

preferential option for the poor or the use of wealth that is more concerned with societal cumulative value than individual enhancement.

Also helpful are Christoph Stuckelberger's recommendations on how to spread the influence of Calvin's economic thinking. Included among his suggestions are: dependence on Calvin as an original source (think of this perhaps as *ad fontes redivivus*) instead of on Weber as more definitive; avoidance of monocausal or simplistic explanations; and the production of more accurate translations in new cultures.

On the theme of translations (and the inherent difficulties involved), the final part of this book includes two helpful essays on the mechanics of translating Calvin. Edward Dommen's chapter on rendering Calvin into English well demonstrates the challenge and complexity of translation. In addition, Peter Opitz's chapter on translating Calvin into German, seeking in the main to explore the various connotations (not to mention the equivocalities) of "doctrine" and "religion," made his point too.

This book will serve as a useful supplement to the standard in this field (Andre Bieler's *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought*). This reviewer especially appreciated some of the more helpful studies from part 2, written by first-time rediscoverers. If this volume aids in that heuristic process, it will make a welcome contribution not only to scholarship but also to various communities of faith and life.

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Incorrectly Political: Augustine and Thomas More

Peter Iver Kaufman

Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press,
2007 (279 pages)

Although their lives were separated by eleven centuries, Augustine and Thomas More faced similar ecclesiastical and political dilemmas during their public careers. Augustine lived during the era between Constantine's conversion to Christianity and Rome's collapse when he was forced to grapple with the difficult issues raised by the new faith's impact on a declining empire. More lived during the first decades of the Reformation era, attaining the high office of Lord Chancellor to King Henry VIII, which he used to champion the prerogatives of the Roman Catholic Church against the anticlerical reformers in England. Both lived in times of transition. Indeed, conventional history has long held that the two eras frame the entire millennium known as the medieval era.

In the current volume, the prolific Peter Iver Kaufman, professor of history and religious studies at the University of North Carolina, has written an engaging historical account of the careers of these two pivotal Christian figures, focusing on the lessons they learned and would pass down to subsequent generations. Not quite a comparative analysis, the author devotes four chapters to Augustine and three to More, weaving in succession the fascinating stories of their lives and times. Though histories are often told

in colorless fashion, Kaufman infuses his own account with wit and clever turns of phrase, as exhibited in the book's title.

Arguably the central figure of the early western church, Augustine lived in an ostensibly Christian empire but was painfully aware of the distance between formal profession of faith and the lived reality of sinful human political institutions. While several recent interpreters of the African bishop's works view him as a kind of theocrat, advocating the transformation of politics to conform to gospel principles, Kaufman dissents, holding instead that he was deeply pessimistic over the prospects of meaningful reform of the dying empire's structures to secure greater justice for its people.

Augustine himself, despite—or rather because of—his episcopal office, was called upon to perform quasijudicial duties in addition to his ordinary ecclesiastical responsibilities. This was because the imperial courts were “notoriously slow and corrupt” (46) and litigants had more confidence in the impartiality of the bishops' judgments. Yet, the defect in this combination of roles became obvious when Augustine, as a teacher in the catholic church, took a hard line in dealing with the conflict between Christians and pagans at Calama in 408, offering the latter only conversion to Christianity rather than taking a more conciliatory approach based on a tolerance of different truths, which Sir Bernard Crick, among others, views as inherent in the political enterprise.

If Augustine had low expectations of the possibilities for reforming civic life, he did believe that government could be used to protect the position of the church by, for example, suppressing the Donatists, a heretical sect that sought to recreate a purified church outside the bounds of the catholic church. This has led some interpreters to assume that he held government in high esteem, a position Kaufman rejects.

As for Thomas More, the author's account revolves around his famous fictional work, *Utopia*, and the crisis generated by the Reformation and the king's divorce. Unlike Augustine, More pursued an overtly political career, rising to the position of Lord Chancellor, which he held briefly from 1529 to 1532. Early in his career, he penned *Utopia*, telling the story of a distant people who renounced private property, owned all things in common (*omnia omnium*), and gave themselves to hard work, virtue, and contemplation. Kaufman doubts that More believed it was possible or even desirable to attempt in England what the Utopians had accomplished “nowhere,” believing instead that the most that could be hoped for is damage control. For this reason he, like Augustine, was willing to *use* government for this modest purpose, even if it could not be appreciably improved. Government cannot impose virtue or aid in one's salvation; it can be only a flawed instrument to prevent wickedness from having its full effect on society.

Kaufman's final assessment? For both Augustine and More, “to invest [political power] with any dignity was to be incorrectly political” (224).

Although it obviously goes beyond the author's purposes, this reviewer would love to see him draw lessons, if any, for current political practice. If Kaufman's interpretation is correct, is the apparent pessimism of Augustine and More fully warranted? Few would argue that there is no appreciable difference between a constitutional democracy such as the United States or Canada and the monarchical absolutism of late Rome or Tudor

England. One need not be a naïve progressivist to notice that some polities in today's world are relatively more just and less corrupt than others.

This book is valuable reading for anyone with an interest in Augustine and More, and it provides an important resource for Christians who are reflecting on the implications of their faith for political theory and practice.

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United States Welfare Policy: A Catholic Response

Thomas J. Massaro, S.J.

Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007

United States Welfare Policy is a meaty, well-crafted book focusing on the pivotal Welfare Reform Act of 1996. Massaro lays his groundwork for a Catholic perspective in the first chapter. With regard to the 1996 reform, the next chapters address the historical context, the actual reform policies, and Catholic contributions to the policy debate. The fifth chapter presents the implementation and impact of the reform policies. The final chapter explores policy and ethical issues for reauthorization of the 1996 reform.

The centerpiece of the reform was termination of an open-ended federal entitlement for low-income families and replacement with capped federal block grants to the states. Work requirements were strengthened. Years of financial support were limited. The 1996 law set 2002 as the year for permanent reauthorization with consideration of appropriate changes. Reauthorization has been delayed in Congress and, in 2005, the 1996 Act was “temporarily” extended until 2010.

When Congress takes on reauthorization of the 1996 reform, Massaro advocates changes consistent with his understanding of Catholic social teaching (CST). Massaro sees the 1996 reform as seriously flawed. Massaro does not claim that he has written “the” Catholic response. This is obvious from the book's title. As is clear below, this Catholic reviewer is substantially at odds with Massaro's perspectives.

The book's trajectory is firmly established in the first chapter where Massaro presents his view of the essentials of CST as related to welfare policy. The general arguments of the book flow quite logically from the foundation laid in chapter 1. For this reason, much of this review is devoted to chapter 1.

Catholic social teaching is not defined dogma and is subject to differing interpretations. Additionally, for any specific policy initiative, prudential judgment must be considered and will differ among policy analysts. Massaro writes, “Even accomplished scholars sometimes fall into the trap of inordinate reliance upon a single fragment of a papal social encyclical that seems to support a preferred position on a given issue” (12).

To illustrate this potential for misinterpretation, Massaro alleges that some right-wing commentators misinterpreted John Paul II's 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, which discussed the “malfunctions and defects of the social assistance state” (13). Massaro notes