

pressure, and are not well-integrated into Gorrings' critique of capitalism.

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## *Between God and Gold: Protestant Evangelicalism and the Industrial Revolution, 1820–1914*

by Robert A. Wauzzinski

Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993, ISBN: 0-8386-3481-8, \$39.50.

This ambitious book seeks to explore the "fusion of Evangelicalism and Industrialism" using an interdisciplinary ("theology, economics, church and world history, and philosophy") approach. The author's own theological-philosophical perspective is that of "the Amsterdam school of Christian philosophy" which is given a clear, articulate, if not thoroughly persuasive presentation. (See Roland Hoksbergen, "A Reformed Approach to Economics: The Kuyperian Tradition," *ACE Bulletin* #20, Fall 1992, for a thorough treatment of this school of thought.) There is much talk in Christian liberal arts circles about the need to engage in interdisciplinary studies, and Wauzzinski deserves praise for his efforts in this regard. Unfortunately, in my view, the final product is less praiseworthy than the effort.

The main thesis of this book is that Evangelicalism and what the author calls "Industrialism" have, from the time of the Industrial Revolution, become allied through a common "religious commitment" to the idea of progress and to individualism. Evangelicals have often failed, says

EDITORS' NOTE

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Wauzzinski, to recognize, much less respond to the structural, systemic injustice wrought by Industrialism, being content to treat the results of injustice and preach the salvation of individual souls. Thus a form of dualism, or "compartmentalization of religion," which consigned Christianity to the realm of the spirit but not the flesh, emerged within Evangelicalism.

Evangelicalism, indeed the Church in general, surely goes wrong in adopting this truncated view of the proper domain of Christian thought and action. It also errs in aligning itself too closely with any secular ideology or "ism," be it capitalism, socialism or "Industrialism" (a concept which I found rather difficult to pin down). Wauzzinski has performed a useful service in exposing the historical and theological roots of this dualism and unwarranted attachment of (some) evangelicals to capitalism. Yet clearly he has more in mind than making a point of purely historical interest. There is still a bond—or so he contends—between Evangelicalism and capitalism, and evangelicals may well be reaping the fruits of this bond. "Perhaps Evangelicals might want to consider the possibility that their fall from public grace, increasingly occurring during this century, maybe as much a result of God's judgment for their siding with capitalism as it is the result of the increasing realization of secular America that Evangelicalism has no unique socioeconomic insights to offer American identity" (p. 213).

Putting aside the matters of whether Evangelicalism, as a movement, has "fallen from public grace," and the propriety of inferring God's judgment on this basis, there still remains the important question of whether "Evangelicalism has (any) unique socioeconomic insights to offer American identity." If Wauzzinski is seeking some comprehensive socioeconomic critique and alternative program, widely endorsed by Evangelical leaders, accepted by the rank and file, and grounded in a distinctively evangelical theology, then he is bound to

be disappointed. The decentralized character of the evangelical movement is enough to forestall such uniformity. Yet he seems totally unaware—or so it would seem by scanning his references—of the growing body of literature produced by Christian economists, to which evangelicals have been major contributors, which stands opposed both to the dualism and the close ideological attachment of which he is rightly critical. This omission calls into question his rather sweeping indictment of Evangelicalism. (I refer the interested reader to Craig Gay, *With Liberty and Justice for Whom?*, Eerdmans, 1991.)

Along with this failure to acknowledge, much less interact with the writings of Christian economists, I found equally troubling his limited and generally biased sources on matters of economic history. Knowingly or unknowingly, the author chose to rely on the views of a very limited range of writers, often dated, and many of whom who are ideologically committed to an anti-market, anti-capitalist perspective. This led him to make some rather bold generalizations which are either misleading or, in some cases, flatly wrong. For example, he cites with approval the description of England during the Industrial Revolution given by J. L. and Barbara Hammond ("The towns had their profitable dirt, their profitable smoke, their profitable slums, their profitable disorder, their profitable ignorance, their profitable despair. The curse of Midas was on this society..."), as if this were, in a sense, a summary, or at least a representative sample of scholarly opinion on the subject. Given the abundance of recent, published work on the Industrial Revolution it is difficult to explain Wauzzinski's use of this source, though popular and influential it was in its time (early to mid-twentieth century). The question of what happened to living standards during the Industrial Revolution is still hotly debated by economic historians, yet the works of J.L. and Barbara Hammond scarcely figure in this debate. Open to similar criticisms are his references to Arnold Toynbee and John A. Hobson. Other examples of questionable

claims include the assertion that the Industrial Revolution "widened the gap between the rich and poor" (p. 117) and the claim that "modern Industrialism centers more upon industrial growth than it does on profit" (p. 86).

It is perhaps owing to his use of questionable sources that Wauzzinski can make the following statement: "When poverty did not disappear, charities attempted to correct what the market had helped to cause" (p. 121). This we find in the context of his criticism of early 19th century evangelicals for their failure to attack the roots of poverty (industrialization) and insufficient response to a structural problem (charity). The statement leaves the impression that poverty—in the sense of people lacking sufficient income to live a life of human dignity—was an aberration in human history brought on by the market (or by capitalism, or by industrialization; these distinctions are often blurred in the book). But this has it exactly backwards. Taking the long view of human history, poverty was the norm, not the exception. And it was not until the Industrial Revolution that the common working person could look forward to anything but a marginal existence at best. What is needed is not so much an explanation of poverty as an explanation of why some nations have been able to overcome what historically has been the almost universal state of human existence.

The book concludes with a discussion of proposed "reforms" to modern capitalism which build on the concept of

"codetermination" (where decision-making authority is shared by labor and management) at the level of the individual firm. At the national level, economic policy would be formulated by "representatives of employers, unions, government, consumers, environmentalists, the disenfranchised, banking and the Federal Reserve System." Implicit here are two unsupported assumptions: that democratization will necessarily produce a more just economy; and, that democratic planning will produce tolerable economic results. Far too many questions remain unanswered. Would this system broaden or limit employment opportunities? Would government *mandate* the restructuring of corporate boards to include union members and consumer advocates (p. 206)? What incentive (or coercion) would insure that "economic growth projects...have a variety of social needs in mind at the moment of their initiation, not as a charitable afterthought"? And how will government arbitrate disputes about "God-given callings"? ("...when power or opportunity reduces intercommunal or interindividual relationships, government must step in to give all parties room to pursue their God-given callings" (p. 207).) Why should owner-managers "broaden their definitions of cost"?

Interdisciplinary scholarship is always risky since one faces potential criticism on several fronts. It is possible that a church historian or theologian would have given this book a more positive review. As an economist I am unable to do so. ■

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