

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

October 1999

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## THE REFORMATION DAY STATEMENT

We, the undersigned, having gathered together for the purpose of exposing the fundamental errors of the Roman Church-State and her superstitious and deceptive doctrines, as well as to re-affirm the Biblical doctrines of grace which alone can counter the persistent heresies of Rome, do of one mind stand together after the example of Paul the Apostle to exhort all Christians to stand boldly against those today who are not being “straightforward about the truth of the Gospel” (*Galatians 2:14*).

There have risen within the ranks of those professing the Christian Faith some divisive persons who do not cherish or do not understand the distinctive doctrines of the Bible, but rather have trampled the Gospel and the unity of the Christian church underfoot. These men have twisted the clear Biblical doctrine of justification. The Biblical truth is that justification is strictly the act of God’s grace alone in which the Lord declares legally righteous those who are his own, by the imputation to them of the perfect righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ alone, through faith alone. They have abandoned the Biblical phrase “imputed righteousness” and taught that justification is a transformative rather than a purely forensic act. This alteration carries with it the old lie of Satan—of conveyed, imparted, or infused righteousness (“you shall be as God”). They have proclaimed major doctrines that annul the grace of justification to be secondary issues, yet to be resolved. These men have persisted in their divisive behavior without the benefit of church discipline commanded by Christ in *Matthew 18:15-20*, and modeled for us by Paul the Apostle.

In light of the recent proliferation and popularity of such unbiblical concordats as *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* (March 1994) and *The Gift of Salvation* (November 1997), we see that it is once again time for the church of Jesus Christ to rise up to stand on the Bible alone so that it may be said of us what was said to the Philadelphians: You “have kept My Word, and have not denied My Name” (*Revelation 3:8*), for his Word alone is truth (*John 17:17*). It is therefore strongly urged by those present at this Conference that all who read this *Statement* join with us and sign it. In so doing we seek to obey the command of Christ “in a spirit of gentleness” so that we may receive from him either the restoration of our transgressing brethren (*Galatians 6:1*), or the clarity and courage of mind necessary to excuse them from our midst in order to preserve the unity of the church for which Christ prayed in *John 17*, “that they all may be one in Us.” To God alone be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

The Reformation Day Statement *was initially adopted October 10, 1998, at The Trinity Foundation Conference on Christianity and Roman Catholicism, Erwin, Tennessee. Its signers as of October 10, 1999, included:*

Richard **BENNETT** Dr. James **BORDWINE** Timothy **KAUFFMAN** Dr. John W. **ROBBINS** Robert M. **ZINS** Francisco **OROZIO** (Mexico) Bret **LAUTZ** Donald **TUCKER** (Spain) Arden **HODGINS** Jerry **MOSER** Cecil **ANDREWS** (Northern Ireland) Steve **NUTTER** E. Bradford **CANTERBURY** Daryl **AUFDERBAR** Paul E. **BELLINO** David and Aldina **GIBSON** Nick **BIBILE** Tom **LUCK** Denis **CLARKE** Alan **KERN** (South Africa) Mike **GENDRON** Jim and Linda **ORR** Alan **HOWE** (UK) Elaine **KING** Ralph **SWANSON** Paul **TAUTGES** Jason **ENGWER** Richard **BACON** Eugene C. **CASE** Marlyn **LAHRSON** Robert **O'DONNELL** (Australia) David **SHEARD** (Zimbabwe) Jeff **MCKINSEY** Michael **ROBICHAUD** (Canada) Raymond P. **JOSEPH** George Alexander **BRADLEY** Mark **MCCULLEY** Bill **MIZE** (Spain) David R. **REAGAN** Clinton **ESSER** (Canada) Earl M. **BLACKBURN** Mike **RENIHAN** D. J. **DICKEY** Timothy **ADKINS** Nobel **VATER** (Puerto Rico) Karl **SCHENK** (Canada) John and Sheila **GARDNER** Les **WALTERS** Sherwood **BECKER** Betty Jane **MINER** Stephen **PRIBBLE** Larry **TRUMMEL** Neil, Linda, and Jason **SMITH** Joshua **ROSENTHAL** Elizabeth **VAN ROOY** Tony **WILSON** (South Africa) Andrea **PRICE** Tricia **DELAND** Katherina C. **GARDNER** Daniel **SIM** (Singapore) Wayne F. **SCHLICHTER** John **MCWILLIAMS** Donald **CROZE** James P. **STEEL**, Sr. Miles **MCKEE** Jonathan **HUGHES** Glenn P. **EVANS** Arthur **FOX** James W. **CAMPBELL** Rodney Thomas **KING** Harold E. **THOMAS** Todd **BORDOW** Donald **OWSLEY** Gary L. **MARTINEZ** John D. **WILLIAMS** Everett C. **DEVELDE** Thomas A. **FOH** James R. **BRUDER** Larry **CONARD** Richard **WYNJA** Jeffrey **VENTRELLA** Donald Martin **PARKER** Abe W. **EDIGER** Jay Michael **MILOJEVICH** Zsalt **VERESS** Edward and Dana **BURLEY** Ronald F. **RITSMAN** Brian **SCHWERTLEY** Joseph **YANKURA** Andy **PRESTON** Donald H. **TAWS** Bradford Clyde **FREEMAN** William B. **ARCHER** DeLacy **ANDREWS**, Jr. Michael **ROBERTS** Ralph A. **REBAND** II Mark T. **SMITH** James **ANEMA** Ian **MCFARLANE** Richard C. **MILLER** Garry Lee **KNAEBEL** Edward B. **MANNING** Kirk Patrick **HAGGERTY** (Germany) Daniel J. **JARSTFER** Peter **STAZEN** II Earl E. **ZETTERHOLM** Bill **SLACK** Bruce **HOLLISTER** J. Michael **DYCK** Gary **MCKIRCHY** Linda **ROBBINS** Norman **DE JONG** Calvin Russell **MALCOR** Leonard **PINE** Vaughn E. **HATHAWAY** H. Jeffrey **LAWSON** Todd **O'DRISCOLL** Lance **LEWIS** (Belize) Michael **EWENS** (Sweden) Steven **SINCLAIR** Roy **LIVESEY** (UK) Simba **GUTY** (Zimbabwe) Jason Seong Wei **LOH** (Malaysia) James M. **MCANANY** Frank Dennis **SILVA** Don **MILLS** Donald R. **CROWE** Dr. Oral **COLLINS** Don **COCKES** J. 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JOHN** Marla **PERKINS** Peter **MCCALLISTER** (Northern Ireland) Buddy **BOONE** Thomas W. **BRADNER** Thomas M. **CHMELOVSKI** Todd L. **RUDDELL** G. Brent **BRADLEY** Collette **ROBERTSON** Kari **PETTIT** David **McALLISTER** (Northern Ireland) Geraldine **MICHELS** William **CHIN** Daniel **PATTISON** Vincent **SKWAREK** Carlos **SEVILLA** Dr. Peter **GADSDEN** (UK) Jonas **BAILE** (Philippines) Randall **RUMPF** Anthony Michael **GULYAS** (Canada) Charles **SMITH** Eliz **YOUNG** Karen **FRAZER** Jackson **BOYETT** David H. **JONES** Jeffrey **REVELL** (UK) Bernard **WARD** (UK) Steven **GYSLER** Larry **NEWCOMBER** Murray **DUNCAN** (UK) Christopher **RUMPF** Dr. R. K. **MacGREGOR-WRIGHT** Dan **MAYVILLE** (Canada) Nathan **ESPOSITO** David N. **BECKMAN** Rand **WINBURN** Charles **KINDEL** R. Wayne **BARBELY** Trevor **KIRKLAND** (Northern Ireland) Dr. John A. **BATTLE**, Jr. Edward **BARCLAY** (Australia) Dr. and Mrs. Elihu **CARRANZA** Dr. W. 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The Trinity Foundation invites all Christians to sign *The Reformation Day Statement*. To obtain further information about Christianity or The Trinity Foundation, to receive our free monthly essay-letter and free book, tract, and tape catalogues, or to sign *The Reformation Day Statement*, please write to The Trinity Foundation, Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692. You may also sign the statement at our website: [www.trinityfoundation.org](http://www.trinityfoundation.org). Address email to: [jrob1517@aol.com](mailto:jrob1517@aol.com). Telephone: 423.743.0199. Fax: 423.743.2005.

**The Bible alone is the Word of God.**

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# *The Reformation Day Statement* vs. *World Magazine*

In September 1999, Dr. John Robbins of The Trinity Foundation reached an agreement with an advertising salesman on the staff of *World* magazine to buy space—a two-page spread costing between \$3,000 and \$4,000—in the October 23 issue of *World*. The space was reserved, the price agreed upon, and the placement in the magazine was discussed. The purpose of reaching this agreement was to publish *The Reformation Day Statement* and its list of hundreds of signers, most of whom are officers of churches or para-church organizations, and some of whom are very well known in Christian circles.

But after reading *The Reformation Day Statement*, the magazine's publisher, Mr. John B. Prentis of St. Louis, decided not to publish it. Rather than calling Dr. Robbins to inform him of and to explain his decision to break the agreement, Mr. Prentis assigned the task to Jennifer Graham of the magazine's staff. On October 12, Ms. Graham informed Dr. Robbins by telephone that the content of *The Reformation Day Statement* was the basis for *World's* refusing to publish *The Statement*. In the opinion of *World* magazine, *The Reformation Day Statement* is unloving.

Ms. Graham gave The Foundation no good reason for refusing to publish *The Reformation Day Statement*. She did not allege that *The Statement* was slanderous, libelous, inaccurate, scatological, fraudulent, or lewd—typical reasons publications sometimes give for rejecting paid advertisements. *The Statement* is simply unloving. *How* it is unloving, Ms. Graham did not disclose. Dr. Robbins asked her to send a letter to The Foundation stating the magazine's refusal to publish the *Statement*; she immediately agreed to do so; but as of this writing, we have not received a letter.

Although *World* has given no good reason for refusing to publish the *Statement*, and it is hard to imagine there being any good reason, there are several bad reasons the magazine might have for refusing to publish *The Statement*:

## **Love of Money**

Perhaps *World* magazine fears that it would lose either advertisers or subscribers were it to publish an accurate description of the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church-State. Perhaps *World* fears financial loss were it to publish a *Statement* that describes accurately the authors and signers of the ecumenical documents produced by Evangelicals and Catholics Together. The beliefs expressed by the signers of Evangelicals and Catholics Together show them to be persons who do not understand and therefore cannot believe, or who do understand but refuse to believe, the Biblical doctrines of salvation. This fear of financial loss seems to be a major concern of all the leaders of the magazine, despite the fact that it operates under the umbrella of a 501(c) (3), nonprofit, charitable organization.

A year ago *World's* editor, Marvin Olasky, mused in an editorial:

“As I write this, I'm looking over a list of subscription cancellations from July to September, with reasons cited: ‘movie reviews... offended by ad... wrong

point of view... too intellectual... it upsets me... no time to read... can't afford... WORLD is filthy trash... Clinton coverage... not worth the price.’ We understand some of those losses—our magazine costs a dollar per issue, and some people would rather spend that dollar in other ways. We don't want to raise the price any higher, and the key to holding the line is gaining advertising revenue, which means accepting some ads we do not necessarily like.

“Our principle has been that the editorial and advertising parts of WORLD have different functions, and we hope our readers understand that. On the editorial pages (24 of them in our normal 36-page issue) we only print what we believe to be true; of course, we report on and quote accurately some wrong-headed folks, but we'll communicate to readers what we think is right. The advertising pages, however, are different: The goal of those pages is to bring in revenue while serving as a forum used by all sorts of individuals and organizations.

“One example of how far we're willing to go concerns a book on Bible translation called *The Inclusive Language Debate*. We've run ads for that work even though it takes a position completely opposed to the one we took last year in the Stealth Bible controversy. But we want folks on the gender-neutral side to accept advertising from groups like the Committee on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, so we do the same even for books that mischaracterize last year's debate.

“A second example: Our view of the Y2K bug is that the problem is serious but the big scare-narios are overstated—and yet, we may run some ads that are scary. We do trust in the ability of our readers to be discerning. Besides, we may be wrong and the advertisers may be right. The ad pages, in a sense, are the paid equivalent of our mailbag, where we also run pros and cons.

“My final example comes from our toughest call. Several years ago we carried a series of ads from a Catholic publisher who aggressively challenged some Protestant thinking. Many of our Protestant readers were offended by that, but we followed through on our distinct approaches to editorial and advertising matter: Recently, we've run an ad for a conference taking place this month on ‘Christianity and Roman Catholicism.’ The very title of the conference is obnoxious to Roman Catholics, and some of the lecture titles are even more pointed.

“That ad has left us uncomfortable for two reasons. First, we all know there is a difference between disagreeing with someone and baiting that party with ornery language. Second, frankly, since we're looking for advertising dollars to hold down the subscription price, it particularly hurts when some ads actually lose money for us. That's been the case here.

“In the abstract, I relish provocative ads almost as much as I do provocative articles. The rationale is revenue but also education: I really do believe that iron can sharpen iron. The problem, though, is that words can be sticks and stones,

breaking not bones but the morale of readers. We'll scrutinize ads, but our desire is to maintain a mostly open forum."

Despite editor Olasky's desire to maintain a "mostly open forum,"

- ◆ despite the fact that *World* (out of a desire for mutual back-scratching) has published (by its own admission) ads advocating mistranslation of the Bible,
- ◆ despite *World's* policy of running ads that "we do not necessarily like,"
- ◆ despite *World's* "principle...that the editorial and advertising parts of *WORLD* have different functions,"
- ◆ despite *World's* statement that "The...[advertising] pages... [serve] as a forum used by all sorts of individuals and organizations,"
- ◆ despite *World's* willingness to "run some ads that are scary,"
- ◆ despite *World's* "trust in the ability of our readers to be discerning,"
- ◆ despite *World's* willingness to admit that "we may be wrong and the advertisers may be right,"
- ◆ despite *World's* recognition that "The ad pages, in a sense, are the paid equivalent of our mailbag, where we also run pros and cons,"
- ◆ despite *World's* publishing a series of ads from a Roman Catholic publisher "who aggressively challenged some Protestant thinking,"

despite giving all these reasons why *World* should have published *The Reformation Day Statement*, *World* abruptly cancelled its agreement with The Trinity Foundation and refused to publish *The Statement*.

But if love of money were the sole reason for its outrageous action, why would *World* turn down a \$3,000-plus paid announcement? Of course, at a subscription rate of \$49.95 per year, 65 subscription cancellations would cost *World* more than it would have gained from publishing *The Reformation Day Statement*. Those cancellations seem to be what *World* fears most—the fear of men seems to grip the CEO, editor, and publisher of *World* magazine. They do not share Martin Luther's priorities: "Let goods and kindred go, some readership also"—and they prefer to silence those who would speak truth so as to avoid offending their Roman Catholic readers. The leadership of *World* is, however, quite willing to offend Protestant readers by publishing advertisements from aggressive Roman Catholic publishers. They are betting the Protestants won't have the courage to cancel their subscriptions.

## Animosity Toward The Trinity Foundation and Dr. Robbins

There may be some substance to this motive also, for in the editorial quoted above, *World* attacked, without cause, the paid advertisements for The Trinity Foundation's 1998 Conference on Christianity and Roman Catholicism. *World* accepted our six advertisements and our money, and then gratuitously attacked the advertisements in its editorial columns, apparently in an effort to placate angry Roman Catholic readers who can canceled or threatened to cancel their subscriptions. Neither the editor, nor the publisher, nor the CEO of *World* ever offered an apology for the magazine's unwarranted, inaccurate, and baseless statements that last year's advertisements were "obnoxious," "pointed," "baiting," and "ornery." *World* accepted

the advertisements, and *World* kept our money. But if it was simply personal animosity toward Dr. Robbins or The Trinity Foundation, why did *World* accept and publish advertisements for the 1999 Trinity Foundation Conference on Christianity and Economics?

## Creeping Apostasy

Perhaps here we have struck closer to the truth of the matter. After all, the accusation of being unloving is nothing new; it has been the constant cry of the liberals against Christians for the past century. For years *World* magazine has been heavily promoting the books of William Bennett, former Secretary of Education and Chairman of the Catholic Campaign for America; and of Charles Colson, co-chairman (with the Roman Catholic priest Richard Neuhaus) of Evangelicals and Catholics Together, the ecumenical movement of the Religious Right. Bill Bennett (whose brother Bob Bennett is one of President Clinton's lawyers) is a personal friend of Joel Belz, CEO of *World*. (Mr. Belz says so.) While pretending to be an evangelical magazine, *World* has been supporting Roman Catholics and ersatz-evangelicals who are doing their best to bamboozle everyone into cooperating with Rome. No wonder *World* refuses to publish *The Reformation Day Statement*. *The Statement* conflicts with *World's* agenda.

## What Is To Be Done?

Readers who are concerned about the outrageous action of *World* in refusing to publish *The Reformation Day Statement* can do several things:

**Call or write** the editor, publisher, and CEO of *World* to let them know what you think of their refusing to publish *The Reformation Day Statement*. Send a copy of your letter to The Trinity Foundation for our records.

CEO **Joel Belz** maintains his office in Asheville. *World* magazine, Post Office Box 2330, Asheville, NC 28802  
Telephone: 1.800.951.4974. 1.828.253.8063.  
Fax: 1.828.253.1556

Publisher **John B. Prentis** maintains his office in St. Louis, and receives his mail in Asheville. Telephone: 1.314.983.9013.

Editor **Marvin Olasky** maintains his office in Texas and receives his mail in Asheville. Telephone: 1.512.471.7908.

**Cancel** or do not renew your subscription, if you are a subscriber to *World*. Potential loss of revenue seems to be the greatest fear *World* has. A theological debate with the magazine's leadership is likely to be unfruitful, but they do seem to listen to money. Make your subscription dollars speak loudly and clearly. Help the theologically challenged folks at *World* make the right decisions; since they are unlikely to listen to theological reasons, we must give them pecuniary reasons to choose wisely. Besides, you will get a lot more news for a lot less money by subscribing to *Christian News*, a weekly newspaper published by Herman Otten, a Lutheran minister who still fondly recalls the Reformation. His address is 3277 Boeuf Lutheran Road, New Haven, Missouri 63068. A year's subscription to *Christian News* is \$25.00, but you won't get a book written by an apologist for the Roman Catholic Church-State as a subscription premium.

**Pull** your ads, if you are an advertiser in *World*, until *World* changes its policy of accepting aggressive Roman Catholic advertisements and rejecting announcements favoring the Reformation.

**Write** to the Christian leaders who have signed *The Reformation Day Statement* and thank them for doing so.

Sign *The Statement* yourself, if you have not already.

## Publishing News from The Foundation

This essay is taken from Dr. Robbins' latest book, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church* (Trinity, 1999). Dr. Robbins earned his Ph.D. in Philosophy and Political Theory from The Johns Hopkins University.

Despite the Roman Catholic Church's strident and sustained crusade against political freedom and capitalism that has now lasted for more than a century, a small but influential group of American Roman Catholic economists has begun to argue that the Roman Catholic Church now favors capitalism. Not only does the Roman Church-State favor capitalism *now*, according to these apologists for Rome, it has *always* favored capitalism, we are told.<sup>1</sup> The opposite impression—the impression that the Roman Church-State was anti-capitalist—was allegedly created by “progressive leftists” who engaged in a “selective reading”<sup>2</sup> of the papal encyclicals. Among these revisionist Roman Catholic apologists are Robert Sirico, a Paulist priest who is also the president of the Acton Institute in Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Michael Novak, a fellow of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D. C.<sup>3</sup>

Sirico argued, for example, that John Paul II's encyclical issued in commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* in 1991, *Centesimus Annus*, “represents a dramatic development in the encyclical tradition in favor of the free economy.” “More than any other church

document,” Sirico wrote, “this latest one celebrates the creativity of entrepreneurs and the virtues required for productivity.” Sirico asserted, “The pope affirms both the practical and moral legitimacy of profit, entrepreneurship, appropriate self-interest, productivity, and a stable currency.” Furthermore, *Centesimus Annus* is not only a “repudiation of the entire collectivist agenda, root and branch,...but [also] the warmest embrace of the free economy since the Scholastics.” “*Centesimus Annus*

<sup>1</sup> Michael Novak explained that “one key point of this inquiry [his book] has been to show that the Catholic tradition also carries within it a powerful ethic of capitalism—indeed a fuller and deeper ethic than was available to the first Puritans” (*The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: The Free Press, 1993, 232). On the other hand, Novak also wrote that “Most assuredly, *Centesimus Annus* is no libertarian document—and precisely that, to many of us, is its beauty.... I want to stress that *Centesimus Annus* gives encouragement to social democrats and others of the moderate left...” (138).

<sup>2</sup> Sirico, “Catholicism's Developing Social Teaching,” *The Freeman*, December 1991, 467. Sirico himself seemed to be of two minds on this question, for he also referred to the “left-wing trend” in Catholic social tradition (471).

<sup>3</sup> Novak's book was written “In homage to Pope John Paul II,” and, as one might expect from such a dedication, it is largely Roman Catholic propaganda.

Our newest book, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church*, is now available in both hardback (\$29.95 plus shipping) and paperback (\$19.95 plus shipping). Better buy the book directly from The Trinity Foundation, for it is not likely to be offered as a subscription premium by *World* magazine.

evidences the greatest depth of economic understanding and the most deliberate (and least critical) embrace of the system of free exchange on the part of the Catholic teaching authority in 100 years, and possibly since the Middle Ages...” “[T]his encyclical constitutes the epitaph for liberation and collectivist movements in terms of any official ecclesiastical legitimacy.” It is “an uncompromising rejection of collectivism in its Marxist, Communist, socialist, and even welfare-statist manifestations.”

Now these are certainly dramatic claims for *Centesimus Annus*. One would expect such sweeping claims indicating dramatic and almost revolutionary developments in Roman Catholic social thought to be supported by many quotations from the encyclical itself. Unfortunately, Sirico quoted only one complete sentence and one sentence fragment from the encyclical, a document of approximately 28,000 words. The sole complete sentence reads as follows:

By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility the social assistance state leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are more dominated by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending.

The partial sentence Sirico quoted is a solitary reference to some of the virtues that compose the work ethic: “diligence, industriousness, prudence in taking reasonable risks, reliability and fidelity in interpersonal relationships, as well as courage in carrying out decisions which are difficult and painful but necessary, both for the overall working of a business and in meeting possible setbacks.” Any reader of Sirico's essay who actually reads the 1991 papal encyclical will be disappointed, for virtually all of the claims that Sirico made are not supported by the statements of the encyclical itself.

Of course, some of Sirico's claims may be true. For example, when Sirico wrote that “*Centesimus Annus* evidences the greatest depth of economic understanding...on the part of Catholic teaching authority in 100 years,” he may very well have been correct. Our survey of the teaching of official Roman Church-State social thought as expressed in the papal encyclicals and conciliar constitutions turned up little or no evidence of economic understanding. Instead, the Roman Church-State has shrilly denounced the market, self-interest, and capitalism on ethical grounds, and made sustained demands for government intervention to protect the “common good” and promote “social justice.” Sirico's statement turns on a comparison between *Centesimus Annus* and previous encyclicals, so if the latest papal encyclical is less candid and forthright about, or less strident in, its criticism of capitalism, it might appear in a somewhat favorable light. And if the pope praises some of the “economic virtues,”

even though the praise is almost 500 years after Luther and Calvin, perhaps it is a sign of hope for economically conservative Roman Catholics like Mr. Sirico, who seem to be embarrassed by a Church-State that has been one of the world's longest and strongest proponents of anti-capitalist ideas.

Sirico claimed that "more than any other church document this latest one [*Centesimus Annus*] celebrates the creativity of entrepreneurs and the virtue required for productivity." This writer has not read all church documents, and neither, one supposes, has Mr. Sirico. In his essay Sirico discussed only one previous church document, *Rerum Novarum*, and furnished us with a creative misreading of that encyclical as well.<sup>4</sup> But despite his best efforts, *Rerum Novarum* is so obviously an anti-capitalist document that Sirico is finally embarrassed by it. His desire to find something of economic value in the papal encyclicals seems to betray him into making statements that he cannot support. The many official Roman Church documents that this writer has read express the Roman Church-State's long-standing hatred for capitalism on moral grounds, a hatred that has now been clearly expressed by the Magisterium for over a century. P. T. Bauer accurately called these papal encyclicals "incompetent," "immoral," and "envy exalted."<sup>5</sup>

### **The Meaning of *Rerum Novarum* and *Centesimus Annus***

If Sirico's reading of *Centesimus Annus* is so misleading, what exactly did John Paul II say in the encyclical? Since *Centesimus Annus* was issued in commemoration of *Rerum Novarum*, the pope began by praising *Rerum Novarum* as an "immortal document," and continued: "the vital energies rising from that root have not been spent with the passing of the years, but rather *have increased even more*." Continuing his praise for *Rerum Novarum* for several paragraphs, John Paul II asserted that "the validity of this teaching has already been pointed out in two Encyclicals published during my Pontificate: *Laborem Exercens*...and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*..." John Paul II proposed a "re-reading" of *Rerum Novarum* "to discover anew the richness of the fundamental principles which it formulated..." What are those fundamental principles? John Paul II, echoing Leo XIII a century before him, began with a quasi-Marxist analysis of capitalism. Please keep in mind that the quotations that follow are from the encyclical that Sirico and Novak have described as the most pro-capitalist document the Roman Church-State has ever written:

4.2 In the sphere of economics...new structures for the production of consumer goods had progressively taken shape [during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries]. A new form of property had appeared—capital; and a new form of labor—labor for wages, characterized by high rates of

production which lacked due regard for sex, age or family situation, and were determined solely by efficiency, with a view to increasing profits.

4.3 In this way labor became a commodity to be freely bought and sold on the market, its price determined by the law of supply and demand, without taking into account the bare minimum required for the support of the individual and his family. Moreover, the worker was not even sure of being able to sell "his own commodity," continually threatened as he was by unemployment, which, in the absence of any kind of social security, meant the specter of death by starvation.

4.4 The result of this transformation was a society "divided into two classes, separated by a deep chasm" [*Rerum Novarum*, 132].... Thus the prevailing political theory of the time [the nineteenth century] sought to promote total economic freedom by appropriate laws, or, conversely, by a deliberate lack of any intervention....

5.2 The Pope [Leo XIII] and the [Roman] Church...were confronted...by a society which was torn by a conflict all the more harsh and inhumane because it knew no rule or regulation. It was the conflict between capital and labor....

5.3 In the face of a conflict which set man against man, almost as if they were "wolves," a conflict between the extremes of mere physical survival on the one side and opulence on the other, the Pope [Leo XIII] did not hesitate to intervene by virtue of his "apostolic office..."

5.4 In this way, Pope Leo XIII, in the footsteps of his Predecessors, created a lasting paradigm for the Church....

6.1 With the intention of shedding light on the conflict which had arisen between capital and labor, Pope Leo XIII affirmed the fundamental rights of workers.... "it may truly be said that it is only by the labor of the working-men that States grow rich."

6.2 Another important principle is undoubtedly that of the right to "private property...." The Pope is well aware that private property is not an absolute value, nor does he fail to proclaim the necessary complementary principles, such as the universal destination of the earth's goods.

8.1 The Pope [Leo XIII] immediately adds another right which the worker has as a person. This is the right to a "just wage," which cannot be left to the "free consent of the parties...." This concept of relations between employers and employees, purely pragmatic and inspired by a thoroughgoing individualism, is severely censured in the Encyclical....

8.2 A workingman's wages should be sufficient to enable him to support himself, his wife and his children. "If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice."

8.3 Would that these words, written at a time when what has been called "unbridled capitalism" was pressing forward, should not have to be repeated today with the same severity....

This re-reading of *Rerum Novarum* by John Paul II preserved the Marxist flavor of the encyclical—an unsophisticated labor theory of value, the economic class structure of society, and the class struggle—and endorsed it. Leo XIII in 1891 and John Paul II in 1991 adopted a quasi-Marxist view of capitalism. Both John Paul II and Leo XIII also endorsed the fundamental principle of the "universal destination of goods," which holds that need makes all goods, both natural and manufactured, common, and that those who own goods must surrender them to those in need, or their goods will be rightfully taken from them by either the needy or by the public

<sup>4</sup> Sirico noted that his interpretation of *Rerum Novarum* is "not a prevalent one today. It [Sirico's interpretation] comes from a view of the world as expressed by classical liberals." Unfortunately for Sirico's interpretation, Leo XIII did not share the classical liberal view of the world, and *Rerum Novarum* itself rails against classical liberalism. To claim, therefore, as Sirico did, that *Rerum Novarum* lends itself to such an analysis is to misrepresent the encyclical (Sirico, "Catholicism's Developing Social Teaching," 466).

<sup>5</sup> Peter T. (Lord) Bauer, "Ecclesiastical Economics Is Envy Exalted," *This World*, Winter-Spring, 1982, 56-69.

authorities.<sup>6</sup> To say of *Rerum Novarum*, as Sirico did, that it “provides one of the most finely honed defenses of the free market and private property order in the annals of Catholic, indeed Christian, social thought...”<sup>7</sup> is preposterous.

Later in *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II endorsed the slogan of liberation theology: “the preferential option for the poor,” and wrote, more ominously, that “The Pope does not, of course, intend to condemn every possible form of social conflict.... The [1981] Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, moreover, clearly recognized the positive role of conflict when it takes the form of a ‘struggle for social justice....’” These statements make Sirico’s claim that *Centesimus Annus* “constitutes the epitaph for liberation and collectivist movements in terms of any official ecclesiastical legitimacy” false. *Centesimus Annus* includes a hardly veiled endorsement of liberation theology, and John Paul II endorsed liberation theology several times in other documents, as we have already seen. Liberation theology has continued to receive endorsement from the Roman Magisterium during the past twenty years, that is, during the reign of John Paul II.

Section 15 of *Centesimus Annus* endorsed all sorts of government intervention, and concluded with this paragraph:

The Encyclical [*Rerum Novarum*] and the related social teaching of the Church had far reaching influence in the years bridging the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This influence is evident in the numerous reforms which were introduced in the areas of social security, pensions, health insurance and compensation in the case of accidents, within the framework of greater respect for the rights of workers.

What was that far-reaching influence of *Rerum Novarum* to which John Paul II referred? In Europe *Rerum Novarum* granted the moral authority and the political support of the Roman Church-State and Roman Catholic voters to the rising tide of statism in all its forms except atheistic Communism: socialism, fascism,<sup>8</sup> and Nazism. In the United States, it fueled the rise of the labor union movement,<sup>9</sup> the Progressive movement, and interventionism. Aaron I. Abell, Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame, sketched the influence of *Rerum Novarum* in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

In 1917 the hierarchy of the Roman Church-State in the United States formed the National Catholic War Council,

the predecessor of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. In 1919 the Council’s Administrative Committee issued a plan for social reconstruction, written by John Augustus Ryan, a Jesuit. The plan, following the proposals of Ryan’s 1908 book, *A Living Wage*, advocated social insurance against unemployment, sickness, invalidity, and old age; a federal child labor law; legal enforcement of labor’s right to organize; public housing for the working classes; graduated taxes on inheritances, incomes, and excess profits; stringent regulation of public utility rates; government competition with monopolies; worker participation in business management, and so forth. When Franklin Roosevelt was elected President in 1932, he asked Monsignor Ryan to join his administration, which Ryan did.

Fifty-four years ago Abell pointed out that “A social view of property...served as the entering wedge for much contemporary and future American Catholic participation in social reform.”<sup>11</sup> Sirico asserted, contrary to the evidence, that this interpretation of *Rerum Novarum* “has over-emphasized the social view of property. This reflects a bias [in the interpreters] against individualism and self-interest...”<sup>12</sup> But, as we have seen, the bias against individualism and self-interest is the bias of the Roman Church-State, demonstrated through many quotations from papal encyclicals. Sirico’s alleged conspiracy of leftwing interpreters who have twisted the pope’s “finely honed defense of private property” and capitalism into an endorsement of interventionism and social reform is a fantasy. It would be difficult to over-emphasize the bias of the Roman Church-State against private property, self-interest, and capitalism.

Furthermore, that bias continues to be expressed by the Roman Church-State, even in the very encyclical that Sirico told us is an endorsement of capitalism. After admitting that “the modern business economy has positive aspects,”<sup>13</sup> the pope wrote:

Many other people, while not completely marginalized, live in situations in which the struggle for a bare minimum is uppermost. These are situations in which the rules of the earliest period of capitalism still flourish in conditions of “ruthlessness” in no way inferior to the darkest moments of the first phase of industrialization.... The human inadequacies of capitalism and the resulting domination of things over people are far from disappearing.

Furthermore, John Paul II wrote,

It is right to speak of a struggle against an economic system, if the latter is understood as a method of upholding the absolute predominance of capital, the possession of the means of production and of the land.... In the struggle against such a system, what is being proposed as an alternative is not the socialist system, which in fact turns out to be State capitalism, but rather a society of free work.... Such a society is not directed against the market, but

<sup>6</sup> “While the Pope proclaimed the right to private ownership, he affirmed with equal clarity that the ‘use’ of goods, while marked by freedom, is subordinated to their original common destination as created goods” (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* [1991], 30.2).

<sup>7</sup> Sirico, “Catholicism’s Developing Social Teaching,” 474.

<sup>8</sup> The Roman Catholic scholar Karl Otmar von Aretin noted that “The papacy’s denial of the modern world, and in particular of democracy which guaranteed the freedom of the individual, favoured the emergence of fascist regimes in the 1920s” (*The Papacy and the Modern World*, Roland Hill, translator. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1970, 8).

<sup>9</sup> Sirico admitted that “*Rerum Novarum* became the springboard for the burgeoning labor movement in America and Europe” and that “To the [social] reformer’s [sic] mind, Leo’s encyclical gave them the support and recognition they needed to carry out their program” (Sirico, “Catholicism’s Developing Social Teaching,” 467).

<sup>10</sup> Abell, “The Reception of Leo XIII’s Labor Encyclical in America, 1891-1919,” *The Review of Politics*, October 1945. Abell’s *American Catholicism and Social Action: A Search for Social Justice, 1865-1950*, is a detailed account of the social and political activities of both Roman Catholic laymen and officials in the United States.

<sup>11</sup> Abell, “The Reception of Leo XIII’s Labor Encyclical in America, 1891-1919,” *The Review of Politics*, October 1945, 471.

<sup>12</sup> Sirico, “Catholicism’s Developing Social Teaching,” 467.

<sup>13</sup> No doubt the “positive aspects” of the modern economy, though not listed by the pope, include the many government interventions in business and the economy long advocated by the Vatican. Such intervention seems to be the reason John Paul II distinguished between “early,” “unbridled,” and “primitive” capitalism, and the “modern business economy.”

demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and the State....

Furthermore,

...it is unacceptable to say that the defeat of so-called "Real Socialism" leaves capitalism as the only model of economic organization. ...if by "capitalism" is meant a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality...then the reply [to the question, "Is capitalism the model for the Third World?"] is certainly negative.

Building on the interventions that are already in place, the Roman Church-State wants more:

It is the task of the State to provide for the defense and preservation of common goods such as the natural and human environments, which cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces. Just as in the time of primitive capitalism the State had the duty of defending the basic rights of workers, so now, with the new capitalism, the State and all of society have the duty of defending those collective goods....

Contrary to what Sirico alleged, there seem to be only two sentences in the entire encyclical that might appear to lend any support to the market economy. One, as we have seen, is a mild criticism of bureaucratic ways of thinking and spending, which Sirico quoted. The other sentence, which Sirico did not quote, endorsed the "modern business economy" only on grounds of efficiency, not morality, as Sirico claimed, and the pope immediately qualified it:

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. But this is true only for those needs which are "solvent" insofar as they are endowed with purchasing power, and for those resources which are "marketable" insofar as they are capable of obtaining a satisfactory price. But there are many human needs which find no place on the market. It is a strict duty of justice and truth not to allow fundamental human needs to remain unsatisfied and not to allow those burdened by such needs to perish.

Sirico provided neither quotations—nor even any citations—to support his sweeping assertion that the encyclical gave a moral endorsement of profit, self-interest, and a stable currency. This writer has found no such statements in the encyclical either. Therefore, I am forced to conclude that Sirico's assertion of a moral endorsement of capitalism by the Roman Church-State in *Centesimus Annus* is false. Perhaps Sirico was confused by John Paul II's reference to certain character traits as "virtues," namely industriousness, diligence, prudence, courage, and reliability, but endorsement of these character traits does not constitute an endorsement of profit, self-interest, and a stable currency, let alone capitalism. John Paul II tentatively ("It would appear") praised only the efficiency of the free market, and he did so only after the Communist systems of Europe had collapsed. But even that tentative praise was immediately weakened and qualified, and the paragraph concluded with the pope asserting, on *moral* grounds, the duty of the State "not to allow fundamental human needs to remain unsatisfied," as they would in a free market, even a market already regulated by government. This one tentative sentence about the efficiency of the market was buried in the middle of a document that repeatedly condemned real

("early" "unbridled," and "primitive") capitalism and repeatedly re-affirmed the Roman Church-State's commitment to her fundamental social principles of the universal destination of goods, the primacy of need, and government regulation and control of the economy.

One can sympathize with a Roman Catholic who is embarrassed by the fact that his allegedly infallible Church has preached collectivism and condemned capitalism on moral grounds for more than a century. One can even understand such a Roman Catholic's desire to reinterpret any phrase from the pen of his "infallible" leader that might be made to favor capitalism and freedom. But neither our sympathy nor his embarrassment is an excuse for misrepresenting *Centesimus Annus* as a moral endorsement of capitalism. Sirico's claim that *Centesimus Annus* is "a repudiation of the entire collectivist agenda, root and branch" has no support in the text itself.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Nineteenth century Roman Catholic historian Lord Acton's comments about the Roman Catholic apologists of his day are timeless. He wrote a letter to Dollinger explaining that his reading of history had convinced him that a common vice is "to defend one's cause by unfair or illicit means." Acton had studied, with "infinite credulity and trust" the most eminent Roman Catholic writers of his day. But he found that what they told him was "on many decisive questions, false." Acton came "very slowly and reluctantly indeed to the conclusion that they were dishonest." A special reason for their dishonesty was "the desire to keep up the credit of authority in the [Roman] Church." The Roman Catholic scholars ignored moral standards in their study of history, because "it is impossible honestly to apply a moral standard to history without discrediting the [Roman] Church in her collective action." In order that "men might believe the Pope, it was resolved to make them believe that vice is virtue and falsehood truth." This defect was not due to ignorance or incompetence. Acton found it in "the ablest, in the most learned, in the most plausible and imposing men" he knew. These men "who were outwardly defenders of religion," were actually "advocates of deceit and murder." The "great point was that these men justified things to which in the past the papacy stood committed. They wished men to think that those things had not happened, or that they were good. They preached falsehood and murder" (quoted in Hugh MacDougall, *The Acton-Newman Relations*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1962, 141-142).