

the *main* motivator in market economies? Is greed the same as the pursuit of profit? The authors might have recurred to sociological studies that address these questions and in so doing might have strengthened their case.

Even so, the questions are worth asking: How much of what goes on in the market is motivated by greed? What do the world's religions have to say about it? Can the world's religions subvert greed and raise up other values in its place? While the world's religions may be incommensurable on doctrine, might they be united in their concern for the poor?

Many may be put off by the assumption that the veins of global capitalism bleed greed. Those who can get past this and grant that the above questions need to be asked, will be well-served by this little book that surveys the world's religions on this issue.

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Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition:
Christian Ethics After MacIntyre
**Nancey Murphy, Brad J. Kallenberg,
and Mark Thiessen Nation (Editors)**
Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003
(385 pages)

With the publication of *After Virtue* in 1981, Alasdair MacIntyre became established as one of the leading and most controversial moral philosophers of our time. What set him apart was the untimely character of his thought: Standing against regnant “universalist” schools of ethics (e.g., Kantianism, utilitarianism), MacIntyre argued that all ethical discourse is embedded in or arises from particular *traditions* of inquiry, including the universalist schools themselves. What is more, MacIntyre argued that the most compelling and coherent account of ethics remains the virtue ethics of the Aristotelian tradition. Since *After Virtue*, MacIntyre's thought has embraced Thomas Aquinas as an even more coherent and synthetic moral thinker than Aristotle, and MacIntyre, himself, has converted to Catholicism.

Following MacIntyre, might there be seen to be a specifically *Christian* tradition of ethics, one that is both distinct from universalist, secular systems and in fruitful dialogue with them? And what might such a tradition say to urgent moral issues in society today? The editors of *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition* have assembled a fine collection of essays introducing the reader to the MacIntyrean method and addressing these questions.

Contributors are chiefly theologians, religious ethicists, and Scripture scholars, and include the luminaries Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder. Essays by Protestants, Catholics, and Jews are all notable for a focus on the *communal* character of lived faith; there is a marked emphasis on how theological ethics must be considered

as part of the phenomenon that is “the church.” The scholars agree with MacIntyre that Christianity constitutes a tradition or traditions that are the context, school, and safeguards of virtuous practices. This approach contrasts sharply with the individualist trajectory of much of Christian preaching and ethics in the twentieth century and may signal a promising move in scholarly, ecumenical dialogue.

Readers of this *Journal* will be engaged throughout by explicit and implicit critiques of the modern state. Students of MacIntyre view the modern state, with its secular-universalist pretensions, as both morally and intellectually incoherent and destructive of coherent ethical traditions (e.g., Hauerwas: “I do not believe we are citizens ... in this strange society in which we find ourselves”). From this vantage, modern notions of liberty and equality are themselves corrosive.

From the perspective of a commitment to a public philosophy or theology—one that seeks to engage the modern world—the MacIntyrean approach appears disengaged and ghettoizing, despite MacIntyre’s own claims that traditions can engage each other and prove mutually clarifying. D. Stephen Long’s essay, “Christian Economy,” is a case in point. Long identifies “the welfare state” and the “free market state” as dual manifestations of modern politics, both of which serve the disintegration of community life. He identifies genuine problems—for example, the decline of neighborhoods—but tends to view these only as epiphenomena of systemic errors in welfarism and free-market economics. A danger of broadly condemning modernity (a temptation for MacIntyreans) is that modern problems are not seen as amenable to modern solutions. Thus, a theologian such as Long cannot see as helpful, neighborhood-restoring movements such as the new suburban “main streets,” or the intentional community-building efforts of the New Urbanism.

Especially worthy of note is an essay by Rabbi Michael Goldberg on business ethics. Refreshingly free from anti-modern cant, the essay proposes that modern corporations are communities characterized by their own ethical practices and are worthy of respect and analysis.

Also worthy of special note are essays by Rodney Clapp on the family and by Duke University scholar Richard B. Hays on homosexuality and Christianity. Clapp argues soundly that the phrase “family values” is contentless and ahistorical and that Christianity offers resources for us to speak of and to foster, instead, “family virtues.” And Hays’ subtle analysis of the traditional Christian stricture against homosexual activity is particularly welcome in the wake of the 2003 Supreme Court decision in the *Lawrence* case and the recent ordination of an openly gay Episcopal bishop in New Hampshire.

Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition is suitable for the educated, general reader and is recommended for those interested in the important renaissance of virtue ethics.

—Todd R. Flanders

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