straitns as sufficient means to maintain such an order.

It is suggested that the Agrarians, who called for extensive use of governmental powers to establish and maintain the economic foundations of an agrarian society, are properly understood as neither libertarians nor progressives. Instead, they are cultural conservatives whose efforts culminate in the work of an Agrarian-in-exile at the University of Chicago, Richard M. Weaver, and whose work may be best understood as an expression of conservative rather than progressive or libertarian political economy.

OXFORD CONFERENCE ON CHRISTIAN FAITH AND ECONOMICS
Report by Kenneth G. Elzinga (University of Virginia)

During January 6-9, 1987, at Oxford University, three organizations joined to sponsor the "Oxford Conference on Christian Faith and Economics." The organizations were the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Transformation Journal, and Partnership in Mission International. The event drew some three dozen invited participants from around the world who had diverse backgrounds in the world of scholarship, government, commerce, and the church.

Summarizing the deliberations of a group convened to discuss such a broad topic is not easy. One way to describe the flavor of the conference is to identify the papers given and their discussants. The conference began with a paper on "Christian Reflections on Economics in the Twentieth Century" by Rob van Drimmelen of the World Council of Churches. Following this was the conference's inaugural lecture by Sir Fred Catherwood, a member of the European Parliament.

In the first full day of meetings, Nicholas Wolterstorff (Calvin College) spoke on "The Bible and Economics: The Hermeneutical Issues," a paper discussed by Samuel Escobar (Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary) and Herbert Schlossberg (Minneapolis). Then followed a paper entitled "The Bible and Economics: What Does It Tell Us?" by Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Stephen Mott and discussed by Milton Wan.

The second full day had more of an economics focus. P.J. Hill (Wheaton College) presented a paper entitled "An Analysis of the Market Economy: Strengths, Weaknesses and the Future." The afternoon's counterpart paper was by Robert Goudswaard (Free University of Amsterdam), "An Analysis of Centrally Planned Economies: Strengths, Weaknesses and the Future." These papers were discussed by William Stent (Lalrope University, Australia) and Robert Bartel (King College, Tennessee), Miroslav Volf (Yugoslavia), and Washington Okumo (Tanzania).

A portion of one evening was set aside for dinner and remarks by David Young (Oxford Analytical); evenings and mealtimes also were times of informal and sometimes passionate discussion. In addition, at the close of the conference a morning was devoted to hammering out a written agenda of areas of agreement, disagreement, and topics for further study. The packed agenda left no time for being a tourist, save a portion of one evening when conference members were able to visit the facility of the Oxford Centre for Missions Studies.

Like most interdisciplinary conferences, some time was spent talking past each other, with economists wishing theologians knew more economics (and no doubt, vice versa). What gave the group the cohesion it had was the commitment the participants had to the Christian faith. The fact that we could gladly affirm that it was good to pray together (and for each other) and to have devotions together further sealed the bond we had in Christ and gave us an attitude of openness and a desire to listen to each other. I think an unbeliever, observing the meeting, might well have remarked, "see how they love one another (notwithstanding their disagreements)."

I saw three main issues being discussed. First, what is the proper hermeneutical lens for reading the Scriptures with regard to such themes as creation, redemption, the Kingdom of God, bringing freedom to the oppressed, and eschatology. Second, how do we assess the actual performance of planned and market economies. And finally, several of the participants (particularly if not solely among the theologians) are searching for a third form of resource allocation mechanism besides the market or central planning.
To respond to each of these all too briefly: There was a consensus that the traditional "evangelical" focus on the biblical message of atonement, justification, and regeneration of sinners remains central--but that the Scriptures also teach of a social ethic involving justice, and that securing justice is bound up in matters economic. The extent to which justice, say in the form of resource reallocation, is to be meted out by the state versus voluntary action was not agreed upon.

There remained considerable debate about the efficacy of markets versus planning in economic development. I personally was taken by how many of the theologians had read Marx, but never waded through a good price theory text like Mansfield or Hirshleifer or Browning & Browning. Both as a matter of theory and a matter of empirical evidence, there was disagreement about the government's ability to redistribute wealth without reducing incentives to generate additional wealth.

As to a "third way," I suspect some of the participants were disappointed that economists may seem unable (or unopen?) to discern alternatives to market and centrally planned organizations. There was some interest expressed in worker-owned or worker-managed enterprises but, among the conference, there did not seem to be an awareness of the literature that does exist on that subject in the discipline's specialty of comparative systems. An Association of Christian Economists member who knows this field would have been a valuable resource at the conference.

Unresolved were such longstanding issues as the efficacy of the government in raising a nation's standard of living and eliminating abject poverty. Further clouding the discussion of this particular issue were disagreements about what Scripture teaches concerning the roles of the state versus the church in alleviating poverty. There was agreement that the Scriptures taught not only redemption but also of God's concern with justice for the oppressed. While the discussion did not focus on these subjects, it was agreed that poverty was only one dimension of the economic problem that the Christian faith should address. The light of the gospel also must illumine such economic topics as work, leisure, ecology, and stewardship of wealth.

The papers given at the Oxford Conference will be published in the July-September issue of Transformation journal. ACE members who do not subscribe can order copies for $4.00 through Ronald J. Sider, 312 W. Logan St., Philadelphia, PA 19144. I would suggest adding an additional $1.00 to cover postage and handling. The conference is part of an ongoing effort. The Executive Committee consists of Vinay K. Samuel (India), Ronald J. Sider (USA), David T. Bussau (Australia), and Chris Sugden (England). This group is scheduled to meet in April, 1987 to formulate a continuing study agenda. Details still are being developed but the taxonomy appears to be one working group focusing on Stewardship/Creation; a second on the Theology of Work and Leisure; a third on the Biblical Definition of Justice; and a fourth on Freedom, Government and Economics.

It is gratifying to note that in recent years the opportunities for study, consultation, and fellowship on the topic of Christianity and economics have increased substantially. The Association of Christian Economists has been one avenue for this. The Oxford Conference on Christian Faith and Economics, and its continuing endeavors, is another. May these and other efforts ultimately be to God's glory.

"North American Christians in the Third World: How Best Can They Serve?"
Prepared by Roland Hoksbergen
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A number of Christian professors, particularly, may have students who express an interest in serving in Third World settings. This report speaks to this interest by a professional economist administering a study program for North American undergraduates.

I. Introduction: Sensitivity, Respect, and Humility

For the Christian, of course, whether to help one's brother or sister in need is not open to debate. It is a given. Aware of this biblical mandate, and filled with Christian love for their worldwide siblings, many Christians