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George E. Garvey
The Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law

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Introduction: Catholicism's Critique of Civil Society at the Turn of the Third Millennium

GEORGE E. GARVEY[+]

The series of essays published here explores in some depth the particular body of Roman Catholic moral theology that has come to be known as the church's social teaching or, more recently, social doctrine.[1] Catholic social teaching reflects the wisdom the Roman Catholic Church brought to bear on the real and pressing social problems of the world. The sources of its insights include sacred scripture, church doctrine, Christian tradition, human reason, and natural law. The social teachings are primarily embodied in papal pronouncements, most notably a series of encyclicals beginning with Pope Leo XIII's magisterial *Rerum Novarum*,[2] various documents issued by and during the Second Vatican Council,[3] and the works of Episcopal conferences throughout the world.[4]

[+] Professor of Law, The Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law.

[1] For some time, it was not particularly clear how the social teachings fit into the Catholic taxonomy of teaching documents. Pope John Paul II resolved this by identifying the social teachings as theological and, more specifically, a part of the corpus of moral theology. POPE JOHN PAUL II, SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS [ON THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF POPULORUM PROGRESSIO] ¶ 41 (1987) [hereinafter SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS].

[2] The social encyclicals are generally considered to consist of the following: POPE LEO XIII, RERUM NOVARUM [ON CAPITAL AND LABOR] (1891) [hereinafter RERUM NOVARUM]; POPE PIUS XI, QUADRAGESIMO ANNO [ON RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SOCIAL ORDER] (1931); POPE JOHN XXIII, MATER ET MAGISTRA [ON CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS] (1961) [hereinafter MATER ET MAGISTRA]; POPE JOHN XXIII, PACEM IN TERRIS [ON ESTABLISHING UNIVERSAL PEACE] (1963); POPE PAUL VI, POPULORUM PROGRESSIO [ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLES] (1967); POPE PAUL VI, OCTOGESIMA ADVENIENS [ON THE EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF RERUM NOVARUM] (1971) (note that *Octogesima Adveniens* is actually an apostolic letter rather than an encyclical); POPE JOHN PAUL II, LABOREM EXERCENS [ON HUMAN WORK] (1981); SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS, *supra* note 1; POPE JOHN PAUL II, CENTESIMUS ANNUS [ON THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF RERUM NOVARUM] (1991) [hereinafter CENTESIMUS ANNUS].

[3] The most pertinent concilar document is SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, GAUDIUM ET SPES [PASTORAL CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD] (1965) [hereinafter GAUDIUM ET SPES]. Another important document, though not explicitly considered to fall within the realm of social teaching, is SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, DIGNITATIS HUMANAE [DECLARATION ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM] (1965) [hereinafter DIGNITATIS HUMANAE].

[4] The United States Bishops' Conference is most noted for two teaching documents: United States Catholic Bishops, The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response (1983) and Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the United States Economy (1986). In the immediate post-Vatican II period, the bishops of Latin America played an important role developing themes addressing the issue of solidarity with the poor. They coined the

I. *Evolving Response to Changing Circumstances*

Since these teachings address contemporary issues, they have naturally evolved in scope and focus as the major problems facing society have changed. *Rerum Novarum*, for example, addressed the twin evils plaguing Europe in Leo XIII's day: the exploitation of the working class in the emerging industrial sector and the reactive rise of a violence-prone and atheistic socialism.[5] One hundred years later, Pope John Paul II wrote *Centesimus Annus*, in which he celebrated the end of Soviet communism and turned his attention to the problems associated with unrestrained capitalism. The evils associated with the liberal, capitalist order were perhaps less apparent than those associated with communism, but still infectious and pernicious.[6] For John Paul II, as well as his predecessors beginning with Pope John XXIII, the Catholic social vision could not be confined to Europe and its colonial progeny and social problems extended well beyond the nascent industrial working class. Citizens of the modern world need more than a "living wage" and sufficient leisure time to remain healthy and maintain family bonds. They must have the skills and training required to participate meaningfully in a modern economy.[7] In the developed world, physical needs are generally met, but spiritual needs are often unsatisfied. In the Pope's word, "alienation" plagues today's work force, as well as citizens of modern societies, in many aspects of their lives.[8] This form of alienation is not the Marxist brand of alienation. John Paul II's teaching with regard to alienation merits a lengthy quote:

> Marxism criticized capitalist bourgeois societies, blaming them for the commercialization and alienation of human existence. This rebuke is of course based on a mistaken and inadequate idea of alienation, derived solely from the sphere of relationships of production and ownership, that is, giving them a materialistic foundation and moreover denying the legitimacy and positive value of market relationships even in their own sphere. Marxism thus ends up by affirming

phrase "preferential option for the poor" at the 1979 meeting of the Conference of Bishops of Latin America (CELAM) in Puebla, Mexico. The principle and phrasing have become a standard part of the universal canon of social teachings. *See* David Hollenbach, S.J., *Commentary on Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the church in the Modern World), *in* MODERN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: COMMENTARIES & INTERPRETATIONS 287 (Kenneth R. Himes ed., 2004).

[5] RERUM NOVARUM, *supra* note 2, ¶¶ 3-4. My description of the factual situation addressed by Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* greatly simplifies the scope of the social turmoil facing the church and society in the late nineteenth century. The "revolutions" of the prior hundred years came in many forms, intellectual, political, social, economic, religious. Urbanization presented it own forms of social dysfunction. Still, the tension between liberalism (capitalism) and socialism adequately captures the principle themes of the first great papal intellectual engagement with modernity.

[6] CENTESIMUS ANNUS, *supra* note 2, ¶ 29. John Paul II could accept a "free economy," but not one that was driven by the quest for profits and committed purely to the regulation of the market. *Id.* ¶ 42.

[7] *Id.* ¶ 33.

[8] *Id.* ¶ 41.

that only in a collective society can alienation be eliminated. However, the historical experience of socialist countries has sadly demonstrated that collectivism does not do away with alienation but rather increases it, adding to it a lack of basic necessities and economic inefficiency.

II. *Addressing the Problem of Alienation*

The historical experience of the West, for its part, shows that even if the Marxist analysis and its foundation of alienation are false, nevertheless alienation—and the loss of the authentic meaning of life—is a reality in Western societies too. This happens in consumerism, when people are ensnared in a web of false and superficial gratifications rather than being helped to experience their personhood in an authentic and concrete way. Alienation is found also in work, when it is organized so as to ensure maximum returns and profits with no concern whether the worker, through his own labor, grows or diminishes as a person, either through increased sharing in a genuinely supportive community or through increased isolation in a maze of relationships marked by destructive competitiveness and estrangement, in which he is considered only a means and not an end.

The concept of alienation needs to be led back to the Christian vision of reality, by recognizing in alienation a reversal of means and ends. When man does not recognize in himself and in others the value and grandeur of the human person, he effectively deprives himself of the possibility of benefitting from his humanity and of entering into that relationship of solidarity and communion with others for which God created him. Indeed, it is through the free gift of self that man truly finds himself. This gift is made possible by the human person's essential "capacity for transcendence." Man cannot give himself to a purely human plan for reality, to an abstract ideal or to a false utopia. As a person, he can give himself to another person or to other persons, and ultimately to God, who is the author of his being and who alone can fully accept his gift. A man is alienated if he refuses to transcend himself and to live the experience of self-giving and of the formation of an authentic human community oriented towards his final destiny, which is God. A society is alienated 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.

Exploitation, at least in the forms analyzed and described by Karl Marx, has been overcome in Western society. Alienation, however, has not been overcome as it exists in various forms of exploitation, when people use one another, and when they seek an ever more refined satisfaction of their individual and secondary needs, while ignoring the principal and authentic needs which ought to regulate the manner of satisfying the other ones too. A person who is concerned solely or primarily with possessing and enjoying, who

is no longer able to control his instincts and passions, or to subordinate them by obedience to the truth, cannot be free: Obedience to the truth about God and man is the first condition of freedom, making it possible for a person to order his needs and desires and to choose the means of satisfying them according to a correct scale of values, so that the ownership of things may become an occasion of growth for him. This growth can be hindered as a result of manipulation by the means of mass communication, which impose fashions and trends of opinion through carefully orchestrated repetition, without it being possible to subject to critical scrutiny the premises on which these fashions and trends are based.[9]

As John Paul II notes, the success of the contemporary economic order has produced a strident materialism—"consumerism"—that stifles spiritual development and measures a life's success by the accumulation of material goods.[10] Ultimately, society must foster an environment in which men and women can contribute to the common good through their efforts and decisions in the many dimensions of life: employers and employees, investors, consumers, and participants in the broader culture.

III. *Technology's Threat to a Culture of Human Values*

John Paul II, in his reign as pontiff, expanded the scope of Catholic social thought to give greater attention to the dangers of technology for human values. The socioeconomic and political focuses of older social teachings were placed within the broader context of culture responsive to human values. At their very worst, the excessively materialistic worlds of both capitalism and socialism created a "culture of death."[11] Naturally, the church has always reminded society that antihuman solutions to social problems, such as abortion and euthanasia, are morally unacceptable and socially destructive. Such teachings can be found implicitly throughout the modern social teachings, and they are most explicitly developed in the encyclicals of John Paul II, particularly *Evangelium Vitae*.[12] However, while much of the Catholic Church's energy has been properly committed to advancing a culture of respect for the inviolable moral status of human life, it has not neglected other critical elements in modern society. The vital social roles of marriage and the family have been major themes of Catholic thought and teaching.[13] And the economic order remains a vital concern of the Church's social magisterium.

[9] *Id.* (citations omitted).
[10] *Id.* ¶ 36.
[11] *Id.* ¶¶ 39, 41.
[12] POPE JOHN PAUL II, EVANGELIUM VITAE [THE GOSPEL OF LIFE] (1995).
[13] *See, e.g.*, POPE JOHN PAUL II, FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO [ON THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY IN THE MODERN WORLD] (1981).

IV. *The Church and a Differentiation of Roles in the Formation of Public Policy*

At its core, the church's social teaching is truly doctrinal,[14] but it is somewhat pliable in ways not generally associated with typical conceptions of "doctrine." The social teachings must be applied, generally by laymen and women, in diverse, changing social and cultural situations. The social teachings are, in this sense, historically contingent. In all contexts and at all times, the Catholic social tradition fosters the universal and inalienable dignity of each individual, and the logical extension of that dignity to human rights, which, properly understood, must always be respected. At the level of exhortation, the church's social teachings follow the ancient prophetic tradition and cry out for social justice. Beyond such relative absolutes, however, the social teachings address contingent practical matters and they provide principles that must be applied by men and women of good will to decide how to act as producers, consumers, and investors, as well as in the myriad ways they relate to family and community. For some, such as legislators, judges, and employers, the decisions will have dramatic public consequences. They shape public policy and may control the well-being of many. In short, the social teachings are addressed in a particular way to those who function in secular society—the laity—and they call for the exercise of judgment in matters both mundane and profound. The exercise of church authority in this sphere is characterized by a level of institutional humility. Laymen and women, acting within their spheres of competence, are called to exercise prudent judgments that are informed by the principles of the social teachings rather than demonstrating unquestioned assent to detailed prescriptions.

Pope John XXIII described well the challenge to Catholics and others of good will to conform to the teachings of the church in the social realm. First, he recognized it may be difficult to apply social teachings to specific factual situations: "It is indeed difficult to apply teachings of any sort to concrete situations, it is even more so when one tries to put into practice the teachings of the Catholic Church regarding social affairs."[15] Self-interest and a highly materialistic society, John XXIII stated, make it hard to "discern the demands of justice in a given situation."[16] He does, however, provide a rubric:

> The teachings in regard to social matters for the most part are put into effect in the following three stages: first, the actual situation is examined; then the situation is evaluated carefully in relation to these teachings; then only is it decided what can

[14] SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS, *supra* note 1.
[15] MATER ET MAGISTRA, *supra* note 2, ¶ 226.
[16] *Id.*

> and should be done in order that the traditional norms may be adapted to circumstances of time and place.[17]

This formula neither dictates outcomes nor frees decision makers from the norms of Catholic teaching. It is rather a challenging call to action.

V. *Humanity's Response in a New Era: The Church's Continuing Role as Teacher*

This symposium had its genesis at a conference held as jubilee year reflections at The Catholic University of America in March 2000. The original purpose was to consider the significance of the church's social teachings for the new millennium. The social order emerging in the present and which the turn of the millennium appears aptly to mark—which takes up where modernity leaves off—provides a challenge and an opportunity for Catholic social thought. The subsequent articles published here, thus, address the role of Catholic social teaching in what can be considered postmodern society. The church, after all, has been struggling with modernity since its inception and the social teachings represent a reasoned, on-going critique of the modernity project as it has unfolded. There are aspects of *Centesimus Annus*, however, that address a society that may be characterized as postmodern. The world is no longer bounded by the twin ideologies of the modern era—socialism and liberal capitalism. At least the "developed" nations of the world are past the problems of early industrialization. Any contemporary social critique must focus on the liberal order and globalization.

Historical epochs do not begin or end at specific points in time.[18] Rather, they emerge as significant social changes occur and they are replaced when society realizes that fundamental changes have once again taken place. Nor is any epoch common to all of humanity. Different ethnicities and cultures have their own stories.[19] While modernity has influenced much of the world, it is in its origin, a European phenomenon.[20] The Protestant Reformation held some of the philosophical underpinnings of modernity. The social upheaval of the French Revolution contributed, as did the Enlightenment and the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions. Modernism, in common understanding, is highly secular, materialistic, and utilitarian. It exalts human reason, empiricism, science, and technology, while marginalizing religion. The modern era spawned the two competing socioeconomic systems that were the subjects of

[17] *Id.* ¶ 236.

[18] REINHART KOSELLECK, *Representation, Event, and Structure*, *in* FUTURES PAST: ON THE SEMANTICS OF HISTORICAL TIME 105, 106 (Keith Tribe trans., 2004).

[19] Charles S. Maier, *Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era*, 105 AM. HIST. REV. 807, 807 (2000).

[20] PHILIP GLEASON, CONTENDING WITH MODERNITY: CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY 12 (1995).

the Catholic social critique: liberalism (capitalism) and socialism. Liberals have been excessively focused on the self, as opposed to the community. Socialists, by contrast, suppressed the self, subordinating individuals to the state. The church in its social teaching asserted that both had it wrong.

A negative Catholic reaction to modernity reached its rhetorical zenith during the papacy of Pius X, who, in a series of encyclicals, identified and condemned a heresy he termed "modernism."[21] Pius X was surely focused on the essentially anti-Catholic and antireligious aspects of the modernist project. Unfortunately, to the contemporary mind, negative assessments of what Pius termed modernism was tantamount to resisting all human reason, science, and progress. The canon of Catholic social teaching, however, contains a more balanced, reasoned critique of the modern world. Beginning with Leo XIII, the Catholic Church has been constructively, though critically, engaged in the challenges of modern secular society. Following the reigns of Popes Pius X and Benedict XV, who were dealing with the tragedy of World War I, Pius XI resurrected the engagement with the modern world. Rather than being the reactionary, antiprogressive institution of popular stereotypes, the church has embraced scientific, technological, political, economic, and sociological advances when they promote the common good and rejected those that stifle human dignity.

If the modernity project reflects a secularism that disdained religion, an extreme materialism, and a belief that science and technology can create a society where human needs and wants will be satisfied, the postmodern story has begun with a pervasive and justified skepticism. The blessings and advances of applied and basic science have provided material benefits, but they have also put humankind at unprecedented risk. Modern economies, whether state-controlled or market-driven, and modern political orders, whether totalitarian or democratic, have not adequately satisfied human needs. Rather, the height of the modern era—the twentieth century—is marked by some of the greatest atrocities in the history of humankind.[22] One pillar of the modern project, totalitarian socialism, has crumbled. The other, liberal democracy, is faltering. Industrial economies are entering the information age. Globalization is swamping the nation-state and threatening indigenous cultures. In sum, the changes to society are so fundamental that it is appropriate and necessary to acknowledge that the postmodern world is upon us. The rub, however, is to capture the nature and character of this new epoch.

[21] POPE PIUS X, PASCENDI DOMINICI GREGIS [ON THE DOCTRINES OF THE MODERNISTS] (1907); POPE PIUS X, LAMENTABILI SANE [SYLLABUS CONDEMNING THE ERRORS OF THE MODERNISTS] (1907); and POPE PIUS X, SACRORUM ANTISTITUM [OATH AGAINST MODERNISM] (1910). The 1910 Oath Against Modernism was replaced with a Profession of Faith in 1967 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

[22] Maier, *supra* note 19, at 812.

The question is not whether the Roman Catholic Church, or any other religion or religions for that matter, should dictate the terms of the new social order. The separation of church and state is a given in Western society. At least since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church makes no claim to a favored status in secular societies.[23] It has no pretensions of possessing a capacity to reach political decisions for states, even to states that are self-identified as Catholic. The proper question is: May the Catholic Church (and, implicitly, other religious institutions) rightly have a place in the "public square" as the new era unfolds? Does the church have something of value to add to the public discussion? From a Catholic perspective, and it is hoped from that of other men and women of good will, the answer will be affirmative.

The church brings Christian idealism and humanism to questions arising in social policy. While idealistic, however, the church's social teachings are not Utopian. They may be better characterized as anti-Utopian because the church is an expert in humanity;[24] it understands the human condition. Catholic social teachings, however, address real world problems and provide principles for the resolution of concrete social concerns. The church's ability to appreciate problems can be seen throughout the history of the teachings. Leo XIII, for example, was prescient in his critique of socialism. Lenin and the Soviet socialist juggernaut had not come on the scene when Pope Leo identified the problems that would attend the rise of socialism. A century later the system collapsed, largely for reasons anticipated by early papal teachings. Several factors make the Catholic Church particularly well suited to the ongoing challenge. For one thing, the church is a universal, hierarchical institution. It experiences society—"the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties"[25]—of the diverse peoples and cultures of the world community. The teachers of this tradition are and must be informed about the problems facing the world in all of its diversity. The church is present in its bishops, pastors, and diplomatic corps and, accordingly, has access to the genius, limitations and challenges of all societies and peoples. Catholicism also lacks the intellectual constraints of fundamentalism. Reason and experience are important elements of Catholic teaching, particularly in the economic, political, and cultural arenas. Importantly, the church also brings a sense of transcendence so lacking in contemporary secular society. Mankind is at the center of Catholic social thought, but the aim of each person, individually and in community, is to transcend the material world, to seek that truth and aspire to the perfection which is God.

[23] DIGNITATIS HUMANAE, *supra* note 3, ¶¶ 2-7, 11, 15.
[24] SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS, *supra* note 1.
[25] GAUDIUM ET SPES, *supra* note 3, ¶ 1.

VI. *Liberalism and Global Trends: A Christian Critique*

As Western liberal influence, particularly that of the United States, extends to developing nations, critical analysis of the dominant liberal culture becomes ever more urgent. The evolution of, or perhaps more accurately revolutionary change in, American and Western European culture over the past several decades makes it essential that Catholic and non-Catholic moral and ethical teachings be brought to bear on the pressing issues of the day. Appeals to the favored secular norm of "separation" between the state and organized religion cannot exclude the world's faith traditions from participation in the formulations of policies relevant to globalization. The inability of the Western world to understand the values and customs of Islam, for example, accounts for much of the instability in contemporary society. Catholic thought has particular significance since it values the proper, autonomous role of the secular order and avoids the extremes of both theocracy and radical separation.

The voice of religion has not been absent from the American public square throughout our national history. Until quite recently, the so-called "wall of separation" between church and state was not thought to justify the exclusion of religious adherents, and the policies they fostered, from the public debate.[26] For example, Protestants led the social gospel movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[27] Church leaders of many denominations led the civil rights movement in the mid-twentieth century. The Catholic Church's particular influence was likely most notable following World War I and into the New Deal.[28] Following the lead of Leo XIII, the American bishops championed the needs of the working class[29] and in the process won a level of social and political respectability that had previously eluded the Catholic Church.[30] Still, Catholic and Protestant elites operated in largely separate social and political spheres. There were enough shared values in society that different religions did not have to make common ground. The so-called "Protestant Ethic" was perhaps too individualistic for the hierarchical Catholic Church, but fundamental civil virtues—industriousness, honesty, courage, patriotism, generosity, prudence, moderation, etc.—were ideals common to Americans of all faiths.

By contrast, over the past several decades American economic, political, and social elites have successfully fostered a secular, individualistic and materialistic ethos. On many issues there is little common ground between those wishing to

[26] Mary C. Segers, *In Defense of Religious Freedom*, *in* A WALL OF SEPARATION? 53, 73-75 (1998).
[27] SHEILA KENNEDY, GOD AND COUNTRY: AMERICA IN RED AND BLUE 70 (2007).
[28] Michael J. Baxter, C.S.C., *Following Jesus at the Job Fair*, 3 LOGOS 15, 19 (2000).
[29] *See* Admin. Comm. of the Nat'l Cath. War Council, *The Program of Social Reconstruction* (Feb. 12, 1919), *in* THE CHURCH AND LABOR 220 (John A. Ryan & Joseph Husslein ed., 1920).
[30] *See* WILLIAM M. HALSEY, THE SURVIVAL OF AMERICAN INNOCENCE: CATHOLICISM IN AN ERA OF DISILLUSIONMENT, 1920-1940, at 10-11, 56 (1980).

foster and protect core virtues that were once widely accepted across religious divisions and those who seek a thoroughly non-religious society. Individuals committed to traditional religiously-based values—be they Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or Muslim—are likely to see the challenges of exaggerated secularism as more threatening than the beliefs of those who adhere to other faiths.

Well-intentioned representatives of the churches, in failing openly to acknowledge their distinctively religious roots, may also inadvertently aid those who have largely driven religious values from public political discourse in the United States. The proponents of a nonreligious state, after all, speak much the same language as religious leaders. They also purport to promote human dignity and freedom of conscience.[31] Their notions of freedom and dignity, however, have done little to protect life or families. The Catholic vision (which is, of course, the focus of this symposium) must define itself with sufficient precision to avoid any confusion about the differences between its version of a just society—one that fosters authentic human dignity, freedom, and the common good[32]—and that of the unaided modern secular state with its materialistic and individualistic ethic.

VII. *The Contours of the Symposium Discourse that Follows*

This symposium gathers an array of scholars with exceptional learning on topics relating to the enduring meaning of Catholic social teaching. In a common effort to illuminate the essential meaning of Catholic social teaching at this turn of the third millennium, each of the articles that follows, from among the diverse aspects touched upon so far, takes up its own particular topic and explores it in depth. Together, these essays, in the distinctive spirit of their subject matter, invite the reader, then, to take away, from their more particular consideration of the legacy of Catholic social teaching, insight, conversion, and a readiness for action. To facilitate the reader's availability to follow more attentively the overall contours of their common discourse, this introduction will now turn to a concluding sketch of the questions and directions in thought appearing in the articles that follow.

In the opening essays of Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., and Father Joseph Komonchak, the reader receives an introduction to Catholic social thought considered precisely as doctrine. In his article, "Continuity and Change in Catholic Social Teaching," Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., provides an elegant exposition of the development of the church's modern social teachings, as espoused by the teaching office of the several modern popes who have

[31] National Secular Society, The National Secular Society's General Principles, http://www.secularism.org.uk/generalprinciples.html (last visited Jul 5, 2008) (stating in part that the National Secular Society is devoted to developing "the freedom and dignity of mankind").

[32] POPE BENEDICT XVI, DEUS CARITAS EST [ON CHRISTIAN LOVE] (2005).

promulgated it.[33] He identifies both the content and the style of teaching characteristic of each pope. He orients the reader to three basic principles that have consistently informed their teaching: (1) the dignity of the human person, from which flows human rights; (2) "principles that bind the human species together as interdependent members of the same family," which are captured in the principle of solidarity; and (3) principles regarding "political authority and its limitations," which are associated with subsidiarity.[34] In keeping with his own larger concern with the development of doctrine, Dulles, clearly charts evolution in Catholic social teaching in evolving historical situations and in response to changing social problems. As the article's title promises, he concludes that the social teachings of the popes are in essential continuity at the level of principle, while receiving new applications in changing historic contexts.

In his article "The 'Legislative History' of *Gaudium et Spes:* An Original Tensions in Views at Vatican II and Interpretations of Catholic Social Thought"[35] Joseph Komonchak explores the debate that accompanied the drafting of the Second Vatican Council's most significant conciliar contribution to the church's modern social teachings, the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (*The Church in the Modern World*).[36] The Council was, of course, the church's great institutional effort, collegially and ecumenically, to bring the church up-to-date in the modern world. *Gaudium et Spes* provided the vehicle for the church leaders in the Council—the pope, bishops, theologians—to address the social issues that had been the subject of previous papal pronouncements. One of the Council Fathers' most significant contributions was to provide a definitive theological anthropology in support of Catholic social thought, which in its earlier manifestations had been largely built on concepts of natural law. Father Komonchak's article communicates fascinating detail about what American civil lawyers would call the "legislative history" of the document, exploring the tensions at work among diverse theological viewpoints in the committee charged with creating a draft for promulgation by the Council. These viewpoints were represented by Marie-Dominique Chenu (a Thomist), Joseph Ratzinger (intellectually an Augustinian), and Giuseppe Dossetti (Komonchak identifies Dossetti as a "prophet" who does not fit nicely into any intellectual camp).[37]

It should come as no surprise that the church's theological teachings reflect diverse intellectual and spiritual traditions, most notably those associated with

[33] Avery Dulles, S.J., *Continuity and Change in Catholic Social Teaching*, *post*, p. 73-87.
[34] *Id.* at 74.
[35] Joseph A. Komonchak, *The Redaction and Reception of* Gaudium et Spes: *Original Tensions in Viewpoints at Vatican II and Possible Theological Readings of Catholic Social Thought*, *post*, p. 89-120.
[36] GAUDIUM ET SPES, *supra* note 3.
[37] Komonchak, *supra* note 35, at 109.

Augustine and Thomas. What is so instructive and provocative about Father Komonchak's article is the insight it provides into the dynamics of the preparation of an authoritative social document of the church. The magisterial authority of such a document functions in what can be, as in this case, a creative interaction with theological schools and voices. Komonchak suggests that, far from undermining the document's integrity, the intellectual diversity, that complicates but also enriches the process of creating the document, remains a source of fruitful hermeneutic direction in reading and applying it with wisdom. The lessons Komonchak derives from his exploration of the conciliar pre-history of *Gaudium et Spes* surely point to productive lines of inquiry in the reading of all of the textual sources of Catholic social thought, past but no doubt future as well. As in the case of the diverse theological viewpoints influencing the shape of *Gaudium et Spes*, we are reminded that the "signs of the times" occasionally invite the skeptical, perhaps even pessimistic, perspective of St. Augustine. At other times the more sanguine optimism of St. Thomas is appropriate. Realistically, it is difficult to conceive of an honest critique of any era that does not reflect a balance of pessimism and hope. Above all, the voice of the prophet must always be present.

The next several symposium essays, authored by Jean Bethke Elshtain, Richard John Neuhaus, and David Schindler, all leave the specific concern with doctrine behind, in order to turn to the task of formulating political science or social theory to mediate Catholic social doctrine in concrete application. Each, of course, draws on its author's respective discipline or field and philosophical or theological perspective. From the vantage of political philosophy, Jean Bethke Elshtain, in her essay, "Catholic Social Thought and the Public Square," develops the theme of the meaning of Catholic social teachings for a civic philosophy.[38] Catholic social teaching, Elshtain states, provides valuable insights into the human person's inherent nature as a social being.[39] While Catholic social thought constantly reinforces its core commitment to the dignity of the human person, it also always places that person in a social setting. "In Catholic social thought, human persons are intrinsically, not contingently, social. We are born to communion, to relationality."[40] The notion that humans appear first as individuals who only subsequently enter into a "social contract" forming society for reasons of utility or necessity has no place in Catholic thought. Humans have been, from their creation, social beings. The distinction is captured in the distinction between "individual" and "person." The self-centered individual is committed to the maximization of his or her utility. In modern productive societies, this has resulted in a

[38] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Catholic Social Thought and the Public Square, post*, p. 121-35.
[39] *Id.* at 123.
[40] *Id.*

consumerist ethic. Catholic social thought provides a badly needed critique of and tonic for this materialistic mentality. With regard to the political order, Elshtain maintains that the principle of subsidiarity, "central to Catholic social thought,"[41] supplies needed balance. "Subsidiarity, then, is a theory of, and for, civil society. It keeps alive alternatives between individualism, on the one hand, and collectivism, on the other."[42] Finally, Elshtain notes that the church values the cultures of diverse nations. However, like John Paul II, she makes a clear distinction between nations as cultural groupings of peoples and states as political bodies.

Where Jean Elshtain underscores the contribution of Catholic social thought to a humanly worthy universal political orientation, Father Richard John Neuhaus, in his essay, "A Consistent Ethic of Strife" elaborates a philosophy and theology for mediating Catholic social thought which is transformative precisely because it is particularist.[43] This emphasis is a fascinating supplement not only to Elshtain but to points he himself has made elsewhere, since many of his own books such as *The Naked Public Square* and *The Catholic Moment* advance ideas quite in harmony with those found here in Elshstain's essay. Neuhaus focuses on certain societal or cultural "transformations" that he sees as necessary. He actually names five: we need to cultivate the courage to be counter-cultural; we need to appropriate more fully the gift of Peter among us, a gift luminously exemplified by John Paul II's pontificate; we need to recognize that the church's teaching about sexuality, marriage, and family has a coherent structure—it is all of a single piece; we need to more fully honor marriage as a Christian vocation; and, finally, we need an intensified commitment to what *Familiaris Consortio* calls the "politics of the family."[44] Critically, Neuhaus calls for social policy that is not afraid to be openly religious and particular. Where Elshtain stakes her claim in the broader domain of politics, Neuhaus argues for the value of shifting focus to a transformative and reconstructive renewal by fostering integrity in family policy and observance of personal moral standards in the areas of sexuality and procreation. Neuhaus calls for the end of dissonant theological dissent which has interfered precisely with the church's freedom to offer direction in these areas.

If Father Neuhaus's essay provides a middle ground synthesizing political theory and a philosophy and theology of social reconstruction, David Schindler,[45] in his essay, offers a mediating social theory concerned with

[41] *Id.* at 128.
[42] *Id.* at 129.
[43] Richard John Neuhaus, *A Consistent Ethic of Strife*, *post*, p. 137-48.
[44] *Id.* at 141-42.
[45] David L. Schindler, *Homelessness and the Modern Condition: Family, Community and the Global Economy*, *post*, p. 149-68.

societal and cultural renewal and reconstruction not directly oriented to questions of politics. Quoting from the book *The Hidden Wound* by Wendell Berry, Professor Schindler, from his disciplinary perspective as a Christian social theorist, seeks to advance a philosophy of social and cultural reconstruction. To this end, he defines, as central, the problem of the new "homelessness."[46] Separation of various social activities largely related to economics, from the home, has produced what John Paul II would identify as a type of alienation. Even in the home, we are too often today "homeless." This context is now too often not a place of domestic relationships—love and generosity—but a symbol of status, a sign of success, where people eat pre-prepared food and perch before the television or computer.

Schindler states that "the purpose of our existence as consumers and as workers, at the deepest level, is to transform the world into a 'home': To extend the organic relations constitutive of the family into the structures of the world, and thereby to *domesticate* the world."[47] That theme explains the importance of family in terms both mundane and profoundly theological. The family is not simply the first unit of society, as is always stressed in Catholic teachings, it is the model for all other social bodies. The relationships that properly exist in families, characterized by love and generosity, do not simply teach us how to behave in family. Rather, they are a model for community.

The last set of symposium essays revolves more pointedly around more specific problems in the formation of public policy proposals. Robert George and William Saunders, Jr. and Father Bryan Hehir consider issues relating to an intermediate role that Catholic social teaching accords to laity and experts in mediating the import of Catholic social thought for concrete questions of social policy. Helen Alvaré investigates the application of the principles of Catholic social thought to specific issues arising in family policy under American civil law. Professor James Kurth explores the implications of Catholic social thought for the critique of America's foreign policy.

Bryan Hehir,[48] on the one hand, and Robert George and William Saunders, Jr.[49] on the other, tackle their common question, in some ways complementary, and, in others, divergent. How does one balance the ecclesially authoritative character of church teaching with regard for other kinds of authority, notably technical expertise and empirical knowledge relevant to concrete social policy? How does one balance commitment to a common viewpoint and to preserving

[46] *Id.* at 150.
[47] *Id.* at 157.
[48] J. Bryan Hehir, *An Obligation to Heed the Church's Social Doctrine: A Necessary Rephrasing of the Question*, *post*, p. 189-209.
[49] Robert P. George & William L. Saunders, Jr., *Prophets and Kings: When Must the Church Speak Out Against Injustice?*, post, p. 211-24.

the unity of the church's teaching office with plural roles and approaches to be encountered within society and even within the church?

In his article, Bryan Hehir considers the case of the concern that occasionally arises over the potential disciplinary ramifications of Catholics who hold public office publicly opposing church teachings. Father Hehir offers a salutary caution that juridical and disciplinary measures, whatever their appropriate role, do not substitute for an adequate conceptual hermeneutic mediating a creative and fruitful approach to living the truths of Catholic social thought. He brings into focus the essentially evangelical and not juridical character of the Catholic Church's social doctrines. These doctrines call for a transformation of life. They seek to enable and inspire Catholics, precisely as lay, to participate in this transformation according to their distinctively lay charisma. He concludes that Catholic social teaching, by its nature, applies within a space defined by the world at large, rather than the church in any corporate or juridical sense. He observes also that it calls for the integration precisely of technical fact-sensitive knowledge that of necessity only the laity offers. Thus, he cautions that "the social teaching binds the conscience of the Catholic, but it binds the conscience of the Catholic within a wide space—i.e., there is space within it to move."[50] Finally, he offers a schema for distinguishing gradations of obligitoriness, where it does appear, in the Church's social teachings, noting the difference in doctrines which are fixed versus those that are in flux: i.e. teachings that are "in possession," "in tension," and "in evolution."[51] The former calls for greater acceptance, while the latter is less binding.

Robert George and William Saunders, Jr.,[52] in their article, take up questions closely related to Hehir's, but they do so from a different angle of concern. They are concerned not so much with the thematics cherished by Hehir, rather they are interested in the integrity of moral and political practice, as this is sustained from all relevant sources. They are even more keenly interested than Hehir to determine where the church has not taught in a way that obligates assent by Catholics in concrete detail. However, where Hehir focuses on the freedom this awareness accords the reader for further actualizing the transformative themes found in the documents, George and Saunders focus on the freedom it allows the reader to seek to reach right answers based on other sources of moral reasoning and practical and empirical knowledge. For example, issues such as the minimum wage are contingent on the state of the economy, the work force, and other variable conditions. The principle of the "living" or "family" wage is important in the Catholic social canon, but its

[50] Hehir, *supra* note 48, at 204.
[51] *Id.* at 204-05.
[52] Robert P. George and William L. Saunders, Jr., *Prophets and Kings: When Must the Church Speak Out Against Injustice?*, *post* p. 211-14.

application will vary with society and circumstances, so it is important for religious leaders to enter the fray with care. George and Saunders warn that by joining the policy debate too often, on issues in regard to which they lack expertise or sufficient sensitivity to American principles of church-state relations, American Catholic bishops may diminish the church's authority to speak on more fundamental moral issues with respect to which it is more essential that the Catholic voice be heard in the pubic sphere. They argue the church should be more reticent in proposing details of policy for contingent situations. They consider papal social teaching to set a better standard to this extent, in that by and large it has been more careful to avoid detailed prescriptions than has that which has been proposed by the United States bishops.[53]

Like Hehir, George and Saunders make provision for church teaching sufficiently specific to be obligatory, but, unlike Hehir who considers this the essentially less interesting case, they view it as, in fact, the leading focus of church teaching. In contrast to Hehir, they appear to view the church's disciplinary role in relation to the laity who serve in politics as essential rather than accidental. They call upon the church and its leaders to clearly condemn practices that violate the most basic and profound principles of the Gospel: those things that infringe upon the dignity of human persons. In the current cultural environment, they stress the importance of Catholicism's weighing in with a truly prophetic voice—one that values personal dignity no less than individual autonomy. They state that church leaders must speak most forcefully against injustice when the issue in question is not subject to contingencies.[54] They identify slavery as wrong in all circumstances, i.e., no contingent facts will justify human slavery. The same is true in the case of abortion and euthanasia, and they call for the church to discipline Catholic politicians who defy church teaching in these areas.

The dialectical contrast between the Hehir, George and Saunders essays is surely one of the most interesting and worthwhile features of the symposium. It would seem to have a parallel with the creative tensions Joseph Komonchak documents in the conciliar debate underlying the promulgation of *Gaudium et Spes*. It is unlikely that one will, in fact, find any contradiction in any basic principle in the separate accounts, both are deeply learned in and devoted to the tradition, and yet they offer a fascinating contrast in emphasis and in reflective voice and philosophy.

The symposium concludes, then, with two final essays, written by Helen Alvaré and James Kurth. These articles concern themselves with concrete applications of Catholic social thought in two specific areas central in papal and

[53] *See* Hollenbach, *supra* note 4.
[54] George & Saunders, *supra* note 49, at 211.

conciliar texts: family policy and foreign relations. In a sense, Alvaré and Kurth apply the mediating ideas, in some combination, of thinkers like Elshtain, Neuhaus, and Schindler, precisely in a role they are each, respectively, well qualified to fill, namely, as the lay experts envisioned by Hehir and George and Saunders.

In her essay, "A Worthy Ally: Catholic Social Teachings on the "Anguish" and the "Hopes" of Marriage and Family," Alvaré applies Catholic social thought to contemporary problems in family and marriage policy under American civil law, the area of her own academic expertise. Her work very much reinforces the viewpoints offered by Father Neuhaus and David Schindler. She begins by identifying the sobering problems posed by the modern permissive, individualistic society for the integrity of the family. She synthesizes a vision of the convergence of the transformative inspiration of Catholic social thought for the family with the empirical evidence of social science, to demonstrate a cogent proposal for sound family policy under civil law. The problems—abortion, divorce, single parents, out-of-wedlock and teenage pregnancies, poverty—are linked. Single mothers and their children are likely doomed to poverty. The children of divorce suffer and have trouble succeeding later in life, academically, economically, and as members of families.

Alvaré's draws attention to the paradox of an elite intellectual and legal class that refuses to admit facts that contradict their normative judgments about sexuality, marriage, and family. She persuasively argues that Catholic social teaching provides a well-reasoned alternative to the secular view of the "good" society. She shows that the church can frequently evince greater openness to the findings of sound natural and social science than secularists who sometimes revel in condemning the church as anti-intellectual and anti-science.

In a parallel to Helen Alvare's essay, James Kurth, in his article, "Catholic Social Thought and the American Worldview,"[55] applies Catholic social teaching to the separate area of international relations and foreign policy. He writes as a political scientist.He observes that Catholic social teaching, beginning with *Rerum Novarum*, has survived the rise and fall of radical socialism and radical totalitarianism. Throughout the century or so spanning the promulgation by the church of its social doctrine, the United States and the Vatican have sometimes made common cause—the defeat of the Soviet Union and fascism, for example—but now the cultural stance of the papacy and the United States are not in alignment. John Paul II rejected two varieties of capitalism in *Centesimus Annus*: the "national security state" and the "consumer society."[56] The United States and Western Europe exemplify the latter.

[55] James Kurth, *Catholic Social Thought and the American Worldview*, *post*, p. 225-38.
[56] CENTESIMUS ANNUS, *supra* note 2, ¶ 19.

Professor Kurth concludes by asking whether the "great struggle of the twenty-first century will be against the United States, which, by carrying liberalism to its individualist extreme, represents the idolatry of the self?"[57] He asks the reader to consider this clash against the backdrop of world history in which the church has moved before into such direct opposition with the cultural assumptions underlying a powerful state in a given time and survived, outliving the state that opposed it.

In a manner reminiscent of Hehir, Kurth draws direction from the broad transformative thematics of Catholic social thought. At the same time, echoing George and Saunders, he insists that the status quo, in his case conceived globally, must be overtly opposed to realize the prophetic demands of the church's teaching. Juxtaposing the Catholic and American visions of a free and just society, Kurth calls attention to the fundamental divergence in core philosophy that is thereby revealed. His essay serves to end the symposium on the note of the salutary caution that a facile synthesis of Catholic ideals and an unfiltered American cultural bias, however convenient, can hardly be sustainable.

These brief précis of the articles in this volume cannot, of course, portray the substantive depth of the works themselves, nor of the Catholic social teachings that are their subject. From the perspective of Catholic social doctrine and academic inquiry informed thereby, the challenges of the postmodern world surely include, at a minimum, the preservation of the traditional family, the problems of a consumerist mentality, and the preservation of all of the positive aspects of received human cultures. Globalization cannot simply be left to transfer the ethics of an economistic and consumerist culture to other parts of the world. Human persons—men, women, children (already born or still in the womb); the aged, the poor, the immigrants—cannot be treated as commodities. Catholic social teaching will continue to serve as a powerful and richly textured critique of the world as it presents itself. It will remain a constant champion of the dignity of the human person, authentic freedom and the needs of the poor and vulnerable.

[57] Kurth, *supra* note 55, at 238.