other cheek"! But in reality, apologists is the reasoned defence of our Christian beliefs, and as Catholics we have an obligation to teach the teachings of our religion. This defence can take many forms.

Expressing our Christian values at the ballot box is just one way in which we can defend them, by voting for the individuals and political parties that most closely align with our beliefs and the teachings of Catholicism. There were, in 2008, an estimated 46 million Catholic voters in the US. Studies indicated that 41 per cent of Catholics voted for Democrats, 37 per cent for Republicans, and 22 per cent for Independents. Democrats Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman won with majority support from Catholics, and John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, did even better—he won the 1960 election with 78 per cent of the Catholic vote. Since Kennedy's election in 1960, Republicans have won an increased share of the Catholic vote; Ronald Reagan (twice), George H.W. Bush (in 1988) and George W. Bush (in 2004) all won majorities among Catholics. On the other hand, Jimmy Carter (in 1976), Bill Clinton (in 1996) and Barack Obama (in 2008) also won Catholic majorities. Mr. Obama's share in 2008 was 54 per cent of Catholic voters.

The Catholic electorate, it would seem, can still go either way. It has been said that Catholics today are politically homeless—driven away from the Democratic Party by that party's position on abortion, yet uncomfortable with Republican stances on the free market and (for some) the death penalty. Because of their divided loyalties, Catholics are now the quintessential swing voters: since 1972, the presidential candidate who has won the Catholic vote has also won the election. (The one exception was Al Gore in 2000, who did win the popular vote while losing to George W. Bush in the electoral vote.)

George W. Bush made significant inroads among Catholic voters because he used language and chose issues that appealed to Catholics. "Conservative compassionate," as it was termed in 2000, was a term that describes many Catholics, who are conservative on social issues yet favour government programmes for the poor. With the 2012 election in sight, the question is whether Republicans can win the Catholic vote again or whether the Democratic Party can woo that vote as successfully as it did in 2008. There are obvious candidates on the one hand, in the minds of avowed Catholics who are willing to give political support to the liberal positions on abortion, "gay marriage", single-parent "families", and the removal of religious influence in our school systems, all of which strike at the root of a Catholic (or Catholic-friendly) society. It has been said that American Catholic voters have been "liberal" about government in a way that no free-market "conservative" can really understand, and conservative about morals in a way that no socialist or New-Age liberal can grasp.

At this crucial time in our history, the upcoming election will have a major impact on the direction this county will move in the future. New Supreme Court justices are always likely to be appointed under any presidential administration. Whether the Court will continue to move gradually back toward the nation's traditional values, or move or the continued erosion of values, thus weakening the basic fibre of society, is what it is at stake here. I'm talking about support for the family unit, for the life of the unborn, and for the concept of "One Nation under God". For these reasons, Catholics must continue to think in terms of the moral right confronting their electoral choices.

This is not to ignore the importance of individual economic needs, solving the problems of energy use, the continuing fight against terrorism, and the securing of our borders. As important as all these issues are, however, a society without a conscience is a society doomed. Conscience tends to be thought of as that feeling which may make us believe that certain actions or failures to act are inherently wrong. Society is formed by men of conscience who establish a tradition of behaviour that eventually becomes accepted as a collective conscience. We have a choice to live in an era where rules, regulations, laws, executive orders and other commands from authorities at all levels of government pervert society. Authorities bent on centralizing their rule enforce all these rules collectively, and strangle the conscience of individuals as a matter of policy. Consequently, trends then become irrelevant, subjugated to the rule of the collectivity. Catholics, whose traditional values are so much a part of their culture, must find some way to extricate themselves from the malignant power that would strangle their conscience.

In religions that worship the Judeo-Christian-Islamic god, conscience is a God-given faculty; something we have with us from birth. Some believe that conscience is best described as the voice of reason. This is the view of St. Thomas Aquinas and many other philosophers, even when they may differ on its source. To St. Thomas, reason is God's gift, hence, conscience is a gift of God.

Therefore, I believe that the time is at hand for Catholics to search their consciences when looking at their electoral choices. There will usually be two major opponents, distinctly different in their views, both of whom will have their shortcomings, but one of whom is likely to be more consistently in line with our Catholic principles. The other one may openly pledge himself or herself to the pro-abortion of abortion on demand. He may state that one of his high priorities is the enactment of a mininized "Freedom of Choice Act" that would legalize abortion through nine months of a pregnancy, and overcome every state's parental consent laws. He may support some "Health Care" schemes that would force all citizens to buy abortions. He may even support partial-birth abortion, and oppose any attempt to enact laws against it. Such a candidate is never worthy of the vote or support of any committed Catholic.

Similarly unworthy would be a candidate who would treat same-sex liaisons as the legal and moral equivalent of marriage, or one whose ideology calls for the repeal of the federal "Defense of Marriage Act", or who supports government轅aided creation of Planned Parenthood and other such pro-death organizations in dispensing contraceptive drugs and devices to minors with no parental involvement, and fostering sexual promiscuity among young people.

CONCLUSION: THE APOLOGISTS OF CATHOLICISM

Catholics are going to be faced with a choice in November, 2012. They have it within their power to begin on the path of returning our country to the fundamental moral values that made it great, and restore our individual rights to religious freedom without government interference. One of two different individuals will guide Congress in enacting laws, one will appoint federal judges to the bench, and one will likely appoint the next Supreme Court Justice. His choices in those matters will ultimately depend upon our choice as Catholics. Our responsibility as Catholics is to define the principles that we know to be morally and ethically correct, through a conscientious analysis of the candidates, and then by our informed votes. Therein lies our opportunity and our obligation—to practice the "Apologists of Politics".

CATHOLICS AND NEOLIBERAL ECONOMICS

Thomas Storck

In the past several decades there has been a resurgence of liberal, or neoliberal, economics in the Western world, in the United States especially, but also in Europe and Latin America (and even in non-Western countries such as India). Neoliberal economics claims the support of a consensus of economists, who regard the fall of communism as a vindication of neoliberal views. It would almost appear that neoliberal economics is simply a conclusion of common sense, and the only realistic way to manage an economy in today's world.

But before we turn to an evaluation of these claims, let me make clearly exactly what I mean by "neoliberalism". I think it can be summarized as follows: The basic and most important factors in an economy—factors such as prices, wages, interest rates, exchange rates, etc.—should be determined simply by the give-and-take of market forces, ideally with no interference by the government or any other power. If it occasionally becomes necessary for government to intervene in these exchanges, that intervention should be as small as possible, and for as short a time as possible. Such organizations as labour unions distort the market's natural processes by artificially inflating the price of labour. If the market is allowed to set all these various rates, this will, ultimately, work for the most efficient use of our resources, and thus for the prosperity of society. There needs to be a basic trust in the working of market forces, because in the economic sector this is the best and safest way of managing things. It would always, or almost always, be oxymoronic to speak of "guiding" or "orienting" the market toward the common good, because the market, by definition, always tends toward the good of the whole.

Such a view of the economy, often associated with the Anglo-Saxon world, has also gained many supporters on the continent of Europe. We have an entire generation that is not at all like to contrast their approach with what they call the excessively bureaucratic and regulated economies, in which unemployment is allegedly high because in these economies it becomes too costly for businesses to hire workers and too difficult to fire them. According to this view, social protections that were designed to help workers have only ended up hurting them, and harming the productivity of the whole economy. With the onset of the recession a few years ago, such thinking became more common, at least among political and financial elites, and with the financial collapse of more than one European economy, even more so.

Now it must be acknowledged that some of the critics of neoliberalism are correct. An overly-cen tralized state apparatus for economic regulation can be detrimental to the very society it was designed to aid and support. Does this mean, therefore, that Catholics, as well as others, should embrace the system of neoliberalism? I do not think so. What I hope to show here is that the
Catholic Church has rejected any form of liberalism or neoliberalism in economics, and that the tenets of Catholic social thought cannot be compromised with them. This is not to say, of course, that Catholic teaching regarding bureaucratic regulation by central state authorities is acceptable, either. Although Catholic social thought actually began in the due diligence of John XXIII initiated renewal of social doctrine, a renewal that is usually dated from his encyclical of 1891, Rerum novarum, Landmarks in modern social teaching include Pius XII's Quadragesimo anno (1931), John XXIII's Mater et Magistra (1961), Paul VI's Populorum progressio (1967) and Octogesima adveniens (1971), John Paul II's encyclicals Laborem exercens (1981), Sollicitudo rei socialis (1987) and Centesimus annus (1991), and most recently his posthumous Caritas in pace (2009).

Though these documents are addressed chiefly to the unique conditions of their time, there are certain themes that persist through all or most of them, and it is to these themes that we now turn to the claims of neoliberal economics, that I shall now turn my attention. This is obviously not the place to undertake a complete survey of the content of the Church's social doctrine, which is a task that could fill volumes. Therefore, I shall discuss only three topics: the question of the just wage, the question of state intervention in the economy, and the popes' explicit state statements on economic liberalism and neoliberalism.

WAGES

One of the recurring topics taken up by the papal Magisterium since Leo XIII has been the wage question. Doubtless this is because the vast majority of modern men must live by what they earn in wages or salaries, and the fact that if that income is not sufficient for their livelihood and that of their families, it is hard to see how they will obtain what they need to sustain life. The ultimate aim of neoliberalism is that wages and salaries will be regulated simply by the forces of supply and demand, or what the supporters call the "law of supply and demand" or "wage and employer". In other words, whatever offer of wages an employer makes to a prospective employee, the latter must simply accept or reject, unless he is able to negotiate something better, based on some peculiar skill he possesses that the employer desires. It is held that by this method of determining wage rates, both employer and employee will receive exactly what he contributes economically to the firm. But it is easy to see that this method offers no guarantee that the employer will be given the right to hire himself, let alone his family, with sufficient food, clothing, medical care, etc. Thus, beginning with Pope Leo XIII, the Church has condemned the theories about wage determination. Leo's discussion of this is still classic, and is cited by nearly all his successors. He notes, first, the contemporary common notion that wages are fixed by free consent; and, therefore, the employer's consent that he has agreed upon, has done his part, and is not called upon for anything further. The only way, it is said, in which injustice could happen, would be if the master refused to pay the whole of the wages, the workman would not undertake; when this happens the State should intervene, to see that each obtains his own, but not under any circumstances, let alone his own, the advantage that human beings cannot change. But if the concept of the economy as akin to a gigantic machine, or a mathematical formula, in which each individual merely contributes to another, and in which any external intervention always militates against our economic well-being (a concept that has been termed "technocratic economics"), of once this economic concept is destroyed by the ethical mandate for just wages, then logically, the entire intellectual system becomes inapplicable. And as we shall see, the pope has explicitly rejected the notion of the economy as a self-regulating machine.

STATE ACTIVITY IN THE ECONOMY

The second topic that I shall touch upon is that of state activity in the economy. As I have said, neoliberalism regards almost all regulatory activity by the state as an interference with the self-regulating market economy. The late Paul Samuelson, author of the most widely used economic textbook in the world, expressed this view in the following words: "... given the resources and technology of the society, even the most skillful planner cannot come along with a computer or an ingenious reorganization scheme and find a solution superior to the competitive marketplace. ..." This statement, of course, has much background that I have not the space here to explain, including the notion of economic efficiency producing a situation "where no one can be made better off without making someone else worse off", and the purely individualistic idea of happiness upon which this notion is based. Likewise, there is the hypothetical concept of "perfect competition", a situation which rarely obtains in the real world but is central to neoliberal economic analysis.

Although the Supreme Pontiffs do not directly address these ideas drawn from neoliberal economics, they do address the question of state regulation of the market, and therefore the concept of economic efficiency. On this subject, instead of quoting Leo XIII or Pius XI, I draw my examples from Centesimus annus, the last social encyclical of John Paul II. I shall begin by noting the defects of both socialism and "the absolute predominance of capital", Pope John Paul recommends "a society of free work, oriented towards the common good.

Such a society is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the State, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied (35).

A little further on he writes that "It is the task of the State to provide for the defence and preservation of common goods such as the natural environment, which cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces" (40).

And in the same section, this:

Here we find a new limit on the market: there are collective and qualitative needs which cannot be satisfied by market mechanisms. There are important human needs which escape its logic. There are goods which by their very nature cannot and must not be bought or sold. Certain of the goods of the market offer secure advantages. Nevertheless, these mechanisms carry the risk of an "idolatry" of the market, an idolatry which is always automatically undesirable, and in which any external intervention always militates against our economic well-being (a concept that has been termed "technocratic economics"), of once this economic concept is destroyed by the ethical mandate for just wages, then logically, the entire intellectual system becomes inapplicable. And as we shall see, the pope has explicitly rejected the notion of the economy as a self-regulating machine.
neoliberal conception of how economies operate is a false, but economic history is of little interest to most economists today. According to neoliberalism, then, no institution (the state or any other) has any role to play in regulating the outcome resulting from the play of market forces, except for the maintenance of peace and perhaps a few other instances. Any attempt to guide or control market forces must lead, in the long run, to economic disaster, as occurred in the former-socialist countries. Even if there may be hard times in store for some national prosperity (for example, dislocations that result in unemployment), attempts by the state to provide any but the most minimal social protections or safeguards will have nothing but bad effects.

There are even more direct, explicit condemnations of economic liberalism in papal social documents. Several of these may be found in Pius XI's Quadragesimo anno (1931). Early in that encyclical, when discussing the earlier Rerum novarum, Pope Pius more than once noted bluntly how it did not conform to the reigning liberalists of its day. "For it is declared and overthrown in the ideals of liberalism, swept aside inveterate prejudices, and was so far and so unexpectedly in advance of its time, that the slow of heart ridiculed the study of the new social philosophy, and the timid feared to scale its lofty heights." (§4). And further, "With regard to the civil power, Leo XIII boldly passed beyond the restrictions imposed by liberalism, and fearlessly proclaimed the doctrine that the civil power is more than the mere guardian of law and order, and that it must strive with all zeal to make sure that the laws and institutions, the general character and administration of the commonwealth, should be such as of themselves to realizes public well-being and private prosperity." (§25). And then, "In fact, the Eucalyptical Rerum novarum completely overthrew those tenets of liberalism which had long hindered effective intervention by the government." (§27). In another passage Pius speaks of the liberal hostility towards labor unions: "For at that time governments of no few nations were much given to liberalism, and regarded such unions of workingmen as disfavour, if not with open hostility. While readily recognizing and protecting similar associations among other classes, with shamefull their denial the innate right of forming associations to those who needed them most for self-protection against oppression by the more powerful." (§30).

And, lastly, referring to "the liberalistic tenets of the so-called Manchester School", he discusses liberalism's bias in favour of capital and against the worker. Capital, however, was long able to appropriate to itself excessive advantages. It claimed all the products and profits and left to the labourer the barest minimum necessary to repair his strength and to ensure the continuation of his class. For by an inexorable economic law, it was held, all accumulation of riches must fall to the share of the wealthy, while the workingman must remain permanently in indigence or reduced to the minimum needed for existence. It is indeed true that the actual state of things was not always and everywhere as bad as the liberalistic tenets of the so-called Manchester School might lead one to conclude; but it cannot be denied that a steady drift of economic social tendencies was in this direction (§54).

During the 1930s, when Pope Pius issued Quadragesimo anno, liberalism in economics was not in high repair. But after the Second World War this began to change, especially beginning around 1970. Therefore the very explicit discussion of economic liberalism or neoliberalism in Pius XI's Rerum novarum (1917) is of great interest. After speaking of the attractions of socialism for some Christians, and the necessity of distinguishing "between the various levels of expression of socialism" (§31), Pius notes the contemporary rise of interest in economic liberalism:

On another side, we are witnessing a renewal of the liberal ideology. This current asserts itself both in the name of economic efficiency, and for the defence of the individual against the increasingly overwhelming hold of organizations, and as a reaction against the totalitarian tendencies of political powers. Certainly, personal initiative must be maintained and developed. But do not Christians who take this path tend to idealize liberalism in their turn, making it a proclama in favour of freedom? They would like a new model, more adapted to the reality conditions, while easily forgetting that at the very root of philosophical liberalism is an erroneous affirmation of the autonomy of the individual in its activity, his motivation and the exercise of his liberty. Hence, the liberal ideology likewise calls for careful discernment on their part (§35).

Next, we turn to some fairly recent passages from the writings of Pope John Paul II. Although some North Americans and Europeans have tried to portray John Paul as having lent free-market ideological support, this is far from the truth. While he did see some good points in a market economy, he was explicit in his condemnation of economic liberalism. Let us look again at his encyclical of 1991, Centesimus annus, the very document that is often held to be an endorsement of free-market economics.

In this encyclical (§10), the Pope briefly notes that Leo XIII "criticizes two social and economic systems: socialism and liberalism." But his most important comments on liberal economics come a few pages afterwards (§13), in an interestingly contrasting echo of Pius XI's earlier discussion of socialism in Quadragesimo anno (§811-26). Echoing his predecessor, John Paul writes that the fundamental error of socialism is anthropological in nature. Socialism considers the individual person simply as an element, a molecule within the social organism, so that the good of the individual is completely subordinated to the functioning of the socioeconomic mechanism.

Likewise, socialism denies man's power of free choice and "the unique and exclusive responsibility which he exercises in the face of good or evil. And what is the root of these socialist errors? The Pope replies that "we must reply that its first cause is atheism." Then, however, John Paul II continues his analysis of this atheism:

The atheism of which we are speaking is also closely connected with the rationalism of the Enlightenment, which views human and social reality in a mechanistic way. Thus there is a denial of the supreme insight concerning man's true greatness, his transcendence in regard to earthly realities and, above all, the need for salvation... (§13).

But socialism did not exist during the Enlightenment, so to whom is he referring? It is impossible not to see here an explicit condemnation of the original theoreticians of liberal economics: thinkers such as the Physiocrats in France, Adam Smith in Scotland, and David Ricardo and Thomas Malthus in England. Therefore, the Church's well-known disapproval of socialism's ideological foundations can now be seen as directed equally toward the ideological roots of capitalist liberalism. Thus it would seem that John Paul is indirectly suggesting here that, just as Pius XI famously said that no one can be a "sincere Catholic and a true socialist", similarly no sincere Catholic can be a capitalist insofar as that means embracing the full logic of the capitalist system—a logic which, when it expresses itself in consumerism, "agrees with Marxism, in the sense that it totally reduces man to the sphere of economics and the satisfaction of material needs" (Centesimus annus §19). And in one more passage in the encyclical (§42), the Pontiff also makes clear his distance from neoliberalism: "... there is a risk that a radical capitalist ideology could spread which refuses even to consider these problems, in the a priori belief that any attempt to solve them is doomed to failure, and which blindly entrusts their solution to the free development of market forces."

We can see from this that the social doctrine of John Paul II, far from embracing neoliberalism, in fact rejects it. For Catholic social teaching sets certain boundaries beyond which justice and human solidarity do not permit societies to proceed. Catholic teaching, it is true, does not specify exactly how an economy should be run. The Church's social doctrine is not a social science, but rather belongs, as John Paul II explained, "to the field, not of ideology, but of theology and particularly of moral theology." But neither is the Church's social doctrine merely a set of vague exhortations or ideals. It definitely sets forth certain things as impermissible in human affairs because they involve, directly or indirectly, violations of justice. Although the concrete political choices offered to Catholics in most countries today rarely include policies consistent with Catholic social doctrine, we must nevertheless educate ourselves in what the social vision of the Church is, and even if it is too seldom that we can make a decisive difference in national politics, we can at least raise our voices and hope to make some small impact on social and economic thinking.

But whether this happens or not, within our own souls we must hold on to the realization that the Faith preached by the Church of Jesus Christ involves not only individuals, but nations, including national economies. As Pius XI said in the 1920s, when he spoke of the Kingship of Jesus Christ, Nor is there any difference in this matter between the individual and the family or the state; for all men, whether collectively or individually, are under the dominion of Christ. In Him is the salvation of the individual, and in Him is the salvation of society (Quas Primas §18).

NOTES
1. There is really no difference, or at least no essential difference, between liberalism and neoliberalism. The latter is simply the former as presented to the contemporary world.
2. But Pius XI certainly understood minimum-wage laws to be morally right. See Quadragesimo anno (§81, 71).
4. John Paul II, Pop. encycl. letter Solidarity not selfish §41.

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