



February 2014

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Recommended Citation

Joseph Gremillion, *Theological Dimensions of the American Economy and the Pastoral Letter of the U.S. Bishops*, 2 NOTRE DAME J.L. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 67 (1987).

Available at: <http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndjlepp/vol2/iss1/7>

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THEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE AMERICAN ECONOMY AND THE PASTORAL LETTER OF THE U.S. BISHOPS

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This article briefly explores the theological dimensions of the American economy. The first section will profile six major elements of the American economy which acquire theological significance because of the quality, manner and degree of their effect among and within people, both as individual persons and as communities.

These six basic elements of our "political economy" are: 1) *work* as co-creation with God, and with thousands of others; 2) possession and exercise of economic *power* through the tripod structure of capital, workers and government; 3) the personal *dignity* and participation of the *humanum communitarium*; 4) *the poor* and oppressed, who are often marginalized and bereft of participation, power and creative work; 5) the whole of *humankind*, all of God's human family; and 6) *North America* and The West in relation to other religio-cultural regions.

Section Two historically traces four root sources of values, norms and principles for judging these six "people" dimensions of our economy as carriers of theological weight. The four wellsprings of our democratic heritage and national continuum are, in brief: the Bible, Christian tradition, civic humanism, and the American societal experience. These four formative currents, charged with the dialectic of change in order to conserve, and of deepening identity through change, pervade modern memory and self-consciousness, pregnant with the humanizing genes and thrust of thirty-five creative centuries, from Abraham, Moses and Isaiah, through Jesus, John and Paul, Aristotle, Plato and Cicero, to Jefferson, Lincoln and Martin Luther King.

Section Three then sketches onto this millennial map a very recent theological happening: the awakening of the U.S.

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Catholic Church to its current mission. More precisely, this section recognizes that our National Conference of Catholic Bishops has been both caring and daring in the process and content of its pastoral letters. Through their public witness as religio-cultural leaders, the bishops have addressed the politico-economic systems of our nation.

Faith leaders have performed this function at key turning points along the four formative currents sketched above for Section Two. The Catholic bishops, along with other pastors, rabbis and prophets, are assuming a responsibility pioneered by Jewish and Christian leaders at earlier critical periods throughout our 3500 year history. Moses and Jesus, Augustine, Ambrose, Patrick and the Bonifaces, Luther, Calvin, La Casas and Bellarmine had missions like that of today's Catholic bishops.

I. SIX "PEOPLE" DIMENSIONS OF THE ECONOMY

The first paragraph of the U.S. bishops' pastoral on the American economy encompasses the entire text that follows in *people*. The very first sentence proclaims the good news that people endow the economy with theological significance: "Every perspective on economic life that is human, moral and Christian must be shaped by three questions: What does the economy do *for* people? What does it do *to* people? And how do people *participate* in it?" The bishops immediately affirm the *human* character of the economy: "formed by human decisions . . . men and women working together, developing the gifts of God's creation and building a world more fit for human living." This economic work "influences what people hope and believe about their destiny It affects the way they live together [and] touches their very faith in God." The bishops conclude this paragraph by asserting: "Concern for all these dimensions of economic life leads us to write this pastoral letter."¹

It is therefore "as pastors and teachers of the Gospel" that the bishops approach their people-centered appeal to the American conscience.² Christian ministry, they assert, has given the Church "firsthand knowledge of the hopes and struggles of many groups and classes of people": the homeless, the hard-workers now losing jobs and security they

1. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* para. 1 (Second Draft 1985), reprinted in 15 ORIGINS 257 (1985) [hereinafter cited as *Pastoral Letter*].

2. *Id.* para. 2.

thought assured, families with both parents at work, young people choosing careers, "conscientious managers, investors and entrepreneurs [taking] risks in conditions of uncertainty," farmers facing loss of land and way of life, employees burdened with repetitive tasks trying "daily to take some pride and care in their labor," and "[n]ew waves of immigrants [who] brave the dangers of disappointment and cultural dislocation."³

The bishops also look "beyond our own shores, [at] the reality of 800 million people living in absolute poverty and 450 million malnourished or facing starvation."⁴ As American pastors within our universal Church, they are moved to address human realities far beyond their dioceses of Peoria and Philadelphia and to look into the planetary ambit of our superpower nation. Thus, God's entire human family enters into the moral, pastoral and theological dimensions of our American economy—in the Gospel according to Archbishop Weakland of Milwaukee and his episcopal brothers.

Six elements of the economy, all people-oriented, carry theological significance: work, power, dignity, the poor, humankind, and North America. Each must now be inserted, however sketchily, on to our topographic profile of the American economy.

A. Work

The first element is work: *Work is Co-Creation with God*, and with thousands of others, to produce goods and services, and to construct a free and just society. God created humans in His own image, to become like Him, a creator, and thus to work. God provides raw natural resources: soil, sun and sea, air and water, seeds, plants and animals, oil and ores. Human work and techniques then transform, refine and perfect these into consumer goods—by rearranging, through application of energy, patterns of elements, molecules, atoms and crystalline structure. Human workers also offer services to thousands of fellow humans, rearranging the patterns of communal living into the "socialization" culture of multiplying societal relationships, which Pope John XXIII spotlighted and embraced in *Mater et Magistra*.⁵

This continuing creation of goods and services occurs to

3. *Id.*

4. *Id.* para. 4.

5. John XXIII, *Christianity and Social Progress (Mater et Magistra)* (1961).

day through the close collaboration of the thousands who are organized into synchronized groups of specialists, principally under the impetus, aegis and roof of the business corporation. This key institution of the American economy combines capital, equipment, technology, natural resources, trained workers, directors and managers, to produce and distribute goods and services. This system feeds, clothes and shelters 235 million U.S. citizens; it cares for the ill, facilitates movement, provides education and information, fosters recreation and arts, and thus enables God's gift of physical human life to flourish at acceptable levels never before attained for such a large majority (about eighty-five percent) of such a large population.

I therefore agree with the statement of Michael Novak, well-known philosopher-theologian of the American Enterprise Institute, that the business corporation is more than a type of voluntary, non-governmental association. It is definitely "also a moral institution and a political institution."⁶ In my judgment, it is even more: the American corporation is also a human societal *creation for continuing co-creation* with God; the business enterprise itself is alive with theological meaning and responsibility. This holds *a fortiori* for the economic system as a whole, in its multitudinous dimensions of human collaboration. This stance provides deep motivation for turning Catholic moral-pastoral attention to business firms and institutions, as well as to governmental bodies. It also turns this attention to economic growth and inventiveness, job creation and productivity, in addition to past Catholic concern for the distribution of product and profit.

The basic conviction that the theology of creation has been overshadowed too long by the theology of revelation underlies this view. Revelation only began with the advent of *homo sapiens*, perhaps a hundred thousand years ago, and entered our human consciousness and culture quite recently—initially through Noah, Abraham and Moses in our Judeo-Christian tradition, only a few thousand years back. Creation, on the other hand, stretches back to the Big Bang, at least 15 to 20 billion years ago, and its recent "prophets" range from Aristotle, Euclid and Ptolemy, through Bacon, Galileo and Newton, to Darwin, Einstein, Hubble, and Planck—and Teilhard de Chardin.

6. Gremillion, *Toward a Theology of the American Economy*, THIS WORLD, Spring 1982, at 34, 40. See also M. NOVAK, FREEDOM WITH JUSTICE 148-64 (1984).

God the Creator has “spoken” far longer than God the Revealer, and speaks today through human work and initiative, and through cultural creations frequently derived from work and its challenges—often through research laboratories of the *Fortune 500*. These culture-generated “signs of the times” have been discerned as revelatory since Vatican II, the first Ecumenical Council to approach universality in geographic representativity and cultural scope.

In their long section on “Biblical Perspectives,” thirty paragraphs fully packed with faith conviction, the U.S. bishops strongly assert the co-creative character of human work:

Men and women are also to share in the creative activity of God. They are to be fruitful, to care for the earth Creation is a gift; men and women are to be faithful stewards in caring for the earth. They can justly consider that by their labor they are unfolding the Creator’s work.⁷

B. *The Power Structure of Capital-Workers-Government*

Struggle and debate over the nature, origins and uses of power—economic, political and cultural, by vision, suasion or force—within the American economic system entered our national arena in the late 1800’s. This was the era of landmark events such as the Homestead strike and Haymarket riots of 1886-87 against Andrew Carnegie and Cyrus McCormick, and the Sherman antitrust laws of the 1890’s. After the Civil War, the federal government increasingly became concerned with economic power as railroads provided a countrywide transport network, and as telegraph and telephone created a coast-to-coast societal nervous system.

Church support for a tripartite power structure of capital, labor and government simultaneously arose in Western Europe and North America in the 1870’s-90’s, largely in response to human and family needs for pastoral reasons. Led by Terrence Powderly, head of the Knights of Labor, and by Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, American Catholic laity and clergy promoted the new keystone of organized labor during those crucial years. Gibbons even went to Rome to defend Powderly and his labor organization.

This capital-labor-government construct is so basic to all Catholic social teaching that its first official formulation by

7. *Pastoral Letter*, *supra* note 1, para. 38.

Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*⁸ must be reviewed for the-ological insights even today. Its continuity through three gener-ations was reaffirmed by John XXIII's summary of Leo's 1891 foundational social teaching:

Work, inasmuch as it is an expression of the human per-son, can by no means be regarded as a mere commodity. For the great majority of mankind, work is the only source from which the means of livelihood are drawn. Hence, its remuneration is not to be thought of in terms of merchan-dise, but rather according to the laws of justice and equity

Private Property, including that of productive goods, is a natural right possessed by all, which the State may by no means suppress. However, as there is from nature a social aspect to private property, he who uses his right in this re-gard must take into account not merely his own welfare, but that of others as well

The State, whose purpose is the realization of the com-mon good in the temporal order, can by no means disre-gard the economic activity of its citizens. Indeed, it should be present to promote in a suitable manner the production of a sufficient supply of material goods . . . , safeguard the rights of all citizens, but especially the weaker, such as workers, women and children . . . , contribute actively to the betterment of the living conditions of workers . . . , [and] see to it that labor agreements are entered into ac-cording to the norms of justice and equity, and that in the environment of work the dignity of the human being is not violated either in body or spirit.⁹

In the ninety years since *Rerum Novarum*, Catholic social ministry, especially in the industrialized West, promoted structures to implement this tripartite power pattern, which began with Pope Leo's legitimization of workers' unions in 1891. In his encyclical *On Human Work*,¹⁰ John Paul II up-dated and reaffirmed this trio of power-partners.

On the American economic scene, the originally domi-nant power of property and capital was brought into better balance, step-by-step, by the rise of worker and governmental power. Antitrust laws, the regulation of railroads and utili-ties, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Wagner

8. Leo XIII, *On the Condition of Workers (Rerum Novarum)* (1891).

9. John XXIII, *supra* note 5, nos. 18, 20-21.

10. John Paul II, *On Human Work (Laborem Exercens)* (1981).

Act, and racial integration helped to achieve this balance. In fact, a whole body of socio-economic legislation and court decrees affecting family, housing, women's rights, farm owners and workers, immigrants, and other "people" concerns contributed to a more equitable power structure.

During these ninety years of tripartite power shifts, business leadership rarely yielded willingly its original dominance. The formerly weak sometimes abused their newly acquired power; labor leadership, so charged, was reined in by the Taft-Hartley Act. The regulatory and other economic roles of government are constantly criticized and revised. Still, labor and management recently entered into fresh negotiation and contracts that reflect joint desire for cooperation—especially in the face of new economic powers overseas, primarily along the East Pacific Rim which now brusquely enters our economic system.

These tripartite power equations, their tensions, breakdowns and realignments—the stuff of daily headlines and evening TV reports and for nine decades the centerpiece of Catholic socio-economic teaching—receive major theological and pastoral attention today. Why? Because they energize and channel our continuing co-creativity with God, and because they affect all our brother-sister humans, both in the United States and the world. For this reason, the current letter of the American bishops focuses on the three main economic actors, in sections entitled: 1. Working People and Labor Unions, 2. Owners and Managers, and 3. Citizens and Government.¹¹

C. *The Human Person: Dignity and Rights, Freedom, Participation and Community*

Seven sentences from one paragraph in the bishops' pastoral provide the foundation for all that follows. These seven statements must be quoted in full as architectural axioms for the entire American structure of *Law, Ethics and Public Policy* which affect our economic system:

The basis for all that the church believes about the moral dimensions of economic life is its vision of the transcendent worth—the sacredness—of human beings.

The dignity of the human person, realized in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured. (Italicized in original for

11. *Pastoral Letter*, *supra* note 1, paras. 97-122.

emphasis.)

All human beings, therefore, are ends to be served by the institutions which make up the economy, not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined goals.

Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious.

When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred.

For that is what human beings are: We are created "in the image and likeness of God."

Economic life must serve and support this dignity, which needs to be realized in relationship and solidarity with others.¹²

This sevenfold declaration of human dignity imparts a sense of sacramental significance. It provides to the social ministry of the church what the Declaration of Independence provides from the pen of Jefferson to the jurisprudence of our nation—a wellspring from the ultimate bedrock that humans "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." From this fruitful source have flowed forth the Bill of Rights and thousands of laws to preserve and enhance human dignity and freedom.

True to the "Liberal" philosophy of their day, however, our Founding Fathers formed a *political* system for assuring freedom and participation through highly structured *communal* authority for weak and strong alike; they deliberately left the *economic* system to the "invisible hand" of individualist competition, with minimal *communal* oversight. This original slight which excluded economic rights was remedied by the Civil War and the following century of social struggle.

The bishops' pastoral lists economic needs and rights which are "absolutely basic [for] human dignity."¹³ These include "food, clothing, shelter and medical care . . . , security in the event of sickness, employment and old age."¹⁴ The bishops assert:

These economic rights are as essential to human dignity as are the political and civil freedoms granted pride of place in the Bill of Rights and the U.S. Constitution

We believe, therefore, that these economic rights

12. *Id.* para. 33.

13. *Id.* para. 84.

14. *Id.* para. 84.

should be granted a status in the cultural and legal traditions of this nation analogous to that held by the civil and political rights to freedom of religion, speech and assembly.¹⁵

D. *The Poor*

The poor, the weak and oppressed now receive pastoral priority from the U.S. bishops. The bishops first set forth theological motives for their "preferential option for the poor,"¹⁶ as derived from the Old and New Testaments. They then focus on the 33 million Americans, "about one in every seven people in our nation [who] are poor by the government's official definition;"¹⁷ another "20 to 30 million are needy Between 1979 and 1983 the number of people below the government's definition of poverty increased by over 9 million. These burdens fall disproportionately on blacks, Hispanics and native Americans."¹⁸

In response to criticism that the first draft of their pastoral had slighted concerns of the middle-class, the U.S. bishops included in the current text the "many working people and middle-class Americans [who] live dangerously close to poverty," those who often "rely on the wages of two or even three members just to get by The loss of a job, illness or the breakup of a marriage may be all that is needed to push people into poverty."¹⁹ The bishops assert that both Christian conviction and "the promise of this nation to secure liberty and justice for all" imply that the poor and vulnerable have a special claim on their pastoral concern.²⁰

This Christian conviction has a long history. Christ began his public ministry in his hometown synagogue of Nazareth:

He stood up to read [from] the scroll of the prophet Isaiah "The spirit of the Lord has been given to me He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind bring new sight, to set the downtrodden free" Then he began to speak to them, "This text is being fulfilled today even as you

15. *Id.* para. 85.

16. *Id.* paras. 55-60.

17. *Id.* para. 169. *See id.* paras. 169-212.

18. *Id.* para. 20.

19. *Id.* para. 21.

20. *Id.* para. 22.

listen."²¹

The Church has not followed Christ's prophetic example at all times in all places. Churchmen and churchwomen have often carried to the rich and powerful, becoming too rich, too powerful, too oppressive themselves.

The modern ecclesiastical movement, favoring the poor and empowering the weak of our industrial society, became official ninety years ago with the encyclical of Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, and it gathered momentum in Western Europe and North America through the 1930's. With a blistering critique far exceeding today's episcopal rhetoric, *Rerum Novarum* begins with a pastoral social analysis of:

[T]he misery and wretchedness which press so heavily at this moment on the vast majority of the poor Working men have been given over, isolated and defenseless, to the callousness of employers and the greed of unrestrained competition [A] very small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself.²²

In 1931, during the pit of the Depression and the height of Communist agitation, Pius XI analyzed the economic situation in social class terms introduced by Marxism. The Pope's encyclical, *On Reconstructing the Social Order*, states:

[T]he human community appeared more and more divided into two classes. The first, small in numbers, enjoyed practically all the comforts so plentifully supplied by modern invention. The second class, comprising the immense multitude of workingmen, was made up of those who, oppressed by dire poverty, struggled in vain to escape from the straits which encompassed them.²³

Pope Pius continued on to praise the preferential opters for the poor of his day, the "many Catholics, priests and laymen, who with admirable charity had long devoted themselves to relieving the undeserved misery of the laboring classes."²⁴ This preferential option for the poor and oppressed has since received an official Catholic mandate so well-known that it need not be documented here—from Popes John,

21. *Luke* 4:17-21.

22. Leo XIII, *supra* note 8, no. 2.

23. Pius XI, *On Reconstructing the Social Order (Quadragesimo Anno)* no. 3 (1931).

24. *Id.* no. 5.

Paul and John Paul, from the Vatican II and the Synod of Bishops, from religious orders and lay movements, from the Latin American Bishops at Medellin and Puebla, and their sister episcopal conferences in all other continents, from lay leaders of hundreds of peace and justice centers, and from most theological schools of the Catholic Church worldwide.

E. *Humankind*

The Whole of Humankind is the geographic range and "people-scope" of the bishops' pastoral on the U.S. economy, and is derived from Christ's command to preach the Gospel to all nations, and in doing so "to bring the good news to the poor." The entire human family is the over-arching unit and universe of Catholic social ministry, especially since Western industrial technology has bonded our planet's 160 nations and dozen regions into a world economy, an interdependent network of production, service and distribution centers serving our 4.6 billion brother-sister humans.

In two major sections, "Food and Agriculture" and "The United States and the World Economy," the bishops' pastoral embraces the whole of humankind in seventy detailed paragraphs.²⁵ They address "farm owners and farm workers [as] the immediate stewards of the natural resources required to produce the food that is necessary to sustain life." We must understand these resources as gifts of a generous God. "When . . . seen in that light," the American bishops assert, "and when the human race is perceived as a single moral community, we gain a sense of the substantial responsibility we bear as a nation for the world food system."²⁶

This Christ-given perception of the *genus humanum* "as a single moral community" has far reaching consequences for the U.S. bishops: "Traditional Catholic teaching on this global interdependence emphasizes the . . . unity of the human family, the universally beneficial purpose of the goods of the earth, the need to pursue the international common good," in a world divided ever more sharply by "the scandal of the shocking inequality between the rich and the poor."²⁷ Half the world's people, the bishops remind us, "nearly 2.5 billion, live in countries where the [annual] income per person is \$400 or less. At least 800 million people in those coun-

25. *Pastoral Letter*, *supra* note 1, paras. 213-82.

26. *Id.* para. 225.

27. *Id.* para. 247.

tries live in absolute poverty . . . Fifteen out of every 100 children . . . die before the age of 5," and millions who survive are stunted physically and mentally.²⁸

Recognizing the great complexity of the global economy, the bishops want to assure that moral considerations are not excluded. For guidance, the bishops cite three key themes from recent Catholic teaching: "1) the need for reform of the international system, 2) the acceptance of a 'preferential option for the poor' as an overall policy imperative and 3) the need to refashion national policies in that light."²⁹

F. *North America, the West, and the Other Regions*

"The Whole of Humankind" is not an amorphous plasma of 4600 million human particles. Our *genus humanum* is a structured societal reality, organized today into 160 nation-states, which vary in population and potency, history and culture from the superpower stature of the Soviet Union and the United States, to the slight size of Caribbean and Micronesian "statelets."

These nations, not individual humans, are the principal actors on the world stage, and are seldom solo performers. Even the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, foster alliances and blocs in support of their positions, especially among nations that are geographically adjacent and have kindred ethnic and cultural roots. Thus the North American region (U.S. and Canada) combines with Western Europe to form The West, and the U.S.S.R. (really a region formed of a dozen ethnic, religio-cultural Republics, led by the Great Russians) joins hands on the world stage with Eastern Europe. These two binary stars, North America-Western Europe and U.S.S.R.-Eastern Europe, are accompanied in our planetary drama by other regional actors, such as Latin America, Black Africa, the Middle East, China, and Southeast Asia.

The West is the focus of this sixth "people" dimension of the economy which carries theological significance. Thinkers ranging from Max Weber to Michael Novak have probed for the reasons that the industrial revolution occurred in The West. Novak reasons:

The first imperative of a society committed to human progress is to convert wealth to capital, consumption to savings,

28. *Id.* paras. 247-48.

29. *Id.* para. 253.

miserly hoarding to investment in the future. Far from being immoral or even amoral, such a conversion is an act of self-denial and acceptance of responsibility for the future For such reasons, Max Weber held that what is most distinctive about the new order of economic progress is spiritual.³⁰

Novak judges therefore: "Weber was correct in perceiving that the new event in world history is a revolution of the spirit, an altered sense of the human vocation and religious obligation. Its aim is to eliminate poverty in all nations."³¹

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism is the faith-freighted title of Weber's well-known analysis. From his chair at the American Enterprise Institute, Novak astutely revives these theological dimensions of the American economy in the search for meaning. More theologians should reflect on the birth of modern industrial society in the Judeo-Christian West two centuries ago, and its sudden outburst into all regions and cultures since World War II.

More specifically, multinational corporations must be studied and judged as societal creations which intensify communal co-creation with God. Their industrial know-how need not be reinvented by other people; rather, it must be applied, adapted or refused—in keeping with the values, history, and religio-culture of each region. Catholic social teaching urges, however, that the human patrimony of technology be made available in fair and generous manner, without undue imposition of American political and economic self-interest, and with a preferential option for the poorest.³²

Paul VI stressed the widely varying economic-political situations in the several cultural regions in his "Call to Action,"³³ and offered the following message applicable to all peoples and their cultures:

Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country . . . and in dialogue with . . . all men of good will, to discern the options and commitments which are called for to bring about the social, political and economic changes seen in many cases to

30. M. NOVAK, *supra* note 6, at 177.

31. *Id.*

32. See *Pastoral Letter*, *supra* note 1, paras. 253-83.

33. Paul VI, *Call to Action (Octogesima Adveniens)* (1971).

be urgently needed.³⁴

Obviously, therefore, Catholic social teaching becomes pluralist because ecclesial (even papal) consciousness awakens to the diverse economic and cultural regions of the globe. Pluralism results, both within the Church itself *and* in moral support or in criticism of central planning, or free market, or guided economies. These pluralist possibilities, as stated in the first paragraph of this paper, are approached by Catholic social teaching from six theological dimensions derived from the quality, manner and degree of their effect among and within people, as individual persons and as communities.

II. FORMATIVE SOURCES AND CARRIERS OF THEOLOGICAL VALUES

Section One briefly surveyed six people-centered theological dimensions of the American economy: work, power, dignity, the poor, humankind, and North America. This section will sketch the four principal sources and carriers of these dimensions and will trace their development through the centuries, into the culture and consciousness of our nation today. These four formative currents are the Bible, Christian tradition, civic humanism, and the American societal experience.

"We the People" of America still strive to become more fully human-in-community in the 1980's, through responses derived from the awakening call and empowerment of God, as Creator and as Revealer, active always in human history. Three of these epochal awakenings begot communitarian creations (the Bible, Christian tradition, and civic humanism) which gave birth to the West as a cultural whole—Europe as well as North America. The fourth of these formative currents, the U.S. societal experience from the 1600's to the 1900's, is proper to our own national memory and current direction.

Our overarching map, therefore, of six theological dimensions of the American economy dwells within the time-continuum of these four major currents which form the mainstream of Western history. This short paper can only identify these four roots and enrichers of America, and their eras and key leaders which include:

1. The Hebrew Scripture and people, arising among the early civilizations of the Middle East and continuing for over

34. *Id.* para. 4.

3500 years. Their leaders include: Abraham, Moses and Isaiah, David, Solomon, Ecclesiastes, the Essenes and the Machabees.

2. The 1950 years of Christian Communion, called forth by Jesus, with Mary and John, Peter and Paul, Priscilla and Philomen, recorded in the New Testament, in Christian tradition, in oral and written memory, monuments, monasteries and cathedrals, liturgy and familial heritage.

3. Civic humanism, with its origins in Greece and Rome, from Solon, Socrates and Aeschylus, Aristotle, Plato and Phidias, Pliny, Plotinus, Cicero and Seneca. Civic humanism came down to us through 2500 years, via Avicenna, Maimonides and Averrhoes, Boethius, Alcuin, Albertus and Aquinas, the Magna Carta, Thomas More and Erasmus, as well as the communal movements of the Renaissance and Enlightenment.

4. The societal experience of our American "We the People" as a cultural continuum since the 1600's, led into national peoplehood by the Pilgrims and Quakers, slaves and immigrants, by our revolutionary parents and constitutional creators, Christian and Deist: Bradford, Penn, Williams, Washington, Jefferson and the Adamses (John and Abigail to great-grandsons Charles and Henry), Madison, Hamilton and Marshall, and guided by European friends such as Burke and Tocqueville. This experience continued through Lincoln, Julia Howe and Harriet Stowe, Emerson, Whitman, the James brothers (William and Henry), Debs, Gompers, the Roosevelts, John Ryan, Senator Wagner, Cesar Chavez and Martin Luther King.

Each of these four generators and carriers of theological values profoundly affects the political-economic institutions and policies of our nation today. Each deserves a full chapter here; indeed, hundreds of books as well as whole libraries are devoted to these four historic wellsprings of The West. The bishops' pastoral recognizes the significance of these four currents:

What the Bible and Christian tradition teach, human wisdom confirms. Centuries before Christ the Greeks and Romans spoke of the human person as a "social animal," made for friendship, community and public life. These insights show that human beings cannot grow to full self-realization in isolation, but in interaction with others.

The virtues of citizenship are an expression of Christian love more crucial in today's interdependent world than

ever before. These virtues grow out of a lively sense of one's dependence on the commonweal and obligations to it. This civic commitment must also guide the economic institutions of society Solidarity is another name for this social friendship and civic commitment that make human moral and economic life possible.³⁵

Scholarly concern and secular sympathy for such views are manifested by Robert Bellah and associates in their recent book on "Individualism and Commitment in American Life." This subtitle, Bellah's preface explains, is a phrase taken from Tocqueville as he "described the mores . . . of the American people and showed how they helped to form American character," in his "comprehensive and penetrating analysis," *Democracy in America*, written 150 years ago.³⁶

III. THE CHURCH AWAKENS TO ITS IN-THE-WORLD MISSION

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin stated, in his magisterial paper presented here at Notre Dame, that during Vatican II: "When the bishops addressed the task of defining the nature and mission of the Church, it became evident that an explicit, extensive interpretation of the role of the Church in the political, economic, cultural and international arena was a theological fact which required expression."³⁷

This "theological fact" of the Catholic Church awakening to its current world mission has moved toward Pikes Peak proportions in the topography of our societal-ecclesiastical map. Wary of triumphalism and the limits of space, and very concerned about ecumenical and interfaith relations, this Catholic role cannot even be profiled here. All that can be said now is what Sir Hilary said about Mount Everest: "It is there!"³⁸

The U.S. bishops state the following about their current

35. *Pastoral Letter, supra* note 1, paras. 70-71.

36. R. BELLAH, R. MADSEN, W. SULLIVAN, A. SWIDLER & S. TIPTON, *HABITS OF THE HEART: INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMITMENT IN AMERICAN LIFE*, at viii (1985).

37. Bernardin, "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World:" *Its Impact on the Social Teaching of the U.S. Bishops*, 2 *NOTRE DAME J. L. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y* 5, 8 (1985).

38. Books by the score address the subject under the umbrellas of plural theologies, liberation and democratic capitalism, Blacks and Women, and First and Third Worlds. I have even assumed the stance of a fifth evangelist. See J. GREMILLION, *GOSPEL OF PEACE AND JUSTICE* (1976). A more famous author takes a second look and is born again. See H. COX, *RELIGION IN THE SECULAR CITY* (1984).

pastoral letter:

[It is] but the beginning of a long process of education and implementation . . . to help Catholics form their consciences on the moral dimensions of economic decision making and to articulate a moral perspective in the general societal and political debate that surrounds these questions *Each one of us must ask how far the biblical and ethical vision outlined in this letter has permeated our own thinking and our own way of life.*³⁹

The bishops outline the responsibility of all, as individuals and as participants in ecclesiastical and societal groups, "to instill a moral and ethical dimension into the public debate on these issues" of our political and social system.⁴⁰

The most profound awakening signaled by this letter, however, is for evangelizing American culture: to become born again as Americans to the root sources and vision which begot and nourished our much blessed nation since the 1600's. The bishops go counter-cultural, by calling for self-control through "stands against many manifestations around us that emphasize values and aims that are selfish, wasteful and opposed to the Scriptures."⁴¹ They simultaneously support American culture by evoking anew "the American dream . . . to make this world a better place in which to live."⁴² In tandem with the globe-girdling outreach of American multinational firms, "at this moment in history that dream must include everyone on this globe. Since we profess to be members of a *Catholic* or universal religion, we all must raise our sights to a concern for the well-being of everyone in the world."⁴³

The pastoral letter then goes beyond our national roots and culture, by likening the production, service and distribution of daily work to communion with God himself, and by applying this exalted Judeo-Christian vision and promise to the "social and economic structures" of Monday twentieth-century mornings:

Communion with God, sharing God's life, involves a mutual bonding with all on this globe. Jesus taught us the commandment to love one another and that the concept of

39. *Pastoral Letter*, *supra* note 1, paras. 329-30.

40. *Id.* para. 336.

41. *Id.* para. 331.

42. *Id.* para. 338.

43. *Id.*

neighbor is without limit. We know that we are called to be members of a new covenant of love.

That challenge must find its realization in the kind of community we build among us. Love implies concern for all - especially the poor - and a continued search for those social and economic structures that permit everyone to share in a redeemed and redemptive community.⁴⁴

44. *Id.* para. 340.