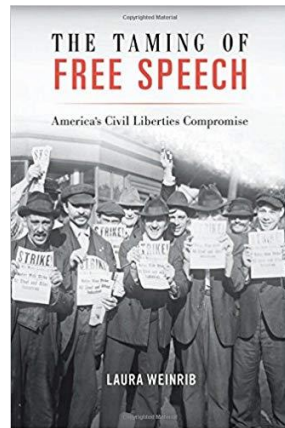


BOOK REVIEWS

Laura Weinrib. *The Taming of Free Speech: America's Civil Liberties Compromise*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. i + 461. ISBN 978-0674545717. Hardcover \$45.00.

Few recent Supreme Court decisions are as notorious as *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. The 2010 ruling says that free speech law prevents the government from restricting corporations' independent political spending. Viewed as a major setback for campaign finance reformers, *Citizens United* has even triggered calls for a constitutional amendment to overturn the ruling. The slogan *free speech for people*, rather than for big business, has become a rallying cry.



But what if *free speech for people* is itself the novel suggestion? What if *Citizens United* didn't substantially upend the American free speech tradition, but simply carried it to a logical conclusion?

In a provocative recent history of free speech law, University of Chicago law professor Laura Weinrib mentions *Citizens United* by name only once, but its shadow looms large nonetheless. In her telling, the intellectual groundwork for *Citizens United* was laid nearly a century ago, through early labor activism and an uneasy consensus between the ACLU and the entrenched economic interests of the late 1930s. By agreeing to this bargain, Weinrib contends, the ACLU evolved into a uniquely respected defender of civil liberties, while abandoning its roots in the labor movement.

The Taming of Free Speech: America's Civil Liberties Compromise chronicles the emergence of modern free-speech doctrine, tracing the doctrine's roots back to the early struggle of the labor movement against wealthy industrialists. Weinrib's volume is a sweeping work that encompasses three distinct narratives: the development of the concept of "free speech," the role played by organized labor in pushing for civil liberties, and the ideological history of the ACLU. At times the breadth of her storytelling leads the book to lose its focus, as when she launches into extended discussions of the Scopes "monkey trial" regarding evolution or the development of obscenity law. But the book remains engrossing throughout, with a surprising thesis: in recounting the long history of governmental efforts to suppress "seditious" and "disruptive" speech, Weinrib makes clear that current popular ideas about free speech—such as the view that constitutional speech rights are both universal and nearly absolute—are far more historically novel than many Americans likely believe.

Her story begins in the early 1900s, shortly after the Supreme Court's controversial decision in *Lochner v. New York*. *Lochner* invalidated a worker-protection law on the grounds that it violated "liberty of contract" between companies and their workers, ushering in an era of pro-business Court rulings that led to longstanding skepticism about the judicial system among organized labor.

With the courts seemingly closed to them, labor activists pursued direct action in the form of protests and disruptions. These early civil-liberties advocates articulated an expansive vision of free expression—including concepts like the right to strike and agitate publicly against employers—that was closely linked to belief in the urgent need for economic redistribution. In an ironic quirk of history, the first ideas about modern civil liberties emerged from a radical collectivism that was deeply hostile to contemporary liberal notions of individual autonomy.

The *Lochner* line of cases came to a screeching halt when the Great Depression struck. As business interests issued a range of challenges to

Franklin D. Roosevelt's proposed New Deal, Roosevelt and his administration knew they needed the judiciary to approve their progressive reforms. By threatening to expand the membership of the Court and staff it with pro-New Deal appointees, Roosevelt successfully goaded the Court: Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes beat the Court-packing plan with the "switch in time that saved nine." A new Court majority would uphold Roosevelt's New Deal reforms.

Enter the ACLU, which had begun life as a pro-labor activist group that shunned the prospect of "impact litigation." Now, facing a chastened Court willing to lend a constitutional imprimatur to Roosevelt's reforms, the organization began advancing novel arguments for civil liberties—arguments that could be powerfully grounded in the American tradition, but that also led to unforeseen social consequences.

Weinrib's tale reaches its historical climax in 1940, when a major internal conflict broke out within the ACLU. Following a spate of company-sponsored violence against union protestors, the National Labor Relations Board issued an order barring the Ford Motor Company from distributing anti-union literature to its employees. The ACLU faced a dilemma: stand with labor, in the tradition of the early radicals who had birthed the organization, or defend Ford's right to express itself freely? When the ACLU decisively came down on the side of "free speech for everyone"—even powerful, prosperous speakers like the Ford Company—it heralded a sea change in the ACLU's popularity, and bridged a longstanding divide between the ACLU and political conservatives. A subsequent internal purge of Communist sympathizers from the ACLU's rolls further cemented this transition and cultivated even more public goodwill.

Subsequent free speech cases in the 1960s and 1970s would go on to enshrine a view of the First Amendment as a vehicle of individual expression, sharply contrasting with earlier perspectives. Today's outraged reactions to *Citizens United* are a testament to just how deeply this newer view has penetrated the American cultural consciousness.

Flag-burning is protected by the First Amendment, the modern argument goes, but corporate involvement in the political process is something different: free speech is about *people*, not groups, communicating their views.

Yet the earliest labor activists and the ACLU had pushed for free speech to be viewed as a *group*-oriented right: shorn of its leftist politics, this original theory—that free expression must be understood as a right exercised by collective groups, *including wealthy businesses*—lies at the heart of *Citizens United*. Given the free speech doctrine's genesis in the labor movement, *Citizen United's* holding takes on a deeply ironic dimension.

That irony underlies the provocative question at the heart of *Taming*: did the ACLU “sell out” by taking Ford's side? In one account, the 1940 debate was the moment the ACLU first found itself, emerging as a genuinely nonpartisan organization admirably willing to stand on principle in the face of severe pressure. From a different standpoint, the ACLU's decision to recognize “employer free speech” was a compromise of longstanding ideals, a sacrifice of labor interests on the altar of mainstream respectability. That free expression must be understood as a right that may be exercised by collective groups, *including prosperous businesses*, lies at the heart of *Citizens United*; to the opinion's liberal critics, this is the bitter fruit of the ACLU's long-ago betrayal.

In depicting the ACLU's internal dilemma, Weinrib highlights—whether intentionally or not—a persistent tension between competing visions of American justice: must law be based on principles that are blind to and impartial about the beneficiaries, or is it ultimately inextricable from its social and economic context? One might call these the philosophies of the late Justice Antonin Scalia and of Justice Sonia Sotomayor, respectively, and they are not easily reconcilable.

Weinrib's tone is often mournful, wistfully recalling a time when the ACLU was unabashedly pro-worker. But given the seminal impact of the organization after 1940, this regret is shortsighted. While the ACLU's

rejection of judicial consequentialism sits uneasily alongside modern progressive legal thought, that willingness to stand zealously on constitutional principle laid the groundwork for transformative victories to come, including *Brown v. Board of Education*. Any argument that would potentially subordinate constitutionalism to perceived economic inequities is a two-edged sword: judges become merely agents of either the “powerful” or the “powerless,” transforming the legal landscape into a zero-sum battlefield, and the balance of power can change dramatically.

By consistently arguing that constitutional protections apply to *everyone*—Ku Klux Klan protestors and labor radicals alike—the modern ACLU resists political classification along easy lines. And on net, the disadvantaged still benefit from this regime: adopting the “Scalian” notion that constitutional principles must be applied with absolute consistency—civic consequences be damned—cuts sharply against potential reactionary arguments that society must be protected from a threatening “other.” If the government cannot seize a major corporation’s property without due process, neither can it seize an immigrant’s property without due process: equal rights are equal rights.

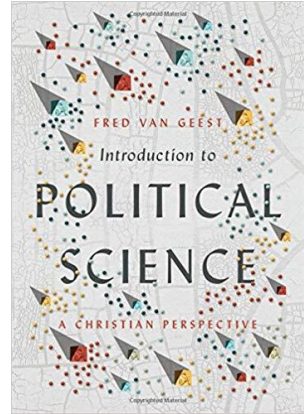
With its controversial 1940 decision to defend the Ford Company, the ACLU morphed from a special-interest group to a national proponent of civil rights and civil liberties. And no matter one’s views on *Citizens United* itself, that transition has helped construct a social order in which virtually all Americans—wealthy and poor alike—have the freedom to speak up without fear.

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Fred Van Geest. *Introduction to Political Science: A Christian Perspective.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2017. Pp. xv + 315. ISBN 978-0830851805. Hardcover. \$40.00.

In Christian higher education, it is a common question of what to do with secular textbooks. There are very few Christian textbooks, or textbooks that are compatible with a Christian worldview, a fact which often leaves professors and instructors to supplement the secular textbook with faith-based readings. I remember my own undergraduate experience at a small, Christian liberal arts university, where as students in Political Science 101, we used a workbook written by our own professor.



Fred Van Geest, chairman of the political science department at Bethel University, attempts to provide a solution for Christian political science courses and the faculty who teach them with his textbook, *Introduction to Political Science: A Christian Perspective*. As one endorser of the book says, “[T]hinking about the study of politics from a Christian perspective usually entails holding a secular textbook in one hand and the Bible or your favorite ‘faith-and-politics’ book in the other. Van Geest offers students an introduction to political science...that highlights how various theological traditions within Christianity have weighed in on the same questions and concepts that attract the scholarly focus of our secular counterparts.”²

This is certainly Van Geest’s aim for the textbook, and he notes in the preface that “this book is designed to introduce you to the world of political science from a Christian perspective” (p. vi). However, the

² Peter Baker, American Studies Program, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, as published on the front matter of the book

Christian perspective that he presents throughout the book is one that is decidedly pro-government and oddly anti-libertarian.

Not only is it obvious that Van Geest disagrees with those who would identify as libertarian, he goes so far as to intentionally criticize and belittle them throughout the book. His poorly-cited slights are sprinkled throughout the book, even in places where they are not relevant, and he included several factual errors about libertarianism and prominent libertarians. He undoubtedly is the type of Christian college faculty who would make libertarian students feel unwelcome, which is all too common, and is why my co-authors and I wrote *Called to Freedom: Why You Can Be Christian and Libertarian* (Wipf and Stock, 2017).

Chapter 1 is titled “What is Government? Why do we need it?,” and immediately we see the author’s pro-government bias. To answer the title’s first question, the author explains in a very Obama-esque way, that “government is an institution that helps us make collective decisions” (p. 4). This is an insufficient answer, because obviously there are plenty of institutions that help us make decisions that are not government. Our churches help us make decisions about our spiritual and personal lives, our families help us make decision and plan for our futures, and our banks help us make decision about our money, just to name a few examples.

Political economist Max Weber identifies the following two characteristics of government that differentiate it from these other kinds of institutions: 1) it maintains a territorial monopoly over lawmaking and enforcement and 2) it collects revenue through compulsory taxation.³ This is the definition of government my co-author, Jason Hughey, uses in our book, as it clearly differentiates government from other social institutions.⁴ One doesn’t have to be a libertarian to see the differences between this definition and the amorphous one offered by Van Geest.

³ Weber, Max. “Politics as a Vocation.” In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, pg 77. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946

⁴ Jason Hughey, “What Does The Bible Say About Government?” in *Called to Freedom: Why You Can Be Christian and Libertarian*, ed. by Elise Daniel (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 38.

However, his answer to the second question is more concerning. Without even entertaining a serious debate about whether or not we “need” government, he makes the bold claim that such questions are unbiblical, saying “anti-government rhetoric, the kind that disparages the idea of government in general, is inconsistent with the Christian view.” He even goes so far as to say, “government is a gift from God, even though it may not always feel that way!” (p. 5).

An odd thing about his pro-government position in this chapter is that he includes a brief discussion of rational choice theory, the idea that “political actors are good at pursuing their self-interest and will reliably do so” (p. 15). However, he attributes this behavior primarily to voters, and instead of looking at what happens when politicians or bureaucrats act selfishly, he asserts that these people “may also be motivated by less selfish desires such as a desire to seek justice” (p. 15). This would have been an excellent place to discuss that some Christians support limited government because of what can happen when sinful, selfish people are given the ability to use force over others. However, Van Geest passed on giving that position representation.

Finally, in the chapter’s “Study and Discussion Questions” he asks students to respond to the question, “[W]hat might happen if we were to have no government at all? What does your answer imply about the specific functions of government?” This is interesting because the idea of “no government” was not really addressed in the chapter. The primary examples he gives throughout the chapter of what services government provides are road-building and public education. The conclusion the question is leading students toward is that if there were no government, there would be no roads and no schools. Hopefully some students reading this textbook have pointed out in their class discussions that just because the government currently builds the roads and runs the education system doesn’t mean they always have or should or that no one else could do so.

Chapter 3 introduces different “political ideologies,” starting with classical liberalism. While he points out that “the root concept in liberalism

is liberty or freedom,” (p. 47) he gives no discussion to what the Bible has to say about liberty. He also correctly points out that “classical liberals tend to have a minimalist view of government. According to them, government should simply do its best to get out of the way of individuals and should only intervene if other individuals threaten citizens’ basic rights, such as, for example, the right to private property” (p. 52). However, he again gives no conversation to what the Bible would have to say about these ideas, and offers only disparaging remarks about how classical liberals used to think that freedom only applied to “white, property-owning men” and that they currently think government should not be concerned with wealth inequality or race, although he provides no citations for any of these.

To add insult to injury, Van Geest goes on to make some bizarre and inaccurate remarks about libertarians. Particularly interesting was his comment that, “Ayn Rand (1905-1982), an avowed atheist, is one of the intellectual heroes for many libertarians today. In fact, libertarian US congressman and presidential candidate Ron Paul named his son Rand Paul after Ayn Rand” (p. 53). The younger Paul’s full name is Randal Howard Paul, which is easily discoverable from a quick internet search, and is not named after Ayn Rand.

Since he was on the topic of libertarians, he added, “some of the positions taken by the libertarian party of the United States might be unpopular with many Christians (see sidebar)” (p. 53). In the sidebar which spans two full pages, he included some of the 2016 positions of the Libertarian Party. At no point does he explain that libertarian philosophy is not synonymous with the Libertarian Party, nor does he explain why some of these positions would be “unpopular” with many Christians.

While he does go on to briefly discuss other ideologies such as socialism, communism, and nationalism, he returns to classical liberalism with his closing thoughts for the chapter:

In short, secular ideologies are based on a flawed understanding of the world, how it was created, and how God is redeeming it. For instance, liberalism, the most dominant ideology in many places in the world today, is based on the principle of the sovereignty of the individual. Clearly this principle is directly at odds with the idea of God's sovereignty, which is at the very core of a Christian perspective. (p. 61)

Again, he provides no citations for these claims and no discussion of why it is at odds with Christianity. It is a reasonable position for a person to hold that God is sovereign, but that as far as government is concerned, human beings who are made in God's image are of utmost importance.

Chapter 4 provides a fairly straightforward explanation of how different democracies are structured. However, he chose to include another little jab at a couple prominent libertarians in the chapter's "For Further Exploration" section with the following prompt:

Watch the movie *Citizen Koch*. Do you think the political influence of the Koch brothers is a threat to democracy? What might be significant about the fact that the Koch brothers are financial contributors to PBS, and PBS chose not to air the film after it was complete? (p. 85)

While the Koch brothers and their political involvement are certainly fair game for analysis, this prompt is remarkably misleading. Could students not be given examples from a variety of political backgrounds? There are certainly plenty of billionaires to go around. Are we supposed to understand the prompt as saying that the Koch brothers are a "threat" to our country? This sort of singling-out of prominent Christian libertarians is concerning for a textbook claiming to offer a Christian perspective.

Chapter 5 is supposed to be an explanation of the different institutions that make up governments, but much of it is spent defending government employees from negative stereotypes. "Bureaucracy" he notes, "has often come to connote a corrupt, unresponsive, rule-bound, inflexible group of people who don't care much about their work" (p. 90). This is unfortunate,

he says, because “many government employees, rightly called *civil servants* or *public servants*, are extremely devoted to providing services in a responsive and efficient way” (pp. 90-91, emphasis original). He argues that we should use the term “public service” rather than bureaucracy, because it “more effectively convey the wide range of opportunities Christians have to demonstrate their love to their fellow neighbors” (p. 91).

This would have been a great opportunity to return to the discussion of rational choice theory, and look at what happens when government employees do not act in the best interest of the people they serve, intentionally or unintentionally. Instead of a thoughtful discussion, he briefly acknowledges that “we need virtuous public servants,” because “when they lack democratic values, things can go horribly awry” (p. 102). However he only uses two examples of politicians who lacked democratic values and they are Richard Nixon and disgraced former South Carolina governor, Mark Sanford—two examples which are neither timely nor the most obvious, yet are both Republican. The latter is often identified as a libertarian for his free-market positions. These two men certainly had their public scandals, but they are not alone. They are just alone in being criticized by Van Geest as lacking democratic values.

Chapter 8 deals with funding governments, and specifically addresses libertarians again, saying, “many people have strong feelings about taxation - some libertarians even call it theft, a position clearly at odds with scriptural teaching.” Instead of pointing to scripture, he explains this by saying that “taxation is essential if we wish to pay for services such as national defense, healthcare, social security, parks, garbage collection, police services, education, and so on” (p.156).

While it should be obvious that there are many ways to fund these kinds of activities, Van Geest doubles down on his claims in his discussion of social policy in Chapter 9. Focusing on education, he says,

From a Christian point of view, failing to provide education for all would also be a tremendous loss because citizens with God-given abilities would be unable to develop and use those abilities for the benefit of others. In the Christian tradition, believers are told in Genesis 1:22, 28 to “be fruitful,” and in today’s modern world, it is extremely difficult to do this without an adequate education. (p. 182)

This is particularly odd because education is one area where we see a variety of funding strategies, such as private education, homeschooling tax credits, and private scholarships. One of the other areas he mentioned, such as national defense, may have made his case better, but still would have been noticeably biased.

Continuing to support government spending, Chapter 10 on economic policy includes a lengthy introduction to the theories of John Maynard Keynes. He so takes for granted that Keynesian economics is correct that he says, “in difficult economic times, it is tempting for governments to do the opposite of what is recommended under Keynesian economic theory because government revenues also declined in bad economic times, motivating governments to lower spending or raise taxes to improve worsening deficit situations” (p. 198, 200). Concerningly, there is neither equal treatment of opposing theories nor an equally robust explanation of laissez-faire economics. He merely waves off capitalism saying that “while capitalism has quickly become the dominant type of economic system in the world, it can’t survive without government” (p. 202). This statement ought to have been accompanied by an explanation, or at least a citation, about why capitalism has dominated and why he claims it can’t survive without government, yet the chapter includes neither.

While he begrudgingly admits that capitalist economies “are clearly superior to communist, planned economies,” he laments that they are “based on the idea of self-interest” (p. 210). He goes on to say, “it is not an economic system that has at its heart a concern for meeting human needs and creating opportunities for people to flourish. It is not an economic

system based on human love and compassion” (p. 210). There are many Christian economists at places like the Acton Institute and the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics who would disagree, and who regularly make thoughtful and compelling cases for how free markets do in fact promote human flourishing, but they aren’t given a voice here.

Chapters 11 and 12 look at international relations, the United Nations, and other international organizations meeting the needs of the world’s poor. The presentation of the different institutions is pretty straightforward, except there are a couple of glaring omissions: there is no discussion of how access to the global free market has raised billions of people out of destitute poverty, nor is there an acknowledgement that corrupt governments in many countries limit human flourishing. Van Geest’s focus is entirely on promoting governmental bodies and the not-for-profit organizations that work with them.

In conclusion, Van Geest’s textbook provides one Christian perspective—one that happens to be considerably pro-government and negative towards libertarians. Given its evangelical orientation, this textbook suffers from insufficient citations, especially from scripture. There were far too many places where Van Geest claims to speak for the Bible, or all Christians, without referencing a particular passage when it would have been appropriate to do so. For this reason, he certainly has failed in his goal of providing a solution to the problem of holding a secular textbook in one hand and the Bible in the other. Any Christian college faculty wanting to use this textbook in their political science course, will still need to hold the Bible in their other hand to make up for the lack of scripture. They may also want to supplement with free market and Christian libertarian readings so their students get a fair presentation of that viable Christian perspective which is unfairly maligned in Van Geest’s textbook.

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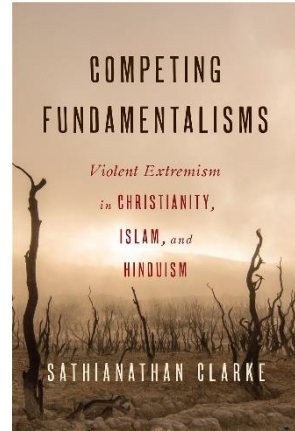
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Sathianathan Clarke. *Competing Fundamentalisms: Violent Extremism in Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2017. Pp. viii + 246. ISBN 978-0664259884. Paperback \$30.00.

The relationship between religion and violence is a touchy one. This is especially true in a context where national hopes and tribalistic politics finds convenient validation from the eternal throne of God (i.e., “divine authorization”). But something has emerged to scholars of religion that can help untangle this subject—namely, the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism.¹

Sathianathan Clarke’s new book *Competing Fundamentalisms* seeks to unfold this subject and explain why it (not simply “religion” or any religious tradition in particular) is cause for public concern. Three major religious traditions (Christian, Islamic, Hindu) are examined separately and then together (instead of just one or two). Along the way, Clarke crafts a deeply insightful historical narrative behind contemporary fundamentalisms from each religion which, interestingly enough, all emerged in the early 1900s. The latest scholarship is implemented without falling off balance in his assessment of each tradition (even while being a Christian professor). The final result is a remarkably concise, readable, and discerning volume.

Clarke is by no means the first to spotlight the many harms caused by religious fundamentalism. Even narrowing to the Christian tradition, the



¹ Note that David Harrington Watt, *Antifundamentalism in Modern America* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2017) offers an alternative narrative that questions the legitimacy of the “fundamentalism” category, or at least its supposed neutral status. But his argument is uphill given the five-volume *Fundamentalisms* project by the American Academy of Religion in the 1990s, and field studies like Josie McSkimming, *Leaving Christian Fundamentalism and the Reconstruction of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

Oxford and Vanderbilt scholar James Barr wrote three heavy-hitting volumes on the subject in the 1970-80s²—interestingly, a period of “resurgence” (p. 38) for global religious fundamentalism. But, what is it? Clarke patiently positions himself towards the end of the book to provide this basic definition. His concise summary is found below with insertions of key words (to help readers grasp its depth):

Religious fundamentalism is a communal mind-set [separatism, in/out dynamics] steeped in a revealed Word-vision [biblicism, Qu’ranism, literal interpretation, fixed textual foundation], corroborated by a definitive ethical system of world-ways for human living [includes patriarchalism, practical dos and don’ts in contrast to godless world], and calibrated by an aggressive movement [statism, nationalism, militancy] that labors toward the goal that such a global order will govern the social, political, economic, cultural, and religious lives of all human beings [universal in scope; colonization/proselytization]. (p. 154)³

The first chapter of the book unfolds the complex dynamics of religion and public life, giving priority to “four theories that underestimate the role of religion” (p. 9). Most of these theories (social and psychological) tend to be secular, and don’t give credit to the role of religion itself in fundamentalism. “I submit that it is irresponsible, especially for nonfundamentalist religious practitioners,” Clarke concludes, “to blame the violent manifestations of religious fundamentalisms exclusively or

² James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Louisville: WJK, 1978); *Beyond Fundamentalism* (Louisville: WJK, 1984); *Escaping Fundamentalism* (London: SCM, 1984). The content from most of these books can be found in the more recent publication, John Barton, ed., *Bible and Interpretation: The Collected Essays of James Barr*, vol 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

³ Cf. McSkimming, *Leaving Christian Fundamentalism*, 40: “In short, Christian fundamentalism may be understood as a totalizing and highly influential social movement, thoroughly adept in the acculturation of its participant members through embracing and promoting a defensive collective identity, suspicious of ‘the other’ but also committed to mission and evangelism. It is apparent that a guarded, fortified and self-perpetuating inward focus (with requisite identity specifications) emerges.”

primarily on nonreligious spheres or forces. We must be honest with ourselves: religion is part of the problem" (p. 32). He further qualifies, "I do not claim that religion can be distilled from and extracted out of the rest of reality....religion cannot help but be expressed though [*sic*] cultural, social, political, economic, and psychological dimensions of our twenty-first-century world. Yet neither can religion be fully emptied into these other facets of human life" (p. 33).

The next three chapters (2-4) look at Christian, Islamic, and Hindu fundamentalisms, respectively. After sketching out the 20th century origins, he summarizes Christian fundamentalism in three headings:

1. Biblical Absolutism

- a. "Modernity threatens to let assured reason and liberal reasoning shake the secure foundation of the Bible as absolute authority in the life of the community of believers as they seek to bring about the divine purposes for world history. The other sacred narratives jeopardize the fundamentalist myth that as a 'Christian nation' the United States must be grounded upon and guided by God's Word as revealed concretely, historically, and literally only in the Bible." (p. 49)
- b. "...Christian fundamentalists find their own purpose organically and missionally connected to the nature of God's powerful and even violent works in the Bible." (p. 49)

2. Cosmic Struggle between Good and Evil

- a. "fundamentalists espouse and disseminate imagery that bespeaks the clash between powers of good and evil. Thus, battle symbolism permeates individual Christian's thought..." (p. 51)
- b. "...this dualistic worldview marks the overflow of such conflicting language and symbolism from the mind of individuals and communities into real life [e.g., suspicion and antipathy towards Muslims]." (p. 51-52)
- c. "...this cosmic conflict between good and evil will end in a cosmic showdown in which God will completely crush and conquer Satan and all the forces of evil...[this] apocalyptic end

that involves the whole cosmos makes this dualistic drama pregnant with meaning for fundamentalists.” (p. 52)

3. “Chosenness” and God’s Rule over the Whole World.
 - a. “When the absolute God ‘whose name is Jealous’ acts against those perceived as a threat to this ultimacy in the world, we humans see ourselves as authorized to commit violence.” (p. 56; as a case in point, Clarke quotes Liberty University President Jerry Falwell Sr., who cited the Bible to legitimize the Iraq War in 2003)
 - b. “...the United States has been chosen by God...[as such] the nation must engage in beliefs and actions that demonstrate its fidelity to God, justifying its status as chosen” (p. 57)
 - c. “...the United States must embrace its calling to be ‘the Redeemer nation’ within the world.” (p. 58)

Clarke’s account incisively identifies how, through politics and belief, Christians came to be known for *legitimizing* large-scale violence instead of opposing it. He also rightly notes (as other scholars have), that fundamentalism is an unwitting, negative *extension* of modernism, not an alternative to it (p. 61). All of this affects Christian perceptions of Islam in global affairs, doing theology, and self-perception as the Christian community—especially in connection to statism.

The alliance between neoconservative political ideology and religious fundamentalism swept the country, which believed it was under massive and violent threat, both from secular and liberal “pagans” within and religious and anti-Christian “terrorists” abroad...[T]he justification for violence and responsibility for war was effectively transferred by Enlightenment modernity from the church to the nation-state...On the other hand, Christian fundamentalists became much more vested in gaining control of the nation-state. I have highlighted the way in which the Bible, flag, and God were entwined by fundamentalism to forge an imagined “deification of the nation.” On the other hand, Christian fundamentalists could utilize the state to carry out violence against those who were demonized by religious and political leaders of the chosen

nation....[M]ythical appeal to the privileged status of “redeemer nation” is fused at the with engaging the myth of “redemptive violence.” (pp. 45, 61-62)

The chapter on Muslim fundamentalism begins with background dynamics of Islamic violence and traverses into the Ottoman Empire and ultimately the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1900s. Like Christian fundamentalism, Muslim fundamentalism is a response to Western, modern secularism and an uncomfortable, shifting sense of cultural identity. Clarke traces the contours of the movement in three cords: “(1) complete surrender to the one God and conforming to Allah’s will made available in the Sharia; (2) absolutist Scripture interpreted by authoritative leaders committed to a divinely scripted view of the world; and (3) promotion of global religious civilization that extends the Muslim way of life in a world of westernization and modernization” (p. 81). The Qu’ran and role of tradition, concepts of *jihad*, and the present-day situation (ISIS, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt) are also covered.

The chapter on Hindu fundamentalism is particularly interesting for Western readers (being restricted to India). Since the goal is to establish a nation-state based on a particular race and set of ideological principles, the whole enterprise felt awfully similar to Jewish Zionism. In any case, the three contours of Hindu fundamentalism Clarke assembles are (1) “strongly cultivated scriptural identity” (based on the Vedas), (2) body-emphasis (“the objective of Hinduism is for human beings to reflect the harmonious order of god’s body in the world”), (3) “hegemonic politics and monistic philosophy” (nationalist aspirations, also rooted in Hindu theologies, e.g., *atman*, *dharmā*, etc.). Clarke concludes: “Many fear that the dual tactics of persuasion through Vedic education and coercion through violence will succeed in uniting Hindu fundamentalism’s short-term goals of ‘intimidation of the minorities, especially Muslims and Christians’ with its long-term one, that of ‘Hinduization of the whole of India’” (p. 126).

The next chapter then connects the dots from all three traditions without doing injustice to their distinctives. Clarke identifies three overlapping connections in this respect:

1. "Unwavering confidence in and complete submission to the Word-vision" (the Real and true is definitively revealed in revelatory, textual form)
2. "Fixed and straight-forward world-ways" ("rigid and uniform ways of living" p. 134)
3. "Global order in conformity to an absolute word-vision and in compliance with fixed world-ways" (world domination)

Clarke provides numerous case studies to make all of these themes come alive. He also looks at "intra-religious" and "interreligious" competitions, concluding the chapter with a discussion on fundamentalism's common enemies: secularism and modernity (p. 159ff).

Finally, the concluding chapter looks for positive ways in dealing with fundamentalism, such as "unleashing religion's constructive power" (p. 165), "detoxifying scripture" (p. 167), being "stewards of God's mysteries" and, above all, being proclaimers of "the gospel of peace" (p. 177). Religion in general is not the problem. In fact, he finds redemptive threads (especially within Christianity) that can disarm the destructive mayhem of 20th- and 21st-century Islamic, Hindu, and Christian fundamentalisms.

There are other particular features in Clarke's insightful analysis. In reconciling violence in the scriptures with Christian theology, he essentially takes the view of John Crossan, saying,

Jesus represents the radical and inclusive nonviolent version of ushering in God's vision for the world that subverts the contending vision of God pursued by the elite establishment, which depends on violence. I believe that this third approach, with its emphasis on embrace peace with 'distributive justice,' offers up a credible conception of sacred Scripture as a whole that both delegitimizes violence and validates nonviolent action on behalf of the well-being of all human beings. It manages to keep

the traditional canon as a mark of respect...without ignoring the contest between violent and nonviolent strands woven into the metanarrative. (p. 172)

Unfortunately, Clarke doesn't draw the connection between the economic concept of "distributive justice" and how its enforcement almost always requires the kind of empire and coercion that is being critiqued. Liberal-democratic and socialist applications of any kind of economic or moral "justice" necessarily (and historically) terminate in, ironically, the "elite establishment, which depends on violence."⁴ A sharp distinction between the role of the church and the role of the state would have been very helpful here—especially as one sees Caesar's head popping up all over the place.⁵

Clarke also highlights an important, anti-intellectual feature of fundamentalism when discussing fundamentalist Hindu education: "Acceptance of the idea that the Vedas are divinely revealed scripture, *even if one does not know what they contain*, undergirds the fundamentalists' aspirations to Hindu unity" (p. 115, emphasis original). How many people have been compelled by Christian fundamentalists to believe in the

⁴ One recalls that a "state" is, by definition, a territorial monopoly on violence. See Anthony Giddens, *Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 2:121; Max Weber, "Politik als Beruf," in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* (Muenchen, 1921), 396-450; Franz Oppenheimer, *The State*, trans. John Gitterman (Black Rose Books, 2007, originally published New York: B and W Huebsch, 1908), 15; Murray Rothbard, *For a New Liberty* (Auburn: Ludwig Von Mises Institute, 2006), 56-68; David Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom*, 3rd ed. (David Friedman via Createspace, 2014), 108. Despite confusion about this subject in Clarke's account, he nevertheless brilliantly observes that "Capturing the nation-state to implement the Master's metanarrative within the country across the whole world, as human history marches toward the end times, becomes an important goal for Christians in the United States" (p. 54).

⁵ The same can be said of a similar, recent volume: Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson, eds. *Violence in the World's Religious Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), as noted in my review published by *Reading Religion* (November 8 2017).

truthfulness (or “inerrancy”) of the Bible without even having read it? One should never forget the remarks of the popular Christian rapper, Jahaziel, after leaving his faith: “When I first joined Christianity, I was told ‘you must believe this book is God’s infallible word...Before I’d even read the book!! How can one decide for themselves whether a book is accurate and true BEFORE they have even read & investigated the book thoroughly?!”⁶ Clarke doesn’t mention it, but he might as well have said it: Christian fundamentalism (along with its dominant form, American evangelicalism) is one of the leading *causes* (not guardrails) of apostasy.⁷

Competing Religious Fundamentalisms is arguably one of the most important works of contemporary religion. Bombings, wars, and other acts of violence is serious business; most human beings living on earth today are affected, in some way, by Islamic (think 9/11 and America’s endless “war on terrorism”) and Christian fundamentalism (think literal Bible interpretation and bans on women teachers). And if the driving motivations underneath all of this are *theological*, then an informed, level-headed, and constructive assessment of this topic is extremely valuable. This is the kind of assessment found in Clarke’s work.⁸

It’s also encouraging that Clarke’s own Christian tradition has neither been alienated (flawed as it has been throughout history) or rendered powerless to deal with these notoriously complex problems. In fact, he plainly says at one point: “...tolerance is not enough...much more is required of Christians, who are called and commissioned to transform the

⁶ Jahaziel, cited in Billy Hallowell, “Christian Rapper Renounces Christianity, Citing ‘Human Errors of the Bible,’ ‘Brutal Nature of Its God’ — and There’s More.” *The Blaze* (January 5, 2016).

⁷ This is pointed out by the many volumes on this subject, including those in apologetics such as Craig Evans, *Fabricating Jesus* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008).

⁸ There are at least two typos in the manuscript: “absolutism” (p. 46); “though” (instead of “through,” p. 33).

broken world that God loves so much" (p. 177).⁹ He ably unfolds the nonviolent Christian vision of the world by revisiting theologians, popular texts, and ideas that maybe need dusting off for some readers. He shows how in Ephesians Paul "was drawing from the imagery of the Roman Empire even as he was spiritualizing such military symbolism by infusing it with the ethic of nonviolent resistance of the people on the Jesus way" (p. 182), how a sound doctrine of the Trinity demolishes selfish monarchy and "reveals and authorizes self-emptying love" (p. 180), and most of all, how an ethic of peace is not just a popular theme in Christianity, but a central feature of Christian identity.

Clarke is also careful not to dismiss God's work in other religious traditions. He realizes the futility of some pluralistic attempts at simply collapsing religious traditions together by saying "we're all on the same page," but also realizes that people of different faiths have positive contributions to offer one another. In the end, one either embraces fundamentalist religion or peaceful religion:

The difference between fundamentalist religion on the one hand and peace-embracing religion on the other, can be seen in the *competing* propensity of the battlefield with the *completing* possibility of the flower garden. On God's behalf, violent fundamentalists are competing in a battle to take over the world....Competing names, competing peoples, competing lands, and competing lifestyles are all needed in this cosmic dualistic struggle to make One God to be Lord over all. By contrast, the nonviolence implied in the restorative Word, inclusive ethical practices, and all-encompassing world of *completing* religions serves to make room for God's overflowing plenitude. God is the richer communion into which the whole human family is made free to enter. Names, peoples,

⁹ Cf. the nonviolent ethic of libertarianism compared to the nonviolent *and* constructive ethic of Christian libertarianism in Jamin Andreas Hübner, "Christian Libertarianism: An Introduction and Signposts for the Road Ahead," *The Christian Libertarian Review* 1 (2018): 15-74.

lands, and lifestyles complete each other in this divine-human communion of abundant life. (p. 186)

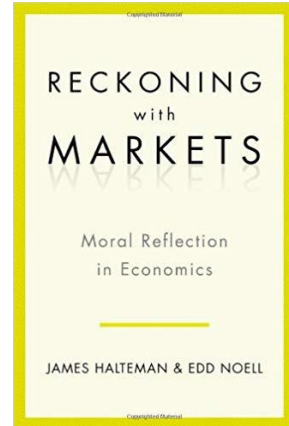
This is an encouraging end to the book, especially for those who struggle to see how world religions might peacefully coexist in an ever-globalized age.

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James Halteman and Edd Noell. *Reckoning with Markets: Moral Reflection in Economics.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xvi + 218. ISBN 978-0199763702. Hardcover \$40.95.

Reckoning with Markets attempts to reintroduce a broader approach to economics that faded with the rise of the neoclassical synthesis in the early-to-mid-20th century. By explicitly engaging moral questions, the authors push back against (narrow, scientific) economics in favor of (broad, humane) political economy. But as we will see, there are some issues regarding execution that limit the force of the authors' arguments. Furthermore, it is questionable whether students of economics, who are this book's primary audience, can benefit from such a broader perspective unless they are already highly competent practitioners of rational choice.



Unusually for books in the social sciences, and in my view refreshingly, the Preface is not a mere preview of coming attractions. The authors describe their experiences attempting to craft market-friendly academic programs in post-Communist Russia, including their unfortunate failures. They believe this failed due to, in part, a lack of appreciation for the mutual impingement of moral values and economic forces. This impingement is the subject of the book. Chapter one explores how the greatest minds in the Western canon have thought about the relationship of ethical conduct to commercial life. The bulk of the chapter is written as an imaginary plenary session with debates between Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, Karl Marx, Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and other giants of political economy. The purpose is to show just how varied are the various theories and frameworks for exploring morals and markets, as well as to set up the

detailed investigations into those theories and frameworks in the following chapters.

Chapter two focuses on moral reflection in the ancient Mediterranean world. The writings and philosophies of the ancient Greeks (Plato and Aristotle, with Hesiod playing a supporting role), the Old and New Testaments, and the Stoics are the three main traditions surveyed. The chapter outlines their basic thought, discusses how each relates to the other, and highlights differences with conceptions of human welfare in modern economics. Although I think there are some small mischaracterizations of F.A. Hayek and Adam Smith, this an informative chapter that lays important historical groundwork.

The third chapter covers the economic thought of the Scholastics. The bulk of discussion focuses, understandably, on St. Thomas Aquinas, but later thinkers such as Cajetan are also discussed. The themes receiving the most attention are justice and exchange and usury. The authors do a good job of showing how Scholastic thinking evolved as the medieval commercial revival spread throughout Europe. They conclude with a discussion of the 2007-8 financial crisis that shows how Scholastic moral reasoning about commerce can be applied.

Chapter four is on Adam Smith, the ‘founding father of modern economics.’ Unsurprisingly given the themes of the book, it is Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* rather than the *Wealth of Nations* that receives the majority of the authors’ attention. The chapter discusses the moral underpinnings of commercial society, including the importance of moral sympathy and impartial reflection. At times this chapter made me uncomfortable, such as when the authors repeatedly refer to Smith’s positive theory of political economy as “mechanistic,” without it being clear from the context whether this view is the authors’ or that of scholars in the secondary literature. But overall it is a reasonable treatment of the evolution of economic thought in the Enlightenment era, and its Scottish manifestation in particular.

In chapter five we reach a crucial turning point: the transition of political economy from a humane study to a naturalistic and quasi-mechanical science. This is the era economic systematization, and the rise of concepts such as the “laws of the distribution of income.” The authors do a good job of presenting the material, considering the brevity of the chapter in comparison to its surveyed time horizon. But there are certain times, such as in their discussion of Malthus and Marshall, where the authors’ skepticism regarding this transformation comes through.

Chapter six explores moral reflection in heterodox schools of economics. The authors pick three thinkers who are frequently associated with prominent heterodox schools—Karl Marx, Thorstein Veblen, and Friedrich Hayek—and describe their contributions to social science, as well as how each treated ethical reflection in their systems of political economy. The chapter concludes with another interlude on the financial crisis but engages only the Marxian perspective on what went wrong in markets. I would have liked to have seen an Old Institutional and Austrian perspective on the crisis as well.

In chapter seven, the authors move beyond exploring particular thinkers or schools of thought. They turn their attention to the entirety of modern economics, by which they mean rational choice theory. Unsurprisingly, the authors find it wanting, and argue that rational choice theory cannot cope with important factors such as genuine uncertainty, entrepreneurship, and change in economic systems that is both sudden and radical. This chapter is simultaneously interesting and frustrating. While I am highly sympathetic to the motivations behind the authors’ critiques, I do not think economically informed readers will find them persuasive. The authors acknowledge that economists usually defend rational choice on predictive grounds, rather than ontological, but then they proceed with critiques whose force depends on economists holding the ontological view. Objecting to rational choice by saying, “But people aren’t really like that!” is neither insightful nor helpful. Furthermore, the authors completely neglect more robust and generalizable forms of

rational choice. In particular, the work of economists such as Armen Alchian, Gary Becker, and Vernon Smith has provided a strong case for locating rationality at the systemic level, rather than at the level of individual psychological motivations. Economists rely on prices and incomes to explain *impersonal* phenomena, not personal. Furthermore, the authors' insistence that economics, at a deep level, is not truly a value-free science fails to appreciate that economists can occupy many social roles, such as scholar, policy analyst, and political activist, in which economics is certainly coupled with value judgments, but the essence of the economic way of thinking itself (*ceteris paribus* demand curves slope down) remains valid.

Both the troubling and promising themes from this chapter are expressed in the final two chapters. Chapter eight critically surveys the extension of rational choice analysis to non-market decision making, such as law, politics, religion, and the family. The authors still do not appreciate the difference between rational choice as a motivational assumption, and rational choice as engine of analysis. More promisingly, however, they do recognize the artificially narrow bounds economic discourse was forced to occupy due to the profession's predilection for scientism.

The concluding chapter outlines a broader approach to political economy, one more commensurate with the great political economists of the classical and early neoclassical eras. The authors conceive the individual as occupying a series of moral communities that range from high degrees of personality, such as the family, to high degrees of anonymity, such as the state. They then describe how the systems of moral discourse surveyed throughout the book can help economists understand individual choice depending on the particular moral community. This is not at all objectionable from the standpoint of applied economics, or economic history. But it still does not impugn rational choice, because rational choice is not about motivations.

Overall, I believe the book's goal is a noble one. The science of economics should be broadened once again into the science of political

economy. Room should be made for moral discourse and reflection on how commercial institutions relate to virtuous living and human dignity. I am less satisfied with the project's execution, however. The book feels like it was written to be a compendium to an undergraduate course on economics and ethics. But aside perhaps from a senior-level elective or capstone course, such a course is more likely to do harm to students than good. The economic way of thinking is already bitterly resisted by scholars and policymakers, even by those who purport to be economists. An economics education should instill the fundamentals in students' minds through repeated, persistent, and thorough application of the first law of demand to all social spheres. This is precisely because students of economics far too often will use any excuse to stop thinking like an economist. Only for an economist who can explain the best arguments for hard-line rational choice is it safe to begin reflecting on these more complicated issues. For those who are only "nine to five economists," it is more appropriate to focus on the counterintuitive ways in which rationality, prices and incomes, etc. *can* explain so many disparate social phenomena. If students cannot pass a Turing Test as Gary Becker, it is probably not a good idea for them to start looking for excuses to ignore human purposiveness and the omnipresence of tradeoffs.

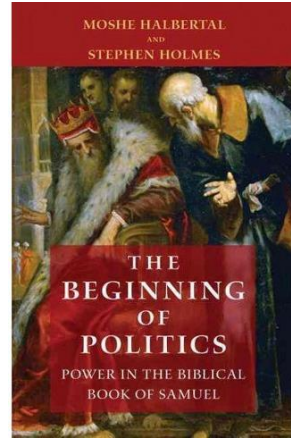
I share many of the concerns that motivate the authors' project. I think their approach to political economy is ultimately correct. But the road to the authors' desired destination is long, winding, and uncertain. Just as only Nixon could go to China, only a believer in the economic way of thinking can safely explore moral reflection in economics.

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Moshe Halbertal and Stephen Holmes. *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. xiii + 211. ISBN 978-0691191683. Paperback \$27.95.

Two lawyers from New York provide an unusually brilliant and persuasive reading of the book of Samuel in their new monograph *The Beginning of Politics*. In contrast to run-of-the-mill Old Testament scholars who emphasize the political nature of ancient literature (e.g., royal propaganda), Halbertal and Holmes contend that the author (singular) was perhaps the first person in history to write a book focusing on politics and power itself. In their words, "...the book of Samuel does not display a one-sided allegiance to any of the political factions that competed for power at the time. Its author didn't write a political book, therefore, but rather a book *about* politics" (p. 2).



This thesis is provocative and persuasive in countless ways. Consider, for example, what this suggests about the literature compared with its surrounding culture:

The biblical political theology that preceded the dramatic events recounted in the Book of Samuel upended this ancient Near Eastern formula. Rather than declaring that 'the king is a God,' the new theology postulated instead that 'God is the king.' The sole or exclusive kingship of God was fundamentally irreconcilable with a consolidated political monarchy....In the Samuel narrative, both the shift away from the political theology of the Book of Judges and the initial appearance of monarchy in Israel are presented as events occurring in human history. They do not belong to the mythic past. The biblical king, enthroned before our eyes, is a thoroughly human being, not a God. He is not a pillar of cosmic order. He plays a negligible and wholly dispensable role in

religious ritual, does not convey divine commands to his people, does not maintain the order of nature, and is not the prime lawgiver. (pp. 5, 8)

Kingship was always a problem in the Old Testament, and (the book of) Samuel specifically addresses the notorious hazards of political authority in general—such as its aggressive and coercive nature.

Samuel's catalog of the king's onerous privileges, proclaimed at the very moment when the unified Israelite polity came into being, introduces the reader to the fundamentally problematic nature of mankind's political project. For one thing, if the sovereign amasses enough power to provide security for the people against their enemies, he will also be strong enough to threaten and oppress the people he is supposed to protect. Indeed, the very act of organizing the people for self-defense inescapably involves a painful degree of tyrannical subordination, resource-extraction, and unfreedom. (p. 11)

Halbertal and Holmes do not attempt to legitimize violence as so many authors do today in their popular discourse about government. "The privilege to tax...means to confiscate their subject's property, and to draft, which means the right to enlist able-bodied young men whether they wish to serve or not" (p. 12). This is what it means to possess political authority: to initiate violence against people and their property. This, presumably, is one of the reasons why Yahweh has a problem with monarchy and the political structure of power it represents in the first place.¹

Indeed, "the Book of Samuel provides us with our earliest account of the arduous, contested, and historically contingent emergence of this-worldly sovereignty. The centralization of political-military authority is

¹ The authors see Yahweh as having the following attitude toward kingship: "*I did not recommend that decision. It wasn't the initial plan I had for you. Human kingship was your choice, which you insisted upon even after being warned. You wanted it and I couldn't refuse you. So let us see how it unfolds, and what it means. And what will be my place in it*" (p. 15, emphasis original).

admittedly accompanied by priestly anointment and bestowed by the grace of God” (p. 14). With Saul, David, and Solomon, one witnesses all the great hopes and energy of a modern-day political rally—as well as the most primitive problems of a “state-church” combination. The state and its political apparatus are fundamentally opposed to the progressive, peace-making vision of God. So no matter what the rhetoric at the time, it’s just not going to last.

In going through the whole narrative of Samuel to Saul to David, the authors marvelously uncover the insightful details of the narrator—and how they are just as relevant today as they were over three millennia ago. The book’s “anatomy of sovereignty applies not only to dynastic kingship in a tribal society but, with suitable modifications, illuminates important features of every political order, including the welfare state, the liberal state, and so forth” (p. 167). Here are the key highlights of this discussion (in no particular order).

1. *The path to power is not actually glorious:* “sovereign authority is actually consolidated much less sacramentally, through a hard-fought struggle, by tactically ingenious applications of force and fraud deployed to overcome considerable human resistance” (p. 14).
2. *Power corrupts; means become ends.* “Whenever retaining hold on high office, rather than realizing an ideological vision or implementing a political program, becomes the dominant aim of politics, sovereign power becomes for its wielder an end in itself, even while being publicly justified as a means for providing collective security....As power becomes an end for a sovereign clinging desperately to it, other intrinsically worthy ends turn into disposable means. Rulers who wield their authority in the service of power as an end in itself regularly convert such ends as love, loyalty, the sacred, and moral obligation into mere means for

eliminating dangerous rivals and staving off the loss of power, a loss that they morbidly dread" (p. 18).

3. *Power corrupts even those who are determined to avoid it.* "Saul did not covet power. Power coveted him...why exactly does the author of Samuel make sure that we see Saul as wholly devoid of lofty ambition and craving for power? It is sometimes said that the only one who can be trusted with power is the one who doesn't seek it. Yet our author, in these passages, obviously wished to convey a diametrically contrary thought. The account of Saul's first two coronations prepares us to see how intoxicating appeal of supreme power will overtake even a character as naturally uncalculating, unassuming, and unenterprising as Saul" (pp. 20, 22).
4. *Committing violence naturally prepares one for political office.* [On 1 Sam 11] "This was the moment Saul began to act like a king. He established a permanent court with a small standing army; he would no longer be found plowing his fields. Military victory gave him a taste for power and the confidence to assume it" (p. 23).
5. *Political power always depends on the willingness of others to kill—and more.* "...no ruler, no matter how strong, can rely solely on coercion to dictate the behavior of those who wield the means of state coercion on his behalf. When ordering violence against his own subjects, therefore, a sovereign is necessarily constrained by the likely unwillingness of his security forces to obey any order to massacre kinsmen, their own flesh and blood, who, in this case, were also men of God" (p. 75).
6. *Unpredictability is a strategy of maintaining power over others.* "Opaqueness is intrinsic to the mystique of charisma. Screening David's subjective intentions and sentiments from the reader's view is one of the ways in which the genius of our author constructed David's aura. But the general illegibility of David's

motives did not prevent Saul from foreseeing that David, too, would have no qualms about using Michal's love as a stepping-stone to power" (p. 33-34).

7. *"Justice" is often used by those in power to legitimize purely political actions. "one of our author's central themes: the invocation of justice to palliate, excuse, or rationalize conduct undertaken for reasons of pure political expediency is a possibility that haunts all genuine political action" (p. 157).*
8. *Those with political power do not see their role as the same as those who elected them. "But the sovereign who has gained [power] and those around him who compete for it do not see supreme political power exclusively from the public's point of view, as a means for organizing collective defense. The seekers and wielders of sovereign authority inevitably see it from a more personal perspective. The privileges and status of the highest political office can be intoxicating, transforming sovereign authority all too easily into an end-in-itself, a stand-alone goal which becomes the very raison d'être of those seeking to gain or maintain it" (p. 167).*
9. *Hierarchies of power create distance between those in power and those "on the ground," which leads to self-deception. "An increase in political power often spells a decrease in understanding, because political power inevitably attracts disinformation or highly selective information from those who want to use it for their own ends. The powerful will always have trouble deciphering the sincerity and reliability of the indispensable information that backroom counselors whisper in their ears, disorienting their decision making and adding to their isolation" (p. 116).*
10. *Hierarchies of power forge internal competition destined to end badly. "Wielding sovereign authority is dangerous, above all, because supreme power is an irresistible magnet attracting ruthless competition from ambitious and talented rivals to its exercise... supreme authority can breed a distrust of subordinates so extreme*

as to verge on paranoia. It is undoubtedly true that even paranoids have enemies" (pp. 44, 69).

11. *Permitting the state's monopoly on violence will always result in more violence than intended—and come back to bite. "In our view, the subtly constructed details of the story of the massacre of the priests of Nob reveal how the anonymous author of the Book of Samuel excavates the deepest underpinnings of political violence, uncovering structural themes that emerge when a sovereign turns his capacity for violence, originally bestowed to fend off foreign threats, against his own subjects and subordinates. The Israelite people had knowingly accepted the burdens of taxation and conscription as the price of collective self-defense. But they had not agreed to the massacre of innocent members of their own community, for no legitimate national purpose, by a mentally unhinged and paranoid king" (p. 77).*
12. *The state's monopoly on violence is inherently contradictory; politicians represent the will of the people and do this by forcing their will over the will of the people: "A loose-knit confederation of disputatious tribes was especially vulnerable at its frontiers, where territorial disputes with neighboring peoples were most acute. Such vulnerability explains the legitimate aspiration to overcome strife inside a tribal confederacy and to enforce unity. Yet this rationale for pooling collective resources by centralizing the power to command is fraught with a deep contradiction that lies at the core of political life and that our author brings us into focus with exceptional artistry and theoretical force" (p. 166).*
13. *Systematic, collective violence is far more difficult to stop than individual acts of violence because no one needs to claim ultimate responsibility. "In distributing the various components of his conduct along a chain of agents, not only the sovereign but each link in the chain can find some way to disassociate itself from the*

crime. State action, especially when it is oppressive and inhumane, becomes anonymous. It has no face" (p. 88, cf. 97).²

14. *The true heroes are not those in office or those wielding power, but those without power willing to treat even the most corrupt individuals as human beings.* "Saul's last supper was served to him by a socially marginalized woman who was as disconnected from political power as can possibly be imagined. Moved by the shattered king lying inert on her floor, a persecuted sinner proved capable of a pure act of compassion seemingly beyond the moral capacities of the powerful heroes populating the Book of Samuel. The resentful prophet Samuel had only harsh, unforgiving words for Saul on the last night of his life. David and his band were securely hiding in Achish's territory. The only person willing and able to provide Saul with some measure of warmth and care, feeding him from what little she had in her own home, was the woman of En-dor. Her uncalculating compassion is luminous in a narrative replete with moments of questionable piety and political duplicity. The unambiguously noninstrumental nature of her charitable act is the measure of her distance from the equivocal ways of power-seekers and power-wielders. She is a rare moral hero in a world where morality can rarely escape from the cloud of ambiguity that pervades political life" (pp. 65-66).

I can't recommend *The Beginning of Politics* enough. It is a tremendous volume that blends sound biblical study with honest and penetrating thoughts about the nature of political authority and the government's

² God, in the narrative, is apparently aware of this given the prophecy of Nathan: "Cold blooded murder, it turns out, even when committed at arm's length, remains cold-blooded murder. Despite all of his attempts at distributing the violence through the causal chain, David was the one who killed Uriah with the sword of the Ammonites. This is what Nathan says" (p. 96).

power. It would be an excellent “bridge” to Christian libertarianism for those ensaturated in modern, democratic readings that are uncritical of statism, nationalism, and politics in general.³

The book, however, left me with a gnawing question in the back of my mind: Can the authors’ purpose in the book of Samuel be restricted to the book of Samuel, or could it be extended to 1-2 Kings—and perhaps even to the Enneateuch as a whole? A good case could be made that Genesis-2 Kings maintains the same critical perspective of political authority (e.g., the Tower of Babel, Joseph’s refusal to assume power over his boss’s wife, the civil disobedience of the Egyptian midwives, Pharaoh and the Exodus, Moses’ inability to judge so many cases in the primitive Israelite community, etc.). If Genesis-2 Kings was largely composed/compiled by the same group of scribes in the 500s BCE, then a unified perspective would be somewhat expected. Perhaps this is a proposal needing further exploration.⁴

Whatever the case, there is room to doubt Thomas Hobbes’ assertion that the Bible could never be used to criticize political authority.

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³ The book’s thesis also strongly resonates with that of Barbara Tuchman, *The March of Folly* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

⁴ Cf. Jamin Hübner, “Israel’s History as a Post-Exile Critique of Political Power,” 2018 Canadian-American Theological Society annual meeting, Wycliff College, Toronto. For a recent scholarly treatment of this topic, see Jan Gertz, Bernard Levinson, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, and Konrad Schmid, eds., *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America (Forschungen Zum Alten Testament)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016) and Thomas Dozeman, Thomas Römer, and Konrad Schmid, *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch?: Identifying Literary Works in Genesis Through Kings* (Society of Biblical Literature. Ancient Israel and Its Liter) (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011).

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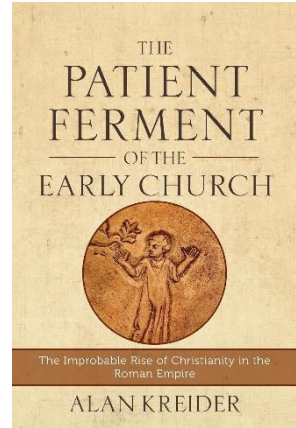
Alan Kreider. *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. xiv + 321 pp. ISBN 978-0801048494. Paperback. \$26.99.

Violence is the product of a habitus of impatience.

So writes Alan Kreider in his recently-published study of early Christian history, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church*. Impatience is the way of the world, and it characterized human interaction in the Roman world of antiquity as much as it does in our own today. It's what drives us to lie, to cheat, to steal, and to kill. We frantically grasp for what we want in fear of our own death that draws ever nearer.

There was something different about the early Christians, however—something that allowed them to grow, most unexpectedly, from a minor mystery religion on the outskirts of the Roman Empire to its dominant religion by the fifth century.

This thing which set them apart from the world around them was patience, a patience that springs forth from faith and hope and is modeled on the example of Christ. Impatience, the early Christians wrote, was at the heart of human sin and produced self-destructive violence. Patience, and therefore peace, however, was the fruit of faith and hope in the resurrection. Distinguishing his approach from scholars who argued that the dramatic rise of Christianity was due to the power of their ideas, or to psychological and physical force (namely Michael Green, Edward Gibbon, and Ramsay MacMullen), Kreider locates the source of early Christianity's appeal in the distinctive behavior of its adherents. He breaks this down into four interrelated factors which have heretofore been ignored by historians: patience, habitus, catechesis and worship, and ferment. He builds his case by establishing the importance of the virtue of patience in



early Christianity, demonstrating that for early Christians this patience necessarily had to be embodied (a *habitus*, a concept derived from French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu). This *habitus*, we learn, was formed through lengthy catechesis followed by communal worship. As outsiders observed the distinctively patient behavior of their Christian neighbors, some were drawn to inquire about this unusual religion. And so Christianity grew, not by force but by ferment.

Kreider's first chapter establishes the surprising and unlikely growth of Christianity during the first three centuries, "despite the opposition of laws and social convention" (p. 8), despite little interest in missions and evangelism, and despite the churches' restricted access to baptized members only. The priority, rather, was living the patient model set forth by Christ. In stark contrast to the imperial world that viewed patience as a virtue suitable only for subordinates, Christians considered patience (the focus of chapter 2) to be the chief of all the virtues, and "crucial to their churches' life and growth" (p. 15). It was so important that three treatises were written on it: Tertullian's *On Patience* (*De patientia*; ca. 204), Cyprian's *On the Good of Patience* (*De bono patientiae*; ca. 256), and Augustine's *On Patience* (*De patientia*; ca. 417) (p. 14). Drawing from Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Lactantius, Kreider reveals widespread agreement that early Christians were to live out their faith by embodying patience, thereby emulating God's character as revealed through Jesus Christ and making it visible to those around them. Not only were words and deeds to match, behavior was even more important than words: Christianity is by its very nature incarnational. And so Christ-followers were to embody patience through trusting God during times of struggle and persecution, and also by interacting with others in nonviolent, noncoercive ways. They repudiated violence and killing in all its forms, including abortion, infanticide, capital punishment, gladiatorial games, and war.

In the third chapter, Kreider defines Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, which is a "'corporeal knowledge,' a 'system of dispositions' that we carry

in our bodies," formed by social conventions, example, story, and repetition—and it, in turn, shapes our identity (p. 39). *Habitus* is extremely difficult to change, but not impossible, and a transformation of *habitus* is precisely what conversion to Christianity required. The Christian *habitus* then served to attract others by offering them something the empire couldn't: worth. Whereas Roman civic religion and pagan *collegia* served to reinforce the power of the state and its "steep social stratification" (p. 42), Christian behavior, particularly with respect to fictive kinship, effectively subverted empire. Christian associations challenged imperial power structures by accepting members from all strata of society, including women and slaves, any of whom could participate by offering a song, prayer, vision, scripture reading, or testimony (p. 61). Their love for one another spilled out of their worship services into the public arena, from providing compassionate care to victims of plague to their behavior as martyrs in the literal arena.

In chapter 4, Kreider argues that ordinary Christians were responsible for the spread and growth of Christianity, and they accomplished it simply by living their lives, which often required them to move to new locations for work, and by organically establishing new Christian communities in the process. Early Christianity was domestic: gatherings were frequent and took place in the home, and members shared their resources and treated one another as family. The domesticity of early Christian communities contributed largely toward developing the Christian *habitus* among its members, as well as making it visible to outsiders—specifically, their neighbors. Early Christianity, Kreider argues, was also a "women's movement," claiming that "from an early date the majority of Christians were women," and that their "greatest significance was their energetic involvement as community builders, providers of service, and practitioners of humble evangelism" (p. 83). For women, as marginalized members of Roman society, the message of the gospel was one of empowerment, of individual worth and dignity, and

their new Christian communities offered opportunities for them to exercise greater influence than what was available outside.

In chapter 5, we learn that early Christian communities ("when Christians were at their best") were distinctive for their sense of "a dynamic interplay between indigenizing and being pilgrim, between affirmation and critique" of the cultures in which they lived (p. 98). They understood that their "commitment to the local culture [was] clear but conditional" (p. 99). Out of love, they sought to allow the gospel to bring healing and flourishing to their cultures through restoration of wholeness to individuals and communities, and they did this through healing and exorcism, caring for the poor, and promoting peace through reconciliation and honest, ethical, and noncoercive behavior. Their ability to maintain an appropriate balance between indigenization and being pilgrim was due, likely, to the patient formation of habitus through catechesis and worship. As we read in chapter 6, the third-century *Apostolic Tradition* reveals that it was difficult to become a Christian, with the catechetical process leading up to baptism lasting possibly years, and entry into the community taking place only after scrutiny of the catechumen's habitus and character. As the early Christians viewed their behavior as the primary mode of evangelism, "admitting new people too quickly whose behavior compromised the Christians' distinctive attractiveness" would "undercut this approach to mission" (p. 149). Following catechesis, a new Christian could participate fully in worship, the focus of chapter 7. Early Christian worship served to transform habitus through example and bodily repetition; one of the most characteristic examples was interpersonal reconciliation expressed by the kiss of peace. Based on Jesus's instruction in Matthew 5:23-24, early Christians understood that reconciliation was nonnegotiable if prayer was to be accepted and effective.

In chapter 8, Kreider explores the picture of early Christian communities related to us through the third-century Syrian *Didascalia Apostolorum*. The *Didascalia* reiterates the essential role of peace as a

precondition for worship and prayer. However, from the bishops' point of view, maintaining the peace increasingly resembled top-down control of the community. During the third century, it became evident that Christianity was gradually taking a turn toward greater indigenization, "making it more like the patriarchal Greco-Roman society" (p. 105). Communal evening meals were replaced by more formal morning services with tokenized elements, and in which the words spoken became increasingly monopolized by male clergy rather than shared by all in attendance. The worshipers no longer sat facing each other, but rather they began to sit in rows with women made to sit by themselves farthest from the bishops and presbyters—an arrangement "which can lead to a habitus of anonymity and inequality" (p. 192). This transition is reflected in the *Didascalia's* frustration regarding the activities of widows: they wandered between houses, interacting with others and sometimes receiving direct financial support. The widows also engaged in ministry by laying on hands and praying for people, as well as baptizing new converts. They were "uncoordinated, unauthorized, and out of control" (p. 238). In reaction, the *Didascalia* restricted the ministry of widows to the home "where they prayed and weaved wool under the authority of the bishops and presbyters" while their earlier roles of "visitation and outreach" were delegated to deaconesses. As Kreider tells us, "By the late fourth century, when women were still in the churches they were unequivocally under the authority of men...Their evangelistic verve and compassionate caregiving, so much a part of the life of the earlier Christians, had been stifled" (p. 106).

The *Didascalia* also reflects the shift in the focus of catechesis from the more difficult and lengthy task of developing Christlike behavior to the relatively quick and painless job of instilling orthodox belief—a transition from patience to expediency for the purposes of attracting and placating converts from the aristocracy (p. 239). The most famous of these was, of course, the emperor Constantine, the focus of chapter 9. To avoid the trouble of reforming his habitus, Constantine chose not to become a

catechumen or to be baptized until days before his death. Despite the best efforts of the theologian Lactantius, who in the *Divine Institutes* urged Constantine to rule with Christian patience by caring for the poor, rejecting all forms of killing, and defending religious liberty, Constantine chose to do things his own way. Constantine asserted that there was more than one type of habitus a Christian could adopt: he made exceptions for war, torture, capital punishment, religious coercion, and he even arranged for the executions of his son Crispus and his wife Fausta. From his impatient point of view, Christianity was to be advanced instrumentally through the power of the state, valuing "numbers more than lifestyle, rationality more than habitus" (p. 268). The shift in catechesis from behavior to orthodox belief became more entrenched under Constantine, thereby effecting the conversion of ambitious, impatient people to Christianity while converting Christianity from a nonviolent religion to one that allowed for anything deemed urgently necessary.

Constantine's influence also accelerated the widening gulf between clergy and laity, as bishops, "courted by the court, found it hard to keep their values or their habitus intact" (p. 279). Kreider imagines that the elevated social standing of clergy also made it increasingly difficult for them "to keep their biblical exegesis sound and their theological thinking straight" (p. 279), thereby introducing us in chapter 10 to the novel definition of Christian patience articulated by Augustine. Although not entirely without its merits, Augustine's *On Patience* was likely written "to justify his own impatience" (p. 283), using "love" to "justify strong-armed policies—state-imposed fines, confiscation, and exile—that seemed urgently necessary to him" to combat "heresy" (p. 285). Beginning with Constantine and continuing under Augustine, we witness the development of a two-tiered Christian ethic: patience was only for those specially called to religious vocation, not for laypeople. It was not only permissible, but also desirable, according to Augustine, for political rulers to exercise force in pursuing such "Christian ends" as an empire unified by faith (p. 295). As Kreider points out, Augustine's perspective was the

fruit of unchecked indigenization: it was concerned only with an inward disposition, not behavior, and so "patience no longer functioned...as a countercultural habitus to be formed by catechesis" (p. 290).

This book tells the story of how the Christian habitus transformed during the first four centuries "from patient ferment" to "impatient force," which has led many to the not-unwarranted "assumption that...in its essence Christianity is violent, and that Christian mission—however loving its professed intentions—is essentially an exercise in imperialism" (p. 296). If we Christians wish to reclaim our "lost bequest" of patient nonviolence, Kreider counsels, then our response must be a patient one: to seek "the reformation of our habitus by the work of the Holy Spirit and by catechesis rooted in the teaching and way of Jesus" (p. 296). In an environment in which Christian worship services are often designed to be "seeker-sensitive," in which missions and evangelism are pursued with instrumentality, in which the number of new converts who pray the sinner's prayer is considered more important than either character formation or theological instruction, it seems, not surprisingly, that American evangelical Christians have fully embraced the two-tiered ethic of Constantine and Augustine in their approach toward politics and their favored politicians. As white Protestants, including evangelicals, are on the decline in America's religious landscape,¹ their instinctive response seems to be an increased focus on evangelism in both the street and the sanctuary, as well as an increase in political activism with the goal of "putting God back in government/our schools/society" via legislation.

However, Kreider's study indicates that this approach, much like Augustine's desperate and incontinent grasping for control (p. 290), is self-defeating, just as Tertullian and Lactantius observed of all violence. Augustine's sense of urgency in combating heresy gave way to concessions and compromises, "practical measures" that he deemed

¹ "America's Changing Religious Identity," Public Religion Research Institute, published September 6, 2017, <https://www.ppri.org/research/american-religious-landscape-christian-religiously-unaffiliated/>.

permissible due to extenuating circumstances—but these "exceptions" always become the norm—*habitus* (p. 295, note 66). Thus the very nature of Christianity has changed—the salt has lost its saltiness, and is now good for nothing (Mt 5:13). Accordingly, it is self-destructive for Christians to utilize impatient means, such as government force, to accomplish what they believe to be godly goals. The ends and means are inseparable: the only way to achieve God's purposes is to truly be remade in the image of Christ, who did not draw a distinction between God's Word and his own behavior, but rather embodied it completely.

Kreider's metaphor of fermentation is borrowed from scripture: Jesus uses the analogy of yeast to explain the growth of both the kingdom of heaven as well as the toxic teachings of the Pharisees (Mt 13:33; 16:5-12). In microbiology, fermentation is the process by which certain microorganisms, deprived of oxygen, metabolize glucose. Because it's not as efficient as respiration, the growth is slower and more subtle—at first, but as these organisms can thrive without oxygen, they are capable of working their way throughout the entire medium, changing its character as they go: "A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough" (Gal 5:9, NRSV). An invisible process that takes place on the microscopic level and beneath the surface, it only becomes evident as the organisms produce gas that creates cracks and fissures in the agar, or causes the bread to rise and the beer to bubble, meanwhile altering the pH or alcohol content of their environment. Just as the type of yeast determines whether you end up with an ale or a lager, so also imperceptible factors have huge potential to change our character without our conscious awareness of it. We might interpret Jesus's warning at Matthew 16:5-12 thus: If we aren't vigilant, the yeast of the world will find its way in and slowly transform Christians' *habitus* of patience back to our former impatient, violent *habitus*. Not surprisingly, we discover, Jesus's admonition was lamentably prescient. Yet this book provides a message of hope – hope that despite all outward appearances, there is still a remnant whose task is to remain true to their

calling, and God is using them to work beneath the surface, to change hearts and minds and save the world.

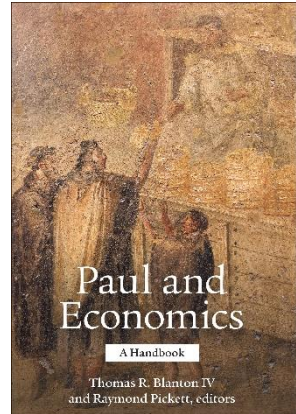
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Thomas R. Blanton IV and Raymond Pickett, eds. *Paul and Economics: A Handbook*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017. Pp. Xxxvi + 437. ISBN 978-1506406039. Paperback. \$39.00

Paul's social world, often thought to be buried or irrelevant, has begun to rise to the very top of New Testament scholarship. And the issue of the ancient economy is not simply an issue of monetary policy. Rather, in the case of *Paul and Economics* (hereafter *P&E*), we have explorations of slave labor, the reality of the scarcity of resources, Paul's collection, and the variegated characteristics of ancient methods of travel.



The stated goal of the editors of *P&E* is aptly and succinctly stated:

Taken together, the essays in this volume aim to lay a foundation and a framework for further exploration of the role of economic factors in the interpretation of Paul's letters and the formation and development of the assemblies (xxxv).

As with all edited volumes, there are essays of great value and essays of lesser value; such is the natural order of things in scholarship where more than two minds are brought together. I will first offer a brief survey of the work as a whole by focusing on each individual essay, followed by commendations and criticisms of the work as a whole, focusing specifically on several key areas that I believe to be either under-developed or over-stated in the book.

David B. Hollander, after his survey of various economic factors within the ancient Roman economy, concludes that the profits of the Roman economy were largely beneficial to Roman citizens. To those who were further away from Rome, there was greater paucity within the population. Hollander's detailed survey of labor and supply and demand

add to the credibility of his conclusion: “the Roman economy disproportionately benefited Roman citizens rather than the population of the empire as a whole” (p. 21). In a comparable manner, John T. Fitzgerald explores the activities of eating and drinking Roman social perspective. More precisely, Fitzgerald details the types of food and drink available to the poor among the various parts of the Roman Empire, which opens up several fresh interpretive avenues for the classic discussion in Rom 14-15 between the “strong” and the “weak” (pp. 241-242).

Jinyu Lui explores the nuances between “urban” poor and “rural” poor in the Roman Empire, with a precise emphasis on the ancient Roman diet and what was needed for survival. Her work explores various types of food and analyzes what was needed for a person to survive hard labor in the ancient setting of Rome. This includes various ways to alleviate Roman impoverishment including begetting children, and begging and reliance upon “the generosity of the passers-by to delay starvation” (p. 53). In essence, the life of the average citizen of Rome may be characterized in terms of “deprivation” (p. 54), and Lui invites scholars to consider further research on the “middling group” and the “poor,” as it relates to upward/downward mobility between socio-economic classes (p. 54-55).

In discussing various aspect of epistemology as it relates to interpreting ancient data, Timothy A. Brookins chapter on the economic profiles Paul's early communities spends a substantial amount of space on the methodology of interpreting facts. He writes, “facts do not speak for themselves, but interpreters speak for the facts” (pp. 58-63, 60). Brookins' assessment of the various “poverty tables” of the ancient world—where various social groups such as the “elites” and other less influential social classes are calculated according to the percentage of the population—is a helpful overview of the various proposals set forth by Peter Oakes, Walter Scheidel, Steven Friesen, and Bruce Longenecker (p. 67-80). The dynamic shifting of these scalar models remains a constant topic of debate amidst those who would desire to rigidly concretize the percentages of these various ancient groups. After Brookins concludes that most of the

population was at “near (at or above) subsistence level” (p. 81). That is, a majority of the population was teetering near, above or below the level of subsistence in the Roman Empire. He then briefly explores where early Pauline co-workers like Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2) and Erastus (1 Cor 16:14-16) would appear in his scalar model, believing that Paul’s churches had a “complete cross-section of society” (86) versus models that would argue that the Pauline churches were enmeshed entirely in poverty. Similarly, Zeba A. Crook contends in his essay “Economic Location of Benefactors in Pauline Communities” that there were perhaps membership fees in the Pauline churches. His work is based on various ancient inscriptions that illuminate his key point, and his essay coincides rather nicely with editor Thomas R. Blanton IV. Blanton’s essay centers on “the economic functions of gift exchange in Pauline communities,” however with minimal dialogue with John Barclay’s work *Paul and the Gift*. In any sense, Blanton’s argument for Paul’s theological reshaping of patronage/reciprocity into what can be called “fictive kinship” (304). Blanton highlights the interplay between theology and mutuality and reciprocity rather starkly and passionately—to sound effect.

Ulrike Roth’s essay “Paul and Slavery: Economic Perspectives” contends that the early Pauline mission was built upon the back of slave labor, prompting what John M.G. Barclay has called “the dilemma of Christ Slave-Ownership” in an influential *New Testament Studies* article. Roth summarizes: “Paul’s approach to the economic exploitation of slaves, and the ways in which the apostle sought to benefit from the slave-system at large, is likely to have been a systematic feature behind his missionary success” (p. 179).

Other contributors include Richard A. Horsley who investigates Paul’s motivations for declining or accepting financial assistance, believing that Paul was inconsistent in how he applied his trade (pp. 120-121), but this was often on the basis of “community formation” (p. 121). In a more direct socio-exegetical manner, Neil Elliott focuses in on the Lord’s Supper in 1 Cor 11:17-34. He writes in the end, based on other elements

woven throughout *P&E* and liberation theology (pp. 246-252), that Paul “wishes to safeguard in the Corinthian assembly a meal practice that embodies a shared mutuality among its participants” (p. 274).

Annette Weissenrieder, in an exceptional essay, digs into the archeological strata of the ancient Roman Empire—particularly in Corinth—and offers a resolution that perhaps the early Pauline communities met in the Appolloneion in Corinth (p. 149). She directly challenges the notion put forth by Edward Adams that the early Pauline communities met in houses, suggesting an alternative point of view that the *ekklēsia* was more civically located rather than domestic.

Two further essays are linked thematically later on in *P&E*: John S. Kloppenborg explores Paul's collection for Jerusalem and Cavan Concannon fixes on the elements of ancient travel in the Pauline communities. Kloppenborg argues that “Paul's project” (the collection for the poor) “is transgressive” rather than “subversive” (p. 330). The fact that Paul's collection was ethnically and geographically particularistic underlies the issue of giving to others. For Concannon, the difficulties of intercity travel (pp. 341-344) and the problem of an “objective” Pauline chronology (pp. 338-339, n.25) results in possibilities and only possibilities: that is, “unless we find ways to account for the costs of connectivity, an accurate picture of the diffuse and shifting networks [documented in 2 Cor 9-13] of early Christians will elude us” (p. 358). Hence, Concannon's essay is centered more on epistemology and a critique of “objective” readings.

When it comes to various issues involving colonialism and critiques of capitalism, L.L. Welborn's essay on “Marxism and Capitalism in Pauline Studies” is perhaps the most philosophically dense of the book as a whole. Welborn critiques the capitalist reading of Paul (p. 365) extensively, desiring that an engagement with Marxist thought (typified by the work of Rancière) “may finally make it possible to reclaim from the clutches of capitalist interpreters” (p. 395). Finally, Ward Blanton's concluding essay on “A New Horizon for Paul and the Philosophers” is

attentive to areas of economic distress (9/11; the economic crisis in the United States in 2008: p. 399ff) from a philosophical perspective.

There are several key essays that rise above the rest in terms of quality of argumentation and intellectual investigation. For those desiring a wealth of archeological data, Weissenrieder's essay on various aspects of ancient housing yields substantial results: her idea of potential meeting places for the Pauline churches presses heartily against the notion of the "assembly" being confined to various houses. Similarly, Fitzgerald's work on ancient diets and the economic realities of food in the Roman Empire is worthwhile and sobering, especially for Pauline scholars. Timothy Brookins and his essay on epistemology is also the highlight for this reviewer as he seeks to reorientate epistemology with Pauline studies and human bias, yielding fresh results that press interpreters to recognize their own bias. When he writes, "despite their helpfulness...models cannot substitute for evidence, for they are based on evidence...models are tentative and revisable, and the interpreter must exercise the discipline not to force particularized data through too generalized a grid" (p. 61). More to his point, one ought to exercise a sufficient epistemological humility in relation to this difficult debate.

As for the rest of the book, most helpful are the select bibliographies at the end of each individual entry. Lacking any sort of scripture index and translation of German, however, makes navigating the handbook somewhat vexatious—the untrained audience will have a much more difficult time engaging with the material because of this. There is also significant conceptual and literary overlap, especially as it relates to the work of Steven Friesen. While perhaps unavoidable, it seems curious that Friesen himself—as often as his work is discussed and criticized—is not included as a contributor in this compelling handbook. Other voices like Justin Meggitt, Bruce Longenecker, and John Barclay are engaged with throughout and often critically, but the lack of response and interaction with the other contributors makes *P&E* a tonally narrow literary work.

The notion of an unbiased interpreter of ancient source materials has been rightly challenged; however, there is a rather overt lack of justification provided for Marxist readings of the New Testament by some of the contributors. Simply speaking and writing about power dynamics and issues of oppression does not make for a substantial commentary, nor does using the language excuse someone from providing justification for why he or she is using such language. Language, a major tool of ideology, requires exploration. For instance, Wellborn's essay attempts to draw a parallel between Marx's phrase "religion [is the] groan of the oppressed creature" (p. 365) with Paul's language in Rom 8:22: this parallel is asserted as one that "clearly echoes" (365) Paul's language. What makes this line of thought difficult to accept is the arguments from others in the book (Brookins, in some sense, Concannon in another)—both of whom are quite to criticize objective readings of a text. The assertion by Wellborn on the interpretive certitude reveals that objectivity is a notion some are clearly seeking—despite their own ideological critiques of other perspectives that attempt 'objectivity.'

It is also worth pointing out that the specter of the Capitalist boogeyman remains lodged within the definitional nebulae: the utter lack of providing sources and documentation for this "neoclassical" or "capitalist" reading of Paul suggests that at the heart of several essays is the ideological privilege of engaging with a straw man (c.f. Wellborn, 365ff; Horsley, 95-97). Another element of disagreement centers on the characterization of polar extremes: "neoclassical" economics versus "Marxist" theories. One is either one or the other: there is no room for crossover or nuance. However, just because someone takes theories of power and various dynamics into account (especially as these theories relate to gender and slavery) does not necessarily tie them to the Marxist option. Is a "capitalist" reader of Paul—whatever or whoever that is—unable to understand power dynamics as they relate to gender and class?

As a Christian Libertarian who rejects Marxism as an ideology, I believe my own conviction concerning economic justice and gender

equality is not in conflict. Horsley also argues stridently against what he believes to be the error of a “unified wheat market” and that “neoclassical” (a term Horsley never defines for us) economists “abstract the ‘economy’ from society” (p. 95). A few things should be noted: first, his argument finally concludes that the Roman economy was “political,” not a “market” (96). This assertion—which is a frequent talking point in Horsley’s other work,¹ appears to be a false dichotomy and needlessly separates politics from the market, assuming a static reality versus a more dynamic reality of the ancient Roman economy. It has also been recently refuted by Temin.²

P&E as a work is generally helpful and often incisive insofar as it attempts to propel Pauline scholars toward greater nuance and clarity in discussing the largely lost world of the New Testament—regardless of one’s conviction about Marxism or capitalism being the appropriate worldview for understanding Paul. However, the lack of a “capitalist” or “neoclassical” defender within the book suggests a lack of ideological inclusivity.

For those looking to understand the data and the contours of this discussion from a general Marxist perspective, one can scarcely find a better book. However, there is a general lack of methodological precision on display throughout the work that appears rather uncritical in accepting Marxist theories and talking points (Brookins forceful chapter notwithstanding). As but one example, several indeterminate criticisms are lobbed toward “Neoclassical economics” in a way that lacks nuance or substance (c.f. Horsley, p. 95): one is free to critique all things (and should critique everything!), but more substance would be helpful—not to mention less off-putting to some many readers. In any case, how much one can glean from this largely ideologically homogenous book is dependent upon his or her a priori ideology, which is both a robust

¹ E.g., Richard Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

² Peter Temin, *The Roman Market Economy (The Princeton Economic History of the Western World)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

commendation of the work and perhaps my greatest critique of the book as a whole.

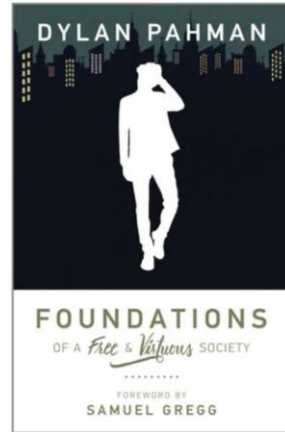
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Dylan Pahman. *Foundations of a Free and Virtuous Society*. Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2017. Pp. xiii + 145. ISBN 978-1942503545. Paperback \$14.95.

The Acton Institute is an organization that explores the connection between Judeo-Christian faith and liberty. Research fellow for the Acton Institute, Dylan Pahman, unpacks this connection in his winsome work *Foundations of a Free and Virtuous Society*. This “introductory work of Christian social thought” (p. xi) challenges the often-encountered view that loving thy neighbor in pursuit of economic justice requires, or is best accomplished through, interventionist or even socialist policies. Beginning with a forward by Samuel Gregg, Director of Research at the Acton Institute, *Foundations* goes back to the foundation of creation to ultimately clarify why free markets best enable humankind to reflect the creator God as those made in His image (Gen 1:27) and how free markets best enable humanity to live out the calling to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28 NRSV).



The forward clearly sets forth the central thesis of this work, “How we understand God, the human person, and human society...will determine much of how we think about everything” (p. vii). From this thesis, this short book (something the author mentions multiple times throughout the work) seeks to “elucidate one common starting point that aims to promote a free and virtuous society” (p. xi). To accomplish this, Pahman divides the work into two parts. Part one consists of three chapters all titled after questions which serve to unpack the central thesis. In part two, the author provides an intellectual exercise asking the reader to imagine a world in which basic economic principles are rejected. Through this exercise

Pahman explores the effects on human flourishing when private property rights, free prices, and just inequality are abandoned.

The introduction plunges the reader into a real-world example that is easily grasped. The author cites the work of economist Victor Claar in examining the impact on human flourishing of the fair-trade coffee movement. Rather than provide a higher standard of living, this movement serves to keep poor farmers in poverty. Pahman grabs the reader's attention by having them reconsider their personal economic behavior and the effects it may have on others. Such thinking begins the examination of how moral motives on their own cannot be the sole basis for economic action; outcomes must be considered. The first three chapters help unpack the claim that a solid understanding of God, human nature, and society (p. xvii) must inform our thinking about economic and social matters.

Chapter one asks the question, "What Does It Mean to Be Human?" (p. 1). In what becomes characteristic fashion throughout the work, the author begins with a pop culture reference, in this instance to a *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strip. This comic points to what could be considered the somewhat absurd notion that humanity reflects God's image. In what way can humanity possibly reflect the omniscient, omnipotent, creator God? Ultimately, the author reveals, through an examination of Genesis 1-3, that we reflect God as rational, creative, and free beings but unlike God are corrupted by sin and death. Pahman asserts that rationality and creativity require freedom which he defines simply as "*able to make choices*" (p. 5). How then is freedom exercised in relation to others?

The following chapter looks at the question, "What Is Society?" (p. 25). As the previous chapter began with a pop culture reference, chapter two begins with humor which also characterizes the writing style of Pahman in *Foundations*. Pahman begins by noting that other people challenge our concepts and comforts which can be "a bit annoying, to be honest" (p. 25). While the previous chapter focused on Genesis 1, this chapter looks at what Genesis 2 says about how we are to live with others. Abraham

Kuyper's idea of "sphere sovereignty" comes to the fore in this chapter to reveal how human freedom should be lived out in community. This notion is reflected in Pahman's definition of society which is "*human persons in communities, within spheres, under just laws, for the common good*" (p.28). Each facet of this definition is further unpacked in the chapter.

The final chapter of part one, chapter three, seeks to "demystify and similarly destigmatize some basic economic principles and business practices that have unjustly acquired bad reputations" (p. 51). Here Pahman introduces the term "Economish" (p. 51) which he uses to refer to economic-specific terms. An example of what Pahman refers to as "Economish" is "division of labor" which he equates with "teamwork" (p. 59). Pahman therefore clarifies economic theory using layman's vocabulary. Reflecting Leonard Read's well-known work, *I, Pencil*, the author looks at what went into producing the very book the reader holds. From lumberjacks felling trees to the shipment of the final product, this example reveals all that goes into production and gives insight into the concept of division of labor. Chapter three wraps up with a clear summary of why free markets go hand-in-hand with Christian anthropology. Pahman notes, "Free markets are open markets...where people are best able to freely cultivate creation for the provision of human needs, for the good of their neighbors and themselves, and for the glory of God" (p. 71).

Part two, consisting of chapters four and five, poses the question "What If?" (p. 75). By this Pahman means, what if we did not have private property, profits, free prices, money, trade, technology, inequality, the rule of law, and free markets (p. 82)? The examples used, often with explicit reference to North Korea or Venezuela, hit home the idea that basic economic tenets are essential to living out our calling as those created in God's image made to be fruitful and multiply. The unifying theme of part two is Bastiat's notion of the "seen and unseen."¹ Pahman applies this concept to the Fall recorded in Genesis 3 writing, "this ...was the

¹ See Frédéric Bastiat, "That Which Is Seen and That Which Is Not Seen," in Bastiat, *The Bastiat Collection*, 2nd ed. (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2007), 1.

mistake of the man and the woman in the garden. God, being a good economist, foresaw the long-term effect of eating from the tree: death” (p. 81). All the “what ifs” of part two are unified by this theme. Ultimately, the second part of *Foundations* conveys the truth that helping one’s neighbors, particularly the poor, requires the factoring of unseen consequences of economic actions or policies. The author notes, “Considering the poor, however, requires *seeing* [emphasis added] more than the apparent, immediate gains of policies intended to help them” (p. 96). The general welfare and the dignity of people is best advanced or upheld when basic economic tenets are appreciated and lived-out by stewards of God’s creation.

While indeed a little book, *Foundations of a Free and Virtuous Society* offers readers a powerful, applicable, humorous, and easy-to-understand introduction to “Christian social thought...without steamrolling over the prudential insights of economic science” (p. 136). Pahman accomplishes this introduction through solid exegesis, explicit definition of terms, and a winsome writing style that is able to reach an audience as diverse as Advanced Placement high school students to students in PhD programs.

This work contributes to the discussion of faith and liberty by providing a brief account of what liberty means for a healthy society, while providing clear definitions and appropriate depth of analysis when necessary. Thus, *Foundations* can edify a high school student struggling with how best to serve the poor of their city or PhD students in Systematic Theology who may understand Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* inside and out, but who through myopia have never contemplated their duty as Christians in the field of economics. Masters-level students in theology and ministry especially benefit from reading this work because of its synthesis of theological and economic truths. However, any Christian who desires to integrate God-honoring economic thinking into their life will derive value from this work.

To reach a variety of readers, the style in which Pahman wrote *Foundations* includes various literary devices including effective use of

questions. Throughout the text, Pahman uses a question–answer formula that addresses common concerns or objections as they arise in the text. Often, the very questions that come to mind are immediately addressed which helps the reader process the material. End-of-chapter discussion questions are also present. These questions either cause readers, in groups or on their own, to reconsider aspects of what was addressed. The author developed questions that challenge his definitions and assertions in what seems a desire to promote authentic engagement with the work and not simply rephrase what has been said in the best possible light.

At times, *Foundations* contained somewhat distracting or potentially misleading information. Repeatedly referencing the brevity of the book, particularly toward the beginning (pp. viii, ix, xii, xviii, 2), served to distract and even question the value of what was being communicated. This introduced some doubt about whether it was worth continuing to read the book. The length of the book is evident to the reader, so repeated mention of its brevity is unnecessary at best.

Pahman begins part two by stating that it will cover truly basic concepts in economics with which “for the most part, both the left-leaning Progressive Policy Institute and the libertarian Cato Institute would be in agreement” (p. 78). However, I question the extent to which this is truly the case. Considering the economists/philosophers cited (Frédéric Bastiat p. 81, Adam Smith pp. 92, 114, and Friedrich Hayek p. 97) and assertions made from the basic economic concepts, it is hard to see how this could be. An example is Pahman’s claim that economist Paul Krugman would agree in large part with his assertions (p. 78). In the last chapter, Pahman writes, “my inclination is to think that unfettered markets is something we need more of, not less” (p. 127). However, considering Krugman’s positions on regulations and legislation such as the Affordable Care Act, I wonder to what extent someone like Krugman would truly agree with the

basic tenet of “free markets” as unpacked by Pahman.² *Foundations* clearly approaches basic concepts from a free-market perspective. The intended audience, which is quite broad and may be unfamiliar with these people or concepts, would benefit from a more precise reference to the backgrounds of the individuals cited or positions held.

I highly recommend *Foundations of a Free and Virtuous Society* as an introductory text on the role of free markets in promoting the well-being and dignity of individuals and society. By following an exegetically-sound examination of Holy Scripture, Pahman reveals how we may more effectively love others and bring God glory, as those made in His image (Gen 1:27) and those who seek to be “fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28 NRSV). This work helps us see how we may best serve the poor and fulfill the mandate of Genesis 1.

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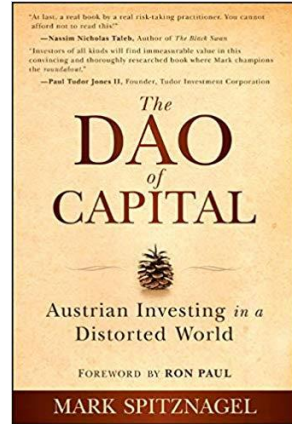
² Krugman’s resistance to a more open market in the area of health care is often seen in his regular *New York Times* column. See Paul Krugman, “The Plot Against Health Care,” *New York Times* (May 31, 2018; accessed December 6, 2018) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/31/opinion/republicans-health-care.html> and Paul Krugman, “Get Sick, Go Bankrupt, and Die,” *New York Times* (September 3, 2018, accessed December 6, 2018) <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/03/opinion/midterms-healthcare-bankrupt.html>.

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Mark Spitznagel. *The Dao of Capital: Austrian Investing in a Distorted World.* Hoboken: Wiley, 2013. Pp. xxix + 332. ISBN 978-1-118-34703-4. Hardcover. \$29.95.

Investing¹ is a favorite topic of Austro-Libertarians,² and with good reason: those who adhere to the economic framework of the Austrian School and a political ethic of individual liberty often find themselves seeking practical applications of their knowledge. In short, they want to make more money while increasing their personal freedom.

But as many have found out the hard way, understanding praxeology does not necessarily translate into profits. Entrepreneurship and investing are risky endeavors, and the unwary or overconfident may find themselves bankrupt despite their economic knowledge. Keynes is attributed as saying, “The market can remain irrational longer than you can remain solvent.” Regardless of its source, the wisdom is sound: economic knowledge can be a significant *disadvantage* in investing, insofar as it may lead the investor to predict certain (eventual) events far before their time. However, this does not mean that it is prudent to simply ride the waves of market uncertainty with the masses. Austro-Libertarian hedge fund manager Mark Spitznagel asserts that a proper understanding of economics *can* help guide investors, provided their knowledge is placed in its proper framework.



¹ This essay discusses investments in the context of a book review. Nothing written here should be construed as professional investment advice or a recommendation to buy or sell any security. Readers are encouraged to consult their own legal and financial advisors prior to making any investment decisions.

² *I.e.*, libertarians sympathetic to Austrian economics.

This thesis is the subject of *The Dao of Capital*. The book was published in 2013 and is not a Christian work in any sense—some of its philosophical precepts are arguably un-Christian—but the practical relevance of the subject matter for Austro-Libertarian Christians makes it suitable to consider.

The first thing which stands out is the formidable list of endorsements from respected scholars, executives, and investors, including Ron Paul (who wrote the foreword), Steve Forbes, David Stockman, Lawrence Reed, Victor Niederhoffer, and Paul Tudor Jones. Those familiar with Spitznagel's background will recognize his own credibility due to the fact that he is a successful practitioner; he has amassed a significant fortune as an investor and entrepreneur. It is typically wise to take with a grain of salt any investment or business advice from those who are unwilling to risk their own capital, but Spitznagel is no armchair commentator.

Unfortunately, he is also not a professional author, and the language he employs is often so fanciful that the book is unnecessarily complex; the reader will at times find him or herself re-reading sentences to unravel the underlying point Spitznagel is trying to make, obscured by strange phraseology and excessive detail. This is certainly not a major defect, but it is something of which to be aware.

The book is a whirlwind of autobiography, economic history, economic theory, and practical investment advice. Spitznagel opens by quoting wisdom from his mentor, Edward Klipp: if you want to be successful in investing, you must hate to make money and love to lose money. "Klipp's Paradox," as Spitznagel calls it, is the foundation of the Austrian-based investing theory he advocates. The principle is rather simple on the surface: instead of seeking immediate gain, the investor must endure immediate loss so as to achieve greater gains later. Because this runs so contrary to human nature and the tenor of Wall Street, there remains an opening for the small minority who follow this contrarian path to generate immense profits.

The early portions of the book consist of Spitznagel's lengthy exploration of Chinese philosophy—along with copious metaphors from forestry and martial arts—mixed with his own personal history and development into the successful hedge fund manager he is today. He explains how he came to connect his experience as a trader in Chicago with what he eventually learned from the Austrian School.

The middle portions of the book begin to cover proto-Austrian and Austrian economic history, including figures such as Frédéric Bastiat, Carl Menger, Eugen Böhm von Bawerk, and Ludwig von Mises. The sequence with which Spitznagel moves between history, anecdotes, economic theory, metaphors, and practical application can at times seem dizzying, and the reader must trek through about three quarters of the book before really getting to its main point. This hodgepodge approach to the material—specifically how concepts vital to the primary thesis (like the Faustmann Ratio) are sometimes buried within it—is the book's greatest drawback.

The Faustmann Ratio is a concept drawn from the nineteenth century forestry studies of Martin Faustmann, who sought to compare the expected value of a developed parcel of land with its current bare market value (or "replacement value"). If the ratio is greater than 1 (that is, if expected value of developing the land exceeds the bare market value), then the investment is probably sound. Likewise, if the ratio is lower than 1 (if the expected value is less than the bare market value), the investment is probably unsound. This is a rather rudimentary method, but it does get to the heart of quantifying the viability of a long-term investment or capital expenditure (as is required in forestry). Contemporary investment analysis uses the same essential principles with concepts and terms like Discount Rate, Net Present Value (NPV), Return on Invested Capital (ROIC), and Opportunity Cost. Spitznagel modifies the Faustmann Ratio with these modern insights by showing that,

$$\text{Land Expected Value} / \text{Land Replacement Value} = \text{Return on Invested Capital} / \text{Opportunity Cost}$$

In other words, if we invest in something, is the return we expect to gain greater than the gains we forego in the present? The investor must consider what economists call Time Preference, and Spitznagel devotes an entire chapter to this important concept. Humans gravitate towards immediate gratification (high Time Preference), but the greatest gains often come from deferring consumption now for greater consumption later (low Time Preference). A preference for later and greater consumption is linked to higher rates of current production; this results in lower interest because people appear to be saving and more eager to lend money. In contrast, a preference for immediate consumption is linked to less resources left over for production and higher interest because there appears to be less money to lend. Those who want to reap great gains must be willing to forego present consumption with the intended goal of greater consumption later.

But Time Preference isn't always consistent, especially when extrapolated over a long timeline. Delays have a greater psychological impact in the short term than they do over the long term. Over the course of a long delay, the waiting still decreases the psychological value of the expected payoff, but the rate of decrease does lessen the longer the wait goes on, and Faustmann's calculation of expected value can be modified to account for this.

The most important concept Spitznagel discusses is what he calls the Misesian Stationarity Index (or MS Index), derived from the principles of the great Austrian economists. The MS Index is essentially an Austrian-branded version of the Equity Q Ratio devised by James Tobin in 1969, which is itself another way of looking at the Faustmann Ratio. Tobin's Equity Q Ratio is calculated as,

$$\text{Total U.S. Corporate Equity} / \text{Total U.S. Corporate Net Worth}$$

That is, the ratio has the current valuation of the total U.S. public stock market as the numerator, and the net worth (total assets – total liabilities) of the total U.S. public stock market as the denominator. Spitznagel, illustrating his point through a lengthy metaphor, shows that when the ratio of the total economy is different than 1, there has been a departure from stationarity. The MS Index is therefore a barometer for gauging the stability and rationality of the total economy. A departure from an MS Index of 1 therefore shines light on both potential profits and losses. Economically-literate readers may already recognize that this is really a corollary to the Austrian Theory of the Business Cycle, grounded in the central bank's manipulation of interest rates across the economy by expanding or contracting the money supply. But the market economy will always self-correct; it will, as Spitznagel writes, eventually return to homeostasis.

The final chapters of the book are the real payoff for the reader interested in practical application. Ironically (or intentionally?), *The Dao of Capital* exemplifies its own argument by taking the reader through the long, roundabout path towards reaping the gains of practical application in making investment decisions. Spitznagel divides his methods into two basic categories, referred to as Austrian Investing I and Austrian Investing II. When the MS Index is significantly above 1 as a result of monetary distortion, the trend is unsustainable and the market will inevitably return to homeostasis. Savers and investors will be dissatisfied with the artificially-low rates of interest pushed down by the inflation of the money supply, and will instead gravitate towards riskier investments to reap more immediate gains. As the cycle accelerates, eventually less capital is left for production, the economy is unable to progress, and investors are forced to liquidate, causing stock prices to plummet.

Comparing total excess returns of the S&P Composite Index (arguably the best gauge of the total U.S. stock market) over the so-called one year "risk free" rate of U.S. Treasury securities across historical data from 1901–

2013, Spitznagel finds statistical significance at the 95% confidence interval that when the MS Index is low, average stock returns are high, and when the MS Index is high, average stock returns are low. Across the same timeline from 1901–2013, he demonstrates that the higher the MS Index, the bigger the subsequent drop in stock price. Just as important, in periods with a low MS Index, bear markets were not much of a concern. In other words, the business cycle caused by central bank monetary distortion is fundamentally predictable (even if it can't be exactly timed). So how does this apply to investing?

The simplest Austrian-informed strategy, according to Spitznagel, is to buy when the MS Index is low (when capital is under-priced) and to sell when the MS Index is high (when capital is over-priced). After selling, the investor can stockpile cash or short-term cash equivalents (Spitznagel specifically mentions one month T-bills, though many Austro-Libertarian investors find the use of Treasury securities both financially and ethically dubious), waiting for the inevitable crash when he or she can swoop in and buy under-priced capital at a steep discount. Eventually, capital prices will rise to over-priced levels again, at which point the investor sells and repeats the process. The fundamental concept is to take the momentum from the manipulation of the market by the central bank and turn that momentum, contra the main stream, towards profit. Spitznagel's strategy, he notes, beats the general stock market by more than 2% annualized. So why doesn't all of Wall Street do this? Because the system is built around immediate gratification; most investors (and for that matter, investment professionals) won't last long enough to ride out a full cycle to its potential when they are getting beat year over year waiting around for the big payoff. Spitznagel rightly reminds the reader that while this sounds simple, it is psychologically and socially demanding.

Spitznagel discusses the so-called Black Swan problem: a philosophical probability question dating back millennia, but popularized in modern financial parlance by Nassim Taleb. A black swan (or "tail event") is an extraordinarily rare event—perhaps previously thought to be

impossible—which is so obscure and in the margins (“tails”) of a probability distribution that it never enters into the calculation of a financial model. But as Spitznagel shows, the 2008 crisis was actually no black swan; it was expected from the vantage point of the Austrians.

Beyond the aforementioned simple Misesian investment strategy, Austrian Investing I (“Tail Hedging”)³ involves the use of options. An option is a derivative security⁴ giving the holder the “option” to buy (“call option”) or sell (“put option”) a specific security at a specific price (“strike price”). For example, when the MS Index is high, an investor might purchase put options against an Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) which tracks the S&P Composite Index, giving them the right to sell the ETF at a price far below its current market price. If the market price crashes below the strike price before the option expires, the investor can exercise the option, sell their ETFs at the strike price, and pocket the difference. He or she then has additional cash to deploy, buying up under-priced assets at a steep discount during the bear market. Of course, purchasing options costs money up front, and as long as the underlying security remains artificially over-valued, the investor will appear to be losing and their options appear worthless; the strategy depends on following the long-term, roundabout path towards gain.

While Austrian Investing I is a macroeconomic strategy, Austrian Investing II is micro, focusing on specific companies with a high Return On Invested Capital. Spitznagel calculates⁵ ROIC as,

$$\text{Earnings Before Interest and Taxes (EBIT) / Invested Capital}$$

The savvy Austrian investor/entrepreneur, expecting that there is more value to be extracted from future business growth, reinvests the business’

³ Because the business cycle is predictable, Spitznagel notes the name is somewhat of a misnomer since this strategy is not truly a “tail hedge.”

⁴ A derivative is a security where the value is “derived” from the underlying asset to which it is pegged.

⁵ A better-known formula is Net Operating Profit After Tax (NOPAT) / Invested Capital

profits into the business itself rather than taking a dividend in the present, thus following the roundabout path towards greater profits later. Furthermore, on a micro level, a well-managed Austrian strategy (or business) is largely immune to the worst aspects of central bank monetary distortion. By not taking on debt at unsustainable levels and growing the business more slowly—reinvesting profits rather than expanding through aggressive borrowing only made possible by central bank inflation—the investor or entrepreneur will at first appear to be losing out to faster-growing companies. However, such a company will be better-positioned to ride out market downturns while competitors find themselves unable to service their immense debt or sustain their over-scaled operations.

Not everyone has the foresight, time, or opportunity to be an entrepreneur, but Austrian Investing II is also accessible to those who buy (in whole or in part) existing companies with a high ROIC and low Faustmann Ratio (of Market Capitalization / Net Worth). The reason for preferring a low Faustmann Ratio alongside high ROIC in this scenario is because it indicates the company is very effective at deploying capital, but is not yet priced to reflect its potential (and thus is ripe for massive gains later). Of course, businesses can still fail for a variety of reasons, and so this approach is a general strategy and not a guarantee of success.

The Dao of Capital is far from an introductory investment book or simple how-to guide, and those with little or no prior financial experience will probably find themselves lost in its intricacies, calculations, and terminology. For those who have experience as business owners, executives, traders, investors, or serious students of the market, it provides a very valuable (if at times far too verbose) set of strategies for utilizing Austrian insights in the world of investing and business.

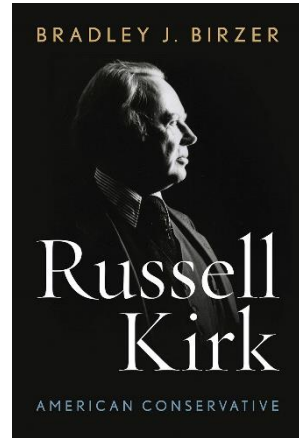
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Bradley J. Birzer. *Russell Kirk: American Conservative.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015. Illustrated. Pp. 574. ISBN 978-0-8131-7527-0. Paperback \$29.95.

The name of the iconic conservative man of letters Russell Kirk (1918-94) is often invoked as the conservative antithesis of libertarianism. This assessment of Kirk is generally made in direct response his two short essays critiquing libertarianism — “Libertarians: Chirping Sectarians” (1981, originally published in *Modern Age*) and “A Dispassionate Assessment of Libertarians” (a 1988 Heritage Foundation lecture). Kirk’s descriptions of libertarianism and libertarians in those essays is both problematic and instructive. “Libertarians” is far better known and more acerbic in tone. The essay asserts that, apart from their mutual opposition to “the totalist state” and “the heavy hand of bureaucracy,” conservatives and libertarians can have “nothing” in common. Calling “genuine libertarians” “metaphysically mad” and concluding with a gratuitous swipe at Murray Rothbard, Kirk’s 1981 essay paints libertarianism with broad brush strokes, failing to acknowledge the various stripes and nuances within the broader libertarian identity.

But in “A Dispassionate Assessment” —not published until 1993— Kirk is initially more cautious. He explicitly distinguishes “ideological libertarians” from “descendants of classical liberals” who call themselves libertarians but “are simply conservatives under another name.” Kirk “approves of” the latter. Regarding “ideological libertarians,” Kirk— whose increasing sympathy with Christianity culminated in his 1963 conversion to Roman Catholicism — repeats the basic criticisms of his 1981 essay, highlighting (among other things) that libertarians recognize “no transcendent moral order” and that (similar to Marxists) they “generally



believe that human nature is good, though damaged by certain social institutions” and pursue an “illusory way to Utopia.” Conservatives, on the other hand, recognize that human nature “is irremediably flawed.”

Paradoxically, readers of *CLR* might argue that Kirk’s essays misrepresent libertarianism even as they find at least some agreement with Kirk’s critiques of certain tenets of a brand of libertarianism that Christian libertarians would disavow. Indeed, at least some self-proclaimed Christian libertarians would comfortably fit among the aforementioned descendants of classical liberals of whom Kirk approved.

That being said, *CLR* readers will find much of interest in Bradley Birzer’s magisterial biography *Russell Kirk: American Conservative*. (Birzer himself is both an active Catholic and a self-identifying libertarian.) Indeed, Birzer’s presentation of Kirk suggests that Christian libertarians ought view Kirk not as an ideological nemesis but rather an ally. Drawing profusely from Kirk’s voluminous published writings and unpublished letters, Birzer’s award-winning biography has already received numerous positive reviews, and I need not repeat their well-founded praises here. Rather, I will discuss how in various chapters Birzer effectively engages Kirk’s religious understanding and Kirk’s lifelong commitment to liberty, the two subjects being inevitably intertwined throughout.

Chapter 1 describes Kirk’s most foundational youthful influences, influences that suggest the origins of Kirk’s enduring intellectual and spiritual concerns. Raised in Plymouth, Michigan in a household that practiced Christian ethics but not religious devotion, Kirk was mentored by his maternal grandfather, a descendent of Puritans whose virtues Kirk described as “more Stoic than Christian” (p. 27). Happily educated in a public school before the influence of Dewey and progressivism became ubiquitous, the boy Kirk read voraciously the fiction of Sir Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, all of whom Kirk would later highlight in his most important book, *The Conservative Mind* (*TCM*, 1953). The writers who most influenced Kirk during his undergraduate studies at Michigan State University were the humanists

Irving Babbit and Paul Elmer More, discussed at length in *TCM*. Not religious but rather championing and embodying the thought and ethics of Socrates, Plato, and Buddha, Babbit emphasized gaining individual virtue and liberty through “rigorous self-denial and discipline” (p. 32). More’s spiritual journey—moving from a humanism in league with Babbit’s to an eventual embrace of orthodox Christianity—resembled Kirk’s, and Kirk later affirmed that More’s writings allowed him “to bring Christian hope to his Platonic and Stoic longings” (p. 42). Going on to earn an M.A. at Duke, Kirk’s master’s thesis—which later became Kirk’s first book—defended the principles of the lesser-known American founder John Randolph of Roanoke, whose agrarian, Stoic, Christian, conservative, and libertarian (all adjectives Kirk used to describe Randolph) perspective largely mirrored Kirk’s own. Upon his return to Michigan in 1941, he eventually found himself, after the U.S.’s declaration of war against the Axis powers, working in the payroll department of the Ford auto plant. The monotony of this position elicited Kirk’s disdain of “the monstrosity Ford had built,” even as Kirk reserved his greatest animosity for U.S. government that Kirk called the “Gestapo” (p. 55).

Chapter 2 chronicles Kirk’s conscripted Army service during World War II, during which Kirk’s views became increasingly libertarian. Stationed in the Utah desert, Kirk read voluminously ancient Stoic writers whose ideas Kirk found profoundly similar to the Christianity he would begin earnestly pursuing the next decade. During this time Kirk also found himself increasingly hostile toward the U.S. government and its domestic allies. Kirk “viewed the government, labor, and corporations as working together to homogenize the world and remake it in the image of the United States,” and his letters and diary entries articulated both his hatred for the New Deal and his belief that Roosevelt and his minions “were worse than Nazis because they practiced oppression under the guise of liberty and equality” (p. 67). In 1945 Kirk also expressed horror at the atomic bombings of Japan, an event he considered “the logical consequence of progressivism,” a doctrine that inevitably leads to

“dehumanization” (p. 86). Also during the 1940s Kirk corresponded with the libertarians and individualists Albert Jay Nock and Isabel Patterson, whose respective 1943 publications *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man* and *The God of the Machine* influenced Kirk deeply. Patterson was especially prominent in Kirk’s 1946 article against conscription. Birzer astutely observes that both Nock and Patterson (with whom Kirk had a falling out in 1951) are discussed favorably in Kirk’s first edition of *TCM* but less so in later editions. Indeed, in his 1954 second edition and subsequent editions, Patterson is omitted, and Kirk does not mention her in his posthumous 1995 autobiography *The Sword of the Imagination*. Nock is also increasingly “marginalized” in later editions of *TCM* (p. 71), although Kirk’s enduring affection for his onetime mentor continued to occasionally manifest itself, particularly in Kirk’s introduction to a 1982 edition of Nock’s biography of Thomas Jefferson.

Chapter 3 observes that Kirk’s intellectual movement away from libertarianism coincided with his doctoral studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, where he discovered and embraced the writings of Edmund Burke, the author most influential to *TCM*—Kirk’s dissertation. Kirk’s embrace of Burke also coincided with Kirk’s increasingly Christian understanding of humanity and indeed reality:

A real understanding of the being known as “man,” he argued, presumably echoing Burke, must recognize “that original sin and aspiration toward the good” are equally parts of “God’s design.” To know one’s place in the order of existence is to embrace the classical and Christian notions of justice. But one can recognize the good in humans only by first recognizing that “sin is a terribly real and demonstrable fact, the consequence of our depravity.” (p. 108)

Kirk also believed that a rejection of the tested classical and Christian tradition in favor of a new understanding of justice and reality based on reason would inevitably lead to human isolation and tyranny: “To ignore this truth or, equally bad, to dismiss or mock it as many eighteenth-

century Enlightenment thinkers had, Kirk argued, 'leads to a wasteland of withered hopes and crying loneliness, empty of God and man.' Following Plato's argument from *The Republic* through the mind of Burke, he claimed that once reason so called has replaced tradition, the demagogue will almost certainly claim his place as society's ruler" (p. 109), exemplified by Robespierre and, more recently, in Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini. Significantly, in a 1953 letter to his publisher, Kirk referred to his libertarian views as something he had "pass[ed] beyond" (p. 83).

Clearly Kirk's acceptance of the Christian tradition, mediated through Burke, made Kirk skeptical and indeed fearful of libertarian thinking, derived as it was from the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century liberalism apart from the transcendent Christian truths and its related virtues and traditions that, by contrast, formed the foundation of the American republic. Birzer's chapter 4 discusses Kirk's increasing identification with Christian humanism. Noting Kirk's 1954 dismissal of liberalism as "a dead thing" (p. 136), Birzer writes that "Kirk saw liberalism as little more than a transitional stage between Christianity and totalitarianism" (p. 137). Quite simply, liberalism derived its defense of liberty from Christianity even as it became lifeless to defend liberty and ultimately undercut liberty itself. Kirk's critique of reason-based liberalism also extended to matters of economic liberty. Writing a year after his 1957 debate with F. A. Hayek, Kirk suggests that Hayek's reasoning is based on "the assumption that if only a perfectly free market economy could be established, all social problems would solve themselves in short order" — an idea that ignores the reality of both human fallibility and humanity's tendency to be unreasonable, and indeed fails to recognize the inextricable connection between the economic, the political, and the moral (p. 159). But Kirk's opposition to Hayek's ideas did not make him an enemy of the free market. Rather, Kirk enthusiastically embraced the writings of the free market Christian humanist economist Wilhelm Röpke, whose vision for a humane economy emphasized a Christian understanding of human nature and humanity's relationship to

God. Kirk's support of Röpke again manifested Kirk's belief that liberty could best be defended from the foundation of Christian tradition.

Similarly, chapter 7 notes that even Kirk's efforts as an unofficial advisor to Senator and eventual 1964 Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater were grounded in Kirk's belief that Goldwater shunned "ideologues" and "ideology," rather "taking his 'first principles of morality' from the Judeo-Christian tradition and his 'first principles of politics' from the U.S. Constitution" (p. 274); moreover, Kirk sought "to infuse Christian humanism into Goldwater's ideas" (p. 277). But Kirk's association with Goldwater—not to mention with William F. Buckley's *National Review*—also suggested a Kirk whose views on foreign policy had grown "increasingly hawkish" during the 1960s. In a 1962 speech that Kirk wrote, Goldwater spoke words that reflected "many conservatives' anti-Communist hawkishness at the time" (p. 279). Warning against pacifism, Goldwater's speech supported the development of the atom bomb, implicitly defending the 1945 bombings of Japan that Kirk once cursed.

In any event, in 1963 Kirk was effectively pushed out of his advisory role and his influence on Goldwater decreased dramatically, and Kirk eventually commenced in writing his second most important book, *The Roots of American Order* (1974). The book was a hefty tome that, following the pattern of T. S. Eliot and Eric Voegelin, "rooted the American order in the symbolic cities of Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, and London" (p. 265). Herein, Kirk wrote that "the most valuable thing in our common inheritance is the Christian religion" (p. 266). By contrast, the greatness of ancient Greece, despite Plato and Aristotle, "failed because as a culture it never really understood the concept of a transcendent, a failure that led to the worship of individual city-states above all things. Their sin was the sin of statism and often the glorification of humans as the highest end of the universe" (p. 266). Here Kirk restates his ubiquitous concern regarding the loss of liberty that must result from rejection of transcendent truth.

Chapter 9 discusses Kirk's ideological and sometimes personal quarrels with both libertarians and neoconservatives. Birzer writes that

Kirk's arguments against libertarians could be "at once detailed and scholarly as well as vindictive and savage" (p. 325). Significantly, Kirk enjoyed friendships and worked closely with prominent libertarians Peter Stanlis and Lawrence Reed, to say nothing of his aforementioned study of the "aristocratic libertarian" Randolph of Roanoke (p. 326). But all these men, we should note, shared Kirk's Christian convictions. By contrast, Kirk believed that "little if anything separated the utilitarian libertarian from the wanton liberal" (p. 326). Kirk's differences with the libertarian fusionist Frank Meyer turned bitter, with Meyer savaging Kirk in a 1955 article in the *Freeman*, calling Kirk's writings "another guise for the collectivist spirit of the age" (p. 327), whereas Kirk himself antagonized Meyer in the pages of *National Review*, for which Meyer also wrote. One may sadly note the irony of the conflict between Kirk and a man whose advocacy of the fusion between traditionalism and libertarianism had perhaps more in common with Kirk's views than Kirk would admit. Adding to this sad irony is the formerly secular Meyer's conversion to Roman Catholicism shortly before his untimely 1972 death. Kirk also clashed with Murray Rothbard. Curiously, however, the two reached a rapprochement in the early 1990s with their mutual opposition to the Iraq Conflict and support of Patrick Buchanan's run for president.

Kirk's positions on these matters coincided with the "increasingly anti-militaristic and anti-interventionist" views of his later years (p. 354). In *The Sword of the Imagination*, Kirk denies that "a single American war—even the war for independence—had been absolutely necessary" (p. 354). He lambasted neoconservative foreign policy and argued that George H. W. Bush, whose 1988 candidacy Kirk supported, was continuing a destructive interventionist progressivism in the vein of Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson. Kirk lamented that Bush's "'new world order' would impose a 'religion of democracy'" that would waste resources and incite hatred against the U. S. Warning against imposing "democratic capitalism," Kirk reminded his audiences that

“[c]apitalism was an economic system, not an originator of virtue or vice that had a transcendent source” (p. 356).

Birzer’s wide-ranging book implicitly analyzes Kirk’s thought with relation to libertarianism, and it invites a libertarian, and certainly a Christian libertarian, reevaluation of Kirk’s writings and ideas. The work pays special attention to how Kirk grounded his views on individual liberty and the state on his convictions regarding the transcendent truths of Christianity, including his regular emphases on human imperfection and sinfulness. Indeed, if a legitimate criticism of Kirk’s critiques of libertarianism is that they are guilty of hasty generalizations that suggest an inadequate understanding and appreciation of broader strains of libertarian thought, perhaps an equally valid criticism of libertarians is that they haven’t read Kirk’s writings closely enough, if at all. (Indeed, Kirk reasonably speculated that Meyer had never actually read *TCM*.) For Christian libertarians especially, such a neglect would be indeed unfortunate, for Kirk’s writings offer a well-developed rationale, based on Christian tradition, for limited government, the illegitimacy of war and imperialistic adventures, a critique of socialism, and the ever-present threat of totalitarianism in the guise of democracy at home. Birzer offers a generous and expertly presented discussion of Kirk’s various writings within a context that provides the Christian libertarian a profitable perspective on these writings. Birzer inspires a deeper investigation of Kirk’s works, an investigation that will not elicit full agreement throughout but will, I dare suggest, call to mind Jesus’ admonition that “the one who is not against us is for us.”

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