

## Market Social Order and Christian Organicism in *Centesimus Annus*\*

A. M. C. Waterman  
Professor of Economics and  
Director of the Institute for the Humanities  
University of Manitoba

### Introduction

*Centesimus Annus* marked the centenary of *Rerum Novarum*,<sup>1</sup> the encyclical commonly regarded as inaugurating modern social teaching in the Church of Rome.<sup>2</sup> In the spirit of its exemplar, it identified “New Things” of today, most obviously “the events which took place near the end of 1989 ... and the radical transformations which followed,” variously described as the “collapse (‘crisis’, ‘fall’) of Marxism,” “the defeat of so-called ‘real socialism’,” and “the failure of communism.”<sup>3</sup> In explaining this *débâcle* the Pope endeavored to show that it was caused by a serious moral and spiritual error of socialism—“the suppression of private property”—and that this outcome had been predicted by *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, *Centesimus Annus* provided a more detailed consideration than any previous papal document of the economic benefits of “the human rights to private initiative, to ownership of property, and to freedom in the economic sector.”<sup>5</sup>

These features caused it to be widely acclaimed, especially in the United States, as a belated recognition in Vatican circles of the virtues of capitalism and the essential compatibility of a market social order with Christian anthropology: “a ringing endorsement of the market economy ... Capitalism is the economic corollary of the Christian understanding of Man’s nature and destiny.”<sup>6</sup> The Pope “capture[d] the spirit and essence of the American experiment in political economy.”<sup>7</sup> But other readers saw *Centesimus Annus* in a very different light. It “focuses on the practical materialism of market economies, their unbridled search for profit, consumerism, and selfishness without solidarity ... [and] reflects the Pope’s concern that what he calls the virus of Western capitalism now threatens to contaminate the lands of Eastern Europe.”<sup>8</sup>

Kenneth Minogue identified one passage as “the purest expression of central planning as the solution to big problems” and judged that “This encyclical resembles a lot of socialist literature in assuming that the basic question is management and distribution.”<sup>9</sup>

How could *Centesimus Annus* afford scope for such divergent interpretations of its message? I shall argue that *Centesimus Annus* superimposes a set of propositions appreciative of a market social order upon an underlying body of traditional papal social teaching that is alien to, and fundamentally incompatible with, such an order. For whereas traditional Christian social theory envisages society as an *organism*, Enlightenment social theory—in which political economy is an *explanans* and market order an *explanandum*—views society as a *habitat*. My article will establish the intellectual context of papal social teaching, contrast this with the presuppositions of a market social order, exhibit and explain the conceptual dissonance within *Centesimus Annus*, and identify the social-theoretic and theological agenda the encyclical sets for normative social theory.

### The Intellectual Context of Papal Social Teaching

*Papal Social Teaching* as we now understand that term was born in 1891 as a delayed reaction to the political and economic upheavals of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> The presupposition of *Rerum Novarum* and the tradition it both receives and transmits is that human society may be properly thought of as a single organism, the “body politic,” carefully distinguished from the merely contingent “state.”<sup>11</sup> In *Quadragesimo Anno* of Pius XI, “it will be possible to say in a certain sense even of this body what the Apostle says of the mystical body of Christ: ‘The whole body (being closely joined and knit together through every joint of the system according to the functioning in due measure of each single part) derives its increase to the building up of itself in love.’”<sup>12</sup> Pauline Christology and ecclesiology supply the controlling image in Christian social theory. As an English political theorist had put it three hundred and sixty years before, “yf al the partys of the cyty wyth love be not knyht togyddur in unyte as membres of one body, ther can be no cyvlyte ... [but] there ys perfayt cyvlyte ... where ... al the partys ... be knyht togyddur in parfayt love & unyte, every one dowing hys offyc & duty.”<sup>13</sup>

It is an implication of this organicist view of society that its various members must consciously and deliberately work in harmony for the common good, not to mention that there should be a controlling intelligence, or “head,” to rule the body. According to *Rerum Novarum*, for example, “A family, no less than a State, is a ... true society, governed by an authority peculiar to itself, that is to say, by the authority of the father.”<sup>14</sup> Both the father’s authority and that of

political rulers come from God and are contingent upon their own obedience to “the eternal law of God” or to the “natural law.” In his earlier encyclical *Libertas* (1888), by contrast, Leo XIII taught that “the highest duty is to respect authority, and obediently to submit to just law” for “it belongs to the perfection of every nature to contain within itself that sphere and grade which the order of nature has assigned to it, namely that the lower should be subject and obedient to the higher.”<sup>15</sup>

We should note that there is nothing uniquely papal or even Roman Catholic about this doctrine. It is the standard form of virtually all pre-Enlightenment Christian social thought and is, for example, identical to the political theory of the English Coronation liturgy and the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*.<sup>16</sup> The key concept in an organicist theory of society is what eighteenth-century authors in Britain such as Samuel Johnson and William Paley recognized as the “principle of subordination.”<sup>17</sup> For as Archbishop Secker admonished his ordination candidates in 1769, “Without union there cannot be a sufficient degree either of strength or of beauty: and *without subordination there cannot long be union*. Therefore obey, as the apostle directs, them that have the rule over you.”<sup>18</sup>

It has often been remarked that the metaphor of the body politic could be and was used by seventeenth-century authors with no Christian-theological underpinnings.<sup>19</sup> Sir William Petty, for example, began his *Political History of Ireland* by noting Francis Bacon’s “judicious parallel . . . between the *Body Natural* and the *Body Politick*” and made much use of the latter in his own work.<sup>20</sup> Sir Robert Filmer and Jean Bodin each made the body politic resemble the family, and thus extended patriarchy from the latter to the former—exactly as did Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>21</sup> At least the first of these might be thought of as modern examples of the Aristotelian organicism that Minogue attributed to *Centesimus Annus*.<sup>22</sup> In my opinion, however, the type of organicism characteristic of papal social teaching, though undoubtedly affected by Aristotle through the influence of scholasticism, is primarily Christian and specifically Pauline.

An instructive example of Christian organicism that seems to owe nothing to Aristotle is Jonathan Swift’s famous sermon on mutual subjection (c. 1720). The sermon presents the familiar “comparison which St Paul maketh between the Church of Christ and the natural Body of Man: for the same Resemblance will hold, not only to Families and Kingdoms, but to the whole Corporation of Mankind.” We learn from this sermon, moreover, “the Nature of that Subjection which we all owe to one another. God Almighty hath been pleased to put us in a state, where we have perpetual Occasion of each other’s Assistance.” And “where there is a mutual Dependence, there must be a mutual Duty, and

consequently a mutual Subjection."<sup>23</sup> For Christians mutual subjection is an act of love. There is negligible difference at this point between Swift in 1730 and either Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue* two centuries earlier, or Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* two centuries later.

Now it might be argued that an organicist view of society, implying as it does a necessary controlling oversight by the highest temporal authorities, would be congruent with a collectivist, specifically Socialist, economic order. Yet, from *Quanta Cura* (1864) of Pius IX<sup>24</sup> down to *Centesimus Annus* (1991) papal teaching has been hostile to socialism. In part this was simply because it was important for the Church of Rome to provide an ideological defense against the wholesale plunder of its property by European governments in the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> At bottom, however, the popes rejected socialism because they believed it represented a false version of that corporate view of state and society, which both they and Socialists maintained against liberals. This position is clarified in *Centesimus Annus*: "the fundamental error of socialism is anthropological in nature. Socialism considers the individual person simply as an element, a molecule within the social organism, so that the good of the individual is completely subordinated to the functioning of the socio-economic mechanism."<sup>26</sup> Both Socialists and John Paul II view society as a whole. But, for socialists, the whole is a machine, and "social engineering" the characteristic mode of governance; whereas for the Pope, the whole is a living body. Socialism, for all its emphasis upon the state, views human beings atomistically, and therefore—as Bishop John Keane pointed out in his 1892 review of *Rerum Novarum* for the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*—the objection to socialism is really the same as the objection to capitalism. A "false ... individualism had its birth in English Deism, grew into the system of *laissez-faire* ... and now comes back to the starting point of its vicious circle in ... State Socialism."<sup>27</sup>

### Presuppositions of a Market Social Order

Thanks to Friedrich von Hayek,<sup>28</sup> it is now commonplace to speak of a "theory of spontaneous order"<sup>29</sup> originating in David Hume's development of certain pregnant insights contained in Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*. This is because the two most important ideas that Hume learned from or, at any rate, shared with Mandeville are, first, "the narrow Bounds of human Knowledge, and the small Assistance we can have, either from Dissection or Philosophy, or any part of Mathematicks to trace and penetrate into ... Cause *a priori*"; and, second, that "all human Creatures are sway'd and wholly govern'd by their Passions ... even those who act suitably to their Knowledge, and strictly follow the Dictates of their Reason, are not less compell'd so to do by some Passion or other."<sup>30</sup> It is

evident that in a world populated by beings of exiguous knowledge and impotent “reason,” social order cannot be the result of human design but must emerge—if at all—as the unintended consequence of human slavery to the “passions.”

Though Mandeville had muddied the waters by improperly describing the pursuit of luxury as “private vice” leading to “publick benefit,” and though in consequence the *Fable* and its author were denounced from the pulpit and the book placed by the Vatican on the *Index Librorum Prohibitatum*, its central message was quickly assimilated by the more powerful minds of eighteenth-century Britain: Joseph Butler, David Hume, Samuel Johnson, Adam Smith, Josiah Tucker, William Paley, Edmund Burke, Edward Gibbon, and T. R. Malthus, among many others. That message is simply that the multifarious activities of any large human society—most notably its economic activities—arise *and can only arise* in a gradual, unplanned, accidental, piecemeal fashion in response to the incentives to individual, self-regarding action created by others’ needs, wants, and desires. Mandeville’s well-worn but untenable claim that the “wealth” of a commercial society is inversely related to its “virtue” was soon filtered out by Adam Smith’s careful description in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, following Josiah Tucker, not to mention Aristotle and the Stoics, of “self-love” as possibly virtuous rather than certainly vicious.<sup>31</sup> Dependence, even as “mutual subjection,” came to be seen as morally less worthy than self-reliance.

It was the achievement of the Scottish Enlightenment, above all of David Hume, to transform and develop Mandeville’s ideas into a theory that explained not only the market but all of human social life. In Part II of the *Fable* Mandeville pointed out that “we often ascribe to the Excellency of Man’s Genius, and Depth of Penetration, what is in Reality owing to length of Time, and the Experience of many Generations....”<sup>32</sup> Spontaneous order is far more than a short-run economic phenomenon, a mere matching of consumers’ demands with producers’ outputs. The entire structure of society, Hume argued at various places in his writings—our laws, morals, arts, science, and religion—is the outcome of a vast evolutionary process in which what has proved to be of service to human societies has survived, and what has proved unserviceable has perished. And not simply the public institutions of society, but even the internalization in individual consciousness of the “artificial virtues” of justice, truthfulness, fidelity, chastity, good manners, and the like, are the result of a kind of evolution.<sup>33</sup>

It is evident that this social theory is drastically different from both the Aristotelian and/or Christian organicism discussed above, and from any form of mechanism, either Newtonian or Socialist. Human society is not an *organism*, nurtured by wise and far-seeing statesmen reliably informed by their reason of

a natural law given by God to his creatures. Nor is it a *mechanism*, intelligible to science and subject to operation by skillful and disinterested managers and politicians who can know the social welfare function and seek the common good. John Paul II was wide of the mark in supposing that “the rationalism of the Enlightenment” viewed “human and social reality in a mechanistic way.”<sup>34</sup> For Hume, Smith, and their followers, society is rather an ecosystem or *habitat*, in which the multifarious customs, arrangements, and institutions evolve blindly from an unknown past to an unknown and unknowable future. The scope for conscious political direction is modest and chiefly confined to maintaining the rules defining property rights subject to tentative, incremental improvement of those rules. It is this vision of society, at least since *The Wealth of Nations*, that has informed the modern science of political economy, and which, in turn, has supplied our understanding of the nature and possibilities of a market social order.

It is important to understand that this has little or nothing to do with the political preferences of any individual economist. Methodological individualism and the doctrine of unintended consequences lie at the heart of the economic way of thinking. Even Marx took the invisible-hand idea for granted, differing only from Smith, Malthus, and the other classical political economists in certain important details of his analysis of growth and fluctuations in a market economy. Hence, writes Marx, “capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation.” For “what the bourgeoisie ... produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers.” Therefore, the anticipated collapse of capitalism and its transformation into a classless society will occur, we learn in *Capital*,<sup>35</sup> as an unintended consequence of the myriad individual, self-regarding actions of capitalists and workers.

### Contradiction in *Centesimus Annus*

It is obvious that *Centesimus Annus* does indeed contain many passages, which, taken by themselves, read like “a ringing endorsement of the market economy.”<sup>36</sup> “The social order will be all the more stable, the more it takes [Original Sin] into account and does not place in opposition personal interest and the interests of society as a whole.”<sup>37</sup> Therefore, an important cause of the collapse of communism “was certainly the inefficiency of the economic system,” itself “a consequence of the violation of the human rights to private initiative, to ownership of property, and to freedom in the economic sector.”<sup>38</sup> Consequently, “It would appear that on the level of individual nations and of international relations the free market is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs.”<sup>39</sup> Wherefore, “The Church

acknowledges the legitimate role of profit as an indication that a business is functioning well. When a firm makes a profit, this means that productive factors have been properly employed and corresponding human needs have been duly satisfied."<sup>40</sup>

While these affirmations are virtually without precedent in papal social teaching, the most remarkable innovation is the stress laid on private initiative. One year before the appearance of *Centesimus Annus* an influential society of German social economists noted that "the entrepreneur, who is the center-piece of the market economy system, is not given adequate recognition in the social doctrine of the Catholic Church." Until the promulgation of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), indeed, capitalists had been viewed solely as employers: their "social aspect ranged [sic] before the economic."<sup>41</sup> "We believe," Werhahn's editors continued, "the time has come for Catholic social teaching to catch up on this deficit. Perhaps the centenary of *Rerum Novarum* in 1991 may provide an occasion."<sup>42</sup> Obliging, John Paul expanded his brief mention of "creative initiative" in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*<sup>43</sup> into an explicit acknowledgment of the important function of business enterprise:

Organizing ... a productive effort, planning its duration in time, making sure that it corresponds in a positive way to the demands which it must satisfy and taking the necessary risks—all this too is a source of wealth in today's society. In this way the role of disciplined and creative human work, initiative, and entrepreneurial ability becomes increasingly evident and decisive.<sup>44</sup>

These passages are intelligible only upon the assumption that the creative, profit-seeking activity of individuals (i.e., "personal interest") can bring about a state of affairs, *without the conscious direction of any central authority or "head,"* in which "the interests of society as a whole" are served by the satisfaction of "human needs" through "the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources."

Furthermore, the passages just referred to are also congruent with the theory of spontaneous order and a view of society, or, at any rate, of the economy, as a habitat. However, they are not congruent with any version of organicism. It is important to observe that there is more to this strand of *Centesimus Annus* than merely catching up with the Scottish Enlightenment. Genuine theological value-added notions originate from two intellectual currents: property, enterprise, and freedom are (putatively God-given) "rights"; and the unavoidable dependence of social order upon market-coordinated "personal interest" is a consequence of "the wound of Original Sin."<sup>45</sup> The former allows the Pope to urge that the failure of socialism and the success of markets were predictable in light

of *Rerum Novarum*. The latter, which is of far greater potential significance for the coherence of Christian social thinking, permits the integration of spontaneous order into the rich texture of Augustinian theodicy: Perhaps a market economy, like the state, is God's *remedium peccatorum*.

Nevertheless, the textual material of *Centesimus Annus*—which affirms the market economy—is interspersed throughout a larger body of text that either ignores or denies it. The possible achievements of a market economy are severely qualified. There are “many human needs which find no place in the market.”<sup>46</sup> “Those who fail to keep up with the times can easily be marginalized.”<sup>47</sup> The market fosters “consumerism” and “artificial consumption contrary to the health and dignity of the human person”;<sup>48</sup> wherefore “educational ... work is urgently needed, including the education of consumers” and “the formation of a strong sense of responsibility among producers....”<sup>49</sup> To some extent, the warnings against consumerism and artificial consumption must be read as a recognition—absent in some recent pro-market propaganda—that a market social order can flourish only where all or most participants are informed and motivated by a coherent set of ethical principles. However, the cumulative effect of these qualifications would seem to imply that the “state has the duty of watching over the common good and of ensuring that every sector of social life, not excluding the economic one, contributes to achieving that good....”<sup>50</sup> For example, “society and the state must ensure wage levels adequate for the maintenance of the worker and his family”;<sup>51</sup> the market must be “appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the state so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied.”<sup>52</sup> In short, there must be “a coherent vision of the common good,” which “demands a correct understanding of the dignity and the rights of the person.”<sup>53</sup> Even more drastically *dirigiste*, consciously planned, global solutions to economic problems are envisaged. Internationalization of the economy “ought to be accompanied by effective international agencies that will oversee and direct the economy to the common good.”<sup>54</sup> What is called for is a special effort to mobilize resources, which are not lacking for the world as a whole, for the purpose of economic growth and common development, redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values on the basis of which, economic and political choices are made.<sup>55</sup>

Propositions of this kind are intelligible only upon the following assumptions: (1) There exists a collectively optimal course of action in each national economy and in the world economy as a whole; (2) Some individuals in each society are in a position to identify such action; (3) Such individuals are, or could be, in a position of political authority; (4) This authority could be exerted by them with sufficient power to achieve their ends; and (5) Power would

actually be used by those in authority to achieve the social optimum (i.e., common good) rather than their own private ends. These assumptions are congruent with the organicism of traditional Christian social theory. They are not congruent with the theory of spontaneous order, which denies (2), questions (3) and (4), and (like John Paul himself in his recognition of “the wound of Original Sin”) casts serious doubt on (5).

The contradictions in *Centesimus Annus* are more than simply a matter of mixed metaphors. So ambitious a body of social theory might well entitle its author to employ the metaphor of *body* in one place and *habitat* in another—even that of *machine* for that matter—to capture certain features of the complexity of human society. The teaching of Jesus, for example, makes use of a great variety of similes and metaphors to convey the many-sidedness of “the Kingdom of Heaven.” But the Pope makes little explicit use of metaphor in *Centesimus Annus*. His reasoning is discursive and ought to be taken at face value. Nor is it plausible to suppose that the encyclical envisages a “third way” between collectivism and the market, which might account for its mixture of affirmation and rejection with respect to the latter. That possibility was firmly rejected in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.<sup>56</sup> In *Centesimus Annus*, the Pope repeated that “The Church has no models to present; models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems in all their social, economic, political, and cultural aspects as these interact with one another.”<sup>57</sup> Save only for the single adverb *responsibly*, this statement is pure Humean social theory. The contradictions of *Centesimus Annus* are real and need to be understood.

### A Thomistic Logic of Christian Organicism

In a previous article I have reported and explained the intellectual isolation of the Church of Rome between the period of the French Revolution and the last decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>58</sup> All versions of liberalism were rejected, thus leaving papal social teaching securely anchored in the tradition of Christian organicism as described in the first section of this article. With admirable consistency the unfashionable political implications of that organicism—authoritarian government, economic inequality, hierarchy in the church, and patriarchy in the family—were unflinchingly accepted and confidently proclaimed. The *Syllabus of Errors*, promulgated by Pius IX in 1864, had forbidden the faithful to believe that “The Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile himself with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization.”<sup>59</sup>

The most lucid and powerful statement of papal doctrine in this period was

Leo XIII's encyclical *Libertas Praestantissimus* (1888), which John Paul II cited with approval in *Centesimus Annus*.<sup>60</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century the Church of Rome had repudiated “the philosophy of this age”—meaning the Enlightenment—as the chief cause of the French Revolution and the humiliations inflicted on the papacy thereby. In the fourth decade of the nineteenth century the Roman Catholic Church gradually rediscovered Scholastic, particularly Thomistic, philosophy. The genuinely intellectual Leo strongly encouraged this revival in his tenure as Archbishop of Perugia (1846-1877); and within two years of his election as Pope had promulgated the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), which made Thomism the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church. *Libertas* deployed the new philosophical techniques in a full-scale, frontal assault upon political liberalism.

According to that encyclical, all rational beings have a natural liberty: “the faculty of choosing means fitted for the ends proposed.” But, if the will seeks what is contrary to reason, “it abuses its freedom of choice and corrupts its very essence.” This abuse occurs because reason can know the law of one’s being—the natural law—as a special case of the eternal law of God. Disobedience is automatically punished by relegation to a lower state of being and, therefore, loss of liberty. As Thomas Aquinas demonstrated, “the possibility of sinning is not freedom, but slavery.” It follows that “the nature of human liberty ... whether in society or in individuals ... supposes the necessity of obedience to some supreme and eternal law, which is no other than the authority of God commanding good and forbidding evil.”<sup>61</sup> Leo had no difficulty in proceeding on this basis to annihilate the trendy doctrines of nineteenth-century liberalism: sovereignty of the people, democracy, and the so-called “liberties” of religion, speech, the press, and teaching.<sup>62</sup> John Paul II summarized Leo’s doctrine in a clause of *Centesimus Annus* that “sent shivers” down the back of Milton Friedman: “Obedience to the truth about God and man is the first condition of freedom.”<sup>63</sup>

It was precisely the rigor and coherence of Leo’s Thomistic analysis of human liberty, deeply influential upon all subsequent popes, including John Paul II, which had as its unintended consequence the subsequent insulation of papal social teaching from political economy and the economic way of thinking. In paragraph 10 of *Libertas* there occurs a passage that perfectly rationalizes Christian organicism, and is fundamentally incompatible with—indeed hostile to—the theory of spontaneous order:

The eternal law of God is the sole standard and rule of human liberty, not only in each individual man, but also in the community and society which men constitute when united. Therefore, the true liberty of human

society does not consist in every man doing what he pleases, for this would simply end in turmoil and confusion, and bring on the overthrow of the State....<sup>64</sup>

According to this way of thinking, it is the function of “competent authority” in society to frame “human law,” consistent with that eternal law that comes “before men live together in society,” which will bind “all citizens to work together for the attainment of the common end proposed to the community, and forbidding them to depart from this end....”<sup>65</sup>

It is evident that there can be no compromise between this way of conceiving human society and that of political economy and modern economics. Nor can there be any possibility of an eclectic combination of the two ideas. Either we accept the assumptions of David Hume and his successors, according to which, human knowledge is and must be too feeble to know the consequences in a large society of each individual’s actions; or we accept the assumptions of Leo XIII and Thomas Aquinas, according to which, any “competent authority” can and ought to know enough to be able to propose a “common end” to his or her obedient subjects and to constrain them to pursue it. It is not apparent that the logic of one system is any better or worse than that of the other. They differ drastically in their assumptions about the range and power of human knowledge.

### **A Difficulty of “Christian Social Thinking”**

The conceptual dissonance I have attempted to identify in *Centesimus Annus* presents in sharp focus a problem that has beset Christian social thinking since the first appearance in the eighteenth century of the theory of spontaneous order. How can Christians, being members of a body in which “al the partys ... be knyt togyddur in parfayt love & nyte,” permit and approve a social order in which the production and distribution of goods and services (not to mention the very nature of society itself) is the result not of any human design for the common good but of many private, individual actions motivated chiefly by self-love? Neither David Hume nor Adam Smith was interested in this question, although T. R. Malthus certainly was. His preliminary and less than satisfactory attempt to work out a theodicy of unintended consequences gave rise to a body of Christian Political Economy after 1798 to which William Paley, J. B. Sumner, Edward Copleston, Richard Whately, and Thomas Chalmers made important contributions.<sup>66</sup>

According to this tradition, Original Sin and redemption by Christ imply that human life on earth is a state of “discipline and trial” for eternity. Private property is economically necessary, suited to human nature, and consistent with

Scripture. Private property, together with the competition produced by scarcity, results in the market economy. *The efficacy of the market in organizing human action for wealth creation is evidence of divine wisdom and mercy in turning human frailty to socially beneficent ends.* Though the market produces some poverty and inequality, these may be regarded, for the most part, as a deliberate contrivance by a benevolent God for bringing out the best in his children and training them for the life to come. The impossibility of achieving social progress by legislation is evidence both of God's design—in the creation of the self-regulating economy—and of the moral and religious obligation of Christians to practice charity and compassion. Moreover, true happiness even in this life is largely independent of wealth and station.<sup>67</sup>

Readers of *Centesimus Annus* will see that certain features of this theology of the market have at last begun to be incorporated into papal social teaching. This can be seen particularly in John Paul II's crucial, quasi-Augustinian insight that the market economy is an application of God's remedy for "the wound of Original Sin."<sup>68</sup> But papal social teaching also continues to insist upon a Christian organicism that was largely neglected by the (Protestant) authors of Christian Political Economy, most of whom accepted an ecclesiology that was sketchy, not to say, defective, even by the standards of their own churches. In my opinion, the Christian organicism of *Centesimus Annus* reflects a view of human nature, both individually and collectively, which, in one way or another, is necessary for a Christian understanding of the relations among God, Christ, and the human race.

## Conclusion

If my analysis in this article is correct, it would seem to follow that there is an important theological task, not only for John Paul II and his advisors, but for all Christians who wish to affirm the benefits of a market social order. The latter depends on a social theory based on a view of society as a habitat, and which alone can explain and rationalize not only the market economy but also liberal democracy, political pluralism, and a wide variety of "liberation" movements. But Christians also need an ecclesiology based upon the view of the Christian Church as the Body of Christ. This organicist ecclesiology is essential for maintaining a coherent soteriology and for undergirding the indispensable ideas of co-inherence, solidarity, and unity, not only of the People of God but of the whole of human society. In some way, an individualistic social theory and an organicist ecclesiology must be brought into harmony and made to coexist.

## Notes

\* The author is grateful to Kenneth Minogue for helpful comments on an earlier draft, and accepts all responsibility for any remaining errors of fact or interpretation.

1. Claudia Carlen, ed., *The Papal Encyclicals*, 5 vols. (n.p.: McGrath Publishing Company, 1981), II, 115. References to this source, hereafter abbreviated as *PE*, identify volume number, encyclical number, and paragraph.
2. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (May 1, 1991), nos. 1 and 2.
3. *Centesimus Annus*, nos. 12, 23, 26, 27, 35, 42.
4. *Ibid.*, nos. 12 and 24.
5. *Ibid.*, no. 24.
6. Richard John Neuhaus, "Review Essay," *National Review* XLIII, no. 11, Special Supplement (1991): S8–9.
7. Michael Novak, "Review Essay," *National Review* XLIII, no. 11, Special Supplement (1991): S11–12.
8. Sylvia Poggioli, "Broadcast," National Public Radio, May 2, 1991.
9. *Centesimus Annus*, no. 28; and Kenneth Minogue, "Review Essay," *National Review* XLIII, no. 11, Special Supplement (1991): S7–8.
10. A. M. C. Waterman, "The Intellectual Context of *Rerum Novarum*," *Review of Social Economy* XLIX, 4 (1991): 465–82.
11. *PE* II, 115: 33, 32.
12. *PE* III, 209: 990.
13. Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue Between Pole and Lupsett*, ed. T. F. Mayer (London: Royal Historical Society, 1989 [orig. pub. 1530]), 37.
14. *PE* II, 115: 13.
15. *PE* II, 103: 13, 15.
16. A. M. C. Waterman, "The Nexus Between Theology and Political Doctrine in Church and Dissent," in *Enlightenment and Religion: The Case of Rational Dissent*, ed. K. Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
17. A. M. C. Waterman, "The Grand Scheme of Subordination: The Intellectual Foundations of Tory Doctrine," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 40 (1994): 121–33.
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19. W. H. Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism and Politics: Two Traditions of English Political Thought, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), chs. V and VII *passim*.
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