RELIGION & LIBERTY

May and June • 2001 A Publication of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty Volume 11 • Number 3

Centesimus Annus in Retrospective

The first issue of *Religion & Liberty* appeared in January 1991—auspiciously, the same year in which Pope John Paul II promulgated his encyclical letter *Centesimus Annus*, a meditation of the nature of freedom in its many forms and its role in the modern world. That encyclical prompted a wide-scale debate on the moral foundations of the free society. Since its founding, the Acton Institute has been a part of this vigorous debate, often conducted in the pages of *Religion & Liberty*. For *Centesimus Annus's* tenth anniversary, we are focusing this issue on that encyclical and its impact, including the following excerpts from some of the conversations we have had over the years with religious and academic leaders.

***The Honorable William E. Simon**, author of* A Time for Truth, *was Secretary of the Treasury from 1974 to 1977. He was interviewed for* Religion & Liberty's *September/October 1991 issue. He passed away on June 3, 2000.*

***R&L:** We have frequently heard the phrase "preferential option for the poor." What does this mean to you? Can it be accomplished in a free-market, non-interventionist society?*

Simon: Somebody once said that *preferential option for the poor* sounds like a bad English translation of a bad Spanish translation of a dumb German idea. And there is no question that the preferential option has been used to promote a socialist agenda and state-centered development schemes in the Third World. But I think the pope has taken a decisive step in the right direction with *Centesimus Annus*, which stresses that the poor are empowered best through participation in a free economy. That is what I mean by a preferential option for the poor: getting poor people off welfare and into productive work.The best way to do this is by letting the free enterprise system thrive.…

One of the most important teachings of *Centesimus Annus* is that countries are poor not because they have a particular monetary system or because they have been exploited by the developed world but because they are cut off from the world market. Foreign aid is rarely effective in promoting development.… We know that private enterprise is the only way to create lasting development; socialist "development" means creating an oligarchy of government or military bureaucrats sitting on top of a country of serfs.

***Rev. Richard John Neuhaus**, president of the Institute on Religion and Public Life and editor-in-chief of* First Things, *was interviewed for* Religion & Liberty's *September/October 1993 issue.*

***R&L:** Can you briefly describe what you call the "new capitalism" of* Centesimus Annus*? Does this encyclical represent a shift in Catholic social teaching?*

Neuhaus: The new capitalism that the Holy Father describes in *Centesimus Annus* is intended, as I understand it, to distinguish what he is proposing from the capitalism at the early period of the industrialization process. This "new capitalism" is marked by a keen appreciation of the need to maintain a vibrant and critical interaction between economics, culture, and politics. It must be emphasized that of those three, culture is the most important, and that at the heart of culture is morality, and at the heart of morality is religion. So this new capitalism is in many ways what writers such as Michael Novak describe as democratic capitalism. It is an idea that is historically embodied in a number of advanced societies, not least of all the United States. This is a very significant development in Catholic social teaching that will, in my judgment, nurture a new phase of Catholic social thought with respect to the relationship between a Christian anthropology and a Christian understanding of history as it relates to economics and political justice.

Michael Novak *holds the Jewett Chair in Religion and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute and was the 1994 recipient of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. He was interviewed for* Religion & Liberty's *May/June 1994 issue.*

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The Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty was founded in 1990 to promote a free society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles. The Institute is supported by donations from foundations, corporations, and individuals and maintains a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

Letters and subscription requests should be directed to: *Religion & Liberty*; Acton Institute; 161 Ottawa Ave., n.w., Suite 301; Grand Rapids, MI 49503.

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R&L: *What is so significant about Pope John Paul II's encyclical* Centesimus Annus*? Could you put it in the context of past social encyclicals?*

Novak: *The Hundredth Year*, to refer to it by its English title, really succeeds in being a critical reflection on the best of the preceding hundred years of papal social thought. It draws together the most creative and effective tendencies in that history, setting aside the wrong turns and the tentative gropings that were not so successful. It is also distinguished for finding a deeper starting point and conceptual apparatus, which permit the author to produce a new synthesis previously unseen in any other single work of religious reflection on the economy. Finally, it comments quite succinctly on the reasons for the collapse of socialism that became evident in 1989. By section 42, the Holy Father considers the consequences of that collapse and asks, "After the collapse of socialism, should we recommend capitalism to the bishops of the rest of the world?" Here again, the Holy Father says, "That depends on what you mean by capitalism," and he makes a very astute separation between the political, the economic, and the moral/cultural components of the free society. He offers a unified vision of how the three relate to one another. He then proceeds to make a cultural critique of the existing order, and reveals an ecology of the free society—a moral ecology—which I think opens up the battle ground of the future. So, in short, I think his conceptual apparatus is deeper and his tools are truer for work of great precision, and the commentary on the events that happened in our time is more exactly on target, than previous works.

George Weigel*, senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center and author of* Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, was interviewed for* Religion & Liberty's *March/April 1996 issue.*

R&L: *What will be the implications of the papacy of John Paul II for future Catholic social teaching? And as we approach the five-year anniversary of Pope John Paul II's encyclical* Centesimus Annus*, what do you see as its greatest achievement?*

Weigel: *Centesimus Annus* is, with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), one of the three great texts of modern Catholic social teach-

ing. But *Centesimus Annus* did more than recapitulate the teaching of John Paul II's predecessors; it also set the social doctrine of the Church on a new path by its endorsement of the free economy, its empirical sensitivity on questions of economic development, and its insistence that a vibrant, publicly assertive moral-cultural order is essential to the functioning of the free economy and the democratic political community. Catholics, and indeed everyone interested in the relationship between moral truth and the free society, will be wrestling with *Centesimus Annus* for at least a century.

R&L: *How has this encyclical transformed the public con-*

Karol Wojtyla (b. 1920)

"Freedom is offered to man and given to him as a task. He must not only possess it but also conquer it. He must recognize the work of his life in a good use, in an increasingly good use of his liberty. This is the truly essential, the fundamental work, on which the value and the sense of his whole life depend."

When Cardinal Karol Wojtyla pronounced these words during the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia in 1976, he articulated his answer to the philosophical question that he had pursued for decades: What is the nature and purpose of human liberty?

The grandeur and dilemma of freedom gripped the mind of this Polish priest-philosopher from the beginning of his intellectual life. Having endured systematic Nazi oppression only to find himself subject to another totalitarian regime, Wojtyla, like many Polish Roman Catholic intellectuals, sought to understand what made humans capable of both profoundly evil deeds and superhuman acts of love. Such reflections called into question modern philosophy's tendency toward ethical relativism and therefore sought to explain how the insights of ancient and medieval philosophy, with their decidedly objective character, might be explained to a modern world that, for all its virtues, had difficulty accepting an inalienable bond between freedom and truth.

Wojtyla's medium for pursuing this intellectual project was the study of human action. Through reading Thomas Aquinas, John of the Cross, Max Scheler, and Immanuel Kant, Wojtyla concluded that the human person could, despite pressures to the contrary, act in ways that reflected the free choice to live in truth. Freedom is more, he insisted, than being free to choose. In books such as *Love and Responsibility* and *Person and Act*, Wojtyla stressed that freedom is that moment of transcendence that people may realize—even in the most marginalized circumstances—by freely choosing to actualize that which is truly good for the human person: virtue. A person who constantly acts in this way is truly free. Wojtyla's insight amounts to a restatement of the Judeo-Christian understanding of the bond between truth and freedom that is captured in Deuteronomy 30:19: "I set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live."

Nowhere was Wojtyla's commitment to this vision more powerfully demonstrated than in his interventions during the Second Vatican Council's debates over religious liberty. Wojtyla insisted that religious liberty is essential if people are to know and freely choose the truth. Wojtyla also, however, maintained that this liberty has to be understood as inseparable from the responsibility to pursue truth. The Declaration on Religious Freedom that resulted from the Council's debates, *Dignitatis Humanae*, fully reflected these themes—themes that would be proclaimed to global audiences during Wojtyla's pontificate as John Paul II.

Sources: Witness to Hope: The Biography of John Paul II *by George Weigel (HarperCollins, 1999), and* Challenging the Modern World: Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II and the Development of Catholic Social Teaching *by Samuel Gregg (Lexington Books, 1999).*

versation about the nature of rights and duties in modern democratic regimes?

Weigel: It has helped transform that conversation by reigniting a discussion of the link between rights and duties or obligations. Over the past several generations, Americans had begun to think of "rights" as merely instrumental: trump cards, if you will, for advancing the claims of what Father Neuhaus has called the "imperial autonomous Self." This emptied the notion of "rights" of its proper moral content. John Paul II, by emphasizing that freedom finds its fulfillment in goodness, not in mere "process," has helped us to reengage the idea that rights are means for the fulfillment of our duties. Or, as your patron, Lord Acton, said, freedom is "having the right to do what we ought."

Peter Berger *is director of the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture and professor of sociology at Boston University. He was interviewed for* Religion & Liberty's *July/August 1996 issue.*

R&L: *In Centesimus Annus the Pope calls for a vibrant market economy circumscribed by strong moral and juridical frameworks. How do you interpret "strong moral and juridical frameworks"? Is there ever a reason for direct government intervention in the economy?*

Berger: It's not for me to interpret what *Centesimus Annus* means or what the Pope meant. It is very clear, though, what "juridical frameworks" means, and you can see this in Russia where there is an effort to create a market economy but the juridical framework isn't there. You need the juridical framework for such things like property law, law of contracts, a reliable taxation system, reasonably non-corrupt government offices, so it is very clear and there is overwhelming evidence for that.

In terms of a moral framework, of course the market economy, like every other human institution, is based on certain moral assumptions. Take a very simple assumption: if people sign a contract, they will live up to it. So certainly you need a moral framework for any economy to work, including a market economy. But just what that moral framework has to be, I'm not completely sure. I'm speaking now not as an ethical theorist but as a social scientist. It is possible, even if it makes one a little uncomfortable, that different moral frameworks are functional at different stages of economic history.

Errata: In Steven Hayward's article on the Virginia Statute (March/April 2001), the sentence that reads, "While the Anglican and Baptist denominations in Virginia wanted state sanction and taxpayer support, several evangelical denominations opposed it," should read "Methodist" instead of "Baptist." Mr. Hayward regrets the error.

Recently elevated to cardinal, ***Avery Dulles, S.J.****, holds the Laurence J. McGinley Chair in Religion and Society at Fordham University. He was interviewed for* Religion & Liberty's *May/June 1999 issue.*

R&L: *Pope John Paul II, in his Encyclical Letter* Centesimus Annus*, noted that, "The individual today is often suffocated between the two poles represented by the state and the market." You have noted that the way out of this modern dilemma is the strengthening of culture. Could you elaborate?*

Dulles: The political and economic orders, important though they obviously are, do not exhaust the reality of human life and human society. They deal only with particular aspects of life in community. More fundamental than either is the order of culture, which deals with the meaning and goal of human existence in its full range. Culture shapes and expresses our ideas and attitudes regarding all the typical human experiences, and in so doing touches on the transcendent mystery that engulfs us and draws us to itself. In our century, the order of culture has often been subjugated either to political or to economic interests. The state sometimes seeks to use sports events, education, the arts, communications, or religion to support its ideology. Alternatively, business and industry strive to turn cultural activities into profit-making enterprises. This latter tendency is particularly manifest in "consumerist" societies such as ours in the United States. Culture should, however, be oriented toward the True, the Beautiful, and the Good. Whenever these transcendentals are instrumentalized by the search for power and wealth, civilization is degraded.…

R&L: *How do you perceive Catholic social teaching influencing debate in the public square?*

Dulles: … Catholic social teaching is not an exercise in economics, politics, or sociology. It seeks to set forth the principles required by fidelity to the moral law and to the gospel. It emphasizes human solidarity, concern for peace, care for the poor, and personal freedom.

Centesimus Annus Turns Ten

Gregory R. Beabout

This year marks the tenth anniversary of John Paul II's most important social encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*. Taking its name from the first two words of the Latin text, the title means "the hundredth anniversary" and is a reference to *Rerum Novarum,* Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical on the condition of the working classes.

Rerum Novarum was the most important social encyclical of Leo's pontificate, which lasted from 1878 to 1903. *Rerum Novarum*'s moral insight into the social, economic, and moral questions of Leo's time was remarkable both because of the way the encyclial clarified the teaching of the church on the social questions of its day and because it helped once again to make the church an important voice regarding social issues after a period of apparent retreat.

John Paul's teaching in *Centesimus Annus* is likely to have equal long-term importance. Like its predecessor, *Centesimus Annus* clarifies in detail the teaching of the church on contemporary social, economic, and political questions, solidly building on the teaching of the Scriptures and the tradition of the church while moving the church's social teaching in a new direction.

Even after ten years, much of what is innovative and profound about *Centesimus Annus* has not yet been absorbed fully. My guess is that most Roman Catholics, even those who attend mass regularly and are active in their parishes, know little about the encyclical. And I imagine most non-Catholics know even less of this important document.

Nonetheless, *Centesimus Annus* has received a good deal of attention from a range of writers and intellectuals interested in the intersection between Christian faith and economics. Business leaders who have studied the encyclical very often find it surprisingly engaging. Typing "Centesimus Annus" into various Internet search engines will produce between two thousand and twenty thousand results. Moreover, conferences have been devoted to it, books written about it, and college courses dedicated to exploring its significance. Ten years after its publications, I find four key elements that are most remarkable about *Centesimus Annus*.

First, the encyclical integrates the social teaching of the church, holding together a scriptural foundation with the teachings of the popes over the last century. Against those who tend to divide Catholic teaching into two parts (pre–Vatican II versus post–Vatican II), *Centesimus Annus* shows that there is really a single, unifying theme that holds the church's social teaching together: the dignity of the human person as created in God's image. The theme of the dignity of the human person is present in the first chapter of Genesis, and it permeates the Gospel account of Christ's willingness to die for the sins of everyone. The genius of Leo's 1891 encyclical was his ability to apply the notion of human dignity to the social questions of his day. Likewise, John Paul takes the same theme, shows how the church has constantly emphasized it, and applies it to our time.

A New Framework

Second, *Centesimus Annus* is extraordinary in the way it reconfigures the basic framework for Catholic social teaching. Ever since 1891, almost every social encyclical has been framed in terms of an argument against two dominant social philosophies: individualism and socialism. After examining the deficiencies of each, past encyclicals went on to show how an emphasis on the dignity of the human person could be applied to that period's contemporary situation. *Centesimus Annus* departs from that pattern, in part because socialism has nearly disappeared since 1989.

Centesimus Annus includes a chapter-long reflection on the death of communistic socialism. Since John Paul played a significant role in bringing about the end of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, this is one of the most intriguing parts of the encyclical. It reads like the account of a humble knight recalling the slaying of a dragon: "It was going to die anyway." Though communism has not vanished completely from the world scene, it is virtually extinct as a significant moral and cultural vision of how to organize a just society.

Therefore, it no longer makes sense to frame Catholic social teaching against the backdrop of rejected social philosophies. The new framework for Catholic social teaching is a proposal for a free society, a new framework that responds to the question, How shall we best order our lives on

earth (as we await Christ's return) in a manner that will bring about a free and just society befitting the dignity of the human person? The answer is that we need a free culture, a free market, and a free polity. This three-part model of the free society, described in detail in *Centesimus Annus*, is the new framework for Catholic social teaching.

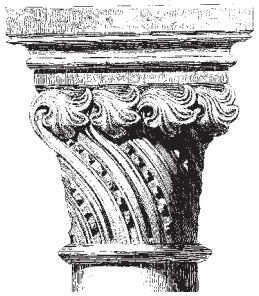
This model of a free and virtuous society is perhaps the most profound contribution of the encyclical. This model is deeply grounded both in the Scriptures and in earlier social encyclicals, yet these basic distinctions, made explicit in *Centesimus Annus*, are easily forgotten or ignored. For example, consider the following statements, indicative of the kind that American religious leaders regularly make:

- Society must ensure that basic rights are protected.
- Society has an obligation to take positive steps to overcome a legacy of injustice.
- Society must combat discrimination.
- Society has a duty to provide employment for all people able to work.
- Society must address the increase in violence.

In each of these assertions, it is unclear exactly what is meant by the term *society*. Each statement lends itself to the assumption that *society* refers to social authorities, which, in turn, is understood as the government. John Paul, then, does a great service in helping clarify what the parts of society are and how they ought to relate to each other.

A free culture, a free market, a free polity—this model of a free and virtuous society is perhaps the most profound contribution of the encyclical.

— Gregory R. Beabout



Perhaps John Paul is so careful to distinguish between the three social spheres because of his experience as a Pole, especially as a priest and bishop who lived under communist rule. Poland has a long history as a nation distinct from the governing power of the state. In the eighteenth century, Poland endured repeated partitions until the state of Poland ceased to exist. However, Polish culture continued to flourish, even under foreign rule. The language of the people, their customs and habits, their family life and religion—all remained cherished, even though the state of Poland did not exist from 1797 until 1918.

With this history and experience, Poles were able to retain their identity when attacked by the Nazis in 1939 and when under the influence of Soviet rule from 1945 to 1989. Poles withstood the takeover of their government and economy by retaining their culture—that is, their language, literature, music, families, and faith.

A Tripartite Framework

For a Pole with the background of John Paul, claims such as those previously mentioned—that society has obligations to protect rights, redress wrongs, and provide jobs—raise questions about which sphere of society has what specific obligations to respond to which needs. To sort out these questions, John Paul devotes one chapter to the market and another to state and culture.

The fourth chapter is a detailed consideration of the market economy. After the fall of communism, the business economy now stands as the reigning economic system. A significant part of John Paul's reflection on the market economy is an effort to show that the free market is based in the freedom of the person. He does not affirm the unlimited market of nineteenth-century laissez-faire capitalism, which places no restraints on the market; instead, he affirms a market economy bounded by a free culture and a free polity.

The fifth chapter is a meditation on the manner in which both state and culture provide such bounds. "Economic activity, especially the activity of a market economy, cannot be conducted in an institutional, juridical, or political vacuum," he writes. "On the contrary, it presupposes sure guarantees of individual freedom and private property as well as a stable currency and efficient public services" (no. 48). John Paul proceeds to outline the way in which the state can legitimately practice its legislative, executive, and juridical functions; however, he also emphasizes that this role of the state is limited.

One task of the state is overseeing the exercise of human rights. However, as John Paul cautions, "primary responsibility in this area belongs not to the state, but to individuals and to the various groups and associations which make up society." The reason this is so, he explains, is that "the state could not directly ensure the right to work for all its citizens unless it controlled every aspect of economic life and restricted the free initiative of individuals" (no. 48). In other words, there is a role for the state in the task of promoting social responsibility, but this role should be limited so that it does not hinder economic and civic freedom.

While the marketplace is to be bounded on one side by a free polity (with political leaders subject to the election process and accountable to their constituents), it is to be bordered by a free culture on the other. According to John Paul, culture includes the family and the many associations and groups situated between the individual and the state. These groups, which allow more personal contact than the state, can exert moral influence on those who make social and economic decisions. This emphasis on communities of virtue is central to the novel tripartite framework presented in *Centesimus Annus*: a moral-cultural sphere that promotes authentic freedom and virtue, and well as a free market and a free polity.

Third, in one of the most creative applications of this new framework, John Paul II makes it clear that the church affirms the free market. Over the past thirty years, American religious thinkers have had a strongly negative view of the marketplace. Some of this is easily explained. The education of seminarians has rarely included the study of economics. Further, there has been a strong tendency in certain circles to borrow liberationist themes that flow from a Marxist analysis of economics and that are aggressively anti-business.

Against this background, *Centesimus Annus* speaks with a new voice. It is not a pro-business document (though it is pro-market), nor does it claim that the church should be run like a business or demand that church leaders have experience in making business decisions. Instead, it is a reflection on the dignity of the human person, a reflection that proceeds in four steps: from human dignity to authentic freedom to economic freedom to an affirmation of the market economy.

The Free Society and the Culture of Life

The driving concern of the encyclical is the dignity of the human person, a dignity given to all humans since they are created in the image of God. Because all human persons have been given the gift of freedom, they are all capable of making their own choices about how to respond to their vocation to return to God in freedom. This freedom demands a universal respect that each person owes to every other.

Economic activity is one sector in the great variety of human activities. Since every human action flows from the person's power of self-determination, and since economic activity is one kind of personal action, the free market is a system that accords with the freedom of the person. In this manner, John Paul shows how an understanding of the human person as a being created in God's image and endowed with the capacity for self-determining freedom leads to an affirmation of the market economy and an emphasis on the moral responsibilities of the proper use of that freedom.

At a time when many religious leaders tend to deride the economic sector as dismal and dirty, John Paul elevates it and challenges us to morally examine our economic decisions and ask whether they are authentic and responsible expressions of the gift of freedom.

Fourth, *Centesimus Annus* makes it clear that the key to a free society is not economics or politics but culture. For example, according to John Paul, the main lesson to be drawn from the collapse of communism is not an economic or political one but a cultural one. The problem with communism was not simply long lines for toilet paper and bread, nor was it simply that the political system produced rulers who were totalitarian tyrants. Rather, the main problem was the spiritual void that communism produced in the culture. Marxism promised to uproot the need for God from the human heart, but the results of this experiment proved that this is impossible. Every single human action, even buying bread or toilet paper, includes a spiritual component, since the human person is created as a free being ordered toward truth.

The driving concern of the encyclical is the dignity of the human person, a dignity given to all humans since they are created in the image of God.

The key to the free society, then, is a culture that promotes the dignity of human life. In contemporary American society, many people have come to think that freedom means being able to have and do whatever one wants. For example, consumerism is a distortion of authentic freedom because it makes us slaves to our desires, even to the point that it promotes a culture of death.

The lesson of the fall of communism is not that we need a new economics or a new politics. Every human person is given freedom as a gift to be used to pursue the truth, especially the ultimate truth, which is God. *Centesimus Annus*, now a decade old, teaches us that the primary task of working for social justice lies at the level of the human heart and involves promoting the culture of life.

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Economics and Theology: A Wondrous Exchange

Raymond J. de Souza

Attempts to write of one's own vocation often fall flat. A priest whom I know remarked recently on the fiftieth anniversary of his priestly ordination, "The Lord could have chosen much better, he could have chosen much worse. He chose me." That is every vocation in sum, and saying anything more often means just multiplying words.

Every "vocation story" is an account of God whispering in an individual soul and, as such, it remains somehow inaccessible to others to whom those whisperings may appear nothing more than gentle breezes. "The priestly vocation is a mystery," Pope John Paul II wrote on the occasion of his own fiftieth anniversary. "It is the mystery of a 'wondrous exchange'—*admirabile commercium*—between God and man. A man offers his humanity to Christ so that Christ may use him as an instrument of salvation, making him, as it were, into another Christ."

On the tenth anniversary of the encyclical letter *Centesimus Annus*, I wish to explain, in part, how I came to be willing to make that exchange—my life for the priesthood. I expect limited interest in my journey to the seminary, yet *Centesimus Annus* taught me a wholly new way of looking at social realities, the role of the human person in those realities, and, finally, myself. Obviously, such a reading of *Centesimus Annus* does not inevitably lead to the seminary, but it may suggest that Christian reflection on social realities is a valid means of arriving at the deeper Christian proclamation about the Truth who is at the heart of all reality.

The Loss of the Most Interesting Things

As an undergraduate economics major, I was confident that my future would be in the political arena, broadly understood, as a public policy analyst or even as an elected official. That confidence began to weaken during my junior year at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. I had chosen an optional course in European politics for the 1991–1992 academic year. The recent defeat of communism in the Soviet bloc made the course particularly appealing, since it was taught by a visiting professor from Poland. Each student in that course had to make a presentation, so I chose to do mine on the role of the church in post–World War II Poland. To be honest, I chose that topic principally to save myself from having to listen to someone else hold forth on Roman Catholicism. (The political climate on campus wasn't exactly friendly to Christianity.)

Most of my friends were political junkies, and one of them recommended an issue of *National Review* that gave extended treatment to *Centesimus Annus*. I had never heard of *Centesimus Annus* but was told that it contained the pope's own analysis of what happened in 1989. I read that supplement, as well as *Centesimus Annus*, quickly thereafter. It was the first document of John Paul that I had ever read.

"He is telling us that economics is not the most important thing about man," wrote Richard John Neuhaus in that supplement. As Neuhaus continued,

> To attribute everything to the economic factor is to perpetuate the terrible lie of the Marxists. In addition to the economic is the political and, most important, the cultural. At the heart of the cultural is the moral and spiritual.

That insight was quite a revolutionary thought for me. Between the mathematization of human behavior and the desire for predictive models, the human element was often lost in academic economics. Neuhaus and others were saying that the pope, of all people, had a different view of how to look at economic questions. (In an "unrelated" development, while at the time I only knew Neuhaus as a writer, I would later come to know him as a priest—and so began to hear other whisperings.)

My university study of economics had left me frustrated. Some days I wondered if economics should be transferred from the social sciences to engineering. At that time I had no exposure to writers who placed economics in a wider field of humane studies—broader thinkers such as Amartya Sen or Gary Becker. It was in *Centesimus Annus* that I first came to sense, albeit vaguely, that there was something more to economics than economists were letting on.

"[There are] two theses that I regard as central to *Centesimus Annus*: first, that both politics and economics have their matrix in culture, and second, that culture is incomplete without religion," said Avery Dulles, some years

later, addressing an Acton Institute conference on the fifth anniversary of *Centesimus Annus*. Dulles continued,

> The political and economic orders cannot prosper without support from the order of culture, which provides the convictions and values on which the state and economy are predicated. The world of culture, moreover, touches closely on that of religion. If it attempts to suppress the dimension of ultimate mystery, it impoverishes itself. It has everything to gain if it opens its doors to God and to Christ.

This was a wholly new way of looking at the social order. For understandable reasons of simplicity, I had learned in economics to treat as "exogenous shocks" all those things that cannot be expressed in our equations and are therefore left out of the model. The problem is that most of the interesting things that happen are left out of the models—war and peace, political regimes and legal systems, and, of course, culture and religion. (In another "unrelated" development, I met Dulles many years later, while already in the seminary, and my encounters with that luminous intellect confirmed the whisperings that I had heard.)

As Dulles explains, *Centesimus Annus* teaches that economics is, in fact, not separate from all of the interesting things that human beings do and, moreover, it cannot be properly understood apart from what is most important to them. Indeed, *Centesimus Annus* argues that "a given culture reveals its overall understanding of life through the choices it makes in production and consumption" (no. 36).

The John Paul Twist

Until that point, I had been trained to accept as "given" all that fell under the capacious category that economists call "preferences." Such an assumption is fair enough to get on with the job of doing economic analysis, but while I learned how economic choices reveal preferences, we never stopped to consider what was behind those preferences. I was becoming more interested in studying what was being chosen and why rather than observing the choosing alone. My own priorities began to shift, and no longer did the study of effective marginal tax rates or dairy marketing boards excite me as they once did (and they did!). My attention had been drawn to something deeper and broader, something best expressed in one simple paragraph from *Centesimus Annus* that I still remember reading. It was one of those moments of illumination in which you realize, instantly, that you will never look at things quite the same way again:

> To [the inefficiency of the economic system] must be added the cultural and national dimension: It is not possible to understand man on the basis of economics alone nor to define him simply on the basis of class membership. Man is understood in a more complete way when he is situated within the sphere of culture through his language, history, and the position he takes toward the fundamental events of life, such as birth, love, work, and death. At the heart of every culture lies the attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God. Different cultures are basically different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence. (no. 24)

So I traveled from economic efficiency to the greatest of mysteries in one quick read. And then there was at the end of that last sentence the characteristic John Paul twist (as I would come to realize many papal documents later): the emphasis on the human person and the meaning of personal existence.

Economics with the Person at the Center

"It will be necessary to keep in mind that the main thread and, in a certain sense, the guiding principle … of all of the Church's social doctrine is a *correct view of the human person* and of his unique value," writes John Paul (no. 11). My economic (and political) training had led me to think of the social order in terms of aggregates—aggregates that allow an economist or political scientist to say that "consumers" are more confident or "voters" are undecided while knowing nothing about any one particular consumer or voter.

It was in Centesimus Annus *that I first came to sense, albeit vaguely, that there was something more to economics than economists were letting on.*

— Raymond J. de Souza

Centesimus Annus makes clear that the church's social doctrine begins with the principle that "there is something due to the person because he is a person" (no. 34), so social structures must be evaluated according to how they serve the person. Indeed, John Paul argues that the social order will be stable only if it takes the rights and interests of individual persons into account; any attempt to oppose the common good and the good of individual persons will be doomed to failure (cf. no. 25). Without falling into an atomistic individualism, *Centesimus Annus* warns against the threat that

"aggregates" can pose to the person.

The logical question follows: Why is the person so important? From a theological perspective, it is answered in terms of man's creation in the image of God (cf. no. 60), but *Centesimus Annus* also gives what might be called an economic or practical answer. It notes that to ignore personal freedom, quite apart from ethics, is impossible in practice, and so makes for bad public policy (cf. no. 25). Moreover, *Centesimus Annus* acknowledges that "man's principal resource is *man himself*" (no. 32) and that in the economic sphere man uses his intelligence in common with others to transform the world. This world of work requires "important virtues" including "diligence, industriousness, prudence in undertaking reasonable risks, reliability and fidelity in interpersonal relationships, as well as courage in carrying out decisions which are difficult and painful but necessary" (no. 32). The health of the economy depends, in part, on the potential unleashed by personal virtue.

What the social order needs is a correct understanding of the human person. The church makes its contribution by offering a Christian anthropology.

Readers of this publication will recognize in that analysis the strains of economic personalism, which might be summarized as economics with the person at the center. The noun is *personalism*, and the adjective remains just that—a description of one aspect of the principal reality under examination. Economic personalism—to which *Centesimus Annus* introduced me to, even if I did not know the term—reoriented my thinking. Whereas before I had looked at economics as an arena in which individuals operated, I now came to see that economic behavior was but one expression of the person, who remains always greater than any one particular aspect of his existence. My interests began to shift from the adjective to the noun, from economics to the person behind the economy.

The Revelation in Christ of What It Means to Be Human

None of these shifts in thinking requires leaving economics behind, let alone moving toward the priesthood. There are many fine economists who practice economics in a broadly humanistic fashion, taking into account that human persons, not machines, are being studied. (In another "unrelated" development, I discovered in my research for my course presentation an author who claimed that the critical actor in the 1989 revolutions was Pope John Paul II. It would be several years before I met George Weigel and his colleagues in their celebrated Krakow seminar—a splendid example of how exploring these questions is admirably suited to the lay vocation. Yet it was there in Krakow, studying *Centesimus Annus* intensely, that I heard even more intensely the whisperings of the gift and mystery of the priesthood.)

There were of course many other steps, both before and after *Centesimus Annus*, beginning most importantly with my upbringing in a devout Catholic family. Nevertheless, *Centesimus Annus* did show me that concern for the social order could be expressed not only in the worldly world of politics: "[The Church's] contribution to the political order is precisely her vision of the dignity of the human person revealed in all its fullness in the mystery of the Incarnate Word" (no. 47).

What the social order needs is a correct understanding of the human person—a proper anthropology. The church makes her contribution by offering a Christian anthropology—a view of man that is rooted in theology. In this way, one moves from the social order to the human person to the revelation in Christ of what it means to be human. In my case, that progression was from economics to economic personalism to Christian anthropology to theology.

"The Church's social teaching is itself a valid instrument of evangelization," John Paul writes. "As such, it proclaims God and his mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals man to himself" (no. 54).

Centesimus Annus is not the reason I entered the seminary—that would place too heavy a burden on one factor alone. I aspire to be a priest, devoted fully to the mystery of salvation principally because I am convinced that it is what the Lord is asking me to do. But if you ask where I saw the Lord and heard his voice, *Centesimus Annus* and the papal magisterium of John Paul II would be one important answer. God speaks to the soul in many and diverse ways. Ten years after *Centesimus Annus*, I am grateful to have heard those whisperings in its pages.

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The Personalism of John Paul II

A Review Essay by Richard C. Bayer

Samuel Gregg's book, *Challenging the Modern World,* ventures to identify the fundamental ideas in the social teachings that John Paul II has influenced and to show the extent to which this development is rooted in his writings prior to becoming pope. Given John Paul's stated intent to supply a Christian alternative to (purely) humanistic philosophies, the concern of his papacy for ethics, and the fact that this is the longest and most dynamic papacy of this century, Samuel Gregg's investigation is indeed an important one.

More specifically, the social teachings under examination are *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), *Populorum Progressio* (1967), *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), *Laborem Exercens* (1981), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), and *Centesimus Annus* (1991). The primary pre-papal texts are *Love and Responsibility* (1960), *The Acting Person* (1969), *Sources of Renewal* (1972), and *Sign of Contradiction* (1977). The choice of these works is representative, and they make for a truly informative yet manageable work. Further, Gregg tackles as case studies the subjects of industrial relations, capitalism, and relations between developed and developing countries. For Gregg's project, the papal encyclical *Gaudium et Spes* is the foundational ecclesial document since it sums up prior teaching and lays out the agenda for future documents; John Paul was deeply influenced by the agenda in *Gaudium et Spes*.

Challenging the Modern World: Karol Wojtyla/John Paul II and the Development of Catholic Social Teaching
by Samuel Gregg

Lexington Books
304 pp. Hardcover: $65.00

In this agenda, Gregg picks out four important points. First, he explores the important distinction drawn by the document between what we commonly call "progress" (such as a simple increase in technology or affluence) and genuine progress toward the Kingdom of God (progress in genuine human realization). Second, the church must discern the signs of the times to teach, to learn, and to discern the activity of God. Third, the heuristic method of dialogue between the church and the modern world is advanced as a humble approach by which understanding of this genuine progress might be advanced, thereby leading to transformation of the world. And fourth, the understanding of private property is quite solid and simply stated.

For Gregg, the pursuit of the common good requires that the right to private property be generally affirmed yet subject to the principal of common use. That is to say, property rights are never absolute; it is necessary to share with those in need for basic necessities. Not only is Gregg's analysis useful for his own purposes—to show the important ideas which influenced John Paul—but it also provides a good introduction to the key ideas about how the church views itself and its relation to the modern world. These four points are also major substantive, methodological commitments in the work of John Paul.

An Unshakable Thomist

Nevertheless, I do have reservations about Gregg's theoretical understanding of development in Roman Catholic social thought. The understanding of development is important because, in a sense, the entire work is about the development of doctrine. From the outset, Gregg asserts that development in all of the documents proceeds only "from the fact that the linguistic formulations used by the Church do not exhaustively encapsulate the revealed truth. Hence, the Church periodically improves upon the language used.…" For Gregg, development does not involve increasing knowledge or realization about society or revelation and cannot involve repudiation of what was believed in the past. Strangely, no theory of development is explained. Whether one agrees with him on all of these assertions (I do not), they do cry out for deeper substantiation. This is the only significant criticism of the work, which is otherwise carefully nuanced and well documented.

The most basic question that Wojtyla seeks to answer in his work is the ethical-anthropological one: What is man? For Gregg, Wojtyla's consistent perspective is a sound

Thomism informed by, and in dialogue with, modern existentialism, phenomenology, and personalism. Unlike much of other modern philosophy, Wojtyla insists on the existence of an objective moral order and the need to recognize the connection between ethics and anthropology. Correcting the mistaken interpretations of some scholars (Gregory Baum, to name one), Gregg understands Wojtyla as an unshakable Thomist, not among those trying somehow to correct Marxism from within and reconcile it to Catholic thinking.

This basic perspective worked out by Wojtyla, combined with the data of *Gaudium et Spes*, have a powerful impact on his theoretical constructs as pope. *Laborem Exercens*, for example, brings many of the personalist themes about action and ethics from Wojtyla's early work into full bloom, especially in the teaching about the subjective nature of work—that is, first and foremost, man shapes himself in the act of work. Only secondarily does one consider work in the objective sense (the goods and services that are created).

Illuminating, Balanced, Accurate

After a fine job of examining the sources (the foundational documents of Catholic social thought and the Wojtyan pre-papal writings mentioned above), Gregg, in the case studies, delivers on his promise to demonstrate convincingly how development in Catholic social thought is rooted in John Paul's writings prior to becoming pope. For example, the chapter on industrial relations discusses *Laborem Exercens* and shows how modern economic errors in industrialization are "actions" rooted in human "choice," actions that constitute a denial of the "subjectivity" of exploited workers. Action, choice, and subjectivity are all concepts well rooted in Wojtyla's earlier work.

Precisely because exploitation is rooted in choice and is not a necessity based on the structure of economic relations, John Paul is never anti-capitalist, per se. Indeed, an underlying subtext throughout the entire book is that a Marxist reading of almost anything in John Paul is grievously mistaken. (Writer Gregory Baum, who gives the documents such a reading, is repeatedly criticized.) For example, as Gregg sees it, John Paul distances himself from Marxism and some liberation theologies when, consistent with the Wojtyan view that persons are the proper subject of free moral choice, he stresses that the root of sin is personal sin and not "evil economic structures." As Gregg states in brief, "from a moral-anthropological viewpoint, personal sin is at the root of problematic structures and perpetuates their existence."

The case study of capitalism in chapter six is a good example of Gregg's illuminating, balanced, and accurate style of interpretation in the face of a controversial issue. In *Centesimus Annus*, Wojtylan moral-anthropological thought is seen as providing the supporting foundation for capitalism understood as a system that "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" (no. 42). Indeed, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* vivifies the role of the capitalist entrepreneur with the spirit of the Wojtylan anthropology. John Paul states that there is a *right* to economic initiative for human subjects who must be permitted to exercise their freedom and creativity for self-realization and the common good. At the same time, the very same thought opposes capitalism as a "system in which human freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within the service of human freedom in its totality" (no. 42). As Gregg notes, "laissez-faire models remain unacceptable."

Challenging the Modern World is appropriate for any reader who possesses a basic knowledge or better of Catholic social thought and who wants to understand more about the subtleties of a living tradition. While this book does not come fully to grips with the concept of development in a theoretical sense, it offers the reader an original and insightful understanding of Christian personalism and Catholic social thought, especially as it has been shaped by Pope John Paul II.

For Gregg, Wojtyla's consistent perspective is a sound Thomism in dialogue with modern existentialism, phenomenology, and personalism.

— Richard C. Bayer

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The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II

by Avery Dulles

Herder and Herder, xii + 204 pp. Paperback: $19.95

Review by Michel Therrien

It has been centuries since the Roman Catholic Church has elevated to the papacy a bishop who is both a deft shepherd and an intellectual giant; these two gifts rarely fill the Chair of Peter simultaneously. Avery Dulles, in his book *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of John Paul II*, mentions but two: Leo the Great and Gregory the Great—placing Pope John Paul II in company with the few who have most worthily filled the shoes of the great fisherman.

Dulles's book presents the reader with a concise and systematic, though sometimes rote, summation of John Paul's theological work. The book marches along to a familiar cadence of Catholic orthodoxy, which is echoed in many circles of Catholic theological interest—except, unfortunately, the academy, where such a book is nothing less than a breath of fresh air. What is more, the fact that Dulles is an esteemed theologian recently elevated to the College of Cardinals only adds to the book's credence, making it worthy of careful study. *The Splendor of Faith* is ideal for students of theology interested in understanding the fundamentals of Catholicism and knowing more about the themes of the current pontificate. However, nothing about Dulles's style grabs the reader; in fact, the book is at times dry and formidably academic.

Below the surface, however, a salient objective seeps through the book's pages. In a manner characteristic of this humble and intellectually refined Jesuit, Cardinal Dulles judiciously addresses the intellectual fallout within Catholic theology after the Second Vatican Council. In contrast to the negative assertions of conservatism that assail this pope, Dulles presents a tightly woven case for John Paul's being, unequivocally, a pope of the council and a most formidable theologian of the post-conciliar church.

The book opens with a chapter-long biographical overview of the pope's life, which enfleshes the themes that vivify this pontificate. The succeeding chapters engage one article of faith after another, beginning with the Trinity and concluding with the last things. By wading through John Paul's voluminous theology, Dulles presents the continuity of the pope's thought before, during, and after the council. He shows just how wedded John Paul is to the vision of the council and, in doing so, demonstrates that his desire to implement Vatican II is the very centerpiece of his apostolic ministry.

John Paul's intellectual dynamism has clearly provided him with an untiring impetus to confront the errors of secular humanism, and yet, as the successor of Peter, he does so by affirming all that is good in the modern world. As Dulles leads us to conclude, John Paul's theology is not simply an abstract intellectual exercise aimed at entrenching the church in the distant past but an undertaking inspired by a rapt conviction that Christ is the absolute fulfillment of human desire. And for those in the post-conciliar church who insist on rooting theology in praxis, John Paul's theology is conceived and developed from the seedbed of his evangelization and pastoral ministry, both before and after his election to the papacy. Dulles's many references to the pope's personal life illustrate this fact well.

Dulles identifies, therefore, the pith of John Paul's theology as Christ-centered and personalist. John Paul's every theological reflection seems to converge on the essential dignity of persons and the enormous revelation and gift of grace that is given in the incarnation of God's Word. At its core, the pope's theological vision is, in the very best sense, evangelistic and humanistic.

Moreover, John Paul is a masterful theologian because of the rigor that he brings to the papacy from his intellectual formation as a philosopher. In applying a personalist philosophy to the sacred science, John Paul has exercised his teaching office from within an anthropological framework that infuses new vitality into the age-old truths of faith. The pope's theology is extraordinary in its affirmation of all that is authentically human, and, though Dulles never asserts as much, the attentive reader can hardly help but notice the pope's systematic avoidance of authoritarianism.

The beauty of a Christocentric personalism is that it moves morality away from an over reliance upon extrinsic structures of authority and toward the very internal logic of human action and human nature itself. The pope's personalist ethic is an enticing invitation to take up the necessary work of relating ethical norms back to their intrinsic relationship both to the subjectivity of human action and to the objectivity of human nature. By pointing out the many ways in which the pope does this, Dulles introduces the reader to a relatively novel approach to moral thought that has multiple applications. Whether it be applied to the study of law, economics, political philosophy, or medical ethics, the pope's

personalism may begin healing the breach between metaphysics and epistemology, which has sent modernity headlong into the culture of death.

The lengths to which Dulles goes in defending the pope as a theologian of the council *par excellence* conveys his commitment to standing against the deconstructionist current of theological discourse within academia. *The Splendor of Faith* reflects well upon Dulles as a theologian who has risen to the heights of respectability precisely because of his commitment to moving gingerly down the center aisle of theological discourse. This book challenges any who might be tempted to dip—even ever so slightly—into the deceptive waters of heterodoxy.

The Splendor of Faith is excellent, especially insofar as it graciously confronts the false perception that this pontificate is a throwback to the pre-conciliar church. One simply cannot come away from this book with such a conclusion. To the contrary, rarely in the history of the Catholic Church have Catholics been so blessed to have a pope who has such a striking pastoral charisma and a monumental command of theological thought.

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Book News

A Free Society Reader:
Principles for the New Millennium
M. Novak, W. Brailsford, and C. Heesters, editors
Lexington Books
xx+414 pp. Paperback: $22.95

In addition to providing an introduction to the religious underpinnings of the free society, this excellent collection of essays also functions as a commentary on the teaching ministry of Pope John Paul II in general and on the primary themes of *Centesimus Annus* in particular.

In his introduction, Michael Novak writes that "the free society is constructed by three liberties: a system of *political* liberty from torture and tyranny; of *economic* liberty from poverty and coercion; and of liberty of *spirit*—moral, cultural, religious—a liberty of conscience, inquiry, and communication." Consequently, the book is organized around this three-fold architecture of liberty. Before dealing specifically with these three liberties, the book establishes in part one the overall topography of John Paul's social teaching, with essays by George Weigel, Rocco Buttiglione, and Richard John Neuhaus, in addition to Novak.

Weigel argues that John Paul is primarily the "pope of freedom" and that the heart of his social teaching is a Christian view of the human person, a view that both justifies and directs liberty. In Weigel's words, "The pope speaks of hope in man's capacity to order his public life in ways that serve the cause of human flourishing." Buttiglione then focuses particularly on John Paul's view of economic freedom and how that freedom, like all freedoms, must be oriented toward the truth. As he writes, "Nothing good can be done without freedom, but freedom is not the highest value in itself." Rather, he continues, "Freedom is given to man in order to make possible the free obedience to truth and the free gift of oneself in love."

Neuhaus, for his part, is concerned with "contending for the soul of liberalism" and sees in *Centesimus Annus* a helpful resource in reestablishing the classical liberal tradition on a more solid Christian footing. According to Neuhaus, "It is a signal achievement of this pontificate that it has so clearly replanted the idea of the individual and of freedom in the rich soil of Christian truth from which, in its convoluted and conflicted development, it had been uprooted." Finally, Novak catalogues the primary intellectual touchstones of John Paul: phenomenology, Thomism, and Carmelite spirituality. Above all, Novak writes, "the most impressive problem posed for him by Christian experience in our time—a problem arising directly from biblical texts and from his own experience—is the question of freedom." Consequently, John Paul's primary intellectual project has been articulating an understanding of freedom informed by the rich Christian heritage of philosophical and political reflection.

Following this intellectual groundwork, the next three sections focus on the economic, political, and cultural aspects of the free society, and they include essays by some of the most incisive Christian thinkers of our day. Part five concludes the volume with important relevant documentation, including *Centesimus Annus* and other papal pronouncements concerned with the nature of freedom.

All told, this is an excellent and comprehensive introduction to John Paul's remarkable contribution not only to the heritage of Christian social ethics but also to the literature of liberty.

—Gregory Dunn

Reading *Centesimus Annus*

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

Grasping the authentic significance of *Centesimus Annus* requires two approaches. First, one must read the encyclical on its own merits, independently of previous papal teaching. As objectively as possible, one can exegete its various passages to discern its thrust and priorities. Then one must read the document in the context of previous social pronouncements by the magisterium over the past one hundred years and see what new themes, developments, and directions the present encyclical initiates.

When read for its own sake, *Centesimus Annus* emerges as an uncompromising rejection of collectivism in its Marxist, communist, socialist, and even welfare-statist manifestations. While the encyclical allows for a certain amount of intervention by the state in such areas as wage levels, social security, unemployment insurance, and the like (always according to subsidiarity and only for the sake of the common good), *Centesimus Annus* also expresses repeated concern for observing the principle of subsidiarity and warns against the effects of intervention on both the economic prosperity of a nation and the dignity and rights of each person.

Centesimus Annus, then, indicates a decided preference for what it calls the business economy, market economy, or free economy, rooted in a legal, ethical, and religious framework. While it rejects the notion that such a free economic system meets all human needs, it distinguishes the economic system from the ethical and cultural context in which it exists. In this way, *Centesimus Annus* can criticize the excesses of materialism and consumerism and still endorse a free economy as being essentially in accord with Christianity.

A second way of reading this encyclical reveals it as an even more dramatic document. When it is read with an awareness of modern Roman Catholic social thought, beginning with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, its historical import surfaces. *Centesimus Annus* demonstrates the greatest depth of economic understanding and the most deliberate (and least critical) embrace of the system of free exchange on the part of Catholic teaching authority in one hundred years, and possibly since the Reformation period. Moreover, it contains a modern appreciation for the dynamic nature of free exchange and the way in which wealth is produced.

> Centesimus Annus *has opened the church to a dialogue with economic liberty.*

When seen in this way, *Centesimus Annus* represents the beginning of a shift away from the static, zero-sum economic worldview that led the church to be suspicious of the system of free exchange and to argue for wealth distribution as the only moral response to poverty. Clearly, John Paul II has incorporated the developments in economic science since the time of Keynes. Not only does the encyclical synthesize advances in economics with Catholic normative principles, but it also reaffirms the autonomy of economics as a legitimate and positive discipline.

Centesimus Annus indicates a turn toward authentic human liberty as a principle for social organization on the part of the Catholic church. Thus a new dialogue has begun. *Centesimus Annus* has opened the church to a vigorous dialogue with the idea of economic liberty. It is an idea that began with Catholic scholarship as seen in the Scholastics; it is fitting that this pope should retrieve it.

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"It follows that the Church cannot abandon man and that '*this man* is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission … the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption.' This, and this alone, is the principle which inspires the Church's social doctrine."

—*Centesimus Annus* no. 53—