

EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES WORLDWIDE ON CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

TERENCE MCGOLDRICK

[Editor's Note: In recent years, Catholic episcopal conferences have taken up many issues of social justice, interpreting for their own churches what was once addressed almost exclusively by the papacy. This ongoing development is the subject of an extensive cataloguing research project based in Fribourg. After comparing how specific themes are highlighted in different regions, the author concludes with an examination of the documents' concepts of solidarity and responsibility.]

A COMPREHENSIVE research catalogue was published during 1997 in Fribourg containing listings and abstracts of statements issued by the worldwide episcopal conferences since *Rerum novarum* (1891) on ethical concerns related to economic issues in their particular societies.¹ This 800-page tome culminates six years of work involving scores of specialists from around the world. The Swiss National Fund for Scientific Research financed this vast interdisciplinary project conducted at the Institute of Moral Theology at the University of Fribourg, with the collaboration of the International Jacques Maritain Institute in Rome. The resulting catalogue is an invaluable instrument making a sizeable body of documentation accessible for the first time. Each document's themes and historical context, its authors, date, title, and keywords drawn from some 200 concepts are provided. For several years I participated in that extensive project which also included conferences held in Calgary (Italy), Madrid, Jakarta, Abidjan, Manila, Fribourg, and Rome, both to bring together local experts to assess

TERENCE MCGOLDRICK obtained his licentiate and doctorate in theology from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, where he was also senior researcher in the interdisciplinary project on episcopal conferences here described and analyzed. Now director of the San Diego Diocesan Institute for Adult Education and Lay Ministry Formation, he serves also as an adjunct faculty member at the University of San Diego. He has published *The Sweet and Gentle Struggle: Francis de Sales on the Necessity of Spiritual Friendship* (University Press of America, 1996) and is now completing a book on the metaphysics of Christian moral teaching.

¹ *Economie et développement: Répertoire des documents épiscopaux des cinq continents (1891–1991)*, *Etudes d'éthique chrétienne* 69, ed. Roger Berthouzoz, Roberto Papini, Carlos J. Pinto de Oliveira, and Ramon Sugranyes de Franch (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires; Paris: Cerf, 1997); in my text I refer to this source as the "Fribourg catalogue." For further information on this project see nn. 34 and 86 below.

these documents and to continue the Church's dialogue with the world.² As Archbishop Rembert Weakland, O.S.B., stated on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the publication of the U.S. bishops' statement *Economic Justice for All*, "Catholic social doctrine has not been at a standstill for these last 100 years. As different problems arose, it was necessary to delve more deeply into one or the other of the basic principles, thus increasing our knowledge and understanding of them. The teaching has grown and become more refined, I repeat, precisely because there were attempts to apply it to different problems at different periods of time."³

That kind of refinement is ongoing not only in Rome, but in Kinshasa, São Paulo, London, Goa, and across the globe, as Catholic teaching continues to be applied to pressing practical social problems in the daily life of particular churches. This new volume will help the Church, in the words of Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, a longtime supporter of the research, to evoke "new ways to render the gospel more and more present there where the future of humankind and peoples is being played out."⁴

My article aims to acquaint readers with this episcopal documentation and to report on the more interesting general trends that emerge from this research. I also provide a brief analysis of two key concepts highlighted in the documents, namely, responsibility and solidarity.⁵ What I offer is an overview of the episcopal conferences worldwide and a sampling of the kinds of research that more systematic studies are likely to distill from these documents. These recent developments in-culturated worldwide in Catholic social teaching emerge from Vatican II's mandate to be in the world but not of the world.

² These symposia have been published. For the conference at Calgary, Italy, on industrialized nations, see R. Papini, A. Pavan, ed. *Etica ed economia I: Il contributo delle Chiese dei paesi industrializzati* (Genoa: Marietti, 1989). For the conference at Madrid, on Latin America, see R. Papini and E. Nasarre, ed. *Etica y economia*, Anales 8 (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria San Pablo, 1992), as well as an Italian version published in Genoa by Marietti, Genova, 1993. For the conference at Jakarta, on the Asian documents, see R. Papini and V. Buonomo, ed. *Ethics and Economics: Religions, Development and Liberation in Asia* (Manila: New City Publications, 1993). For the conference at Abijan, on the African documents, see R. Papini and V. Buonomo, ed., *Etica e sviluppo: Il contributo delle comunità cristiane in Africa* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1995). For the conference at Manila, see L. N. Castro and A. A. Roest Crolius, ed., *Poverty and Development: The Call of the Catholic Church in Asia* (Quezon City: Progressive, 1995). For the conference at Fribourg, on the global documents, see *Ethique, économie et développement: L'enseignement des évêques des cinq continents (1891-1991)*, Actes du colloque de Fribourg (1993), ed. R. Berthouzoz and R. Papini, (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires; Paris: Cerf, 1995).

³ "Economic Justice for All' Ten Years Later," *America* 176 (March 22, 1997) 8-22.

⁴ *Economie et développement*, Preface, i.

⁵ The documents accounted for in the Fribourg catalogue do not go beyond 1991; in the present article I also include a number of documents that have appeared since the catalogue's publication up to 1997.

THE DECISION TO SPEAK OUT

The first issue the bishops of the world faced when they attempted to influence their particular societies politically or economically was their right to speak out on public and controversial questions. They often had to explain why they were speaking out and to confront the nagging criticism that bishops should stick to theology and not venture into matters beyond religion, especially into affairs of the world that are the domain of lay professionals. In various countries, bishops have felt the sting of criticism and learned that speaking on sensitive issues is fraught with complex difficulties. In Cuba, for example, the bishops noted in 1993 that their silence for the previous 25 years was due to their fears of being used for communist propaganda,⁶ and explained that the urgent needs of the people finally brought them to speak out despite the risks. Some bishops may decide, like their Cuban brothers in the past, that the risks are overwhelming and choose not to speak; but if they remain silent they are certain to have no effect on modern society.⁷ Other bishops judge, like the leaders of the Cuban Church today, that the injustices and systemic social problems are urgent enough to take a public position, in spite of all these hazards. As the bishops of England and Wales put it, "As bishops we have the particular responsibility to discern and interpret the signs of the times, even on occasion at the risk of being wrong."⁸

The sheer number of statements in recent years attests to that conviction. The bishops consider speaking out on social questions their prophetic duty, as much as their magisterial duty. The Latin American bishops noted at Puebla in 1979, in response to criticism of their famous remarks about "integral liberation" at Medellin in 1968, that, insofar as politics concerns the common good, it is of interest to the Church as "a way of paying worship to the one and only God by simultaneously desacralizing and consecrating the world to Him. . . . The Church helps to foster the values that should inspire politics."⁹ Ironically, as the bishops of Northeastern Brazil lamented in a statement banned from publication by the government in 1973, the price of speaking out "has

⁶ "Love Hopes All Things: The Question and Direction of Cuba" [dated Sept. 8, 1993], *Catholic International* 4 (1993) 557-66.

⁷ Pius XII judged that his silence in not publicly condemning the Nazis had the effect of preserving the lives of some innocent persons; see Robert A. Graham, *The Vatican and Communism in World War II: What Really Happened?* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996).

⁸ Episcopal Conference of England and Wales, "The Common Good and the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church" [dated October 21, 1996] (Manchester: Gabriel Communications, 1996); this document is available on the Internet at <<http://www.tasc.ac.uk/cc/cbc/cg.htm>>. French text in *Documentation catholique* 94 (Feb. 2, 1997) 130-45, at 137. no. 54.

⁹ *Puebla and Beyond*, ed. John Eagleson and Philip Scharper (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979) nos. 521-22.

always been persecution from those who think that they are so offering a service to God."¹⁰

Besides the need to defend their right and duty to speak out on social questions, the bishops are faced with the inherent complexities and magnitude of these controversial issues. The intrinsic difficulties of applying the principles of Catholic social teaching to practical problems in alleviating human suffering are well known. They center around an innate difficulty of all morality. As Thomas Aquinas explained, the more concrete action becomes, the less speculative principles apply, because a myriad of intervening contingencies is always attached to any particular person, place, and event in time.¹¹ Even the principle of human rights due to the dignity of every person, a cornerstone of Catholic social teaching, is controversial among some Catholic intellectuals, since it seems to neglect the more important and fundamental moral virtues.¹² For this reason, the bishops do not consider their recommendations on concrete economic questions to have the same moral authority as their affirmations on universal moral principles, let alone the official teaching of the Church.¹³ In other words, they acknowledge that these statements may be interpreted differently by persons of good will and under changing circumstances.¹⁴ For that matter, there is sometimes debate among the bishops themselves on many specific positions. Apart from the inherent problems of applying moral principles and internal debate, the complexity of modern economies and social problems can be staggering.

The influence of their statements throughout the world has been mixed. Even in countries where the Church enjoys formidable influ-

¹⁰ "I Have Heard the Cry of My People: Pastoral Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Northeastern Brazil" [dated May 6, 1973], *The Catholic Mind* 72 (November 1974) 39–64, at 62. See Mary M. McGlone, for the Committee on the Church in Latin America of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing Faith Across the Hemisphere* (Washington: USCC, 1997).

¹¹ See *Summa theologiae* 1–2, q. 94, a. 4.

¹² Ernest Fortin discusses this problem with economic encyclicals: "For centuries the cornerstone of Catholic moral theology was not the natural or human rights doctrine, but something quite different called natural law. Rights, to the extent that they were mentioned at least by implication, were contingent on the fulfillment of prior duties. Far from being absolute or inalienable, they could be forfeited and were so forfeited by the individual who failed to abide by the law that guaranteed them" (Ernest L. Fortin, *Collected Essays: Human Rights, Virtue, and the Common Good, Untimely Meditations on Religion and Politics*, ed. J. Brian Benestad [Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996] 305). Jacques Maritain, when working on the declaration of human rights for the U.N. charter in San Francisco in 1945, noted that human rights were prescriptions Catholics could agree upon with other cultures and faiths, but that he had misgivings about their limitations.

¹³ The U.S. bishops, e.g., explicitly make this point in *Economic Justice for All*; text in *Origins* 16 (Nov. 27, 1986) 409–56, at 426, no. 134–35.

¹⁴ The concrete realities of two different countries may also lead local churches to opposite conclusions. E.g., in the Philippines higher oil prices would be harmful to the poor, since the Philippines is an importer of oil, whereas in Indonesia lower oil prices would injure the poor, because Indonesia's economy depends on oil-export revenues.

ence—as the Philippines, where, for example, Cardinal Sin’s radio address mobilized the population of Manila, emptying every Catholic school in the city to surround two opposing factions of the military with a sea of innocent people, and eventually forcing them to lay down their arms and bringing about the “people’s revolution”—the faithful do not always heed their bishops’ pastoral letters on social issues. At least, if they do listen, it is hard to discern any real change in the societies for which they are writing. In Cameroon, six years after their pastoral letter *The Causes of the Economic Crisis* (1990), the bishops issued another statement, this time on the crippling effect of tribalism, and sadly remarked that the situation had further degenerated since their earlier statement. They wrote: “Despite shock therapy, the same causes and the same effects remain unchanged.”¹⁵ Ten years after *Economic Justice for All*, the U.S. bishops wrote similar reflections.¹⁶ Sometimes a bishops’ conference admits this fact, as when, e.g., bishops speaking on public-health issues in Ireland declare that their goal is to initiate public debate, not to lecture society.¹⁷ Usually statements are addressed to “all men and women of good will,” and the tone is meek yet firm. On the surface, *Economic Justice for All* appears not to have had much effect on U.S. society, but it had an important effect on the Catholic community, evidenced by the extensive debate it provoked.¹⁸ That kind of debate can be divisive, yet at the same time, it can spark creative insights and a process leading to better understanding. In a quieter and less controversial way, the method the U.S. bishops used in writing that pastoral, employing consultation in the form of a national town meeting, had perhaps the most salubrious effect. The status of the bishops’ office allows them to bring together leaders from all walks of society and to initiate dialogue, an important service to any community. The U.S. letter inspired Australia in 1989 to use a similar method for its pastoral *The Common Wealth for the Common Good*, and Germany’s consultative statement *Towards the Future in*

¹⁵ “Les effets pervers du tribalisme,” *Documentation catholique* 94 (March 2, 1997) 240–42, at 240.

¹⁶ See *A Decade after “Economic Justice for All”: Continuing Principles, Changing Context, New Challenges* (Washington: USCC, 1996).

¹⁷ To that end, three documents were issued in July 1987, September 1987, and March 1990 by the Irish Episcopal Council for Social Affairs, published in Dublin by Veritas.

¹⁸ See, e.g., *The Lay Commission on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy, Liberty and Justice for All* (Notre Dame: Brownson Institute, 1986). Known commonly as “The Lay Letter,” this report on the final draft of *Economic Justice for All*, produced by a commission co-chaired by Michael Novak and William E. Simon and signed by a long list of business leaders, criticized the bishops as too interventionist, as having an inadequate grasp of crucial concepts such as enterprise, markets, and profits, and for having given a defective exposition of liberty (*ibid.* 4–5). The bishops did not accept this view, but followed John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis* no. 16, who states, citing *Populorum progressio*, that solidarity in economic growth must be directed from a perspective of integral development and must not be a result of individual initiatives alone.

Solidarity and Justice,¹⁹ published in February 1997, was based on exchanges over a period of several years that included members of the Protestant churches.²⁰

For the most part, I show that little new theory emerges from these statements. The bishops are not inventing social doctrine, they are applying it. Of special interest are the emphases and explanations given over both time and topography, as church leaders respond to the signs of the times and apply gospel teaching to social and economic problems.

METHOD AND PURPOSE

The methods used by the episcopal conferences to formulate their documents vary greatly. Some have permanent committees of bishops to address current social issues. Others appoint ad hoc committees of lay professionals, political leaders, theologians, and others to study a particular question. The Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC), for example, has created the Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA), composed of bishops who meet regularly to study social problems of the region and report back to the FABC. Their procedure is to devote several days with the poor before their meeting, as an Asian expression of wanting to be with the poor and to communicate with them beyond words. Episcopal conferences typically meet with others of their own region, but occasionally bishops of the industrialized nations have met with their colleagues in the developing nations to author a joint statement. On rare occasions, the episcopal conference of one country will mobilize far reaching strata of the population in national consultations, as was witnessed in preparing *Economic Justice for All* in the U.S. More often they make a short statement addressing some particular event, such as canceled elections (Nigeria),²¹ a crippling strike (England),²² presidential dismissal for corruption (Brazil),²³ or riots (Albania).²⁴ They are much less likely to compose a major treatise on social issues than to issue a short appeal for calm, a

¹⁹ A summary of the German statement is found in *Catholic International* 8 (1997) 203.

²⁰ In the preparation of most papal encyclicals on social issues, a range of experts and Catholic groups is usually consulted. *Rerum novarum* was the fruit of a debate between different currents of thought across Christian Europe at the end of the 19th century.

²¹ "A Call for a Change of Heart and for the Rule of Law" [dated Sept. 16, 1994], *Catholic International* 6 (1995) 38-40.

²² *The Right to Strike* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1979). This document illustrates another possibility besides simple denunciations. An extensive 61-page study done by a committee appointed by the episcopal conference, it was meant to stimulate discussion within the Church and in society. It defends strikes under British law and under the European Convention of Human Rights, and then explores the moral parameters of a valid decision to strike.

²³ "A Crisis in Ethics" [dated Nov. 19, 1992], *Catholic International* 4 (1993) 139-40.

²⁴ The Albanian bishops' statement of March 5, 1997, is found in *Catholic International* 8 (1997) 204.

denunciation of government policy or corruption, a call for an end to violence, injustice, or exploitation. On occasion, they step back and ask fundamental questions about their culture, governments, and national moral conscience. These are among the more interesting statements. The documents usually appeal to papal encyclicals on the Church's social teaching.

At the Manila conference, Bishop Claver summed up 30 years of action on social problems by the Philippine Church with three predominant criteria: social consciousness, structural reform, and participation ("people power").²⁵ This threefold purpose may also be applied to the bishops' statements of any other country in the world. Initiating debate, pointing to injustices and their structural causes both at home and abroad, and finally, seeking solutions—all these encompass the multifaceted purpose of these communications. The bishops in their public statements seek to begin a process of change that includes these three objectives. The church leaders agree that a wide range of persons in their societies bear some responsibility for these injustices, that fundamental structures of society need to be reconsidered, and that participation is one of the most important means to finding a solution to these problems.

SOME REGIONAL COMPARISONS

Europe accounts for the lion's share (37%) of the international documents, followed by Latin America (29%), Africa (14%), North America (10%), Asia (7%), and Oceania (3%). In the last 20 years a veritable explosion of documents has occurred. Of all the documents to appear since *Rerum novarum* (1891), half have been issued since 1975.²⁶ The European episcopal conferences have been issuing some 15 documents per year on socio-economic subjects. In Asia, half of the statements have been published since 1985. This profusion of documents reflects the important new role that episcopal conferences are assuming in their countries. The Church throughout the world is becoming aware of its role as a prophetic voice in different societies. Raising consciousness has emerged in reflection on these problems as a principal means to effect change. The bishops have come to realize that speaking out for the victims of injustice is part of the solution, because it brings society to awareness of moral and often political problems. The multiplication of documents also attests to the more pronounced place being assumed by the non-European churches in formulating Catholic social teaching.

The authors of the Fribourg catalogue recognize that the terms used as keywords are sometimes ambiguous. Such an enormous project had

²⁵ *Poverty and Development: The Call of the Catholic Church in Asia* (see n. 2 above) 122.

²⁶ Reliable statistics exist only until 1991 with the 1,429 documents that figure in the Fribourg catalogue; however, indications are that the trends have remained consistent in the years since then; see *Économie et développement*, appendix of statistics, 775–95.

to restrict itself to general themes. The catalogue is meant to be an instrument that will allow future studies to focus on the documents that treat a particular theme in order to expose its intricacies. Some general trends emerge when comparing statements from different continents. Worldwide the major themes, occurring in more than a third of all documents are: human rights, poverty, family, and justice. One quarter of them raise issues regarding solidarity, unemployment, dignity of the person, and work.

The following table illustrates the first six major themes treated by the episcopal conferences for each region of the world, ranked in order of frequency.

Asia	Africa	Europe	Latin America	North America	Oceania
Solidarity	Human rights	Solidarity	Property	Family	Government
Human rights	Poverty	Human rights	Family	Economic System	Poverty
Economic development	Economic development	Migrants	Unemployment/employment	State/statism	Family

In Asia, the theme of poverty appears twice as often as the next theme of solidarity. The great disparity of wealth in Asia, due to its rapid economic development, makes poverty all the more scandalous. In the poorer continent of Africa, the most frequent theme is education. The Africans do not need to be reminded of poverty since it is everywhere. For them the stress is on education and the development it generates.²⁷ The African bishops see education, comprehending both moral and economic understanding, as a solution to the phenomenon of corruption as well as the means to needed technical progress. They

²⁷ Education's importance was underscored by a recent conference in Nairobi, March 3-7, 1997, where the Episcopal Conference, the International Catholic Center for UNESCO, and the International Catholic Organizations (ICO) addressed the topic *What Education in Africa for the 21st Century?* The conference drew 150 representatives from 25 African countries. Participants urged national and regional episcopal conferences in Africa to intensify their research into the values that sustain education and to develop observation and consultation centers with a view to adapting the educational process to African culture.

emphasize the unity of moral and economic health especially among the leadership.

Poverty is the most frequently occurring theme in Latin American statements as well, but it does not appear twice as often as the next theme, as is the case in Asia. The Asian churches' contribution has been due chiefly to the Philippines, which has produced most of the statements. In countries where the Church is persecuted, as in China, Pakistan, and Vietnam, there have been practically no statements on these social matters.²⁸ In other societies, as in Japan, Thailand, or Bangladesh, where the Church is a minority, the bishops are careful not to cause their neighbors to lose face by criticizing them openly. The bishops of India are an exception to this rule in Asia. They have assumed an active role that has included even marching on the capital to affirm the rights of the lowest caste, among whom are the largest numbers of conversions to Christianity. Although only 3% of India is Catholic, some 20% of the hospitals are under the auspices of the Church, which gives it greater influence in some circles. The Indian bishops have made statements on a variety of topics, including domestic workers' rights, corruption, justice, and unorganized workers. Asia's most important source for social statements is the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC). Since Pope Paul VI in the early 1970s suggested the formation of a regional episcopal conference, this group has met regularly to address Christian faith in the context of Asia. Economic issues have regularly figured in these statements, but they have also adopted themes such as evangelization and Asian theology. These FABC statements give the best cross section of the Asian Church's interpretation of Catholic social teaching. Their desire for integral development searches to build a community with fellow citizens of other religions and not to take a condescending attitude to the poor, but rather to treat them as companions, sharing their values, aspirations, songs, artists, and even their frailties, in order to become a Church "with others and for others."²⁹

The bishops of Africa have written much more than other regions about corruption, integral development, education, health, well-being, economic goals, and justice. Poverty is neither the second nor even the third theme in Africa. After education, human rights and corruption are more urgent considerations than poverty. One possible explanation is the endemic problem of tribalism. If it falsely leads to nepotism and corruption, the eminent African value of family works against the con-

²⁸ Since its founding in 1980, the first statement to come from the government-approved Catholic Bishops' Conference in China, "Dignity and Responsibility of Women," was issued August 28, 1995, in Beijing, on the occasion of the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995; see the text in *Catholic International* 7 (1996) 24-27.

²⁹ Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), document published April 24, 1974, in *For All the Peoples of Asia*, ed. Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arevalo (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992) 11-25. Robert Hardawiryana, S.J., discusses the Church and development in Asia in *Ethique, économie et développement* (see n. 2 above) 127-53.

struction of a just society. The bishops need not teach people about the dignity of the members of their own tribes, but to promote the dignity of members of other tribes. Education is a means to develop economic skills and the best means to address corruption and violence resulting from racism and greed. The Africans, because of their mixed experience with developmental aid, are aware of the need for integral development. They denounce "development" associated with high-salaried foreign experts who come with massive equipment for a year or two and then leave. Rwanda was seemingly one of Africa's great success stories of economic development through foreign aid. The terrible civil strife and genocide the country recently suffered has raised basic questions about development philosophy. A Catholic vision of development, not limited to economic progress but aimed at the integral progress of the whole person and all peoples, might have helped Rwanda avoid its debacle. The bishops there do not address the question directly but write rather of more basic notions such as conversion and the dignity of every person.

The episcopal conference of Africa's largest Catholic country, Congo, formerly known as Zaïre, has published the most extensive documents for the continent. However, South Africa, Cameroon, and Ghana have also produced excellent documents. Two international African conferences resemble somewhat the Asian FABC, one for French-speaking West African nations (AMECEA) and the other for the English-speaking East African countries (SECAM).

At the beginning of the 20th century, when Catholic social teaching was taking shape in European society, the most pressing problem was labor conditions. The Church, therefore, became an advocate of organized labor and just wages. Today in Europe the problem has shifted to unemployment. Some European countries have in recent decades experienced persistent double-digit unemployment. This explains the importance that Catholic bishops there have given to work and unemployment. The theme of migrants, including seasonal migrant workers, points to this key European concern. Since European culture tends to regard government as the "provider," some of its episcopal reflections on society reflect that outlook.

In Latin America, the Church wrestles most notably with the question of property and the rights of ownership. Throughout the 20th century, land sharing has been a focal point of conflict in most Latin American societies. It was there that the expression "fundamental option for the poor" originated. The scandal of poverty in those largely Catholic countries has led their episcopal conferences to concentrate on the distribution of wealth, salaries, unemployment, and the economic system responsible for the suffering of the poor. In recent decades the Latin American Church has witnessed some of the world's worst violence and persecution. The shift from a Church of the invaders and oppressors to a Church of the poor can be seen in the Latin American bishops' statements. They speak more frequently than the rest of the

world about violence, salaries, property, prices, and the disparity between the rich and the poor. They also speak more than any other region about government and economic crises.

North America, like the European industrialized countries, is especially concerned with working conditions and employment. Unemployment is not their first interest, but rather the right to work and to just wages that permit everyone to participate fully in social life. The role of the state holds a more prominent place in the Canadian bishops' application of church social teaching, since socialism has been a notable factor in Canadian public life. For example, the Canadian bishops took a position against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA),³⁰ whereas their counterparts in the U.S. were comparatively silent on the social and ethical consequences of the treaty. The U.S. bishops have been less likely to speak of state intervention on questions of work than the Europeans, but they do advocate safeguards against the free market's tendency to concentrate power in the hands of a few.³¹ Perhaps predictably, theories that seek to harmonize church social teaching with a free market are springing up more in the U.S. than in any other country.³²

The relatively few documents from Oceania originate chiefly in Australia and New Zealand. As early as 1940, spurred by the largely Catholic Labor party, the Australian bishops created a committee for social action and were applying church social teaching to local problems. The Australian Episcopal Conference published for 20 years, with few exceptions, a yearly statement on social justice. They treated issues such as fair wages, agricultural reform, the family, preservation of small farms, unions, and social security.³³ In 1956 not all the bishops signed the annual statement, as heated debate and disagreement among them became visible. By 1957 the Australian Church had become polarized into two camps about the best way to combat communism and its influence: one camp centered around the aggressive position of Archbishop Daniel Mannix of Melbourne who advocated po-

³⁰ The statement by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was entitled "Widespread Unemployment: A Call to Mobilize the Social Forces of Our Nation" [dated April 14, 1993], *Catholic International* 4 (1993) 432-38.

³¹ Archbishop Weakland admitted that the U.S. bishops were "very naïve," because they did not anticipate the power of wealthy quarters of American society to paint their message as "naïve socialism" or "statist" ("'*Economic Justice for All*' Ten Years Later" 18).

³² An example of such ferment is Michael Novak, *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Free Press, 1993).

³³ Michael Hogan summarizes the Australian bishops' statements, noting their desire to make agriculture and the family central in Australian society, their defense of individual rights and radical criticism of capitalism's excesses, and their consistent advocacy of labor; see his *Justice Now! Social Justice Statements of the Australian Catholic Bishops 1940-1966* (Sydney: Department of Government and Public Administration, Sydney University, 1990) 2.

litical action, the other around Cardinal Norman Thomas Gilroy of Sydney, who focused on personal conscience. The former group was obliged to cede to the latter, when, after an embarrassing argument among the bishops that included a full-page newspaper advertisement by the supporters of Cardinal Gilroy disowning the pastoral letter, the Vatican subsequently intervened. A perfunctory statement in 1958 was meant to display their unity, but by 1960 the practice of annual statements and even the existence of the social action committee disappeared. No Australian episcopal letter on social issues appeared again until, after a five-year national consultation, its statement *Common Wealth for the Common Good* in 1992.

When reviewing these general themes of the world episcopacy, it is important to keep in mind that during the research done in Fribourg, abstracts of the documents were prepared by several different writers. One researcher might be more sensitive to certain key words than another researcher, which means that these abstracts should be used with a degree of caution. Nonetheless, certain data is striking. For example, the themes of protectionism, migrants, leisure, and management are absent from Latin American discourse, whereas they have all been discussed numerous times in Europe. Concepts such as salary policy or professional formation and technology appear much more frequently in the European documents than in the Latin American documents. On the other hand, the Latin American bishops speak more about such themes as multinationals, exploitation, buying power, and indebtedness. Corruption appears in a large proportion of African and Latin American documents, but is practically absent from the European or North American discourse. Social peace is a theme greatly discussed in Latin America and Europe, but hardly appears in the documents of North America and Oceania. Europe and Africa comment much more about refugees and migrant workers than the rest of the world. North America writes more about aid, professional formation for workers, housing, participation, and the economic system.

From these patterns a profile of social issues in the different parts of the world begins to emerge. With the Fribourg catalogue, it is now possible to locate the key documents on a global theme and to study regional nuances and interpretations.³⁴

DENUNCIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

The international bishops' economic pastorals can be divided into three categories that sometimes overlap: short denunciations of societal problems or explanations about the causes of injustices, which we

³⁴ A documentation center, CIDRESOC, was founded at the Institute of Moral Theology of Fribourg University as a result of this research, and is under the direction of Professor R. Berthouzoz, O.P. (Roger.Berthouzoz@unifr.ch). It has a database of keywords for such searches, and will furnish copies of documents upon request.

will discuss in this section, or suggested solutions, which we will discuss in the next.

Most published statements are written by episcopal conferences and regional conferences.³⁵ Significant statements sometimes emanate from the primate of a country, but more and more these are ceding to conference statements. When an individual bishop does publish a document, it tends to be a statement by the president of the episcopal conference, one that provides an immediate and brief communiqué suggesting to the local church a unity of approach in its pastoral mission, offering concrete steps, and discussion questions.

The Australian bishops, in their 1996 letter *A New Beginning: Eradicating Poverty in Our World*,³⁶ suggest the following practical things that individuals can do: assist in education provided by nongovernmental organizations, give money to charities, live simpler lifestyles, reconsider assumptions about the poor and marginalized, purchase tea and coffee from alternate trading organizations such as World Development Tea Cooperative, participate in campaigns for action, volunteer work, political activism, empathy, hospitality, etc. The Indonesian bishops called a synod including the laity and religious. Their statement encouraged creation of basic communities, favoring autonomy for the poorest by facilitating their access to credit, legal aid, and conferences to conscientize Catholic leaders and officials.³⁷

Behind the statements is the daily effort of the churches. They make their society aware of the causes of misery and they pique and inform consciences, especially by drawing attention to self-examination, conversion, responsibility, and solidarity in Christian love. Modern society allows widespread diffusion of their message. Even if their voice is "a voice in the wilderness," one that risks being drowned in the cacophony of our age, the bishops have an obligation and unique opportunity in virtue of their position to raise these questions and to speak for the powerless.

Denunciations

One distinct advantage bishops enjoy when approaching economic and political ethics is their ability to criticize state policy and corruption, especially in totalitarian regimes. This has been the case consistently in countries such as Brazil under the military Junta, in Indonesia under Suharto, in Zaïre against Mobutu, and in South Africa under apartheid. Such action sometimes results in banning of publication, house arrests, confiscation of church property, and interdiction of assembly. Under these circumstances, speaking out is their most

³⁵ The FABC in Asia, SECAM and AMECA in Africa, and CELAM in Latin America, are all examples of such regional groups that meet regularly.

³⁶ The document is dated September 1996; see *Catholic International* 8 (1997) 67-91.

³⁷ "L'Eglise catholique en Indonésie," *Documentation catholique* 93 (March 17, 1996) 288-93.

prophetic function. Of all the world's episcopal conference statements on the economy, by far the most frequent kind is denunciation of a social evil. Such statements draw readers' attention to the suffering of the voiceless fellow human beings of their lands or sometimes of the poor in other lands.³⁸

Their denunciations are not, of course, confined to totalitarian regimes. They also sound the alarm about subtler things such as cultural trends that abandon traditional values, certain political philosophies, and racism. They denounce external economic structures, certain policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), internal economic mismanagement that leaves the country vulnerable to single exports, debt or capital flight, attitudes of individualism, hardness of heart in the face of their neighbors' misery, and the like.

The Causes and the Example of Unemployment

Many times the bishops probe into the nature and causes of those injustices they reprove such as poverty, corruption, excessive national debt, pollution, and unemployment. Different reasons are assigned to their causes. The bishops of Canada see unemployment as the effect of globalization of the economy that replaces Canadian jobs with cheaper labor in developing countries. Globalization, they argue, allows institutions to shift capital across borders thereby outmaneuvering important mechanisms of equity such as unions and governmental monetary policies. They see rising poverty, hunger, family breakdown, domestic violence, and suicide as consequences of frustration and hopelessness due to unemployment. "All feel they are at the blind whim of a market over which they have little or no control."³⁹ The Canadian bishops contend that survival of the fittest, with winners and losers, destroys minimum solidarity and compassion needed in society. They cite *Centesimus annus* on advantages and risks of free market, and they comment that "anonymous market forces cannot be left alone to determine either production and labor conditions or the fulfillment of human needs. This is because many basic human needs and rights find no place in the market."

Interestingly, when the bishops of England and Wales speak of unemployment they do not include production, although they repeat John Paul II's call for an "authority of control" to balance the injustices of a free market; they restrict intervention to social services and would not

³⁸ The USCC's *Statement of Solidarity on Human Rights Chile and Brazil* [dated Feb 14, 1974] is one famous example, more recently, see Australia's "A New Beginning Eradicating Poverty in Our World" [dated September 15, 1996], *Catholic International* 8 (1997) 67-91 Since 1975 the USCC has published more than 40 statements on Latin America, see McGlone, *Sharing Faith Across the Hemisphere* (n 10 above) 165-202

³⁹ "Widespread Unemployment" (see n 30 above) 434

go as far as their Canadian peers.⁴⁰ The French bishops, who have witnessed persistent unemployment touching the third generation in some cases, call upon political leaders whose responsible decisions “alone can breathe life into society.” They express faith in the government’s power to assure a humane society. More deregulation, they contend, would cause only more suffering for the weakest because of individualism, violence, and xenophobia. For the French, a different conception of work and sharing of income would be key ways to redress the dysfunctional structures of society.⁴¹ Their approach is much more statist and institutional than that of the British or Canadians. The German bishops are the least statist in Europe in calling for a social market economy, elaborated by both employees and employers together, to guarantee work for every willing person, and in calling for greater competitiveness in the state economy.⁴²

That unemployment in Europe has reached levels comparable to those of the 1930s has been seen by European bishops as especially alarming. For most of this century, the Europeans focused on the question of work, beginning with the problem of just remuneration, a moral issue connected with the relationship between labor and management. They also introduced the notion of indirect employers that includes persons and institutions, as well as collective contracts and ethical rules of conduct for both. Their interventions are oriented to the ideal of full employment and full participation. A “new politic of employment” has been the principal object of their reflections. Since they believe one cannot solve endemic unemployment by facile hopes nor by international economic instigation, nor already-tried Keynesian production politics, they have turned to more creative solutions outside the market sphere. They see an opportunity in the tertiary sector of services, such as cooperatives, non-profits, and the like. This, they see, has the double-sided advantage of furnishing two urgently needed social goods: employment and the human services unmet by the market alone. Increasing socially useful work also means that patterns of consumption would have to change, shifting from gratification consumerism to a responsiveness to humanitarian needs that contributes to the development of persons.⁴³ Hence they conceive of unemployment as more than merely an economic problem; its causes and consequences are

⁴⁰ “The Common Good and the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church” (see n. 8 above).

⁴¹ “Social Division Is Not Inevitable” [dated Nov. 1, 1996], *Catholic International* 8 (1997) 276–79.

⁴² “Towards the Future in Solidarity and Justice,” a joint statement of the Evangelical Bishops of Germany [dated Feb. 15, 1997], summary in *Catholic International* 8 (1997) 303.

⁴³ See the Irish Bishops’ Council for Social Welfare, *Unemployment, Jobs and the 1990s* (Dublin: Veritas, 1989). For an economist’s analysis of the European documents, see Stefano Zamagni in *Ethique, économie et développement* (n. 2 above) 45–65.

likewise due to cultural and political factors, wherein, they are convinced, its solution is also to be found.

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Once the causes are known, solutions can be explored. Episcopal documents proposing concrete solutions are rare. However, when the bishops do offer solutions, they most often appeal to two pillars of Catholic social teaching: solidarity and responsibility. Explaining how these concepts are understood worldwide would be a vast study, but I propose to look briefly at some developments in each of these key concepts as they are applied in some of the most representative documents.

Solidarity

Solidarity in the economy and in all aspects of social life has become a repeated theme of importance figuring in the Church's reasoning about a spectrum of problems. John Paul II developed the notion in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (On Social Concern) nos. 38–40, where he defines it as the virtue that recognizes the economic, cultural, political, and religious interdependence among individuals and nations, aware that “we are all really responsible for all” as images of God and one in Christ.⁴⁴ In *Centesimus annus* (On the Hundreth Anniversary of *Rerum novarum*) no. 10, he saw its roots in the writings of his successors, under the names of “friendship” for Leo XIII, “social charity” for Pius XI, and “civilization of love” for Paul VI.⁴⁵ The new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls solidarity a virtue that goes beyond material goods.⁴⁶ It has emerged this century as the key solution to the structures of sin and social ills that the Church consistently decries in the process of refining social ethical doctrine, not only in papal encyclicals, but especially in the particular churches' interpretation. Over 400 documents in the Fribourg catalogue (more than one-third of all the texts) touch upon the theme. Some examples of its application and explanation are particularly insightful. The following citation from the Australian bishops, for example, comments on *Centesimus annus* no. 34, which in turn appeals to *Sollicitudo rei socialis* in stating that solidarity is neither a vague nor a shallow distress at misfortune, but a determination to commit oneself to the common good. The Australian conference stresses the broad scope of solidarity when it notes:

It is a commitment to work for the social, economic, cultural, political and environmental conditions which will enable all human beings to reach their

⁴⁴ The English text can be found in David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, ed., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992) 395–436, at 421–24.

⁴⁵ For the English text, see *ibid.* 439–88.

⁴⁶ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City, 1994) no. 1942.

maximum potential. The virtue of solidarity involves making a preferential option for the poor . . . a deliberate choice to be on the side of the poor, as required by the Gospel . . . [It is] to see the world through their eyes, to be willing to learn from them, and to treat them as equals and not as objects of one's charity or pity. It includes a willingness . . . to share their wealth and their power, . . . a way of thinking, feeling, acting.⁴⁷

The French Episcopal Conference in its 1988 plenary assembly adopted a charter of solidarity and formed a secretariat of solidarity as a way of expressing Christian preferential love for the poor and disadvantaged. They noted the inherent relationship of evangelization and development: "One cannot pretend to share the bread of God without sharing the bread of human beings."⁴⁸ They situated the problem of poverty in the broader context of human rights, which they contend are as much political, cultural, and religious as economic and social. Integral development is the expression of solidarity, a sharing of what each has to give to the other, both rich and poor. Evangelization without solidarity, they declared, lacks love and is false. That opinion was echoed by the Asian bishops in their *lineamenta* for its coming synod in preparation for the year 2000. After noting a rising consciousness among the Asian people of their dignity and power to change unjust social structures, they comment on the failure of modernization to account for the fundamental needs of the population. They too devote a major part of their letter to evangelization; they see economic development as a consequence of authentic evangelization, much like the French bishops. They state: "Especially in Asia the Church must be engaged in liberation from crushing poverty and humane development. Its evangelization must be with the poor in solidarity in combat for justice, to awaken the conscience of society to their needs."⁴⁹ In this way, and through works of charity, the Asian bishops agree, the Church will resemble Christ and become a light and a sacrament of his love and pardon, showing his goodness to the many and diverse peoples of Asia. One-sided progress resulting from a cooperative of the powerful is the factor they cite as most divisive, leading to conflict and hindering integral development.

The widening gap between rich and poor is condemned in all parts of the globe. As the U.S. bishops reflected on their own situation, they could have been speaking for any developing part of the world when they said, "Many things have changed in 10 years but the essential

⁴⁷ "A New Beginning: Eradicating Poverty in Our World" [dated September 1996], *Catholic International* 8 (1997) 67-91, at 70.

⁴⁸ "Une charte de la solidarité," *Documentation catholique* 84 (December 6, 1987) 1131-33, with follow-up letters December 1987, 1988, and 1989. See also *Solidarité et développement, l'engagement de l'Eglise catholique: Documents présentés par la commission française Justice et Paix* (Paris: Cerf, 1992) 277-303.

⁴⁹ "Jésus-Christ, le Sauveur, et sa mission d'amour et de service en Asie," *Documentation catholique* 94 (April 20, 1997) 374-97.

remains the same: there is still too much poverty and not enough economic opportunities for everyone.⁵⁰ They criticize the widening gap between rich and poor and the addition of four million poor in the U.S. in ten years. Their solution is a call to unite around common values of faith to create a more humane political economy, that will develop a stable middle class, create decent employment, support solid families and reduce the level of poverty. They conclude: "We should reinforce our sense of community and the pursuit of the common good."

The bishops of Peru, in a document entitled *For a Society of Justice and Solidarity*, define solidarity as essential to restore a functioning state after years of violence caused by terrorism and civil war. Until the nation faces and resolves the misery of daily life for the majority of Peruvians, the bishops argue, a truly solid and durable constitutional order cannot be established. Although they note that awareness of human rights has progressed notably since the CELAM meeting in Puebla, at the same time the problem of violation of some rights has increased while adverse social and political conditions have augmented. They believe it has become evident that the solution lies in a greater need for juridical mechanisms and for the participation of citizens.⁵¹

A year earlier, the French episcopate also took aim at the legal structures of their society, calling for a radical restructuring of the country's laws based on France's Christian cultural heritage and solidarity. For, as they put it, "law has a transcendental function to translate fundamental values of the national community, and to realize according to reason and an enlightened conscience, the work of justice as a service of the national community."⁵² They underscored the need for a solidarity defined in objective rules to determine rights and duties in order to deal with the social effects of competition, such as employment, unemployment, formation of workers, as well as a better justice in financial exchange and economic growth. They reasoned: "The idea of an economic international order or of natural law rests on the sense of the human persons, of their rights as individuals and as citizens, of their collective responsibilities. The law thus becomes the objective expression and legible for all of solidarity."⁵³

True solidarity calls for an authentic participation, a participation measured by subsidiarity. Defining subsidiarity in particular circumstances remains one of the more difficult problems for sociologists,

⁵⁰ "A Decade after 'Economic Justice for All': Continuing Principles, Changing Context, New Challenges," *Origins* 25 (Nov. 23, 1995) 389-93.

⁵¹ "For a Society of Justice and Solidarity" [dated March 15, 1993], *Catholic International* 4 (1993) 313-15.

⁵² "Justice et solidarité" [dated Dec. 10, 1992], *Documentation catholique* 90 (January 1993) 35-43.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 43.

political scientists, and theologians.⁵⁴ The bishops address the theme explicitly in only 21 documents listed in the Fribourg catalogue. This is an area of church social teaching that clearly needs further development.

The bishops of the Philippines, in one of their finest documents, *Education for Justice*, make a creative connection between the family and the employer in regard to the concept of solidarity. They write, "The family should strike a sense of responsibility, of solidarity and of dialogue with the enterprise. It should convey social awareness, a sense of service, of understanding and of dialogue in everything pertaining to labor unions."⁵⁵ They contend that the enterprise and union together should also promote the human and transcendental values of the worker's family, and that the family in its turn should "train its members to understand the nature, the dignity, the value and the Christian meaning of work, of material resources and their social dimension."⁵⁶ Such a vision allows each part of the social fabric mutually to reinforce the other in a very practical way. This is an elucidating explanation of the interdependence between the individual and society that is often drawn upon to explain the common good. It is in the interest of the family that the enterprise be healthy, since it receives from it work and material needs. Likewise, it is beneficial to the enterprise when the family is strong, since its workers are formed there to be responsible and conscientious. The soundness of both institutions, which is most likely assured by the healthy added balance of labor unions, benefits the larger society, putting it in a better position to protect the rights of individuals and provide all the goods that it alone can provide or oversee. These include both essentials such as public order, as well as amenities of culture that add quality to life in a healthy society. This particular letter sees education for justice being accomplished in the various interrelated institutions of family, schools, parish, public authority, and mass media, and it outlines the means of each to educate the nation to become more just.

Responsibility

The notion of solidarity, of course, contains that of responsibility. Solidarity is taking Christian responsibility for the good of one's neighbor in a way tempered by the correlative concept of subsidiarity. The Theological Commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops applied this principle to problems affecting refugees and migrants:

⁵⁴ Several years ago, Jacques Delors, the former president of the European Community, offered an apartment in Brussels and a post with the EC to anyone who could explain subsidiarity in a way functional for the European Union.

⁵⁵ "Education for Justice" [dated Sept. 14, 1978], in *The Philippine Bishops Speak (1968-1983)* 183.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 184.

“Human solidarity confers upon us a responsibility of hospitality toward people forced to leave their homes because of overpopulation or denial of their rights.” They included economic refugees as worthy of solidarity because of the universal destination of the goods of creation, yet they halted before the moral dilemma of any limits to the obligation of solidarity, leaving it in the hands of the community to discern, asserting: “However, we must still try to set fair and just criteria for managing the entry of immigrants and refugees into Canada.”⁵⁷ This is typical of their attitude in other statements, in which the intention is not so much to teach as to raise moral questions for debate in democratic and open society. The responsibility due one’s neighbor in Christian kinship is outlined in detail in many letters. One of the better examples comes from the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) which emphasizes the responsibility of every voter. The statement stresses seven points: (1) For the sake of world peace, the development of democracy, defense, and promotion of human rights are priorities for Europe. (2) Fundamental human rights, especially religious freedom and freedom of education, as well as in respect of economic, social, and cultural rights, are paramount. (3) Since family is a basic value to be promoted, a global family policy should be built into the revised Treaty on European Union in 1996. (4) Scientific development must have realization of full potential of the human person as its main objective, human life must be protected in its initial and final stages. (5) Present economic crisis will only be overcome by a major effort in solidarity, a willingness to adapt, and imaginative measures at both national and community level; marginalized, unemployed, especially young unemployed, require sustained attention and adequate programs. (6) Our own difficulties should not cause us to forget the poverty and distress of the remaining two-thirds of humanity. (7) Faced with a rise in materialism, violence, racism, and xenophobia, we must do all in our power to establish a society that will be more tolerant and more respectful of human dignity.⁵⁸

The bishops of England and Wales responded to the economic and social problems of their society in their pastoral letter *The Common Good and the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church*. There they stress the need for public awareness of the traditional Catholic measure of responsibility in order to temper and counterbalance rising individualism. They believe, as do the episcopal conferences of many other corners of the world, that individualism in a free market has become the prevailing philosophy of the day and is dangerously exaggerated at the expense of the common good and civic responsibility.

⁵⁷ “A Prophetic Mission for the Church” [dated March 16, 1993], *Catholic International* 4 (1993) 318–26.

⁵⁸ “Christian Responsibility and European Citizenship” [dated May 2, 1994], *Catholic International* 5 (1994) 330–32.

This includes the "world common good" in solidarity with the rest of the world, something that requires, they are convinced with John Paul II, the intervention of some supranational "authority of control."⁵⁹ They contend that the increasing gap between rich and poor undermines the common good, because it makes it impossible to guarantee the rights of all to participate in society, to benefit and promote the common good as each is able. "A society without sufficient concern for the common good will be a society where life will be odious, dangerous, and unjust for those it excludes."⁶⁰ Thus, the bishops of England and Wales interpret solidarity in terms of the common good, tying it to the notion of participation. The first responsibility of every citizen toward the common good, they argue, is to watch that no one in the community becomes marginalized.

This emphasis on participation was also the original perspective of the U.S. bishops' letter *Economic Justice for All*.⁶¹ In industrialized societies, the fundamental problem is not economic development, but sharing in that development. The poor of the industrialized nations are perhaps the most marginalized and most degraded anywhere in the world, because they are constantly reminded of what they do not have and are looked down upon by their successful fellow citizens. All poverty is misery, but when everyone else is poor, as in a poor country, living without is not as bitter as the constant tantalization and exclusion that is added to that poverty in wealthier countries. Participation and solidarity contradict the modern trend toward popular individualism. The episcopal conference of England and Wales goes on to contend that the free market needs to be regulated by natural law, the common good, and human rights, and that it cannot automatically provide for all basic human goods. They describe the "trickle-down theory" as contrary to common sense, and they note a fundamental contradiction in conservatives who believe in an unrestrained free market, and who, at the same time, deplore declining morality, because in such an economy persons are encouraged more to egoism than generosity, and all benevolence is really only hidden profiteering.⁶²

Responsibility as the bishops interpret it has three sides: first, to one's neighbor in solidarity, second to the common good, and third to one's own task in contributing to society. This is the form of responsibility they appeal to when calling upon leaders to end corruption, the most pernicious problem of developing nations. Statements originating from the developing nations are particularly emphatic against the evils

⁵⁹ "The Common Good and the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church," *Documentation catholique* 94 (Feb. 2, 1997) 130–45; for the English original, see n. 8 above.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* no. 73.

⁶¹ This opinion is shared by Jean Calvez in his excellent introduction to the French and Italian translations of *Economic Justice for All*; see the French edition, trans. R. Sugranyes and M. Villet (Albeuve, Switzerland: Castilla, 1988) or the Italian translation by the International Jacques Maritain Institute (Paris: Cerf, 1988).

⁶² "The Common Good and the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church" no. 80.

of corruption. The Philippine bishops' letter *Thou Shalt Not Steal* is an example. The bishops focus on the problem, alarmed that graft is "no longer considered as sin, but cleverness," and say it is stealing from the starving.⁶³ They offer suggestions for a massive program of moral formation and organized anticorruption councils. In Argentina during 1997, the bishops echoed this theme in their most critical statement of government economic policy in 20 years: "Those who have more, know more or can do more at all levels, in the family, in business, in politics, in the Church, have a particular, greater responsibility."⁶⁴ The bishops of Guinea are typical of those from Africa when they call corruption the most destructive enemy of development, as ravaging as AIDS. They remark: "Justice is the guarantee of peace, and peace is the guarantee of development."⁶⁵ In Africa where the family is the basic cell of society it can become one of the cultural forces generating corruption, since by loyalty to tribe and family, nepotism and favors are expected from family members in power. In light of Catholic social teaching, this form of corruption is particularly insidious because of its detrimental effects on solidarity. It destroys any sense of duty or common cause and makes every service or position an opportunity for profit. Moreover, what motivation would a young man have to study or work hard in hope of a better job, when positions are awarded not by merit but by connections and favors? This is a repeated theme of the bishops' treatises on the economies in the developing nations.

Historically, the Catholic Church has sided more often with labor on political issues. In Australia, as in the U.S. until the 1980s, the Catholic population comprised a large part of the labor force. Its political positions were duly influenced by its concerns for workers. These concerns have not changed, but they have now become part of larger economic questions, such as trade, globalization, conditions of the workplace, and the free market's treatment of labor as a commodity. The major concern of developed nations, especially in Europe, has become unemployment. When the bishops seek to understand macro-economic structures causing unemployment, as well as attitudes ultimately responsible for those trends, they recommend practical measures of self-help to workers and participation in decisions of production and ownership. The bishops are thinking of participation not merely in strictly economic terms, but also in terms of moral responsibility.⁶⁶ In the words of the French bishops, Christians "have a

⁶³ *Weltkirche* 7 (1989) 217–19.

⁶⁴ There has been an eightfold increase within four years in the number of children dependent on Catholic Charities. The bishops attribute this to poor, or even corrupt leadership; see the summary in *Catholic International* 8 (1997) 8.

⁶⁵ "Vaincre la pauvreté" [dated Dec. 8, 1996], *Documentation catholique* 94 (March 16, 1997) 273–89.

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Irish Episcopal Conference, *Work is the Key: Towards an Economy that Needs Everyone* (Dublin: Veritas, 1992).

role to participate as citizens in the work of justice with all in the dialogue of responsibility."⁶⁷

The bishops of Nigeria have described the underlying cause of their country's economic problems as a moral problem; educational efforts should be designed to empower people to free themselves from misery and work for their own well being.⁶⁸ They recommend practical measures of participation and self-help to the workers. And the bishops of India declare that the most effective solution on behalf of the masses of toilers in the unorganized sector is to "organize, organize, organize."⁶⁹ In this case, they are speaking for marginal farmers who lose their lands "as soon as the money economy penetrates into an area." They are the most exploited in their society, often not receiving half the minimum wage because they are not organized. The bishops go on to express their reservations about unions' excesses and encourage workers to organize into cooperative ventures. Responsibility would include workers' participation in ownership and decisions. In a number of countries, the local episcopate encourages the formation of small Christian communities as a basis for this kind of organization and education for the marginalized victims of social injustice.⁷⁰ In Kerala, the largest diocese of India, over 300 such communities were formed in one year. For the bishops of India, responsibility includes reliance on the community. "Where the sense of the common good and solidarity is absent, there the unorganized poor suffer the most. . . . The elite and those in power, who in every society set the tone and keep the structures of society in place, are responsible for this moral failure." The responsibility of leaders to their charge, and of workers to do their part honestly and earnestly, depends on their sense of contributing to the common good and their appreciation for the contribution of their fellow citizens. In this letter, the bishops of India call upon the press to expose the exploitation and corruption that they are condemning.

The Australian bishops in September 1996 issued an important study on world poverty, drawing upon lessons learned over the past 30

⁶⁷ "Justice et solidarité" [dated December 10, 1992], *Documentation catholique* 90 (Jan 3, 1993) 35-43, at 42

⁶⁸ They suggest vocational training, adult literacy, public enlightenment programs, education in fundamental human rights, rehabilitation of the handicapped, and conventional schools with a sound religious and moral base, see "Comforting a Nation in Distress" [dated March 10, 1995], *Catholic International* 6 (1995) 326-28

⁶⁹ *Statement of Catholic Bishops Conference of India on Unorganized Labour in India Today On the Occasion of the 100th Anniversary of Rerum Novarum* [dated May 15, 1991] (New Delhi: CBCI, 1991)

⁷⁰ This is the theme of the Asian bishops' *lineamenta* for the Synod of Asia 2000 "Jesus Christ, the Savior, and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia." A French text of that document is available in *Documentation catholique* 94 (April 20, 1997) 374-97. The Tanzanian Bishops are representative of Africa when they encourage small Christian communities "to strengthen family and enhance morals", see "The Truth Will Make You Free Solidarity in Truth" [dated May 5, 1993], *Catholic International* 4 (1993) 576-78, at 578

years.⁷¹ The document delves into the structural causes of poverty in detail rarely found in church documents, citing concentration of power and ownership in the hands of a few, as well as unemployment, low wages, inadequate access to services and resources (such as health care, education, energy, water, information, transport), unjust trade relations between rich and poor nations, effects of European colonialism on poor countries, oppression of women and children, totally state-controlled economies and societies, unrestrained capitalist economies, wars and widespread conflicts, racism, violations of human right, and ecological damage. They criticize the IMF and World Bank development policy for separating economic development from social development. Their solution lies in participation of all sectors of society working toward structural and personal change in a more holistic approach to development.

Thus a consensus has emerged among episcopal conferences worldwide that through participation in solidarity, social responsibility has its fullest expression and leads to redressing social injustices. They maintain that solidarity, as a Christian virtue moderated by subsidiarity and the common good, is the most effective instrument for restructuring society into a civilization of love. Application of the principle of solidarity is leading to refinement of the notions of participation and responsibility which are essential to its understanding. The Church across the world is realizing that in this way the social consequences of the dignity of all are fostered, and society will ultimately be humanized.

A SPIRITUALITY OF ECONOMIC LIFE

The bishops' vision of economic life is rooted in Christian spirituality marked by a pastoral dimension more explicit than in papal encyclicals. The bishops avoid the temptation to separate public life from faith by sequestering it in the intimacy of the individual's conscience. Church leaders envisage economic life as integrated into the spirituality of the entire person, the entire society as a communion in Christ, its head. This means that an individual's spirituality has economic consequences, and similarly, society's economic treatment of persons will have spiritual consequences for every individual in that society. The bishops of Tanzania have noted characteristically that "the only way to save our nation from calamity of wickedness is for everybody to take part in the work of the Holy Spirit, which is building anew the consciences of our children, youth and adults."⁷² Only with the aid of an authentic prayer life, the bishops teach, will the laity be able to "fill the abyss"⁷³ that too often separates moral principles guiding personal life and economic decisions.

⁷¹ "A New Beginning: Eradicating Poverty in Our World," *Catholic International* 8 (1997) 67-91.

⁷² "The Truth Will Make You Free," *Catholic International* 4 (1993) 577.

⁷³ *Economic Justice for All* no. 336.

Much of the discussion about values that one notes in Europe and the U.S. today echoes these concerns. But the bishops of Zaire in 1997 also affirmed the deeply spiritual need and real cause of solidarity when they wrote: "In order to consolidate today peace and fraternity in our country, despite the multiple causes of our political, economic social and cultural problems, the source of our strength is above all in the reinforcement of our union with the Lord in prayer."⁷⁴ The refrain of Catholic social teaching, that the family is the most important institution for learning the spiritual values that make solidarity and responsibility possible, often reverberates in episcopal documents. The bishops of Peru laconically make that point when suggesting the way to solve their country's social problems: "No measure will contribute more to the change of our country than the increasing number of families that educate and practice solidarity."⁷⁵

The bishops' emphasis on themes such as conversion, human dignity, and the fundamental option for the poor flows from this sense of responsibility before eternity that makes every person realize that the earth's goods belong to God and that we use them only as temporary stewards. Again in Zaire, after weeks of violence, the bishops articulated this idea to a nation in crisis: "If we truly wish to save the nation, we must all be converted and perform concrete acts of charity . . . in particular, watching over respect for family life, the practice of justice, of truth and of fraternal charity."⁷⁶ To transcend opportunism and profiteering, there must first be a sense of awe, a sense of a greater spiritual good which economic life serves. Only then will the economy serve the integral development of the whole person and not the person serve economic growth. In Cameroon, the bishops close their letter on the causes of the economic crisis, after citing external causes (such as exploitation of the world economic order and debt) and internal causes (such as corruption, mismanagement, and capital flight), with an appeal for "confidence in ourselves" and conversion. "Neither Africa nor Cameroon are irremediably condemned. Africa conquered slavery, it conquered colonization, we should conquer the crisis." They call for new institutions of North/South solidarity and interdependence, "not based on enrichment and domination of some and the impoverishment and oppression of others, but mutual promotion founded on the common good of all."⁷⁷ In a letter as lengthy as the one published by their U.S. counterparts, *Economic Justice for All*, the bishops of Zaire note that, as full members of the Church, the laity participate fully in its

⁷⁴ "Les Evenements actuels et l'avenir du Zaire" [dated Jan 31, 1997], *Documentation catholique* 94 (March 16, 1997) 270-72

⁷⁵ "The Family Heart of the Civilization of Love," *Catholic International* 5 (1994) 270-72

⁷⁶ "Save the Nation" [dated Feb 19, 1993], *Catholic International* 4 (1993) 276-78, at 278

⁷⁷ "Les causes de la crise économique," *Documentation catholique* 87 (July 15, 1990) 706-14, at 711, no 24

mission and are sent from the altar to be "a presence of the Church in the world, a witness of charity, an apostolate of love of neighbor in the family, in the work environment, in the numerous sociopolitical responsibilities."⁷⁸ The challenge is to synthesize the spiritual with social and economic values, as the Zaïre Episcopal Conference emphatically proclaims: "to fail to be concerned with terrestrial responsibilities is to fail to love one's neighbor, even more, [to fail] toward God." In Africa, where the sense of the sacred and the profane is not separated as it often is in the West, the bishops have much to say about bridging the abyss between the world and Christianity.

The spirituality of economic life is the leitmotiv for almost all the episcopal interventions into the public debate. Conversion, family, the dignity of every person, and common solidarity are the spiritual solutions to which the bishops call their faithful. The conversion to which they invite their societies is one of loving responsibility. Every institution, every leader, every worker and family member has a role to perform. How different the world would be, if all responded to that call for conversion.

DEMOCRACY

In more recent times, the Catholic Church, especially in Africa, has become more explicitly an advocate of democracy.⁷⁹ In *Gaudium et spes*, Vatican II paid tribute to states with democratic freedom, but not until John Paul II's guarded praise of democracy in *Centesimus annus*, and the political transitions due to the vacuum created after communism lost its momentum, did the bishops of many countries express cautious support in favor of democracy. The bishops of South Africa consider it urgent. "Together with other people of good will we want a democratic constitution and government as soon as possible because it is the shortest way to justice and peace. . . . Because it promotes the common good and protects individual rights we see democracy as the best way of building a truly human society which protects and promotes the dignity of each person [H]owever, pure democracy is an ideal and no society can claim that it has ever reached it. . . . Any

⁷⁸ "Le chrétien et le développement de la nation" [dated September 17, 1988], *Documentation catholique* 86 (Oct. 15, 1989) 885-913, at 905, no. 152.

⁷⁹ There is a long list of documents advocating democratization, with notable qualification. From Kenya: "A Society Built on Love and Peace" [dated June 20, 1990], *Catholic International* 1 (1990) 89-92; "Looking Toward the Future with Hope," *Catholic International* 3 (1992) 376-80. From Angola: "Politics, Democracy and Justice," *Catholic International* 3 (1992) 592. From Nigeria: "The People's Responsibility to Themselves" [dated September 11, 1992], *Catholic International* 3 (1992) 1039-41. From Chad: "Chacun doit prendre ses responsabilités de citoyen," *Documentation catholique* 90 (February 7, 1993) 134-35. From Zaïre: "Les Événements actuels et l'avenir du Zaïre," *Documentation catholique* 94 (March 16, 1997) 270-72. From Brazil: "Exigences éthiques de l'ordre démocratique," *Documentation catholique* 87 (July 15, 1990) 714-25. From Indonesia: "L'Eglise catholique en Indonésie," *Documentation catholique* 93 (March 17, 1996) 288-93.

attempt to block or slow down the transition to democracy is morally reprehensible, because it will cause increasing violence, social decay and the destruction of the economy."⁸⁰

Participation in every level of society is a cornerstone of church social teaching, and democracy seems to have a natural suitability for the kind of participation the bishops expect in order to confront social problems. Participation is gaining significance as a fundamental theme of doctrine, as the Church wrestles with a range of social problems. Bringing the economically, politically, and culturally marginalized into the mainstream is emerging more forcefully as the task of our generation. As the importance of participation as a matter of justice and a solution to poverty becomes more manifest, so too does the political aspect of participation embodied in democracy. Democracy also allows for subsidiarity, the measure of participation, to be realized in its fullest sense.

However, as the bishops of South Africa were quick to point out in the same letter, the Church still has serious reservations about the ability of democracy to assure a just society. They list a number of principles that guard against the misuse of democracy, including respect for human rights, just and independent legal systems to guarantee rights and freedom for all, free press, social and economic rights (such as food, shelter, decent wages), protection and support for family, particular concern for the marginalized, especially women, the elderly, the handicapped, and the very young.

In Nigeria during 1997 the bishops appealed to General Sani Abacha to restore civilian rule to the country, noting that gospel ideals of leadership are also principles of good government.⁸¹ Several years earlier, in similar circumstances, they called for military rulers "in consideration of the misery of people, to take such urgent steps that will bring the nation back to the course of stability, democracy, and good governance."⁸² Guinea, a country with a nascent democracy emerging from hardened communism and 26 years of civil war, needs a profound restructuring of the state, as the bishops, applying the principles of *Centesimus annus*, insisted. Old mentalities endure in Guinea. The bishops call upon the people to shed their dependence on the state and to take their new-found responsibility in hand, guided by Christian

⁸⁰ "Towards a Democratic Future," *Catholic International* 4 (1993) 327-31. The bishops cite *Centesimus annus* no. 46: "The Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of the citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility of both electing and holding accountable those who govern them and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate. Thus she cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the state for individual interests or for ideological ends. Authentic democracy is possible only in a state ruled by law, and on the basis of a correct conception of the human person."

⁸¹ Untitled statement [dated Feb. 21, 1997], see summary in *Catholic International* 8 (1997) 195.

⁸² "A Call for a Change of Heart and for the Rule of Law" [dated Sept. 16, 1994], *Catholic International* 90 (1995) 38-40, at 39.

values, for “there can be no democracy without work, justice and solidarity.” While they warn that democracy is not “a magic formula to resolve all the problems of development,” they compare the transition to an awakening of the people and laud democracy, arguing that “the greatest service one can render a person is to permit him or her to live in freedom, dignity and truth.”⁸³ They blame their gap between rich and poor, not on multinational conglomerates and globalization, but on former communist party leaders’ corruption; they put great hope in the educational system to aid the nation to become conscious of human rights and responsible democratic liberty. Education, they explain, must be spiritual. “No element is more essential to the construction of democracy than religion, for it frees one from every idol, from all fear, to render one apt to join others, freely, in view of constructing a world pleasing to God.” Similar appeals come from Latin America. For example, the bishops of Nicaragua declared that the establishment of a democratic political system is indispensable, including government subject to the law and the separation of powers of state, to avoid skimming of aid, create jobs, and alleviate the misery of poverty in their country.⁸⁴

These several examples show how democracy is being embraced, albeit reservedly, by the Church in recent years as a means to foster solidarity with responsible participation, as the best way both to realize the dignity of every person and to achieve integral development. This is a striking feature of the local application of the Church’s social teaching in modern times.

CONCLUSION

The Catholic Church across the world is becoming more active in teaching and working for justice in social structures. The relatively recent development of this teaching in papal encyclicals is still being diffused and digested. Cardinal Newman’s thesis that the faithful contribute to the development of doctrine will perhaps find its most fertile example and testing here. As bishops enter more often and more profoundly into the arena of social, political, and economic life in order to bring the gospel to our institutional social existence, they are turning more toward the laity not only to execute their teaching but to participate in its formulation. The picture that emerges is multifaceted, as different global regions promote this teaching while adjusting it to their own cultural, economic, and political character. But the fundamental questions all address are much the same. Coming together as regional conferences has helped the people of God to share in understanding and approaching these complex problems. Now it is time for

⁸³ “Vaincre la pauvreté” [dated December 8, 1996], *Documentation catholique* 94 (March 16, 1997) 273–89, at 275.

⁸⁴ “Pour éviter le recours à la violence, la société doit se renouveler” [dated Oct. 7, 1992], *Documentation catholique* 90 (Feb. 7, 1993) 135–39.

the episcopal conferences of the different regions to benefit from the ideas of other parts of the world, as the reflection of the last 25 years is gathered up.

I hope to have shown the usefulness of the episcopal conferences worldwide to the development of Catholic social teaching. As Archbishop Weakland rightly commented, this teaching is being refined because it is being applied.⁸⁵ That contribution is only beginning to emerge with different priorities in various areas of the world whose particular situations call for discernment. We still have much to learn from these documents gathered together in the Fribourg catalogue. The Catholic Church awaits more systematic, synthetic studies to help solve thorny and complex issues, to speak for the voiceless, and to strive to restructure society into a civilization of love.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ See n. 3 above.

⁸⁶ For more information about the documentation center's services, write to Professor Roger Berthouzoz, O.P., Moral Theology Institute, University of Fribourg, CH-1700 Fribourg, Switzerland; E-mail: (Roger.Berthouzoz@unifr.ch).

"...one of the journals that has to be read..."

PACIFICA

JOURNAL OF THE MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY

Volume 11

Number 1

February 1998

Mervyn Frederick Bendle: "The Postmetaphysics of Religious Difference". Andrew Hamilton: "Creeds as Anti-Personnel Lines". John C. English: "The Path to Perfection in Pseudo-Macarius and John Wesley". John Honner: "Speaking in New Tongues: Karl Rahner's Writings from the Grave".
Reviews and Notices

Annual Subscription: US\$40.00
Pacifica, P.O. BOX 271, Brunswick East, Victoria 3057,
Australia