

dle East more likely. The continued attacks on Americans and frequent suicide bombings in that country, together with the crumpling of the "Road Map to Peace," serve only to strengthen Bovard's argument.

Clark Stooksbury writes from Knoxville, Tennessee.

Economics and the Catholic Ethic

by Tobias Lanz

Catholicism, Protestantism, and Capitalism

by Amintore Fanfani

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Amintore Fanfani (1908-99) was an economic historian whose scholarship focused on the origins of capitalism and questions of economic and social equity. In his early career, he was part of a broader Catholic and conservative intellectual movement that was active during the interwar years and included the English Distributists and the Southern Agrarians. Like these Anglo-American writers, Fanfani and his Italian circle were highly critical of both socialism and capitalism. They spent their careers developing critiques of, and seeking Christian alternatives to, these secular schools of political economy. While most of his peers were academics and literary men, Fanfani was deeply committed to practical politics. Later in life, he served in the Italian Parliament, as prime minister of Italy, and as president of the U.N. General Assembly.

Many scholars trace the origin of capitalism to the Reformation, but Fanfani locates it in the late Middle Ages. The social conditions of that time, characterized by increased risk, uncertainty, and cosmopolitanization, were favorable to the rise of capitalism. In Fanfani's view, however, capitalism is not unique to a given people or place. The "spirit of capitalism" is something latent in the human condition and can emerge anywhere, given the right social circumstances. It is a spirit that places individual material gratification above the good of neighbor and of community. Most significant

is that the desire for individual material gain is a radical departure from precapitalist economic practices. In the Middle Ages, economics was conditioned by the teachings of the Gospel. Work was understood in relation to the Beatific Vision, the culmination of life's spiritual journey, in which every action could bring a man closer to God and Heaven. Therefore, all economic activity was moral activity. And one of the Church's main roles was to ensure that morality remained wedded to economics. Once religious restrictions on wealth and work were ignored, however, the economic sphere gradually cut its ties to Christian social teaching.

Fanfani makes a subtle and important point on the relationship between work and wealth when he addresses the difference between lawful and unlawful means of acquiring wealth. Even most non-Christians reject the idea of moneymaking through such unlawful means as bribery, theft, and extortion. This was not the main problem, however, with respect to the development of capitalism. For Fanfani, the autonomous development of the economic sphere depended on the unlawful use of *lawful* means, the unlimited accumulation of wealth. According to the traditional Christian ideal, wealth was simply a means of satisfying various human needs. Once these were satisfied, additional wealth was superfluous, miserly, and sinful. By contrast, modern man never has sufficient wealth. For him, money is not a means whereby to live but an end in itself. We now live to work, in order to fulfill unlimited desire.

The most effective way to increase material desire was (and is) through advertising. The scale and intensity of advertising accelerated as capitalism expanded. During the Middle Ages, such displays of bribery and enticement were prohibited as direct affronts to common decency and reason, employed explicitly to arouse passion and to promote the culture of appetite that capitalism requires to thrive. (Fanfani calls advertising the new word that has replaced the old word of the Gospel.) Capitalism finally came into its full glory when it captured the state, which once defended religious laws. Under capitalism, however, it defends economic laws. Just as the individual attained a "free conscience" with respect to work and wealth, so the state was freed from upholding religious standards. The growth of mass democracy is part of this political transformation. The masses are not interested in moral issues, only material ones.

Modern democracy is nothing but a referendum on economics.

While capitalism defends the idea of a free conscience with respect to economics, Fanfani does not perceive a direct relationship between this and the Protestant idea of a free conscience in spiritual matters since, in his opinion, the compatibility between Protestantism and capitalism has more to do with the Protestant view of salvation. Early Protestants still held the medieval Catholic view of work and wealth and condemned such practices as usury and miserliness. Fanfani argues, however, that this situation changed as Protestant theology matured. The emphasis Protestants placed on salvation through faith, as opposed to the Catholic idea of salvation through both faith and works, helped to separate work from faith in a way that had already occurred during the evolution of capitalism. Thus, capitalism and Protestantism, though having different social origins, arrived at the same social conclusion: namely, that work and spirituality operated under autonomous sets of rules. The compatibility of these worldviews led eventually to the wholesale acceptance of capitalism by most Protestant sects by the 17th century.

Today, capitalism is fully accepted by most Catholics, especially in the United States. Few know that their ancestors once held radically different views. Fewer still are aware that the Catholic Church has never changed Her teachings on capitalism and has consistently issued encyclicals that underscore this fact. The Church has never condemned private property, the market, or technology, but She has condemned the *abuse* of these things. Thus, Catholics such as Llewellyn Rockwell and Michael Novak, who earn their living as capitalist apologists or use the capitalist system to enhance their wealth and power, are betraying their Faith. It is time that devout Catholics and other conservative Christians restore some sanity in the economic sphere by applying the Gospel to every aspect of their lives, including the way they earn, invest, and spend their money. A good place to begin is by reading this classic book and many others that have recently been reissued by IHS Press, which is dedicated to publishing works that defend the social teachings of the Catholic Church.

Tobias Lanz teaches politics at the University of South Carolina.

The Cabal Strikes Back

Ever since the exposure in the mainstream media last year of the neoconservatives as a fifth column that engineered the present boondoggle in Iraq, dragged the United States into a foreign war for the transparent benefit of Israel, and concocted what are now known to have been lies about Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction" and Saddam Hussein's "links" to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, the neoconservative cabal in both the Bush administration and the press has been on the defensive. The cabal (or, at least, its major leaders in government) ought to be standing in the same dock that Alger Hiss and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg once occupied, but that outcome cannot—yet—be realized. What has been realized is the complete discrediting of "neoconservatism" as a more "humane," more "responsible," or more "credible" variety of the conservative persuasion. Whatever you might say about the flaws of the Old Right, it never placed the interests of foreign states above those of its own country, nor did it ever entice the United States into war to serve the imperial and perhaps even genocidal ambitions of such states. The discrediting of the neocons has been carried out by the "mainstream" or "establishment" and largely liberal press, even though most of what has been brought to public attention about neoconservatism was said long ago by paleoconservatives now consigned—by the victorious neocons themselves and their Old Right surrogates—to exile.

Precisely because of the exposure of the hidden neocon agenda in the establishment press, their hired guns had to return fire, and, in the September issue of *Commentary* (which remains their premier outlet), neocon gunslinger Joshua Muravchik pumped out some rather predictable rounds.

The burden of Mr. Muravchik's fire, of course, was that all the critics who denounced and exposed neoconservatives as responsible for the Iraq war are really antisemites. "Of course," because that is what neoconservatives always say about anyone, right or left, who criticizes them, Israel, or American foreign policy for being too pro-Israel—Pat Buchanan, Joe

Sobran, Gore Vidal, the *Nation*, *Chronicles*, etc., etc., etc. Mr. Muravchik, however, concentrated his own fire on the left—and rightly so, since the left, now and for long the dominant force within the establishment media, is in a stronger position to harm the neocons and thwart their agenda than any part of the right, old or older. Mr. Muravchik is thus able to discover antisemitism lurking in the reflections of such apostles of progress as Elizabeth Drew writing in the *New York Review of Books*, Michael Lind in the *New Statesman*, William Pfaff in the *International Herald Tribune*, and many others, and not merely individual writers but such institutions as the *New York Times* itself, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, the "British Broadcasting Company" (*sic*), the *London Times*, the *National Journal*, the *Boston Globe*, and (by no means least) Lyndon LaRouche, "the crackpot political agitator," as Mr. Muravchik not inaccurately identifies him and with whom he does not hesitate (not so accurately) to lump the others he names. One has to wonder, reviewing this encyclopedic compendium of supposed Jew-baiters, how any Jews could remain at liberty at all in the countries where the thoughts of such pundits are received seriously.

Commenting on the emphasis several of these critics placed on the supposed connections between the neoconservatives and such figures as Leon Trotsky and Leo Strauss, Mr. Muravchik finally spies "the real reason" that lurks beneath any and every criticism of the neocons:

There is, however, one thing that Strauss and Trotsky did have in common, and that one thing may get us closer to the real reason their names have been so readily invoked. Both were Jews. The neoconservatives, it turns out, are also in large proportion Jewish—and this, to their detractors, constitutes evidence of the ulterior motives that lurk behind the policies they espouse.

Leave aside the question of why it is permissible to search out the "ulterior motives" that supposedly drive the crit-



ics of the neocons but not at all permissible to suggest that neocons themselves may have motives of an ethnic and political character. Mr. Muravchik himself notes that "Many neoconservatives are in fact Jews" and offers a somewhat labored explanation of why this should be so in terms of "a powerful attraction to politics and particularly to the play of political ideas" on the part of Jews. Be that as it may, it is perfectly consistent with explanations of neoconservatism in terms of the supposed influence on it by Trotsky or Strauss, both of whom also exhibited the same "powerful attraction to politics" and political ideas. Of course, it is not at all self-evident that mere mention of the Jewishness of the neocons implies the presence of antisemitism, and the far more obvious reason their Jewishness is so often brought up is that it helps explain why they are so zealous in their advocacy of war against Iraq and other Arab states hostile to Israel. This is no more anti-Jewish than pointing to William Buckley's Catholicism as an explanation for his opposition to abortion is anti-Catholic.

Nevertheless, whatever fantasies of antisemitism haunt Mr. Muravchik's mind, he is on stronger ground in challenging a good many of the erroneous statements about neoconservatives that their liberal mainstream critics have uttered, including those concerning their supposed connections with Trotsky and Strauss. As I have noted in my own columns in *Chronicles* and elsewhere, Strauss is "hardly 'the main intellectual influence' on the neocons," as William Pfaff had claimed, and few neocons apart from Irving Kristol have been Trotskyites at all. Mr. Muravchik is thus able to score a point in his apologia by correctly insisting that not a few of the liberal critics of the neocons do not really know what they are talking about with regard to where the neocons come