

children in the manner of an ordained priest. And herein lies the rub: It does not seem appropriate for the non-ordained to bless children at Mass.

I know this will annoy some readers, but I would only ask such persons to consider if it really serves the purposes of our Faith for non-ordained persons, many (if not most) of whom are women, to imitate the actions and office of priests at Mass. I really do not believe that our Lord is best served by this relatively new practice that is creeping into the Mass.

If you believe that the Faith, which was handed down to us from the Apostles and preserved by the Magisterium through two millennia, is true and guided by the Holy Spirit, you will perhaps admit that God's plan for His Church has never included priestesses, and that therefore any steps in that direction, however subtle they may be, are steps away from rather than toward Him. Perhaps, too, you will recognize that the practice I have described

has crept into the Mass in an illegitimate, and therefore inappropriate, manner.

And so, as the father of five children, all too young to receive Communion, my respectful but sincere message to all non-ordained Eucharistic ministers is this: *Please don't bless my children during Mass.* It's nothing against you, but is a reverence and respect for Christ and the ordained priest who acts *in persona Christi*. I appreciate your assistance in helping the priest distribute Communion, but I respectfully request that you leave the public blessing of children during the Mass to those who have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Larry A. Carstens

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books in REVIEW

THOMAS STORCK

THE BACKGROUND TO *RERUM NOVARUM*

Catholic Social Teaching: An Historical Perspective. By Roger Aubert. Edited by David A. Boileau. *Marquette University Press.* 288 pages.

Canon Roger Aubert, a priest of the Archdiocese of Malines-Brussels in Belgium, has been a prominent historian of Catholic social thought for some years. The essays and reviews in this volume were assembled by Fr. David Boileau of Loyola Uni-

versity in New Orleans, who also wrote the final chapter for this work. Canon Aubert's essays range in date from 1947 to 1992 and in subject matter from Church support for a miners' strike in Quebec in 1949 to the growing awareness of European Catholics of the need for an effective response to the conditions created by capitalism and industrialism during the 19th century.

Aubert surveys the situations primarily in Belgium, France, Italy,

and Germany/Austria, though including mention of leading figures and events in England, the U.S., and elsewhere. The earliest call for a

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Catholic intellectual and pastoral response to capitalism and industrialism did not come from the so-called liberal Catholics, those thinkers in France, Belgium, and Italy who most welcomed political democracy and wished the Church to make an accommodation with post-Revolutionary Europe. Rather, it came from those very Catholics who most opposed the overthrow of the *ancien régime* and who desired a return to the principles which had undergirded historical Christendom. This should come as no surprise, because free-market capitalism was a major component of 19th-century liberalism, which also championed political democracy and did not countenance any involvement by the state in the workings of the economy. Those Catholics who advocated the rights of workers and the necessity for state intervention in the economy, positions which at the time could be found chiefly among socialists, were often of noble or aristocratic backgrounds, and included Bishop von Ketteler of Mainz, Germany (who was also a baron), Prince Karl von Löwenstein, Count von Kuefstein, Baron Karl von Vogelsang, and other German and Austrian noblemen, as well as Jesuits connected with the journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, and the French military officer René de La Tour du Pin. Indeed, in 1885, when an Italian priest, Msgr. Jacobini, was introducing La Tour du Pin to Leo XIII, he remarked that he and those who thought like him "were called socialists in certain Catholic circles." However, "the Pope exclaimed: 'Socialism! It's Christianity.'"

These early Catholic social thinkers were typically organized into study circles. One study circle

met at the Austrian estate of Prince von Löwenstein. Another met in Rome at the winter home of Count von Kuefstein, and another met in France. After 1883 Bishop Mermillod of Geneva, who had earlier been a participant in the Roman group, was asked to set up an international clearinghouse to coordinate the work of these different circles. The Roman group, in the meantime, met at the home of Prince Borghese, at the request of Pope Leo XIII. These circles kept Leo XIII informed of the progress and conclusions of their studies, and helped pave the way for his decisive intervention in 1891 with *Rerum Novarum*.

Another theme Canon Aubert stresses is the different positions Catholics took on worker organizations. Frequently, those who otherwise held the most "advanced" views on state economic regulation were also opposed to labor unions, not because they opposed worker organization, but because they wished to establish as much as possible an updated version of the medieval guilds, which had included both employers and employees in the same organization. Often these same men were heavily involved in the revival of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, and they based their economic positions on Thomas's pre-capitalist discussion of property and other economic matters, which were so different from John Locke's absolutist views on the subject. Then there were those Catholics who considered a revival of the guilds hopeless and looked to organizations for workers alone, such as labor unions, as the necessary remedy. A few days before he promulgated *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII changed a crucial passage to allow for the possibility of both

types of organizations, whereas the previous draft text had recommended only the mixed type of groups, akin to the old guilds.

Another point of contention that arose between Catholics toward the end of the century was between those who had come to believe that political democracy was necessary in order to achieve social justice in the economy, a movement Aubert calls Christian democracy, and those who tended to be hostile toward political democracy, although generally supportive of labor organizations. Leo XIII had stated that the Church was indifferent as to a nation's type of political regime, provided that it sought the common good; but in specific instances, as in the case of France, he counseled Catholics to accept the re-



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public instead of engaging in what he saw as a hopeless quest to restore a monarchy.

There were a few Catholics who expressly supported liberal economics; that is, who did not think that the state should intervene in economic life and whose hope for improvement in workers' conditions depended on an increase in the Christian conscience of individual owners. These included Bishop Freppel of Angers and Professor Charles Périn of the University of Louvain. Indeed, Bishop Freppel had organized a conference in 1890 explicitly to oppose another series of conferences sponsored by the Bishop of Liège, who took the opposite point of view. It was partly to bring peace to these warring bishops that Leo XIII issued *Rerum Novarum*, which came down, albeit cautiously, on the side of the so-called School of Liège, the group that accepted the possibility of government intervention. But this careful beginning by Pope Leo opened the way for the much wider acceptance of state action by such later popes as Pius XI and Pius XII.

A further and later controversy, which came to a head in Germany during the reign of Pius X, concerned the question of Catholic participation in religiously mixed labor unions; that is, made up of

both Catholics and Protestants. The majority of German bishops supported such unions, while Pius X agreed with the minority, who wanted labor unions composed exclusively of Catholics. But in the face of the division among the bishops, the Pope, in an encyclical in 1912, allowed Catholics to join the mixed trade unions "in order to avoid a greater evil."

These are just some of the fascinating controversies that occupied our fathers in the Faith as they struggled to present the Gospel message in the changed conditions of modernity.

Canon Aubert's essays are a rich historical feast that should interest any literate Catholic and remind us all of the importance of social doctrine in the life of the Church, a point which Pope John Paul II also stressed.

The concluding chapter, by Fr. Boileau, is neither as useful nor as sound as the earlier parts of the book, and his incessant praise of Fr. Charles Curran, who wrote the Introduction to this volume, wears the reader rather quickly.

I must note some technical problems with the book. The index is quite faulty and incomplete, and moreover was compiled on very peculiar principles. Individuals are generally listed either under their first name or their title, such as Baron, Count, Msgr., etc. There even appears a curious index entry of the "Holy Office of the Knights of Labor." This entry supposedly came into existence because Canon Aubert had written "Cardinal Gibbons...with a view to avoiding condemnation by the Holy Office of the Knights of Labor, the first American workers organization...." Our mad indexer simply saw the

phrase without the slightest understanding of its meaning. There are also a few pages bound out of order. But despite all this and some awkward renderings from the French originals, I highly recommend Canon Aubert's essays, for those interested either in the Church's social doctrine or her history. ■

BRIEFLY REVIEWED

The Cost of "Choice": Women Evaluate the Impact of Abortion. Edited by Erika Bachiochi. *Encounter Books*. \$17.95.

We know the impact of abortion on a baby in the womb — a painful, violent death. The focus, though, of these essays by women is the destructive impact of abortion on women, physically, psychologically, and spiritually.

Consider the physical effects. Besides the risks of infection, tearing of the cervix, or perforation of the uterus, there is the long-term risk of breast cancer. Dr. Angela Lanfranchi has extensively researched the link between abortion and breast cancer. Breast cancer is the only major cancer that continues to rise, and it is estimated that some 10,000 cases a year result from abortion. Attorney Denise Burke, writing on abortion clinic regulation, explains that abortion clinics usually operate under unsafe and substandard conditions. Regulations are lax and often similar to pre-*Roe* "back-alley" clinics.

Even if a woman is lucky

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