WORK IN PROGRESS

A. Richard Chewning (Baylor Univ) notes he is preparing (one of three co-authors) a book entitled Business Through the Eyes of Faith for the Christian College Coalition. He also is editing a series of volumes which will integrate biblical principles with economics and public policy.

B. New member J. D. Han writes: “I have just finished writing a review paper entitled ‘The Economic Functions of the Jubilee & the Year of Sabbath’ as part of my continuing attempt at a better understanding, and hopefully a refreshing interpretation, of the economy of the Old Testament era. Methodologically, insights from the Assyriology of the Substantivist School, initiated by K. Polanyi, are heavily invoked, and the economic structure and operation are expounded in the context of the socio-religious institutions in which the predominantly non-market economy was embedded.” Interested members are welcome to write to J.D. Han, Massey College, Univ of Toronto, 4 Devonshire College, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2E1, Canada.

C. Robert Rogowsky (Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission) notes he is working on “Theology of Economic Justice: An Economist’s Reflections on Five Church Statements.” This is an examination of the theology and policy prescriptions of the existing statements on economic justice by the U.S. Roman Catholic Bishops, the Presbyterians (USA), the Lutherans (LCA), the United Methodist Church, and the United Church of Christ. He plans to compare the theological and ethical underpinnings, to identify common ground and differences, and then (if able) to take a few small steps toward a consistent statement on economic justice and an economic system.

D. Carl Strikwerda (Dept of History, Univ of Kansas) notes he is publishing “The Belgian Lower Middle Class in the Interwar Period” in R. Koschar (ed.), Splintered Class: The European Lower Middle Classes in the Age of Fascism (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987).

E. Anthony Waterman (St. John’s College, Univ of Manitoba) notes that his manuscript of Christian Political Economy, 1798-1833 (approx. 100,000 words) largely is complete.

REPORTS AND REVIEWS

WHEATON CONSULTATION FOR CHRISTIAN ECONOMISTS
Report by Bruce G. Webb (Gordon College)

Some sixty economists, along with a small handful of biblical scholars, met at Wheaton College on September 17-20, 1987, for a Consultation for Christian Economists, on the topic “Biblical Perspectives on a Mixed Market Economy.” The Consultation was sponsored by the George F. Bennett Chair of Economics, and the Business and Economics Department, both of Wheaton College.

Papers, addresses, and discussion centered on three topics: 1) the role of Scripture in the work of the Christian economist; 2) moral criticisms of the market; and 3) the role for intervention in the market system. Each topic was introduced by a major address, followed by small group and plenary discussion. Papers for the conference, which were distributed in advance, were:

- Peter J. Hill, “Appropriate Intervention in a Market System: A Critique of the Literature”
- Donald A. Hay, “A Third Way: A New or Better Response to Changing Relative Prices?”
- Michael Wiseman, “Poverty and Empirical Christianity”
- James Gwartney, “Human Freedom and the Bible”

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6. To what do we appeal when speaking to secular society? Is it possible, or even desirable, to translate our Christian ethics into language that is appealing to the non-believer?

As economists we feel ill-trained to address these foundational questions. We believe that our expertise, as technically-trained economists, lies elsewhere. Perhaps it does. But if we are to develop any sort of distinctive as Christian economists—a distinctive which could serve both the Church and the profession—we must face these philosophical/theological issues head-on. The Wheaton Consultation was an important, if small, step in this process.

A NEW AGENDA
FOR EVANGELICAL THOUGHT
Report by John D. Mason (Gordon College)

On the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (IFACS), IFACS along with the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (ISAE) hosted a gathering of roughly two hundred scholars to assess the state of scholarship in most disciplines, as viewed through (evangelical) Christian lenses. The gathering took place at the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, Illinois, from June 3 to 6, 1987.

Assessments were made of most major disciplines of learning, and there were more general attempts to discern the “pervasive presuppositions of our time.” Enjoyable presentations to this observer included Alvin Plantenga’s (philosophy, Notre Dame) discernment of swings between Enlightenment humanism (creative anti-rationalism) and a perennial naturalism in secular scholarship—the first tending to overestimate the human role, the second to underestimate it; Paul Ramsey’s (ethicist, Princeton) often humorous and challenging musings on medical ethics; and the economics session (which is the subject of this report).

The assessment in economics was prepared by Dave Richardson (Univ of Wisconsin, Madison), with responses from Kenneth Elzinga (Univ of Virginia) and Robert Hamrin (Van Dyk Associates). My observation, supported by comments from a number of others, is that this particular session was exceptionally clear and interesting (in a gathering with but a small handful of economists). The presenters are to be commended; the dismal science need not be dry.

Richardson’s objective was “to assess economics and evangelical Christian contributions to it, outlining an agenda for future scholarship.” Economics was born at the Fall. As a social science economics is the least social, the