

An Elementary Christian Anthropology and the Common Good

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Abstract

Visions of what constitutes a good social order are grounded in philosophical or theological anthropology. Present day civilization has a truncated view of the common good, one that is limited to this worldly technological progress, because it has an inadequate view of man. The ground of being has been lost in our secular age. In rejecting any point of reference external to himself and making his own thoughts absolute, modern man has lost a solid grasp of what it means to be human. Replacing ontology with radical subjectivism brings about a deep crisis of meaning that ends up in a nihilism that imperils civilization.

Acknowledging our parlous state of being closed in on our own thinking allows us to address it. We can ask the questions of our origin, our nature, our destiny anew with a mind that does not exclude metaphysical commitments or the distinctive features of being human a priori. When we do this we encounter a Person, Jesus Christ, who explains, or “fully reveals” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22) our humanity to us. Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of man, “is the center of the universe and of history” (*Redemptor Hominis*, I). The full potential of human existence is realized in friendship with Christ.

The great truth of human existence is that we execute our agency in a divine order. God’s love is at the heart of reality. The great challenge of retaining a transcendent perspective on the common good can only be met by understanding the love story we live in. A Christological vision of humanity is presented that unfolds this story. The key elements are creation, redemption, sanctifying grace and eschatological fullness.

Human perfection is found in love. For this reason Jesus teaches a two fold commandment of love. We are to love God with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind and we are to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mt. 22:37-40). We are to imitate Jesus’ love for us to the point of laying down our lives for others (Jn. 15:12, 13).

This makes the purpose and practice of business evident. Love must enliven the commercial sector no less than any other area of human endeavour. If business practices are to be fully human, they must be born of love and manifest love. If business relationships are to uphold human dignity, they must be permeated by love. If business is to be an institution worthy of what we are as human beings, it must be ordered to God’s plan of love. It is love that guarantees the common good.