

take a zero-sum-game view of modern economic life. He cites the notion that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer and suggests that the former is causing the latter. That reflects a view of economic life that was truer in biblical times and is true in certain parts of the developing world, but to assume that such an economic worldview characterizes the modern information economy betrays a misunderstanding of economics.

There is also no sense that there is serious debate about many of the aspects of globalization. For instance, he asserts that Third World debt ought to be forgiven, with no mention of the voluminous debate about that complex issue. Further, he condemns child labor, without any mention of the debate over that in the business ethics literature. He is very critical of plant closures and downsizing, assuming that those are necessarily immoral and contrary to Christian ethics. Further, the reader gets no sense that there are serious schools of thought that hold that the market is consistent with a Christian ethic. There is no recognition that there are serious thinkers who hold to an entrepreneurial vocation and that the market nurtures important virtues such as initiative, inventiveness, hard work, thrift, and responsibility. He cites the earlier Catholic encyclicals as support for his view, but there is little mention of the later work of John Paul II and his support for the market system. The underlying assumption throughout the book is that the market is a problem that needs radical fixing and that most aspects of the global economy are contrary to the Christian social tradition.

This volume is a good representative of the mainline religious critique of globalization. However, it should not be viewed as representative of the entire discussion, but read in conjunction with other works to present a more balanced view of the global economy.

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God and the Evil of Scarcity: Moral Foundations of Economic Agency

Albino Barrera, O.P.

Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press,
2005 (287 pages)

[Editor's Note: *This book was previously reviewed by Giacomo Costa in this journal (9:1, pp. 182–84). The editor received a request to evaluate the accuracy of that review, and so the book and the previous review were submitted to executive board member Ricardo Crespo. The following is his evaluation.*]

Giacomo Costa, Professor at the University of Pisa, Italy, begins his review of *God and the Evil of Scarcity* by developing some insights about theodicy as being understood as a rational inquiry about the sense and explanation of evil in a world created by God. This discussion consumes half of the review.

Costa considers Barrera's proposal to be a partial modification of Malthus' theodicy. In truth, Barrera's participative theodicy is completely different from Malthus'. Although participative theodicy shares some nonessential traits with Malthus' theodicy, it is not conceived as a correction of it but as a new proposal. Barrera's intention is to criticize Malthus and to propose a different explanation of the reality of scarcity.

Costa claims that Barrera shares Malthus' approval of natural and moral evil. He asserts that Barrera leaves the question of the sense of scarcity unanswered. These claims appear to be unfounded.

Barrera carefully distinguishes formal (antecedent, existential) scarcity and consequent scarcity. On the one hand, formal scarcity stems from God's creation: It is the human natural need to allocate time and resources due to human corporality and temporality. On the other hand, consequent scarcity stems from wrong human decisions about allocation. Barrera thoroughly argues that God has sufficiently provided for the needs of humans but that this material sufficiency is conditional to human economic agency. God has delegated to humans the task of correctly allocating goods in order to satisfy the needs of every person. In this way, God grants to humans a participation in his goodness, holiness, righteousness, and providence, by which man participates in the divine work of creation. Thus, formal scarcity is evidently good for humans. In contrast, consequent scarcity is an evil that cannot be willed by God. Poverty is a reflection of the improper use of humans' reason and freedom.

Malthus did not distinguish among different kinds of scarcity. For him, scarcity is one of the conditions of creation. Man cannot avoid it but must conform to it or adopt a way of surviving it (supposing the absence of both freedom and responsibility). This is positive for Malthus because it fosters the "formation of [the] human mind." Barrera obviously criticizes Malthus' desacralized position on evil. The whole book is an argument—sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly—about why Malthus' theodicy is untenable.

Costa mentions Barrera's so-called pious introduction of the notion of participation. To the contrary, participation is not a pious notion but a philosophical one, which we first find in Plato. The application of this notion to God's perfections is not a pious exercise but good theology. Barrera grapples with the issue of material scarcity in both a philosophical and a theological way, and he does it rigorously and accurately. As stated in the introduction, this is a book written for persons interested in the philosophical and theological foundations of political economy. As John Paul II wrote at the beginning of the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves." Barrera's book certainly provides a foundation for a theology of economic agency.

Christian Social Thought

It is a book that I highly recommend to scholars concerned with a broader approach to scholarship. I suggest that they not just read it but read it completely, including the appendices.

—Ricardo F. Crespo
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