Presbyterian,“ and was among the “dedicated Presbyterians.” Rothbard knows that Smith was baptized an Episcopalian and trained at Oxford for the Anglican clergy, training which he did not complete. He little evidence for his Calvinist Presbyterian interpretation.

One does not have to go so far in the other direction as Peter Minowitz to argue that he was “anti-Christian” and an “atheist” to have some doubts about the importance of Presbyterianism in Smith’s make-up. One could easily substitute Stoic for Presbyterian and come up with many of the “Protestant Ethic” components in Smith’s belief system. But even then, one would have to deal with Smith’s explicit rejection of such sour Stoicism in the Theory of Moral Sentiments and his personal characteristics of qualifying as a “clubbable” man.

For some strange reason, Rothbard does not quote Alexander Gray’s witty little doggerel verse, “The wily bird / had never heard / of marginal utility.” Frankly, it seems to me that Smith quite wisely understood what we might call the positive economics of how subjective utility determines demand and therefore prices, but he did not enshrine subjective satisfaction as the basis of a tenable normative or ethical theory. For Rothbard, Q.E.D. ■

Restorers of Hope: Reaching the Poor in Your Community with Church-Based Ministries That Work
Amy L. Sherman

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 provided the impetus for significant changes in state welfare programs. For some Christians this gave energy to begin or expand their own efforts designed to pick up where federal and state programs left off. In this context, Restorers of Hope joins a growing literature that addresses urban poverty and the church’s responsibility. Some churches are slowly (re)awakening to the needs of their neighbors, people who often live less than 30 minutes away, and to the reality that the church’s economic, social and political patterns often contribute to the problem. Restorers encourages the diffident and pessimistic person while providing a word of caution to the naively zealous. Sherman’s firsthand experience with Blue Ridge Commons, a low-income apartment complex in Charlottesville, Virginia, adds credibility to her ideas. She is a “RESTORER” herself and it is out of these experiences and her research that she writes.

Reviewer
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Divided into three parts, the 11 chapters provide insights and advice on how to forge ahead with such ministries. Part one explains why Restorers are successful. Part two gives guidance from current Restorers to churches looking to begin/expand similar ministries. The final part discusses the interaction of Restorers with public policy and governmental agencies. This is a good book. But before I get to what is helpful, let me state some concerns.

First, the subtitle of the book (Reaching the Poor in Your Community with Church-Based Ministries that Work) is somewhat misleading. Most people define their community, if in fact they consider themselves part of a community, by geographic and/or social boundaries. Although Sherman hopes for change, many readers of Restorers currently are not part of an inner-city community, the focus of the book’s contents. Second, I am somewhat uneasy with the choice of warfare terminology. For example, Sherman refers to “front line activists” (pp. 157, 191) and writes, “Who knows what blessings God is waiting to pour out on Blue Ridge Commons—and the places behind enemy lines in your own city!” (p. 125). Why use this terminology? What if I, a low-income neighborhood resident, wrote “Who knows what blessings God is waiting to pour out on Bethel College—and the places behind enemy lines in your own metropolitan area?” I can hear my peers’ din of concern. There is truth in arguing that when working in the Blue Ridge Commons areas of life we are “behind enemy lines.” But if this is our perception, will we be at ease interacting with the residents and desire to develop relationships based on reciprocity? Will we be slow to judge, cultivate empathy, and engage in self-reflection? Finally, the implicit argument that Restorers should involve themselves in city planning and government in general should be made more explicit.

For all her insights, Sherman is sharpest when arguing that Restorers are the key. This is the comparative advantage Christians can offer. Restorers are people who reach out in the name of Jesus using a holistic approach in working with individuals and families. They understand that the amount and kind of poverty in question arises from both the social-structural and personal-behavioral realms. As they become involved they provide access to structures and environments to which impoverished people have little if any contact. They also offer reciprocal relationships on the personal behavioral level, challenging and encouraging those who would desire change. Sherman argues that Restorers are more effective than similar initiatives because they are more cost-effective in the delivery of traditional services (e.g., childcare, housing, job training, and employment opportunities). But more importantly, they “provide ‘goods’ like love, emotional support, spiritual instruction, trust, accountability, moral authority, hope, character training, and basic life skills in the context of personal relationships with the poor” (p. 206). They go beyond the typical welfare commodities to include necessary relationships, prompting potential Restorers to think in terms of a fifteen-year commitment. Restorers are willing to “entangl[e] lives together so that the people in the church and in the community learn from one another and are shaped by one another” (p. 158). But if there are to be Restorers and if they are to be effective, then they must be recruited and have a model from which to work.

Several years ago while on a college campus I observed posters, a marketing tool for new recruits, having photographs of white students working with people of color from low-income neighborhoods. The caption read “Been there. Done that. Loved it.” If a person or church would be a Restorer, then Sherman cautions against this “just do it” mentality. Instead, she encourages us to answer thoroughly three basic questions, the why, what and how of Christian urban ministry.

Why should the church take this step? The local church shoulders this responsibility because of God’s indisputable concern and love for the poor and
marginalized. What is the goal? “[O]ur ultimate purpose [is] to bring about a restoration that leads us, and those we serve, to praise and worship King Jesus from atop the wall of rebuilt lives,” including the lives of Restorers themselves (p. 242). Finally, how should we love the impoverished? We begin with the “preliminary work of prayer, assessment, research, and building relationships [which] can take a year or two—or more” (pp. 157–158). The process includes building trusting relationships, and here would-be Restorers will encounter fears as they enter new communities where class, culture, race, and religion are real barriers. Among Sherman’s plethora of practical advice are a few options to acquaint oneself with the neighborhood: shop and walk in the community, ride public transportation for a week, volunteer in a homeless shelter, attend a few local worship services. Racial divides are often present and Sherman reminds Restorers of Spencer Perkins’ and Chris Rice’s advice to admit, submit and commit. 2

Continuing with the “how?” theme, the eighth chapter, “Getting Going: Ten Steps to Building a Community Ministry,” ranges from assessing your church’s strengths and weaknesses to building relationships, to determining a niche, to establishing an evaluation system for assessing the ministry’s faithfulness and effectiveness. John Perkins’ followers relocate, reconcile and redistribute, while Sherman’s Restorers “reform hearts, they renew minds, and they refresh spirits” (pp. 74–75). As such she categorizes Restorers as “settlers, gardeners” and “shepherds.” Settlers follow the Christian Community Development model which emphasizes Perkins’ three R’s. Gardeners focus on a particular area, such as Blue Ridge Commons, but few if any live in the neighborhood, and “shepherds” target people not by geography but by need, such as chemical dependency recovery, and continue to live outside impoverished neighborhoods. In section three Sherman devotes three chapters to the “how” of urban ministry as it interfaces with the government. Despite the potential pitfalls, Sherman details the criteria for fruitful partnerships: ground-floors involvement of both parties, connected autonomy, sympathetic respect of each other’s objectives and vision, and clear communication.

For those wanting to learn about a model for church involvement in the redevelopment of central city neighborhoods, Restorers receives my commendation. The strengths of this book are numerous. First, it begins and ends with God. It is about right relationships. Living and/or working with low-income people often combines the hardest difficulties and greatest joys. Sherman rightfully reminds us that we do this for our loving God. Second, she provides a framework for thinking about and building credible efforts. As much as I am a proponent of Perkins’ model, Sherman’s categories of settler, gardener and shepherd are better rubrics for enlarging the field of those involved in this work. They take the dialogue one step further. Third, the emphasis that both structures/environments and personal behaviors contribute to the problem, and therefore the solution, is accurate. Fourth, Sherman acknowledges that Restorers themselves will be changed. They will increase their ability to be bridges between disparate communities. This is difficult because bridges get stepped on from both sides. Finally, Sherman is careful to avoid the pitfalls of categorical thinking: choosing instead to use “some,” “sometimes,” and “not all” when writing of the actions and ideas of government officials, low-income residents and Restorers.

Many neighborhoods in our metropolitan areas need the care and concern of all. Restorers of Hope provides insight and advice to social workers, city planners, business owners, and community development practitioners alike. All would do well to read Restorers, especially those of the household of faith.