

forgiveness — and in writing about his own journey, he succeeds in thwarting despair and, consequently, allowing the possibility of hope to lead him away

from eternal suffering.

Michael S. Rose is Associate Editor of the NOR.

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# books in REVIEW

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THOMAS STORCK

## PERFECTING THE SOCIAL ORDER

**A Reader in Catholic Social Teaching: From *Syllabus Errorum* to *Deus Caritas Est*.** Edited by Peter A. Kwasniewski. Cluny Media. 529 pages. \$29.95.

This compilation of selected original documents of Catholic social teaching is based on a theology course for seniors that Peter A. Kwasniewski taught at Wyoming Catholic College. It began with fundamental moral theology, moved to marriage and family, and then devoted “the lion’s share to political and economic matters.” The carefully chosen collection includes several documents not usually considered part of the *corpus* of Catholic social doctrine, such as Pope Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) and Leo XIII’s encyclical to the French bishops, *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes* (1892). It does, of course, include the usual documents, such as Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and Pius

XI’s *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), which have been crucial to the development of Catholic social thinking.

The inclusion of the less-well-known documents calls for some explanation. Catholic social doctrine is often regarded simply as the Church’s teaching on the economic order — and economic morality does indeed figure largely in it. But any Catholic who thinks or writes about economic matters or, for that matter, undertakes actions in the economic order and fails to take his bearings from Catholic social doctrine, repeated over and over again by various popes, is guilty of what Pius XI in *Ubi Arcae Dei Consilio* (1922), his first encyclical, called “social Modernism,” concerning which, he said, “We condemn it as strongly as We do dogmatic Modernism.” The foundations of Catholic social teaching are not in economic morality. Rather,

they lie in Catholic doctrine about the state, and beyond that in the nature of the human person, recognized not only as a *rational animal* by Aristotle but as a *political and social animal* — a teaching developed by St. Thomas Aquinas. Hence the necessity for authority in human affairs, including the state, which, according to St. Thomas, would exist even if our first parents had never fallen

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Thomas Storck has written widely on Catholic social teaching, Catholic culture, and related topics for many years. His most recent book is *An Economics of Justice & Charity: Catholic Social Teaching, Its Development and Contemporary Relevance* (Angelico Press, 2017). An archive of his writings can be found at [www.thomasstorck.org](http://www.thomasstorck.org).

from grace. Thus, when James Madison wrote in *Federalist* no. 51 that "if men were angels, no government would be necessary," he contradicted the Thomistic and Catholic understanding that both angels and unfallen human beings require social authority of some kind. But if social authority, as embodied in the state, is natural to mankind, then social authority can be redeemed, can be brought under the rule of Jesus Christ. It can, in short, be Christianized.

This teaching was expressed clearly in a series of encyclicals by Leo XIII, all included in this volume, and most strikingly by Pius XI in *Quas Primas* (1925). Pius wrote, "When once men recognize, both in private and in public life, that Christ is King, society will at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace and harmony.... If princes and magistrates duly elected are filled with the persuasion that they rule, not by their own right, but by the mandate and in place of the Divine King, they will exercise their authority piously and wisely, and they will make laws and administer them while having in view the common good and also the human dignity



Pope Leo XIII

of their subjects.... Men will see in their kings or in their rulers men like themselves, perhaps unworthy or open to criticism, but they will not on that account refuse obedience if they see reflected in them the authority of Christ, God and Man" (no. 19).

The enlightenment understanding, as embodied in the American constitutional tradition, however, sees authority as coming from the people, and, as noted above, it concedes to government a purely negative role, so that if "men were angels" (i.e., unfallen creatures), "no government would be necessary." It follows from this that religion is purely a private affair, and each citizen should adhere to whatever religion he judges best, while the state must be religiously neutral, upholding at most only certain natural moral norms. But this is false, for as Leo XIII taught in *Immortale Dei* (1885), "The State, constituted as it is, is clearly bound to act up to the manifold and weighty duties linking it to God, by the public profession of religion. Nature and reason, which command every individual devoutly to worship God in holiness, because we belong to Him and must return to Him, since from Him we came, bind also the civil community by a like law. For, men living together in society are under the power of God no less than individuals are, and society, no less than individuals, owes gratitude to God who gave it being and maintains it and whose ever-bounteous goodness enriches it with countless blessings. Since, then, no one is allowed to be remiss in the service due to God, and since the chief duty of all men

is to cling to religion in both its teaching and practice — not such religion as they may have a preference for, but the religion which God enjoins, and which certain and most clear marks show to be the only one true religion — it is a public crime to act as though there were no God" (no. 6).

In the American context, this teaching received two notable elaborations, both included in this volume: *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae*, Leo XIII's letter to James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore (1899; wrongly labeled here as an encyclical), on the heresy of Americanism, and *Longinqua Oceani* (1895), Leo's less-well-known encyclical to the American bishops in which he notes that while some credit is due to the religious freedom that obtains in the U.S. for the growth and vigor of Catholicism here, the Church "would bring forth more abundant fruits if, in addition to liberty, she enjoyed the favor of the laws and the patronage of the public authority."

This is a tough doctrine to swallow, and it is no surprise that Catholics in the modern era have sought relief from it. Since the promulgation of *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965), the Second Vatican Council's decree on religious liberty, it has been widely held that the Church has repudiated her previous and constant teaching about the duty of public authority to acknowledge God and His revelation. This interpretation has been disputed by more than one commentator, including the present reviewer. Moreover, the earlier teaching by no means lacks affirmation in authoritative post-conciliar documents — for

example, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (cf. nos. 1738, 2105, and 2109, including the footnotes) — so there is no need to either jettison the earlier teaching or reject the Council's decree, but simply to insist that it not be understood as a departure from the Church's settled doctrine. In any case, Kwasniewski includes in this volume not only the text of *Dignitatis Humanae*, in a new and more literal translation by Michael Pakaluk, but *Ci Riesce* (1952), Pius XII's crucial address to Italian jurists in which he discusses modern pluralistic societies and shows how the Church's constant teaching must be applied in such situations.

While the roots of Catholic social doctrine lie in man's nature as a social and political animal, the popular understanding of that doctrine as being mostly about economic morality is not totally misplaced. After Leo XIII, the chief documents of Catholic social doctrine have mostly been concerned with what is moral and immoral in economic conduct, and how the economic order can be reformed to accord with the Gospel. Although the first encyclical devoted to this question was Leo's *Rerum Novarum*, Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* is a veritable encyclopedia of social doctrine. Not only did Pius state as his explicit aim to develop Leo's teaching on certain points, but most of the concrete proposals contained in subsequent papal social documents can be found, or at least hinted at, in this encyclical. If we consider only the economic aspect of social doctrine, it is *the* indispensable document to study. Therefore, the fact that Kwas-

niewski's compilation omits some of the later encyclicals, such as Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and John Paul II's first two social encyclicals, hardly detracts from its value. It does include John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus* (1991), a complex document that not only must be read in harmony with the Church's previous tradition of social thought but contains some of the most hard-hitting criticisms of the free-market capitalist economic order to issue from a pope since the days of Pius XII.

As noted above, St. Thomas taught that man is a political animal. Man's natural state is in community, and in a community with some sort of political authority. The doctrine of John Locke, that our natural state is one of self-rule, the so-called state of nature, is false. The Lockean doctrine, sadly, has done immense damage to human life, and it has even infected the thinking of many Catholics, who ought to know better. For we have been instructed and reminded many times about the truth of such matters. Modern Catholic social teaching, which began with Leo XIII's determined effort to restate the Church's ancient doctrine on the social order in the midst of the 19th century, deals chiefly with the state and its duties toward God and how these duties must express themselves vis-à-vis mankind's economic conduct. Alas, many Catholics are entirely ignorant of this body of doctrine; downplay its significance, or contrive ways of explaining it away as exceeding the rightful teaching authority of the supreme pontiffs.

Kwasniewski includes in this

volume a sample syllabus for a course in Catholic social doctrine, based on this volume but requiring some outside reading. He notes that this book "could also be adopted for homeschool use and for self-study." This is true, but I would caution that although study of the primary sources is a necessity, for most readers some kind of commentary is also needed to avoid misunderstandings. Many such commentaries were published during the '30s and '40s, and I can suggest my own recently published work, *An Economics of Justice & Charity*, as fulfilling such a role.

I highly recommend this volume as a valuable compilation of the chief documents of one of the most important subjects that can be studied — a subject about which Catholics ought to stand out as possessing a full knowledge. This knowledge, of which the world has at best a partial and confused understanding, under God's providence has the power

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to lead to what Pius XI called for in the formal title of *Quadragesimo Anno*: "Reconstructing

the Social Order and Perfecting It Conformably to the Precepts of the Gospel." Now *that* is some-

thing worthwhile with which to occupy ourselves for the next few centuries! ■

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## CHRISTOPHER BEITING

# The Dictatorship of Noise

**The Power of Silence: Against the Dictatorship of Noise.** By Robert Cardinal Sarah. *Ignatius*. 249 pages. \$18.95.

"This is the great tragedy of the modern world: man separates himself from God because he no longer believes in the value of silence."

— Robert Cardinal Sarah

Following on the heels of *God or Nothing* comes *The Power of Silence*, another extraordinary work by Robert Cardinal Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Like *God or Nothing* [reviewed by this writer in our April 2017 issue — *Ed.*], *The Power of Silence* is a book-length interview with Sarah conducted by French journalist Nicolas Diat; though this time around there are also contributions by Dom

Dysmas de Lassus, father general of the Carthusian Order. And although the subject of the book is silence, Sarah's thoughts range widely, and he addresses a number of contemporary problems, so much so that the work might well have been called *God or Nothing II*. (Indeed, "God or nothing" is a leitmotif that appears multiple times throughout the book.)

*The Power of Silence* is an extraordinary work. It is, on the one hand, a deeply considered meditation on the virtue of silence and is as traditional and timeless as the Carthusian inspirations that so often inform it. On the other hand, it is also a wise challenge to and critique of contemporary mores, and it is thus both topical and countercultural. The work as a whole is a paradox worthy of Chesterton, featuring as it does two (and at one point, three) men *talking about silence*. Your humble reviewer is only too pleased to add to the irony, since for years he has used the work of Blaise Pascal to recommend the virtue of silence to hundreds of college students, only to succumb

not long ago to an incurable case of tinnitus that has left him forever unable to enjoy it!

*The Power of Silence* is the product of a number of important influences in Cardinal Sarah's life. One is his African background (he was born in Guinea, West Africa). Sarah maintains that Africans, in their lives and worship, mix moments of activity with moments of profound silence more often than do most other people. Another influence is his time at seminary, which he credits for his first formal "initiation to silence." Moreover, despite not having a monastic background, Sarah is clearly influenced by the monastic life and liturgy. The book opens with an account of Diat and Sarah's 2016 visit to La Grande Chartreuse, the motherhouse of the Carthusian Order. The Carthusians observe the strictest monastic discipline in the Church, leading lives of almost perpetual personal silence and prayer. (That Dom Dysmas would break his silence to add his insights to the discussion in the book is *highly* unusual.) Sarah also singles out

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