choices of either men or women in relation to whom they would become is a transgression of the highest order. This is not to deny that an argument can be made that there are certain types of occupations that are more suitable for one or the other gender, nor does this automatically trump any other considerations in the proper discernment of a vocation. But as a general principle, all persons have both the right and the obligation to respond to the gift of life by becoming fully themselves. Thus all work, understood as a vocation, becomes one of the primary vehicles through which one fulfills one's obligation to the Creator. And no one, no matter who they are, has the right to establish or sustain conditions that determine a priori that another cannot become who that other is meant to be in the eyes of God.
This argument seems to settle definitively the question of whether or not women “belong” in the workplace. Indeed, the Compendium states explicitly that the “feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society, therefore the presence of women in the workplace must also be guaranteed” (295). This statement implies two things: first, that women “belong” everywhere, and second, that this is so because women bring something to community life that is unique to female personhood. A further, if unstated implication is that whatever this something is, it is necessary to make the life of society fully human. Clearly this begs the question of what is meant by the so-called feminine genius and the nature of the unique contribution women are called to make in the process of becoming fully and authentically themselves. To this question we are now ready to turn.

The Feminine Genius

It should be noted at the outset that Pope John Paul II’s reflections on women, while unprecedented in their scope and significance, are part of a longer papal tradition, beginning with Pope Pius XII and extending through the Second Vatican Council and the papacy of both Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI. Historically the Church has always attempted to address contemporary problems; the changing roles of women that marked the twentieth century sparked not only controversy but thoughtful reflection on the part of the Magisterium. By 1971, Pope Paul VI had set up a special commission to study the problems surrounding the effective promotion of the dignity and responsibility of women. All of this is invoked by Pope John Paul II at the beginning of his 1988 Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem. The letter was written in response to the Synod of Bishops who, in October 1987, recommended that further study be devoted to the anthropological and theological bases of the “dignity of being a woman and being a man” (1). Such study was necessary in order to understand the Creator’s purpose in determining that human beings would exist only as either a man or a woman.

By now, Pope John Paul II’s reference to the “feminine genius,” which appears for the first time in this document, is well known. In Mulieris Dignitatem, he maintains that women possess a “special sensitivity which is characteristic of their femininity,” (Mulieris Dignitatem 16) and that “women are more capable than men of paying attention to another person” (Mulieris Dignitatem 18). This claim, that women possess gifts and capacities unique to them, is a central aspect of the argument found in other documents concerning the complementarity of men and women (e.g., Christifideles Laici, 1988). Men and women complement and complete each other, “not only from a physical and psychological point of view, but also ontologically” (Mulieris Dignitatem 17) and we are called
to serve each other in mutual self-giving love. We will return to this thesis shortly.

But before we consider the details of his argument, it seems important first to acknowledge an objection raised by those who fear that such a teaching could be used to perpetuate rigid stereotypical roles and the subordination of women in our culture. The concern is that Pope John Paul II may be promoting the kind of self-giving that leads to a sort of annihilation of the self, a process that women throughout history have both submitted to and fought against. This concern is understandable since, if true, it would risk demanding of women that they merely continue to give up on their hope to realize their own potential, now at the behest of the Magisterium. This would be disastrous, for if it is true that the feminine genius is needed to bring about a more human social order, how could we expect women to develop this capacity while leaving themselves behind, so to speak? If women, Catholic or otherwise, are left assuming that this is the meaning of the teaching, they would have little choice but to reject it and would be justified in doing so. Therefore care must be taken to express clearly what John Paul intends. In what follows, I will try to do so.

Pope John Paul’s argument concerning this so-called “feminine genius” can only be fully understood in light of the meaning he ascribes to personhood; it actually reflects a profound respect for the specificity of the female person. He recognizes fully that the gift of self would be an empty one, if devoid of that which constitutes it. In fact, Pope John Paul’s understanding of womanhood begins with the recognition that “being a person means striving towards self-realization” (Mulieris Dignitatem 7). Though he will point to the example of Mary and argue that this realization can only be achieved “through a sincere gift of self,” it is a gift that can only be made in an authentic act of self-determination. We will see that Mary’s gift of self issues from an authentic sense of her own personhood; it is this reality that constitutes the proper horizon for reflection on the dignity and vocation of women (Mulieris Dignitatem 5).

First, John Paul’s argument regarding the specificity of female personhood is grounded in a profoundly theological reflection on the role that Mary played in the definitive event of God’s self-revelation and the implications for both men and women of her response to God’s invitation. Jesus Christ was born of a woman, made flesh in her body, fed and nurtured through her motherhood. But this motherhood did not begin with the birth of God’s Son. It began with Mary’s fiat; it is thus not only of the flesh, but involves the whole person: body, intellect, and will. Mary’s acceptance of union with God as the Theotokos serves as the exemplar of the pure gift of grace granted to every human being, the source of their dignity: “supernatural predestination to union with the Father.” But Pope John Paul also points out that it is equally a manifestation of the exercise of her free will, through which she shares in the event of the Incarnation “with her personal and feminine ‘I’” (Mulieris Dignitatem 4). In Mulieris Dignitatem, we see again the same underlying anthropological assumption concerning the meaning of human personhood we found in Laborem Exercens.
Dignitatem it is absolutely clear that this assumption applies to women as well as to men.

Pope John Paul II argues that in Mary we find what “signifies the fullness of the perfection of what is characteristic of woman, of what is feminine.” She is “full of grace,” but this fullness does not cast nature aside or negate it. On the contrary, it perfects and ennobles it. She is not an inert and passive object to which something is merely done, an accidental means through which something is accomplished. She is a fully “authentic subject” whose “I” participates in the union affected by God’s action on her (Mulieris Dignitatem 4). That is, she is a person who recognizes fully that in saying “yes” to God, she also engages in a profoundly personal act of self-determination. Mary is actively receptive, a full actor in the unfolding drama of salvation. She represents the “culminating point, the archetype, of the personal dignity of women” because she appropriates her role consciously and intentionally.

Pope John Paul II points to the moment when Mary states that she is the “handmaid of the Lord” as evidence that she has fully grasped what it means to be a creature of God, whose mission is the same as that of her Son: to serve. She thus takes her place “within Christ’s messianic service.” Both Christ and Mary “show all people the royal dignity of service, the dignity which is joined in the closest possible way to the vocation of every person.” But the Holy Father maintains that this self-realization, whether for Mary or the rest of us, can only be achieved authentically “through a sincere gift of self,” analogous to the eternally proceeding donation of self within the communion of Divine Persons, in whose image we are made. This is the “indispensable point of departure” for grasping the truth about all human beings; it must be lived out equally by both men and women in accordance with the special properties proper to each (Mulieris Dignitatem 7). This is the context of Pope John Paul II’s argument that woman occupies a special place in God’s design. In Mary, we find the “feminine genius” in its perfected state. It consists not in passivity or a mindless meekness. It is an active receptivity, a graceful sensitivity to oneself and to the other; it is manifest in a capacity to listen and to hear the truth: that I am a creature of God and therefore called into service. It is the recognition of the unfathomable mystery of life and of the great privilege of possessing the capacity to bear it and to give birth to it.

Physical parenthood, though belonging to both man and woman, is by definition realized more fully in the woman. Her unique contact with the life developing in her womb “gives rise to an attitude towards human beings—not only towards her own child, but every human being—which profoundly marks the woman’s personality.” Indeed, motherhood develops the woman’s natural capacity to attend to other persons. She is the “first teacher” of the new human being and so has “a specific precedence over the man,” who, in a sense, learns “his own fatherhood” from her (Mulieris Dignitatem 18). As a parent, the woman bears a tremendous responsibility for the development of her child and, by extension, all of humanity. But we must hasten to add that the woman is not
able to fulfill this responsibility alone, for she is completed by the man as he is
completed by her. Both men and women are equally responsible as the molders
of the new humanity and need the gifts and insights brought to the task by each.

A crucial undercurrent in this analysis is Pope John Paul II’s fundamental
argument concerning the complementarity of man and woman. This is an essen-
tial aspect that is central to his vision of the Church’s social teaching as ex-
pressed by the authors of the Compendium. Indeed, the fundamental comple-
mentarity of men and women is invoked by the authors in establishing the
anthropological foundations for their exploration of the social tradition (147).
Quoting both Mulieris Dignitatem and the 1995 Letter to Women, the Compen-
dium states that women and men are each other’s complement, that they com-
plete each other physically, psychologically, and also ontologically. In their “re-
lational uni-duality,” men and women share responsibility for not only “the
work of procreation and family life, but the creation of history itself” (147).
Men and women share equal responsibility for the task of transforming the earth
and creating culture, but they are “marked neither by a static and undifferenti-
ated equality nor by an irreconcilable and inexorably conflictual difference.”
Rather, their relationship is characterized by an interpersonal reciprocity that
both enriches them and confers on them the joint responsibility for the condi-
tions of life on earth.

It seems clear from these statements that we are called not only to under-
stand this complementarity but also to live it out. Otherwise we remain forever
imprisoned within the alienation that took place in the Garden of Eden. Our re-
demption by Christ brings to us the grace that could enable us to return to our
more natural state. In this state, our relationships would be characterized by mu-
tual self-giving and deep respect for the unique gifts possessed by both men and
women. It would be a grievous mistake for women to try to imitate men in their
approach to life’s challenges. For one thing, women have their own resources
and must bring them to bear on our contemporary context. For another, men are
equally affected by original sin; they have their own blind spots to overcome.
Women must take care that, in their efforts to find their place in the public
arena, they remember to develop what is most excellent about their own person-
hood. The task orientation often attributed to men is sterile and without meaning
when uninformred by the relationships toward which all human activity is or-
dered. Women should remain steadfast in bringing this dimension of human
living to the forefront of the social order.

This emphasis on relationship (which does not preclude the observable fact
of the female capacity to get things done!) is grounded in the woman’s capacity
for motherhood, a phenomenon that may be either physical or spiritual but
which always “implies from the beginning a special openness to the new per-
son.” The feminine genius is, in part, a function of this openness. For the woman
is particularly aware of the relational aspects of human endeavor, while at the
same time fully equipped to accomplish the tasks necessary to bring the effort to
completion. But she sees the whole picture, or at least senses when something is
missing. In this regard, she is uniquely gifted to participate in the development
of the social order. All women possess these gifts, at least in their potency, whether or not they bear children, because all women possess the psycho-physical makeup that orders them toward motherhood, whether biological or spiritual. The capacity for motherhood is linked to the very structure of a woman’s personhood (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 18). It is a prerogative that cannot be relinquished, for virginity, the opposite of physical motherhood, can itself lead to a kind of spiritual motherhood; it is a state of radical openness to all persons (*Mulieris Dignitatem* 21).

But it is not openness without intelligence or without the full engagement of a free and self-determining subject. The feminine genius does not represent a subtraction from the specificity of female personhood. It is in fact an additional capacity, found, not exclusively in women, but found most especially in women. Finally it is important to note that Pope John Paul II does not have to appeal to the Thomist metaphysical tradition here, nor is he adverting to science. I think we can say that, in addition to his exegesis of the Scriptural account of the Annunciation, he is applying a phenomenological method to the data of experience in attempting to understand and articulate an observable phenomenon. He is thus grounding his thesis in the lived experience of both men and women who have encountered firsthand the phenomenon of the feminine genius.

**The Significance of Pope John Paul II’s Call for a New Feminism**

Pope John Paul II has not only argued that women possess a genius unique to female personhood, but he has also argued that this genius is critical in the transformation of culture. In his 1995 encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, he makes it very clear that women occupy a “unique and decisive” place in creating conditions that would serve to make life more human for all. In fact, he states that such a process depends on women taking the necessary steps “to promote a ‘new feminism’ which rejects the temptation of imitating models of ‘male domination,’ in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation.” This new feminism is to “bear witness to the meaning of genuine love, of that gift of self and of that acceptance of others which are present in a special way in the relationship of husband and wife, but which ought also to be at the heart of every other interpersonal relationship” (*Evangelium Vitae* 99). There can be no doubt of the meaning of these passages. Women are not only to resist their own oppression; they are assigned the task of bringing the social order into alignment with Divine love.

It is significant that Pope John Paul II introduces this idea so late in the encyclical (it is in section 99 out of 105 sections total). The implication is that everything that came before it is to be included in the call for women to “overcome
all discrimination, violence and exploitation.” The response by feminists to *Evangelium Vitae* often centers on the controversy over abortion and the conflicting claims of the mother’s rights vis-à-vis those of her unborn child. But this is not the only issue at stake; women on either side of the debate should not allow themselves to be sidetracked by it. Pope John Paul II is claiming that women have a critical role to play in alleviating suffering wherever “life is weak and defenseless,” including the ancient scourges of “poverty, hunger, endemic diseases, violence and war,” as well as the new threats appearing “on an alarmingly vast scale” (*Evangelium Vitae* 3). John Paul II is pleading with all of humanity to consider the modern reality and to respond to it:

And how can we fail to consider the violence against life done to millions of human beings, especially children, who are forced into poverty, malnutrition and hunger because of an unjust distribution of resources between peoples and between social classes? And what of the violence inherent not only in wars as such but in the scandalous arms trade, which spawns the many armed conflicts which stain our world with blood? What of the spreading of death caused by reckless tampering with the world’s ecological balance, by the criminal spread of drugs, or by the promotion of certain kinds of sexual activity, which, besides being morally unacceptable, also involve grave risks to life? It is impossible to catalog completely the vast array of threats to human life, so many are the forms, whether explicit or hidden, in which they appear today! (*Evangelium Vitae* 10)

Clearly, the world is in great need of “genuine love.” We really must ask at this point in our history: from where, from whom will it come?

It is extremely significant that the *Compendium* refers to *Evangelium Vitae* (as it does 39 times) for it means that these issues are now explicitly included in the social vision of the Church. Of course, they always were. But the broader horizon invoked by the *Compendium* requires us to consider the interrelationships between the various aspects of our social condition. And it becomes clearer that issues of economic justice are inextricably linked to the cultural milieu and the many forms of oppression which can characterize it. More importantly here, it means that the call to a new feminism, and all that it implies, is now an aspect of the Church’s social tradition as well.

As the authors of the *Compendium* state, the feminine genius is necessary to all aspects of our social life. It needs to be made explicit that, in addition to making a professional contribution, women have a natural role to play in identifying and criticizing economic institutions that fail to promote human dignity properly or refuse to acknowledge the legitimate claims of family life on the economic sphere. This critique rightly includes government bodies and other institutions that fail to provide adequate structures to insure that the unique vocation of women is taken fully into account. It includes concerns for equal pay for equal work, for access to education, information, and positions of authority, and for the freedom to exercise her own individuality. The woman’s sensitivity to relationships charges her with a special responsibility to ensure not only that the
dignity of others is respected, but also that social, political, and cultural institutions pay due attention to the relational needs of individuals.

Pope John Paul II argues that woman gets her moral and spiritual strength from the awareness that God has entrusted her with the care of humanity. This role was given to her in the Garden of Eden and is reaffirmed with the birth of every child. The considerable moral force of woman comes from this often unconscious awareness. It makes her strong, even when she finds herself in situations of social discrimination (Mulieris Dignitatem 30). The moral authority of woman, displayed in so many human situations, is a gift from God. This gift, her feminine genius, has been given to her in order to fulfill her role in creating a just and human social order. Her true genius will only become fully visible when both women and men acknowledge its existence and seek truly to complement each other in the great task of creating human history.

Notes


5. Schuck, One, 156, as well as Byron, “Social Question,” 16; Byron points to Schuck’s work throughout his essay.


7. Schuck, One, 4.


10. John Paul II in Centesimus Annus 13 argues that the economic sphere cannot and does not exist in isolation from the two other dimensions of community life: the political/juridical and the moral/cultural. Unless the economic sphere is circumscribed by the right ordering of values and action in these other spheres, it becomes an amoral and illegitimate activity.

11. Schuck, One, 180.
17. Cf. John Paul II, Address to the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Puebla, Mexico (28 January 1979), III/2: *AAS* 71 (1979), 199. [This note is reproduced from the *Compendium*.]
18. John Paul points out that the instruction to “fill the earth and subdue it,” a statement commonly understood to refer to work, comes before the fall of Adam and Eve. Thus work is not to be seen as a punishment for sin, but is a “fundamental dimension” of human existence. It reflects human nature in its original state of innocence. The fall has made it more burdensome, but through work, the human person reflects the creative action of God.
21. Wojtyla, 64. Wojtyla is not speaking here of becoming in the ontological sense as when something comes into being out of nonexistence, but in the relative sense, with reference to an already existing being.
23. Such as the controversial question of women and the priesthood. Out of necessity, I am bracketing this issue in the present deliberations, just as I am also setting aside the question of the suitability of women for occupations in combat, heavy construction and American professional football. I do not intend to equate the priesthood with such occupations; I merely regard such issues as peripheral to the focus of this chapter.
24. Italics added.
25. Indeed this assumption can be found in virtually all of John Paul II’s writings. It begs for further exploration in order to illuminate the true significance of his teaching.
Part III

Implications
Chapter 11

Concrete Applications to U.S. Research and Action

Anthony J. Blasi

Beginning with the 1965 Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes) of the Second Vatican Council, Catholic social doctrine has been describing itself as open to the various social sciences and as ready to learn from them. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church locates this learning from the social sciences within the very process of the development of doctrine. Gaudium et Spes’s expressions of openness confirmed what had already been a fact in some influential circles of the American Catholic Church for some time. Pope Leo XIII’s endorsement of Thomistic thought, a system that contrasted with the platonic tradition of philosophy, highlighted the importance of factual information; and early on in the history of the Catholic University of America, founded by the American Catholic bishops in 1889, social science departments were established. A key figure there was William Kerby, who had been sent to Europe to study sociology and enrolled in courses in Berlin given by the economist Gustav Schmoller and the sociologist Georg Simmel, before earning a Ph.D. in political science at Louvain. Simmel had a particularly strong influence on Kerby’s own work. Kerby not only assumed responsibility for a sociology program at Catholic University and recruited its faculty but also founded a school of social work. His sociological perspective was influential in the church publication he founded—the American Ecclesiastical Review—and the many retreats he conducted for the American clergy.

Prior to Vatican II there was a cadre of intellectuals situated in an organic relationship with the American working class. Most of the Catholic population consisted of members of that class, and the more intellectually inclined of the clergy, especially the Irish Americans (whose first language was English, a fact that gave them an educational advantage over other Catholic ethnic groups), identified with worker’s issues. William J. Kerby (mentioned above), John A.
Ryan, Raymond W. Murray, C.S.C., and Paul Hanly Furfey, among others, found in the social encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* resources for legitimating their sometimes controversial progressive views. Consequently Catholic social teaching found avid advocates in America, advocates who were influential in the ecclesiastical circles of the nation. The empirical side of this genuinely American Catholic tradition reached a zenith during the time of the second Vatican Council, when it became something of a fad for a diocese to have a sociologically trained “pastoral planner.”

Much of this began to diminish in 1968, after Pope Paul VI reversed the conclusions of the Vatican commission he had established to study the birth control question. The pastoral planners, after all, took demography seriously. The hierarchy continued to formulate sincere statements amplifying and applying the social doctrines, and a significant percentage of clergy, religious, and laity continued to take social issues seriously. Indeed, it could be said that the Catholic lobbyists in Washington and in the state capitals were the most influential voices for workers rights, next to those of organized labor, and for the rights of the poor and marginalized in the country. Nevertheless, little has been heard of Catholic Social Doctrine in the Catholic schools and parishes.

One of the factors in this change in climate has been the economic success of the American Catholic population. By the time of Vatican II, Catholics were becoming very middle class. Parochial schools enabled many American Catholics to enter the ranks of the professions. This development paralleled what was happening in the wider American population, which was also becoming increasingly educated. Intellectuals once worked their way through college; enrolling in graduate programs meant living in poverty for a time, surviving off of meager grants and sharing space with the down and out. Today people still work their way through college, but the “colleges” are now more often than not community colleges and public branch campus universities whose degrees confer less status and security. The intelligentsia does not come from the ranks of these erstwhile students but rather are the sons and daughters of yesterday’s intellectuals. They come from suburban high schools and attend elite institutions. They are less political and more conventional than their parents, and they do not lead a bohemian existence during graduate school. Consequently we have a new generation of “conservative” intellectuals, rugged individuals who have never had to rough it, who exert their energies revising the analyses written in the past. As such, they are as common among Catholic intellectuals as any other part of the American population. Indeed, those who do come from the proletarian strata under such circumstances may be tempted more to over-conform to the new elite than identify with low-status ethnic groups.

What this suggests is that there are no longer many “organic intellectuals” ready to give cultural expression to the worldview of the disinherited. Rather, the Church’s professional social thinkers need to pose fairly specific questions and recruit specialists to answer them. In short, the institutional Church needs to promote a research agenda that addresses theses that may have been accepted as truths but are to be treated as falsifiable propositions. That can be politically
difficult since the point of empirical research is to discover whether arguments that have or might have been used in advancing a church teaching turn out to be true, not to prove them true deductively. Andrew Greeley observes that the distinction is lost on many priests and bishops; he summarizes the belief of these as follows: "There is no possible distinction between fact and value. Thus, it is the obligation of the scholar to report the way reality should be (which is the way the Pope and the bishops say it should be) and not the way it is." The late Joseph H. Fichter, SJ, noted that many religious officials, whom he termed "religionists," unwittingly engaged in a secularizing compartmentalization of religion from everyday life in their arguments against objective social scientific inquiry into religious life:

At the same time the religionists, especially some of the full-time functionaries of religion, tend to fence off the religious role as a sort of sacred property. It must not be submitted to the scrutiny of the social psychologist, the sociologist, or the cultural anthropologist.8

Since the present essay is not a catechetical work wherein one would seek to instruct the reader about the full implications of the Christian doctrine of creation, I advise those who adhere to such a religionist view of social science simply not to read what follows.

Research Concerning Family Issues

The family as an institution has taken any number of forms, all of them cultural constructs at least to some extent. The only cross-cultural constant seems to be, at least for ordinary people, that there is an incest taboo; it is contrary to the social norms to marry or have sexual relations with one's parents, siblings, or children. The reference to "ordinary people" is simply a qualification necessitated by the occasional practice in a few monarchies for siblings to marry for dynastic reasons. One might also note an exception from Sumerian society, of which there is a shadow in the patriarchal legends in the Hebrew scriptures, whereby a patriarch, in order to guarantee inheritances to grandchildren by a specific daughter-in-law, would adopt that daughter-in-law as a daughter, thereby having the son marry his sister. Church teaching maintains that the indissoluble monogamous marriage of a man with a woman is natural. This claim appears to require some basic research.

First it is necessary to explain exactly what is meant by "natural." What are the criteria by which natural phenomena can be distinguished from unnatural? It would not appear to be the case that "natural" simply means "from nature," since all manner of human behavior is prompted by natural impulses. One might regard the clear separation of roles as fundamental to a natural order within the family; this would be consistent with the incest taboo. Thus, the political construct of sibling marriage in the Ptolemaic Dynasty would be deemed unnatural.
Empirical research could look for harmful consequences of inter-role conflict in families.

The indissoluble monogamous marriage of a man and woman is said to symbolize and make present God’s eternal covenant with humanity. How well does it really do this? Is there a way to measure this symbolization? Can marriage make the covenant present without an adequate symbolization? Do all alternative forms of family really fail to symbolize or make the covenant present in some way? Need every dysfunctional monogamous marriage of a man and a woman be maintained and every potentially functional alternative be discouraged? What are the consequences for the partners and for children of maintaining a dysfunctional union? Many pastors allow for alternatives quietly—that is, without openly “causing scandal”—on the basis of what they know intuitively. Are they wise in doing this? Shouldn’t something be said for institutional honesty? Could there be measurable contributions to well-being from highlighting the more subtle phenomenon of the functionality of a family, or does the making present of God’s covenant with humanity take the form of a legal system that is found in few if any legal orders of the modern world?

There is sociological research that suggests marital stability correlates with a number of desirable outcomes of the socialization of children. That does not answer the question, however, whether the detrimental effects on children come from divorce or from the defective relationships in the family that lead up to divorce. Research needs to go beyond merely comparing the well-being of children from intact and non-intact families and focusing on the quality of life within families. Then there are the alternatives: Are there really detrimental consequences of same-sex unions where children are adopted? There is little by way of empirical research that suggests there is—much assertion but little by way of research. Quality-of-life research also needs to be conducted on various kinds of polygynous marriage; there are too few cases of polyandrous marriage to establish much of an empirical baseline for that type. Let’s hypothesize, for example, that polygyny tends toward greater stability than monogamy; do any advantages that arise from that greater stability outweigh any disadvantages that arise from conflict among wives? Is the quality of husband-wife relationships impaired by the polygynous situation? These are empirical questions that require research. Those pertaining to polygyny are especially germane to some Christian missions.

As noted in a previous chapter, Catholic social teaching maintains that the legalization of divorce and of same-sex unions detracts from the respect accorded in a society to the monogamous marriage of a man and a woman. This is an argument that really needs to be tested with empirical research. First it is necessary to find a way of measuring the respect accorded to traditional monogamous marriage. A simple recitation of divorce statistics will not do since the argument will then be a tautology: Divorce is an indicator of divorce. Straightforward questionnaire items asking how important marriage is would also fail to yield useful data; respect is not a verbal pattern but a behavioral one. The
needed research may well begin by presenting subjects with video depictions of strained family situations and asking the subjects for their comments.

**Human Work**

The *Compendium* notes that Jesus was a man of work. References to him in the Christian scriptures as coming from the household of a carpenter suggest that this is true enough, but what is the image of Jesus that is actually communicated to Christians by their churches? On one extreme the earthly Jesus can be lost in the imagery of the Pantocrator and on the other extreme such earthly images as the Crucified and the Good Shepherd miss the theme of work altogether. The poverty of Jesus receives due attention during the Christmas season, if only by way of a protest against the commercialization of the feast, but what image is present in prayerful inspiration? This is an empirical question that lends itself to scientific inquiry. On the one hand one might sample religious literature, homiletic texts, and works of religious art. On the other hand, one might sample believers and elicit their images of Jesus.

The whole issue of the subjective dimension of work, which is to have priority over the objective, begs for inquiry. Which occupations occasion a degree of self-actualization and which do not? Which occasion more and which less? Does technology enhance and detract from it? Do large corporate structures enhance self-determination and small businesses detract from it, or vice-versa? If there is a difference at all, how significant is it? Is autonomy on the rise or in decline? Answering such questions requires good indicators of subsidiarity and autonomy and good measures of work-related self-actualization. They also require a circumspect analysis of routine—whether it creates opportunities for reflection by economizing on energy or whether it ties the worker to a dehumanizing monotony.

I think the phenomenon of consumerism on one end of economic activity needs to be evaluated in terms of its consequences for the nature of productive work on the other. The worker who produces for the market participates in a collective structure that typically aims at profits rather than quality of the product in question, and sales rather than needs. This holds the potential of rendering the effort exerted in the workplace meaningless. It could well denature cultural products such as music, art, cinema, education, and communications. The consumer who buys into market phenomena, literally, may well be duped about the possibilities that could or should be possible within the cultural realm. Scholars in the Marxian tradition refer to this as "alienation."

How widespread is this kind of alienation? One thinks of artists who paint a tree, shore, or sunset over and over again as canvasses go by in an assembly line so that furniture stores can be well stocked with "art." On reads about politicians who decide not to run for re-election out of frustration over having to spend most of their time raising campaign funds. One sees carpenters busily construct-
ing spacious houses that most people could never afford to live in. It would be very difficult to conduct research on the problem since the very questions one would ask workers would raise issues in their minds that their employers would object to and that the workers themselves may try to avoid diligently. It would require informal observational research, much in the manner of the “slow journalism” version of sociology. The resultant monographs would be easily attacked for not being “objective.” Few sponsors or funders of such work would tolerate the resultant controversy.

There is another aspect to work alienation that is quite relevant to religion but rarely considered by religionists. Simple observation at Sunday services reveals a tendency in working-class congregations and parishes to dress “up” and in upper middle-class ones to dress “down.” Both populations are trending away from their workplace attire. There is an actual sense that faith and family should stand in contrast to what goes on in the workplace. Whatever the circumstances may be at work, people sense that they dominate too much of life. People want to symbolically demarcate the sacred from the occupational. They want to compartmentalize. The churches can simply accommodate this situation by providing a weekly escape, but they might also cultivate the kind of analysis of our life circumstances that the Compendium suggests.

Economic Life

As noted in a previous chapter, Catholic social thought applies a different yardstick to economic arrangements than does classical economic theory. There is a concern for the dignity of the individual rather than only the maximization of gain and minimization of loss, and there is a concern for the common good, which is not quite the same thing as gross domestic product since it concerns the distributive aspect of the domestic product. Our present focus is on a research agenda that would follow from these approaches of Catholic social thought.

Beginning at the micro level, one would want to know how much income would be necessary for respectable survival in a community and whether a reasonable work week is obtainable and, if obtainable, whether it provides the requisite level of income. At the turn of the twentieth century a research tradition began that focused on such issues; the general program of research thrived in the “sociology caucus” in the American Economic Association that in 1906 became what is now the American Sociological Association. Part of that kind of research tradition continues in the federal government in the form of the calculation of the poverty line, though the line is drawn at a lower level—mere survival—than the early researchers had in mind. But as noted, income is only one of the relevant variables; there are also such factors as the availability of employment, the amount of time required for gainful employment, and the number of individuals who need to hold full-time employment to support a household (note the chapter by Larrivee, elsewhere in this volume). The relevant inquiries do not end there,
however. It may be necessary to raise the minimum wage in order for one full-
time employee to support a family, and some would maintain that raising the
cost of labor for employers leads to a reduction in the availability of employ-
ment in general. If a minimum wage that is set high enough to be a living wage
has such an effect, some other measure needs to be found to produce more em-
ployment opportunities. For example, allowing tax deductions from business
income for labor-saving devices—whether under the form of investment credits
or depreciation over time—needs to be re-evaluated. If a business could only
deduct the actual cost of labor and then have to contribute to a payroll tax for
social security as well, while it would be able to obtain a full tax credit for in-
esting in machinery, the tax code would make it artificially more profitable to
replace people with technology. It is one thing for technology to be adopted
where it is genuinely more efficient and effective, but it is quite another matter
to promote it with contrived advantages. A relevant line of research would focus
on the impact of such legal contrivances on employment opportunities.

Similarly, there is the whole current question of medical insurance. As an
unintended outcome of wage and price controls during World War II, health
insurance came to be a job-related "fringe benefit" in the United States; corpora-
tions sought to hold onto employees during the war by offering such benefits in
the absence of being able to raise wages. Consequently we have today a society
stratified by health coverage. Some occupations typically enjoy health coverage
and some do not. Employers who provide family medical coverage may indi-
rectly subsidize the labor (sometimes part-time) of their employees' family
members who work at jobs that do not come with medical coverage. This and
various other forms of cost shifting render the labor market less efficient—a
concern of classical economics; but they also threaten the viability of the medi-
cal coverage arrangements as a whole. Moreover, alternative plans paid for out
of taxes are devised for the retired and the poor. Obviously the market mecha-
nism is operating for only a portion of the national population, if it can be
thought to be operating at all. Politically, it seems that only the troublesome
prospect of public funds being used for abortion has prevented the advent of
socialized medicine or at least public medical insurance in America—something
thought through by Richard M. Nixon and his major campaign contributor, the
insurance magnate W. Clement Stone. It is not an accident but a simple political
phenomenon that our public medical insurance is generally aimed at retirees.

Before going further toward macro issues, there is the whole question of be-
ing poor in spirit, or in more contemporary terms of not being swept into con-
sumerism. What is the impact on the individual's work ethic if one is not par-
ticularly enticed by earning the greatest sum of money possible? The famous
sociologist, economist, legal scholar, and politician Max Weber observed that
immigrant farm workers in the east of Germany worked only enough to support
their traditional standard of living, so that giving them a raise simply led them to
work less. He may well have been accurate in his observations, but it was a mat-
ter of people leaving their homes and communities and taking up a migratory
existence; one may well want to quit as soon as possible under such circum-
stances. Whether people who are "poor in spirit" work more than others or less, and whether they are better workers or poorer ones than others, are empirical questions; one can think of good rationales for all four possibilities. Provided that one can measure spiritual poverty, research on the matter would be interesting.

Turning to macro issues, it becomes necessary to conceptualize the "common good" more thoroughly. Adam Smith believed that capitalism, not fettered or frustrated by government, promotes the common good. Capitalism, as he conceived of it, entailed price competition. Total or near monopolies would be opposed to capitalism of that kind. Moreover, assets would be plowed back into productive purposes, not squandered in the conspicuously unproductive showmanship about which Thorstein Veblen would later warn us. Consequently, maintaining Smithian capitalism requires anti-monopoly initiatives on the part of government and taxation schedules that could potentially divert idle capital into the market during downward portions of the business cycle. Through much of the twentieth century, governments were appending weights and mechanisms to the capitalist system in order to maintain its balance. Moreover, some sectors of society might not be sufficiently integrated into economic activity and thereby hold down the level of economic activity needed for the common good; consequently, racial and ethnic equity becomes an economic issue as well. One is reminded of the complex celestial system of epicycles used to explain the retrograde motion of the planets in the sky that Copernicus confronted. The common good comes to mean everything—race relations, breaking up monopolies, setting interest rates, taxation, etc.

One wonders whether analysis is enhanced by placing such divergent issues into the single category of the common good. For research purposes, one may well need a schedule of more specific principles as bases for a research agenda and leave the principle of the common good for matters that fall rightly outside the scope of private enterprise. The profit motive is not very functional in medicine, education, disaster response, and national defense. One may make a case that it is only marginally functional in transport and pensions. These would seem to be the relevant arenas of the common good, and an appropriate research paradigm would measure it as such. If some people are afflicted by a communicable disease, all are in danger. If an inadequately educated employee or official botches an important work, all are endangered. Gross domestic product and poverty line do not capture what is at issue in the common good. A calculus of "what if" outcomes needs to be developed.

The Political Community

The principle of subsidiarity alone suggests an extensive research agenda. In social scientific circles the relevant studies are indexed under the term federalism, although subsidiarity and federalism are not exactly the same thing. Sub-
sidiarity as a principle would accord the smaller units contained within a larger one jurisdiction over what they can do well on their own as a matter of entitlement. Such entitlement may be proper to a local level of government (as would be implied in federalism) or to a free-standing entity such as a family or business (where it would be a matter of limited government). The former raises issues of the distribution of powers: those residing in the higher level of government, those concurrent in two or more levels, those where cooperation occurs in two or more levels, and those residing exclusively in one or more lower levels of government. In the United States, the power to print or coin money resides solely in the national government, and that is for the common good, since implementing orderly economic policies was historically made inefficient by the multiplication of currencies. A concurrent power in the United States is that of levying taxes, while a cooperative one would be higher education, where the states establish universities and the federal government provides the bulk of student loans. Most police powers and the administration of primary and secondary schools and of welfare agencies are “reserved” to the states and the local corporations they establish. That is certainly not the only way to do things; smaller nations can easily operate in a more centralized manner. In Canada the criminal code is largely set by the national government, though the provinces enforce most of the laws. The empirical question is, “When does a pattern of delegated, concurrent, cooperative, and reserved powers work for justice and when does it not?” The American experience has found that national powers need to be expanded to overcome the effects of local prejudices. That goal was accomplished in the twentieth century with respect to race relations not only by the enactment and enforcement of the civil rights and voting laws but also by linking the power of the purse, under the form of the federal income tax coupled to “grants in aid to the states,” to the states’ and their agencies’ compliance with federal policies. Here the expansion of national authority and individual rights worked together against state prerogatives.

How much is the common good promoted when one level of government becomes the protector of individual rights against their violation by another level? Under what conditions do the lower levels of government properly protect rights against their infringement by higher levels of government? A comparison with Canada is instructive: The fact that one province is predominantly French-speaking is essential to the political dynamics involved in protecting the cultural rights of the Francophones throughout the country. A similar dynamic is developing in the United States right now, where a significant Latino electorate participates in the politics of some states—most notably California—and may guarantee cultural rights in the future. Such dynamics are not limited to language and ethnic issues; the economic interests of farmers and organized labor commonly arise in different states. Note that the relevant political dynamics are not matters of constitutional structures of delegated, concurrent, cooperative, and reserved functions but rather the existence of different political jurisdictions from which interest groups can insert their issues into a national debate. The localized interest groups can be accommodated in the national legislative processes.
The question of limited government often arises in matters such as free speech, freedom of assembly, and family prerogatives over education. Here there are "trade-offs." Free speech is for the common good not only because individuals have rights but also because government subject to inquiry and criticism will be better government. Tyrannies are sometimes established when the citizenry is passive and incompetent, but in the long term tyrannies tend to become inoperative in matters of the common good and incompetent in general. One might hypothesize that this is so for the operation of universities: Passive faculties may allow their senates to be co-opted or to become merely honorary shams, with the result that the administrations operate without scrutiny in a corrupt and incompetent manner. Some comparative study across a number of institutions of higher education may reveal whether the hypothesis is proven true. On the other hand, free speech is also the occasion of unchecked misinformation and pornography. In the American experience the courts have favored freedom more than the prevention of false claims and pornography, but such prevention is not altogether lacking. While political and artistic expressions tend to be protected absolutely, business expression can be limited for purposes of the common good. Freedom of assembly is similarly necessary for limiting government; critics must be able to organize, yet that freedom has never justified conspiracies simply to perpetrate crimes. Families have the freedom to opt for private schools for their children, but in the United States the states can set standards that apply to all schools—public and private. A lack of standards in education can work against the common good if the private schools neglect those parts of the curriculum deemed necessary for the welfare of the students and necessary for their successful participation in the wider society. Empirical study is needed to determine whether "home schooling" and all kinds of "charter schools" really cover all that is necessary—not only in terms of subject matter but also, and perhaps more importantly, in such curriculum dimensions as objectivity and ability to understand, appreciate, and evaluate multiple viewpoints. In the general area of education, a line of research might determine a minimal cognitive standard, comparable to the poverty level in the economic realm, under which educational supplements might be supplied. Such a standard would have to be much more sophisticated than the batteries of tests used at the present time.

Beyond government, though not beyond its responsibility, there is the question of whether large corporations work for the common good. Historically, this has arisen in questions of economic market monopolies and oligopolies. Research might go beyond the issue of competition: at what size do the firms in a given business sector cease treating their customers and employees reasonably? Firms that are very small may well mistreat their employees; it is not a matter of bigness always being a negative feature. A modicum of impersonality allows a comfortable degree of freedom, both in the activity of the employee and of the customer. But large-scale bureaucratic routines that work only "in the main" have victims. Only research can establish the kinds and degree of such victimization and the scale of organization with which they are associated.
Might the advantages of pluralism and relative autonomy work for the common good in the Church? It has been commonly noted that the principle of subsidiarity needs to be applied to Church governance and that the principle seems to exist in a tension with both the monarchical form of organization and, since the mid-nineteenth century, the centralizing tendencies of the Vatican curia. Curiously, in the recent scandals over pedophilia and its cover-up the absence of effective individual rights has led to victims having to resort to the civil courts to seek redress of their grievances. What is missing in the Church is a lay-run governance sector—that is, one not answerable to the ordinaries who have proven to be too passive with respect to the common good and insufficiently competent in dealing with the problem. The issue has been pressed by the secular guarantees of free speech (exercised by independent Catholic publications, especially the National Catholic Reporter, and the secular newspapers) and, as noted, by resort to the secular courts. Experiments with the empowerment of lay bodies merit scientific attention. It would be particularly interesting to study any parish councils that are genuinely autonomous.

Social Doctrine and Ecclesial Action

While there are several topics to which the Compendium devotes separate chapters—the international community, safeguarding the environment, the promotion of peace—they are considered here together with chapter 12, “Social Doctrine and Ecclesial Action,” for the simple reason that the most salient item for empirical research is the impact of Church teaching on people’s approaches to these matters. The research questions include the extent to which the teachings on these topics are actually presented to church members and, if presented, what impact they might have. The distinction is not merely analytic, since there is a real question about whether the official teachings are mere documents or whether they really serve as the basis for much preaching and teaching. The research interest can extend beyond teachings per se and encompass the impressions made by ecclesiastical practices; for example, subsidiarity was largely respected in the Church prior to the Council of Trent. After that Council considerable uniformity came to be imposed on church life in general, culminating in 1917 with a codification of canon law. The 1917 Code, as well as the 1983 Code that replaced it, established a centralized and uniform governance that did not previously exist through most of the Church’s history. It was even forbidden to translate the 1917 Code from Latin, lest plural understandings of it arise, and a commission was established to articulate “authentic” interpretations. Questions for empirical research are, “What impact does this have on everyday Church life? Do people fail to fully participate in Church life because they apprehend it as a distant and alien matter on account of the high degree of centralization and uniformity centering in distant Vatican commissions?”
The questions for research are, "How much treatment do the various social teachings receive in the Catholic press, the Sunday homilies, and the curricula in Catholic schools? How much spirituality is cultivated on such themes as peace, regard for the neighbor, and simplicity in living in catechetical programs such as the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (R.C.I.A.)? Is the treatment of social doctrines in the Catholic press in general as mixed as in the newspaper of my diocese? What actually is taught as religion in the Catholic schools?" I have heard forthright homilies on peace and immigrant rights, and even on justice, but then I make a point of attending a church where I can expect to hear that now and then. What is the usual fare in Sunday homilies? I know my own annual session on social justice in a local R.C.I.A. program was routinely canceled for such special events as a bishop's visit or pastor's question-and-answer session. And the environmental issue seems to be neglected generally.

The second general research issue for ecclesial action concerns what impact church teaching has when it does occur. This can be considered in terms of the effectiveness both of the message and of the medium. When the Catholic bishops of the United States issued The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response in May 1983, there was a significant response. There may or may not have been a notable alteration in poll indicators of anti-militarist sentiment, but individuals did resign from war-industry jobs, and the Catholic peace movement took on new life. There may well be great potential if other teachings, for example, on environmentalism, were promoted as strikingly. Various American prelates may well have changed minds and moved hearts in the 2007 debate over U.S. immigration policy, when they made a case for making legal immigration easier so that people can be better respected and be treated with dignity and justice. The question is not how many minds and hearts; the number of them is as much a matter of the medium employed as the message. The question is that of the potential residing in the message itself. Focus group research may be able to explore the matter. One could explore the responsiveness, for example, to life issues versus contraception as an issue, or whether there is a responsiveness to medical justice issues versus euthanasia as an issue. It is not that teachings that do not "sell" should be abandoned, but that energy and resources should not be diverted so much from those that do "sell" that the latter would be neglected. To a great extent it is a "zero sum" situation; what is not used effectively is lost.

As for the teachings that can be communicated with considerable success, research is needed to explore how best to communicate them. Personally, I suspect that demonstrations and press releases do not work well with life issues. People who are not sensitized to life at a tender age will not even be moved by a homily on abortion or a newspaper editorial about war. The parochial or religiously-sponsored high school may be the best instrument for sensitizing people to life. Children's sensitivities are capable of being heightened by such experiences as helping with the severely retarded and visiting the elderly. Appropriate attitudes can be cultivated and expanded to include new centers of attention—all in an intellectually honest manner. Once a person learns that one finds the greatest joy in the happiness of the other and comes to feel that there is no benefit in
denigrating and distancing oneself from others, the psychological basis of insensitivity toward the afflicted, unborn, undeveloped, foreign, or simply different is undermined. The psychological basis of “choice” and militarism—as well as, I should add, such hostile forms of “pro life” activism as bombing abortion clinics and demonstrating at military funerals—is insensitivity. Sensitization is better accomplished in the school than amidst the heated rhetoric of the culture wars. Moreover, the entire plausibility of political activism on behalf of the pro life position on abortion has been entirely undermined by its de facto alliance with militarism and with an indifference toward workers’ rights, poverty, women’s rights, and immigrants’ rights. Again, all this is what I personally suspect to be the case. Empirical research is needed to see whether these hypotheses are true.

Conclusion

By the time of the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church reached the point of verbalizing acceptance of social scientific research. Old habits die hard, however, and such Catholic sociologists of the post-Council era as Joseph Fichter and Andrew Greeley wrote of encountering resistance and even hostility from the American bishops when conducting research. This is understandable since the official Church, not to mention the many pastors and teachers who devote themselves to communicating official Church teachings to the faithful, has a considerable body of social teachings to which it is already committed and which it presents as truth. The present essay does not argue for or against changes in any one teaching as such but rather proposes a methodological suspension of conviction so that what facts as may be discovered by honest research can be considered and what implications might be drawn from them allowed to enter into theological discussions. There is a considerable research agenda at hand, and we should not fear it, but rather look for opportunities for a more adequate comprehension of truth to be achieved.

Notes


6. Whether the newly established *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* represents a revival remains to be seen.
9. A personal friend of the present writer in the American hierarchy, now deceased, progressive on many social justice issues, was absolutely allergic to the research conducted by the late Sister Marie Augusta Neal.
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Contributors

Anthony J. Blasi is professor of sociology at Tennessee State University. He earned the M.A. and Ph.D in sociology at the University of Notre Dame, the M.A. in biblical studies at the University of St. Michael's College (Toronto), and the Th.D. in religious ethics at Regis College and the University of Toronto. An author of many books and articles in sociology and the study of religion, he served in 2001 as president of the Association for the Sociology of Religion. His most recent volumes are Transition from Vowed to Lay Ministry in American Catholicism (with Joseph F. Zimmerman) and Diverse Histories of American Sociology (editor and contributor).

Carroll Bourg is professor of sociology emeritus, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, and the past editor of the journal Sociology of Religion (then under the title Sociological Analysis), 1973-1980. He earned the Ph.D. in sociology at Brandeis University and served as president of the Association for the Sociology of Religion. He is active in the national Catholic peace organization Pax Christi USA, and is the coordinator of Pax Christi Nashville.

Charles M. A. Clark is associate dean for faculty affairs and professor of economics, Tobin College of Business, and senior fellow, Vincentian Center for Church and Society, at St. John’s University, New York. He earned the M.A. and Ph.D. at the New School for Social Research. He is the author or editor of nine books, the most recent being Rediscovering Abundance: Interdisciplinary Essays on Wealth, Income and Their Distribution in the Catholic Social Tradition, and over one hundred professional publications.

Michael Coulter is associate professor of humanities and political science at Grove City College, Pennsylvania. He earned the M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Dallas. He has contributed to Perspectives on Political Science, the Journal of Markets and Morality, and the Catholic Social Science Review, and co-edited The Encyclopedia of Catholic Social Teaching, Social Science, and Social Policy.

John Larrivee is assistant professor of economics, Mount Saint Mary University. He earned the M.P.P. at Harvard University and the Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. He has contributed to the Journal of Markets and
Kevin E. Miller is assistant professor of theology at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. He has degrees in biochemistry and political philosophy, and is completing his doctoral dissertation in moral theology, “Mercy, Justice, and Politics: John Paul II on Capital Punishment,” at Marquette University. He has published in Communio, Catholic Biblical Quarterly, and New Blackfriars, and serves on the board of directors of University Faculty for Life.

James A. Montmarquet is professor of philosophy at Tennessee State University. He earned the Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of Chicago and is the author of Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility (Rowman & Littlefield 1993).

J. F. X. Paiva earned his doctorate in social welfare policy and planning at Brandeis University, and has taught social policy at several universities. He worked in migration studies, research, and training for nine years with the United Nations in New York and Southeast Asia. He helped found the Inter-University Consortium for Social Development and is at present consulting editor for Social Development Issues.

Deborah Savage is a former director of the Moss Program in Christian Social Thought and Management at the Center for Catholic Studies and is an adjunct professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas. She earned the Ph.D. in theology and philosophy at Marquette University.

Stephen Scharper is assistant professor in the Department and Center for Religious Studies at the University of Toronto. He earned the M.A. at the University of Toronto and the Ph.D. at McGill University. He has authored books and articles on environmentalism from the perspective of religious studies.

The Reverend D. Paul Sullins is associate professor of sociology and a fellow of the Life Cycle Institute for Social Research at the Catholic University of America, where he earned the Ph.D. in sociology. He has published widely on religion and social issues in major Catholic, sociological, and religious journals.

Andrew J. Weigert is professor of sociology at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. He earned the Ph.L. and M.A. at St. Louis University and the Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota. He has authored numerous articles in sociology, and the two most recent of his nine books are Self, Interaction, and Natural Environment and Religious and Secular Views on Endtime.