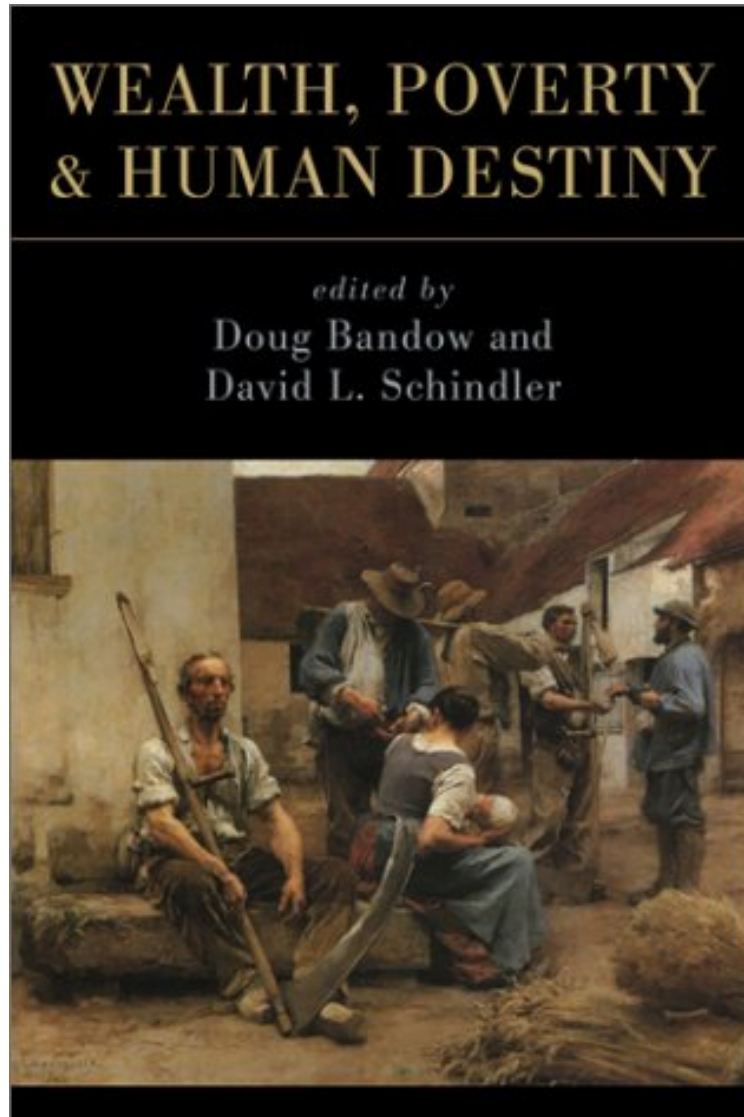


(Ebook pdf) Wealth, Poverty, and Human Destiny

Wealth, Poverty, and Human Destiny

Doug Bandow

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#1494471 in Books Intercollegiate Studies Institute 2003-09-08Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.32 x 1.81 x 6.36l, 2.08 #File Name: 1882926838538 pages | File size: 50.Mb

Doug Bandow : Wealth, Poverty, and Human Destiny before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wealth, Poverty, and Human Destiny:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Intelligent Debate About Religion, Ethics, and CapitalismBy Kindle CustomerThis book, like Rod Dreher's recent book on "crunchy cons," attempts to revive a debate that was once popular among conservatives and libertarians in the 1950s: how to improve, critique or defend capitalism given moral, ethical, and spiritual needs that sometimes conflict with the imperatives of the market economy. While the format is a

bit distracting, the essays are thought-provoking and make you yearn for the days when this type of debate could be freely held without the political name-calling that often results. For my money Wendell Berry turns in some of the more provocative and interesting passages, though the entire book is well worth purchasing if the topic is of interest.²⁸ of 31 people found the following review helpful. Talented scholars in a belabored and obtuse debate

By Kyle MacKenney Christians hold a long-standing commitment to the poor of the world. Today we can see the fruits of this commitment exemplified around the world in hospitals, schools, orphanages, and the like. However, as the poor remain, so do questions regarding the individual and corporate actions of the Christian. These questions, part of a long-running debate, are enhanced by this recent compilation, which stems from a "joint project undertaken by the John Templeton Foundation and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) to investigate whether and to what extent the market economy helps the poor" (viii). Editors Bandow and Schindler each assembled a team of scholars to help debate this issue. Both groups of scholars are firmly committed to the Christian responsibility towards the poor. Their ideological differences are not over whether a responsibility exists, but rather which economic system and practices best fulfill this responsibility. While there are many nuances in each individual's argument, it is possible to draw some broad trends from the authors. Bandow's authors are markedly more pro-capitalism than Schindler's authors, who express serious reservations about the adequacy of capitalism for the task. Many of the Bandow authors cite historical evidence of reduction in material poverty as a strong case for capitalism. This proves difficult for Schindler's group to refute. They instead identify a spiritual poverty in capitalist societies that they label as "homelessness." In Schindler's own words, "'homelessness' refers to a lack of one's proper place in the cosmos" (351). He states, "man is rightly said to be at home insofar as he realizes the relations that most profoundly constitute his being as a creature" (351). He fleshes this out through four different relationships: man with God, man in community, man in family, and finally "liturgical-eucharistic community" (353). This 'homelessness' argument, coupled with an argument regarding 'gift-giving,' constitutes the majority of the material from Schindler's authors. Adrian Walker initiates the thread of gift-giving, writing "the best, most central paradigm for understanding free economic exchange is not contract among self-interested strangers, but gift-giving among neighbors" (23). The question arises as to how to promote this mentality of gift giving. While most of Schindler's authors seem to leave it in the hands of the individual actors, one does propose a role for the church: "From a Christian point of view, the churches should take an active role in fostering economic practices that are consonant with the true ends of creation. This requires promoting economic practices that maintain close connections among capital, labor, and communities, so that real communal discernment of the good can take place." While I agree that much can be accomplished through the church, I am not sure of the tangible first steps advocated by this mindset. Bandow, in his summary at the end of the book, concludes the following: "In the end, the problem of humanity is not liberal economics, but humanity. All men are fallen and sinful; greed and envy are our inevitable lot, no the products of particular social systems" (343). While affirming of capitalism's positive aspects, Bandow is clear about his conviction that capitalism is not Christian. "It neither advances human virtue nor corrects ingrained personal vices; it merely reflects them. But socialism and its weaker statist cousins exacerbate the worst of men's flaws" (345). This calculated affirmation of capitalism is wise and proves to be too much for Schindler's authors to outweigh. One of the primary difficulties in reading a book of this nature is that it is difficult for any of the authors to truly get going within their argument. The interplay between various articles is on the surface at best, save the summaries by Bandow and Schindler. Many of the authors reference Novak in their essays but it is clear that the majority have not been able to read and respond to each other's arguments. This leaves the reader with an unfinished feeling, not because of the need for further thinking on a broad topic, but rather because of dropped questions that never get picked back up. More tightly defined topics, such as Lewis' "Wealth, Happiness, and Politics: Aristotelian Questions" or Davis' "'We Are Not Our Own': George Grant's Critique of Science, Technology, and Capitalism" seem to have greater impact in the end because of their defined limits. While these may not specifically propel the debate, they are satisfying in their success at accomplishing their stated tasks. I am unable to recommend this book to a wide audience. While it would be possible for anyone to glean tidbits of insight from the reading, I am convinced there must be better books and articles available (although this review will not serve as a bibliography directing the reader towards greener and more fertile soil). In my opinion, the essays from P.J. Hill, Daniel Griswold, and Jennifer Roback Morse have particular merit for a wide audience. Hill, Professor of Economics at Wheaton College, argues convincingly against using government to redistribute income. Griswold, Associate Director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, overwhelmingly shows the need for international trade in alleviating poverty. Morse, Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, writes sensitively about the need to embrace "those who are legitimately dependent on us." Morse's voice, one of the most engaging of the compilation, rings loudly in an arena that all too often ignores human dependence. I do not mean to discount the other side of the argument by highlighting these three essays. It is simply that there must be a better forum through which to learn the information that Schindler's authors attempt to present. Perhaps my frustration is largely due to their lack of plausible proposals for tangible first steps. Perhaps my frustration is simply that I am unconvinced (and frankly, tired) by their belaboring of gift and homelessness. Or perhaps my frustration is over their needlessly obtuse arguments. Whatever it may be, I would encourage the determined reader to pick and choose rather than bind himself/herself to reading this entire volume.¹⁰

of 25 people found the following review helpful. Just Buy the dam bookBy O. WillisWhether you support capitalism or not, read this book and maybe you will learn something. Of course, we don't live in a capitalist society. 17 million people work for the 85,000 subdivisions of federal, state and local governments. That is more than any industry in this country, accounting for 4 trillion of a 11 trillion dollar GNP. Yes, we are not a capitalist society.

The rapid spread of the liberal market economy throughout the world poses a host of new and complex questions for the consideration of religious believers, as well as anyone concerned with the intersection of ethics and economics. Is the liberal market order, particularly as it affects the poor, fundamentally compatible with Christian moral and social teaching? Or is it in some ways in substantial tension with that tradition? In *Wealth, Poverty, and Human Destiny*, editors Doug Bandow and David L. Schindler bring together some of today's leading economists, theologians, and social critics -- including Wendell Berry, Michael Novak, Richard John Neuhaus, and Max Stackhouse -- to consider whether the triumph of capitalism is a cause for celebration or concern. The contributors' fresh, insightful examinations should provoke a healthy debate about the intertwined issues of the market, human freedom, the family, technology, and religion.

About the AuthorDoug Bandow, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, is a nationally syndicated columnist. Formerly Special Assistant to President Reagan, Bandow is the author of *Beyond Good Intentions: A Biblical View of Politics* and *The Politics of Envy: Statism as Theology*. David L. Schindler is Dean and Gagnon Professor of Fundamental Theology at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. A member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, he is the editor of *Communio: International Catholic* and the author of *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation*.