Twitter Thread by Radical Catholic

Radical Catholic
@RadicalCath

Daily Caller has published a noteworthy article by @radicalbenjamin on the subject of Corporatism. I'd like to comment on it, but I'm consciously directing my comments at Catholics, especially those who might have noted my own tweets on the same

The connection of Corporatism to Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is not lost on Roberts; in fact, he makes explicit mention of Leo XIII's Rerum novarum. What he does not mention is the crucial difference between Chinese Corporatism and the Christian Corporatism of CST.



Neither *laissez-faire* nor Leninist, corporatism recognizes that a nation's economy exists for its people and their welfare. Accordingly, the state claims for itself ultimate authority over corporate decision-making, and exercises this by directing corporate activity to advance the national interest, prohibiting private actions antithetical to this interest, and organizing sectoral interests in such a way that this subordination is feasible. Though the East Asian countries all embraced corporatism as part of their meteoric rise, it is also found in the Western tradition. Pope Leo's "Rerum Novarum," favorably cited by Catholic GOP Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, assails both the excesses of capitalism and the total control of communism. For Leo and others, corporatism affixes a communitarian lodestar by which private actors navigate or are directed.

One side of that crucial difference is summarized in the following highlighted passage. It is at this point that careful readers should have noted that what Roberts is describing is State Corporatism, or the Corporate State, and not Societal Corporatism, or the Corporate Society.

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The difference between the Corporate State and Corporate Society is something I've discussed before, most recently by referring to Fr. Mort's "Christian Corporatism," which contrasts the State Corporatism of Fascist Italy with the Societal Corporatism of CST.

Nell-Breuning distinguishes the Corporative Society from the Corporative State.[3] Such a distinction not only can clear up terminological misunderstandings, but clarifies further the nature of Corporatism as expressed in the Corporative Society. Once this distinction is appreciated, the obvious conclusion is that what the author of the encyclical is proposing is neither undemocratic nor incompatible with free enterprise and individual initiative. Rather, the principles of Pius XI offer a positive solution for many of the socio-economic problems menacing modern society.

§5. In making the proper distinction, a study in brief detail must first be made of some of the principal features of the Fascist Corporative State. From 1930 to 1931, Mussolini began to outline the nature and function of the Corporative State, although it was not until 1934 that it was established by law. Under Mussolini, the syndicalist system evolved into the Corporative State. The intricate system of syndicates, federations, and confederations was linked together by twenty-two corporations embracing the key industries and professions. These twenty-two corporations were composed not only of the representatives of the respective syndicates of both employers and employees, but also of the officials of the Fascist Party. Over and above the corporations was the National Council of Corporations, of which Mussolini was president. In practice, the entire corporative and syndicalist system was infiltrated by the Fascists and was under the direct control of the State.

§6. The general purpose of the corporations was to control production for national interests. In practice, this meant proposing and fixing the prices of goods and wage standards, settling those labor disputes which had not been settled by the lower

[3] Here I refer to Oswald Von Nell-Breuning's commentary on *Quadragesimo Anno* entitled *Reorganization of Social Economy* (New York: Bruce Publishing Co., 1936), especially pages 210-241. Mention should also be made of the works of Charles Bruehl, *The Pope's Plan for Social Reconstruction*, and Joaquin Azpiazu, *The Corporative State*.

Note that the distinction between the Corporate State and Corporate Society is not reserved to proponents of Catholic Social Teaching. Unger and Chan, cited by Roberts, make the same distinction in their 2015 paper "State corporatism and business associations in China."

> All of the major market economies of East Asia have developed institutional arrangements through which business associations, labor unions, and other major types of associations maintain close relationships with the state. During the stage in which these were emerging economies, the state dominated this relationship in an arrangement known as "state corporatism." But with democratization, Japan's, Taiwan's, and South Korea's business associations and unions came more under the influence their members, and a new balance in relations with the state emerged in an arrangement known as "societal corporatism." In China, which is still in transition from the status of an emerging economy, the state continues to dominate associations.

The difference highlighted revolves around the question of the role of the State in the realization of the common good. In Communist China, as in Fascist Italy, the State plans, directs and commands the economy. This runs counter to the principle of Subsidiarity central to CST.

§13. In the Corporative Society, the State is a civil society whose purpose is to promote the common temporal welfare of its citizens. But the State is not the only society. Besides all the necessary societies, men may belong to many different voluntary or quasi-public societies. Furthermore, in the Corporative Society, the State must always be guided by the two correlative principles of the Common Good and Subsidiarity, so that the rights and ends of the lesser or equal societies are able to be properly attained and secured. The principle of Subsidiarity, which Pius XI expresses so clearly in *Quadragesimo Anno*, is that the State should not do those things in the temporal order which lesser societies can do for themselves:

> Just as it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and commit to the community at large what private enterprise and industry can accomplish, so, too, it is an injustice, a



> grave evil and a disturbance of right order, for a larger and higher organization to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower bodies. This is a fundamental principle of social philosophy. ... Of its very nature, the true aim of all social activity should be to help individual members of the social body, but never to destroy or absorb them.[7]

§14. The State in a Corporative Society, then, must achieve the proper balance between the principle of the Common Good and the principle of Subsidiarity. When Doctor Roepke referred to the Corporative State and said it was undemocratic, he was correct. But this cannot be said of the Corporative Society, because the principle of Subsidiarity preserves the freedom of lower social groups in the social, economic, and political orders.

In an earlier tweet, I quoted a long passage from Bruehl's "The Pope's Plan for Social Reconstruction" which clarifies how Christian Corporatism envisions the role of the State in economic matters. It is very much worth reviewing in this context.

https://t.co/OcwO2h44Be

> A short summary of Christian Corporatism, sometimes called Vocationalism, as it envisions a central role for Vocational Groups which unite Capital and Labor (from Bruehl's "The Pope's Plan for Social Reconstruction"). pic.twitter.com/qWewnRDh00
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> — Radical Catholic (@RadicalCath) February 3, 2020

Why is any of this important? Because we've seen several bad-faith actors quietly appropriate key elements of Catholic Social Teaching and put them to use in the promotion of Socialism. I'm not accusing Roberts; I assume good faith on his part. But this is a common occurrence.

Comment

The Catholic turn to socialism is something to celebrate

Jose Mena 30 May, 2019



Mosaics of Popes Francis, John Paul II and Paul VI at the cathedral in Dhaka, Bangladesh (CNS)

Good and holy popes have frequently condemned the capitalist order. No wonder young Catholics are following suit

It doesn't help that an equal number of Catholics seem to reject everything in Catholic Social Teaching which diverges from Liberal Capitalism and Trickle-Down Economics. Their only real interest in CST is as a magisterial defense of private property against Socialism.

Roberts has written an interesting piece on State Corporatism, and I thank him for the contribution in as far as it offers a jumping-off point to investigate Christian Corporatism and the Corporate Society proposed by Catholic Social Teaching.

For those interested in reading more about Christian Corporatism, especially on how it differs from State Corporatism, I recommend the following article, cited above, by Fr. Ernest Mort.

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https://t.co/uWaZP5Fkf0

> Quadragesimo Anno is a rich vision of how to implement the spiritual-social vision of the popes of the past two centuries, especially when analyzed in context of Mussolini's Italy:https://t.co/Z74o5jQoZJ pic.twitter.com/FQCegOpRfi
>
> — Muck (@Integral_Muck) January 31, 2020