

twentieth century and that what Ketteler and others feared has largely come to pass: the development of worker-directed labor unions that are godless and often ruthless pursuers of self-interest. With such a situation around us, it is less easy to dismiss La Tour du Pin and the other corporate theorists of the nineteenth century who hoped for a more meaningful alliance of capital and labor within trades and a state organization predicated on national well-being rather than international competition and class warfare.

Aubert's account of Catholic social thought and action from Pius IX to Paul VI, therefore, should be supplemented with the far more realistic assessment of Christian democracy to be found in Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996). Likewise his failure to address the continued relevance of the "reactionary" tendency in Catholic social thought should be remedied by the consultation of the fine essays edited by Tom Buchanan and Martin Conway, *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918–1965* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

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## Wealth, Poverty, and Human Destiny

**Doug Bandow and David L. Schindler (Editors)**

Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2002 (538 pages)

"The Gospels and Epistles are remarkably free of economic policy recommendations" writes editor Doug Bandow (311). We must, therefore, work these questions out for ourselves. The present work is a superior contribution in that regard.

Those interested in the topic of liberal economics in a post-socialist world will find this book helpful for a variety of reasons. The book focuses on a major problem of liberal economics today: wealth creation and concern for the poor. It also explores leftist, conservative, and neoconservative critiques of contemporary liberalism. The writers in this collection agree on the goal of raising the lot of the poor (material and/or spiritual poverty) and the dependent, but many disagree about means. For example, do we remedy poverty through political means or through economic growth? The fourteen fine essays (including one by each editor), seemingly organized in no particular order, break some new ground and summarize well an ongoing debate about liberal economics. Although the book is lengthy, most of the essays are not difficult reads. For classroom use, I would recommend picking articles selectively to fit the course.

Adrian Walker is typical of those more critical of liberal economics. Liberal economics is opposed to an "economics of gift" in Walker's essay (a theme repeated in many essays). Workers should receive compensation according to their ontological status as human beings who exist only in communion with others (this "truth claim" is another idea running through many of the essays). The most serious poverty, though, is poverty of spirit—a lack of communion with others. Walker also repeats Marxist

objections to markets: that they endlessly expand, that they generate cheap goods that do not satisfy “genuine” human needs, that they fail to account for spillover benefits and costs, and so forth. None of these objections is new. He does make the salient point that “economic man” is voracious: The contractual, profit-seeking understanding of human behavior catalyzes the market’s solvent effect on morality and religion (31), which offer competing understandings of the human person. The market relies on their goodness but poisons them at the same time. This observation is meant to be historical rather than theoretical, and it is not answered satisfactorily in the other essays. How Walker’s economics of gift would work remains unclear.

In “Making Room in the Inn,” Jennifer Roback Morse has a particularly poignant essay about seeing others and ourselves as “gift.” The article is a good bridge between the two predominant sides represented in the book because it shows appreciation for markets *and* our nature as gift to ourselves and to one another. The weak, the mentally ill (e.g., those with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder), the newborn baby, the elderly, are all seen as gifts to those of us who must care for them. They summon forth our deeper sense of connection with others and our humanity. If they are cared for, we will also be cared for in our time of need. Dependency is an undeniable fact of human nature that should be recognized as much as autonomy and the economist’s concept of activity in pursuit of self-interest. She is in no way naïvely critical of capitalism (editor Schindler later summarizes her work, but he is highly critical of capitalism and liberalism in general), yet she summons us to recognize facts of human existence: our dependence at various times in life and our nature as gifts to one another. As illustration for her argument, she ends the essay with a moving account about the care of her mother-in-law who died after a struggle with breast cancer and Alzheimer’s disease.

The flagship neoconservative article is by Michael Novak, who sees compatibility between Catholic social thought and liberal economics, if liberalism is understood as “a commitment to the best institutions worthy of human dignity, such as limited government, the protection of political and civil rights, and respect for religious liberty and the free exercise of religion, as well as the institutions of a free economy powered by knowledge, know-how, invention and enterprise” (52). For Novak, Catholic social thought uses the primacy of spirit, solidarity, the subjectivity of society, subsidiarity, and breaking the chains of poverty as criteria to praise or blame liberal institutions. It is in Novak’s discussion of the subjectivity of society that he handles Walker’s main objection: that workers exist in the fullest development only in communion with others. Novak readily admits that the human subject as a whole exists only in *communio*. Hence, we have the firm emphasis on solidarity and subjectivity in Novak’s work, which is so heavily inspired by John Paul II. William Cavanaugh attempts to marshal a criticism of Novak by saying that there is no genuine freedom without *telos*; choice must have some direction if we are properly to use our freedom. However, elsewhere Novak has been clear that freedom must be properly used; indeed, he has suggested that the misuse of our freedom may be the modern person’s primary sin. This is crucial because it is not liberal economics that is primarily at fault but we ourselves who err.

Schindler (Professor and Dean at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family) who draws selectively from the essays, claims that “wealth and poverty must be understood finally in terms of the destiny that defines the nature of man” (347), and that this is the great “fault line” that separates the defenders of the market from its detractors. For Schindler, “man is truly at home insofar as he finds his identity inside the constitutive belonging to others (God, other creatures) summed up in *gift and gratitude*” (357, italics mine). To exchange goods and services strictly with a contract understanding is a form of poverty—out of line with this *gift* understanding and with the nature of man. Schindler’s essay would need to say more about an alternative practical economics to make its point. To read the essay is certainly to get the feeling that the present science of economics has been ransacked by theology. Western liberalism in general is heavily criticized. The essay is theologically very interesting and subtle, but gives little practical economic guidance (examples that are used are a mother who makes food with love for a baby and the local bakery lovingly making bread for customers). To my mind, the economy envisioned is not one for sinners but saints. There is little guidance on how to build a nonfeudal world economic system based on these fine theological insights, and there is insufficient appreciation for the real accomplishments of Western liberalism.

In his review of some of the main points of certain essays, editor Bandow (Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute) is more sympathetic to market institutions and practices than is his partner Schindler. Bandow is attentive not only to the practical material advantages of capitalism but to spiritual issues as well. Bandow summarizes: “The twentieth century demonstrates that coercive, collectivist systems undermine [the] pursuit of virtue and the good life much more than do capitalist systems” (328). Bandow and his authors offer us by far superior practical and moral understandings of economic systems as they have actually existed in the world.

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## Léon Harmel, Entrepreneur as Catholic Social Reformer

**Joan L. Coffey**

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2003 (340 pages)

Léon Harmel (1829–1915) no longer ranks among the best-known French social Catholics. Yet, within the generation spanning the years from 1870 to 1914, his was the most decisive imprint on his time; none, in the following generation, ever failed to refer to his work or ask for his support. The reason is that the *bon père* at Val-des-Bois made a decisive contribution toward bringing the gospel to the world of the factory and, by changing mentalities, toward the transference of charities from the realm of class collaboration to a family spirit.