

NEGLECT OF THE MARKETPLACE: THE QUESTIONABLE ECONOMICS OF AMERICA'S BISHOPS

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The overwhelming majority of the points made in this assessment of the first draft of the U.S. bishops' pastoral, "Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy,"¹ shall be critical; indeed, highly critical. It therefore behooves us to begin by considering the positive elements of the bishops' pastoral, before examining its shortcomings.

I. POSITIVE ELEMENTS

A. Moral Courage

High on any possible listing of the praiseworthy aspects of the bishops' pastoral is surely the moral courage it took to contemplate this project, research the issues, and publish the first draft. Moral courage, moreover, pervades every nook and cranny of this document. The bishops have a point of view, a strong one, and they do not hesitate to deliver their message in a forthright and even forceful manner.²

The bishops had anticipated that this pastoral letter would unleash a torrent of abuse;³ this expectation was not disappointed. But even they may not have realized the level of vilification that their missive would call forth. A survey of

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1. See National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (First Draft 1984), reprinted in 14 *ORIGINS* 337 (1984) [hereinafter cited as *Pastoral Letter*].

2. Several of the bishops' critics have noted this forceful style of presentation and have objected to it, calling for a softer, more muted mode of expression. In particular, they have called upon the bishops to express their findings with more "humility." See, e.g., Krauthammer, *Perils of the Profit Motive*, *NEW REPUBLIC*, Dec. 24, 1984 at 10, reprinted in *CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE: CRITIQUES OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' DRAFT LETTER ON THE U.S. ECONOMY* 48 (R. Royal ed. 1985) [hereinafter cited as *CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE*].

3. See *The Church and Capitalism: A Report by Catholic Bishops on the U.S. Economy Will Cause a Furor*, *BUS. WEEK*, Nov. 12, 1984, at 104 [hereinafter cited as *The Church and Capitalism*].

