

Reviews

MANAGING AS IF FAITH MATTERED: CHRISTIAN SOCIAL PRINCIPLES IN THE MODERN ORGANIZATION by Helen Alford OP and Michael Naughton, *University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 2002.* Pp. 360, \$21.95 hbk.

The capitalist market economy pervades most of the world and almost every person's life is touched by it. It provides most people with their livelihood and sets the context of their economic choices. It is impossible to contemplate modern life without the capitalist market economy. Most Christians work within it, some work at its lowest levels, some are managers within businesses and a few are even leaders of large corporations. Does Christian thought have anything to say to the millions of Christians who work in businesses and to the managers and leaders of those businesses? Does the church have anything to say to those millions who spend most of their productive lives in offices, who rise early and commute long distances, to managers who regularly have to make difficult decisions like making staff redundant? Is it possible to apply Christian beliefs into the modern business corporation or should business life be kept separate from the spiritual life? This book, by a Dominican teaching in the Angelicum University (Rome) and a professor of St Thomas University, Minnesota attempts to answer these questions. It convincingly suggests that many areas of business can and ought to be guided by Christian social thought. It is a much needed book, and this reviewer hopes that it will encourage others to engage in a similar manner with the modern business world.

The Catholic tradition is rightly proud of its social thought, developed by many papal encyclicals and documents from the various Conferences of Bishops. This rich tradition includes encyclicals such as *Laborem Exercens*, the US bishops' document on the economy and, recently in Britain, *The Common Good*. Most of these documents generally cover what economists label as the 'distributionist' agenda. The context of this is the way economists describe the two-part challenge of the modern capitalist economy: how to generate wealth and then how to distribute it.

The first part is complex as it deals with how the modern business enterprise functions, produces goods or services, its competition, and the very profound and difficult process it goes through to create wealth. The 'distributionist' agenda is equally important and concerns how best society should distribute the wealth that is created. Hence the focus on trade unions, tax rates and promotion of a more equal distribution of wealth within a country and between countries. These issues are important but, to put it bluntly, businesses need to create wealth first, before it can be distributed. This creation process is incredibly complex and messy in a capitalist market economy. One observation on Catholic

social thought has been its lack of engagement with, some would say complete silence on, the process of wealth creation by businesses as compared with its many documents covering issues of wealth distribution.

This book begins to redress the balance. The engine of wealth creation in the modern market economy is the business enterprise, and the book's focus is the application of christian social principles to this enterprise. It begins by providing an overview of the purpose of business, and then highlights four areas of business: job design, just wages, corporate ownership, marketing communication through to product development. Each of these areas is discussed using christian social principles. These principles are the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, the universal destination of goods, and the theological and cardinal virtues. The chapters are well written and provide valuable material for those christians who are trying to integrate their work and their faith. For the authors, the purpose of business is not just to make money, although they recognise this as a critical 'foundational good', but more that it has responsibility towards the common good. Business also needs simultaneously and not sequentially to pursue 'excellent goods' which promote human development. Specifically, job design should be done in a human centred manner. A similar approach is then applied to the topic of wages, structuring it around three areas. A living wage based on the principle of need, an equitable wage based on a just slice of the firm's profits, and a sustainable wage based on the employer's ability to pay wages that are sustainable in terms of the health of the business. The chapter on corporate ownership is probably the weakest (see below), and comes out strongly in favour of ESOPS (employee stock ownership plans). The next area covered is marketing communication and product development. The emphasis is on promoting a genuine relationship with the customer, and a new product development process focused on the common good. The final two chapters entitled 'Sustaining the Engagement', again offer very practical advice on how christians can develop 'authentic habits of Christian spirituality of work'.

Overall I recommend this book to all those christians who are interested and are involved in business. Possibly for the first time, we have a systematic analysis that integrates the principles of christian social teaching and business management. As the authors say, 'a religion that isn't good on Monday ain't any good on Sunday'. However, this christian engagement with modern business needs to continue. There is much to do, and although this work is very important it still misses some of the biggest issues we need to deal with, such as competition and corporate governance. The latter has a significant contemporary relevance. The shareholder value model of modern capitalism is the foundational principle of corporate governance; businesses are owned by shareholders who expect to maximise their return. The authors reject this model in favour of a common good model which is oriented around corporate capital being used to promote a just

distribution of wealth. This is unrealistic. The shareholder model dominates all aspects of modern capitalism, and we need to find a better way to deal with it. One aspect of the current manifestation of the shareholder model, which is only briefly mentioned, is the immense power of shareholders who usually come in the form of large institutions and pension funds. These institutional shareholders (and the many christians who work for them) are not about to give up their power for a common good model. But the shareholder model and the whole governance structure of the modern corporation are under pressure. The demise of Enron and WorldCom suggests that, although management teams were hired by shareholders to promote their interests, they ended up promoting management's interests. The area of corporate governance is one of the fundamental issues that christian social thought needs to explore. But none of this should be taken as a criticism of the authors. They are to be commended for producing a landmark book that begins the journey of christian engagement with the modern business corporation and wealth creation. I hope other scholars and practitioners will continue this engagement.

BEN ANDRADI

THE MEETING OF RELIGIONS AND THE TRINITY by Gavin D'Costa, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 2000. Pp. xi + 187 £13.95 pbk.

D'Costa divides this book into two principal sections. In the first he considers five thinkers who argue for a radically pluralist position with regard to the various world traditions. D'Costa sets out to show that in fact all these thinkers turn out to be quite exclusivist. One group representing the Christian and Jewish traditions, comprises Hick, Knitter and Cohn-Sherbok, whom D'Costa identifies as holding to the values of modernity, judging the value of all religious positions in so far as they conform to these. Within the Hindu tradition, Radhakrishnan, on the other hand, judges partly by means of Western modernity and partly according to Advaitic criteria, while the Dalai Lama turns out to appraise the value of all traditions, including Christianity, according to the values of his own Tibetan Buddhism. D'Costa intends to show that radical pluralism is unworkable, either because if truly applied it renders any judgment about truth or value illegitimate or, as in the examples he considers, he can detect an implicit exclusivism at work, which compromises the integrity of some or all religious traditions.

Instead, D'Costa argues that it is inevitable and hence legitimate that all evaluation of other religious traditions is done from within a tradition-specific stance. In the second part he thus works from an explicitly Trinitarian and Catholic perspective, and considers whether according to this we can say that other religious traditions are *per se* vehicles of salvation, taking for granted that Catholic teaching states that all individuals can be saved. Carefully working within the limits placed by the current thinking of the Magisterium he comes to the conclusion that there