

3-1-1999

# Book Review: Champions of the Poor: The Economic Consequences of Judeo-Christian Values, by Barend A. De Vries

Francis T. Hannafey S.J.  
*Fairfield University*, fhannafey@fairfield.edu

## Peer Reviewed

---

### Repository Citation

Hannafey, Francis T. S.J., "Book Review: Champions of the Poor: The Economic Consequences of Judeo-Christian Values, by Barend A. De Vries" (1999). *Religious Studies Faculty Publications*. Paper 11.  
<http://digitalcommons.fairfield.edu/religiousstudies-facultypubs/11>

### Published Citation

Hannafey, Francis T. "Champions of the Poor: The Economic Consequences of Judeo-Christian Values, by Barend A. De Vries." *Theological Studies* 60.1 (1999): 197-198.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Religious Studies Department at DigitalCommons@Fairfield. It has been accepted for inclusion in Religious Studies Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Fairfield. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@fairfield.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@fairfield.edu).

munal dimension of the reciprocity of consciences, of the inviolability of individual conscience, and of nondiscursive elements in a holistic understanding of conscience.

This book is valuable for the way it retrieves some often neglected themes in Aquinas, especially those that support a strong relationship between conscience, prudence, and the role of the Spirit. These themes are at the core of S.'s constructive proposal, which suggests but does not develop a rightful place for affectivity, intuition, imagination, community, and prayer in making a moral decision. However, the role of conscience as a reminder of who we are to become does not get adequate attention. Yet S.'s proposal for a stronger relationship between conscience and spirituality carries much promise for the function of conscience not only in making decisions but also in forming character. This book would make an excellent secondary source for any course that includes a serious consideration of conscience.

RICHARD M. GULA, S.S.  
Franciscan School of Theol., Berkeley

RELIGION, FEDERALISM, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR PUBLIC LIFE: CASES FROM GERMANY, INDIA, AND AMERICA. By William Johnson Everett. New York: Oxford University, 1997. Pp. xiv + 206. \$45.

Everett sets for himself the task of a "comparative study of the engagement between religion and constitutionalism" (vii). An introduction and initial chapter explain the basic terms involved in the idea of "covenantal publicity" which serves as both an interpretive and normative lens throughout the volume.

Three middle chapters examine the role of the Church in constitutional regimes through case studies: the former East Germany at the time of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and its immediate aftermath; present-day India with its swirling mix of world religions; and the U.S. as viewed through two legal cases, one involving the United Methodist Church and the other Native American sacred land rights. Each of these three chapters is a revision of pre-

viously published material. In a synthetic theological analysis in the concluding chapter E. distills from his case studies three broad ecclesiological options: communal, institutional, and associational. These options describe both the internal organization of churches and how churches interact with other elements of social life.

The conclusions E. draws from his case studies are careful and measured though not especially insightful. His balanced judgment sees strengths and weaknesses to each option and his correlation of theology with his political analysis permits mutually critical exchange. However, the book leaves one with a sense of an unfinished project. It constitutes more a formal framework of analysis for future work rather than a substantive argument. A limitation of the volume is the paucity of reference to Roman Catholic ecclesiology; none of the case studies uses the Catholic experience as centrally important. Unfortunately, the volume is also marred by a number of annoying typographical errors and a repetitive style.

KENNETH R. HIMES, O.F.M.  
Washington Theological Union

CHAMPIONS OF THE POOR: THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF JUDEO-CHRISTIAN VALUES. By Barend A. De Vries. Washington: Georgetown University, 1998. Pp. xvii + 318. \$55; \$24.95.

De Vries offers an important study of U.S. and global poverty that directs careful attention to its economic and other causes, to policies and actions needed to eradicate the worldwide problem, and to Jewish and Christian biblical and ethical teachings that serve as a resource for moral analysis. In the foreword, Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, O.S.B., describes the work well as "an international approach to poverty and one with an ethical dimension" (xii). This book addresses the urgent moral crisis that "one out of five" of the world's citizens lives in conditions of "abject poverty" (2). D., a former chief economist at the World Bank who has served at the International Monetary Fund, presents in two parts an

analysis of poverty that embraces biblical and ethical demands of justice which call for greater participation of the poor in economic life.

Part 1 studies the economy of poverty and examines conditions in the U.S., the serious situation of the poor in developing nations, the effects of poverty on women, poverty and the environment, and the impact of military finance and production on global poverty. It concludes with an outstanding chapter on poverty and foreign debt that provides helpful statistics and insightful historical analysis of "the consequences of the debt crisis for the poor" (156). D. draws often on data from the World Bank and includes well-designed descriptive and comparative tables.

Part 2 treats the ethics of social justice and explores the ethical teachings and official pronouncements of Jewish, Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, and Evangelical traditions on the causes and consequences of poverty and moral imperatives for action. It considers economics in the Bible, Jewish views on social justice, liberation theology, Roman Catholic encyclical teaching, Protestant teachings on the ethics of poverty, and practical responses organizations and individuals may take to aid the poor. D. recognizes the significant potential that religious traditions hold to provide ethical justification and inspiration for unified action by government, business, and communities on behalf of the world's poor. D. offers us a broad survey of the teachings of these religious traditions.

FRANCIS T. HANNAFEY, S.J.  
Fairfield University, Connecticut

**DURABLE GOODS: A COVENANTAL ETHIC FOR MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEES.** By Stewart W. Herman. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1997. Pp. 245. \$40; \$20.

What if business management/employee relationships were more "covenantal" than adversarial? What would corporations be like if people viewed their firms as cooperative communities committed to a common good? Herman considers these questions and offers God's covenant with the chosen

people as a model for interpersonal relationships in business.

Proceeding largely from Lutheran convictions about the nature of vocation, mainline Protestant emphases on promise making and promise keeping, and H. Richard Niebuhr's belief that all relations are "triadic" or relative to a cause, H. argues that management/employee relations share certain features with the divine covenant. In both sorts of relationships, participation, high expectation, conflict, vulnerability, and ambiguity are evident, enduring, and essential.

Citing the successful labor relations of General Motors' Saturn plant in the early 1990s, Caterpillar's failures during this same period, as well as a number of thorny issues involving corporate downsizing, re-engineering, and offshore migration, H. argues that traditional hierarchical relations that rely upon noncooperation and coercion, especially tactics involving managerial threat and punishment and employee withdrawal of effort, have left corporations endlessly mired in conflict and shortsighted selfishness. Corporations would be better off, he claims, to adopt cooperative strategies based on trust, loyalty, mutual respect, service, and noncoercion, i.e. covenantal business strategies.

This provocative and thoughtful text is a well-argued analysis of the history and embedded values of U.S. labor relations from the 19th century to the present. It stimulates the reader to think how management/employee relations might become truly free networks of interdependent human action wherein constituents bind themselves—despite the inevitable conflicts—to trust and respect each other and to pursue the firm's best interests.

MARTIN J. CALKINS, S.J.  
Santa Clara University, California

**HELPING AND HEALING: RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT IN HEALTH CARE.** By Edmund D. Pellegrino and David C. Thomasma. Washington: Georgetown University, 1997. Pp. viii + 168. \$15.95.

Drawing on the Catholic maxim "reason informed by faith," Pellegrino and