Christodoulakis's book may be perused as a general though not entirely reliable survey of economic history. Bilginsoy's work should be widely and carefully read; it is highly instructive concerning not only the details of past financial crises but also the diverse ways they have been interpreted by academic economists.

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A Commercial Republic: America's Enduring Debate over Democratic Capitalism
Mike O'Connor
Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2014 (287 pages)

Intellectual historian Mike O'Connor's *Commercial Republic* is a well-written but flawed argument for "democratic capitalism." By that term, he means partial political control of the market by a popularly elected government (8). In surveying the political scene after the 2008 market crash, O'Connor decides that the Tea Party, which often appeals to the example of the Founders to buttress its policy proposals, must be discredited. He maintains that the "notion of a prelapsarian period in which the government refrained from influencing economic affairs plays a prominent role in contemporary conservatism" (6). This rhetoric, he claims, is not an accurate representation of history but "a utopian conservative political ideal read backward into the past" (7).

Using a "case study approach," O'Connor examines six events or debates in American history in order to demonstrate that the federal government since its conception "has exerted considerable influence on the nature and shape of the national economy" (7). He concludes, "It is the specific nature of government economic intervention, rather than its mere existence, that defines the character of American democratic capitalism" (248).

O'Connor's conclusion is mundane: historians in the past fifty years have not questioned that the federal government consistently intervened in the economy. The book concerns contemporary political fears of libertarian economics rather than scholarly controversies. This review, therefore, will focus on O'Connor's uses of the American past to persuade the reader that current economic policies lie within the tradition of American economic thinking. O'Connor achieves this by simplifying past events and arguments and, especially in his treatment of the debates during the early Republic, by minimizing or ignoring the constitutional arguments about economic policy. Democratic capitalism emerges as an inadequate and incomplete concept for discussing the history of political economy in the United States.

O'Connor legitimates democratic capitalism by placing the concept in the center of his breezy narrative of American history. The first three chapters deal with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Before the Civil War, O'Connor's heroes, unsurprisingly, are Alexander Hamilton and the Whig Party who argued for federal government intervention in the economy. Hamilton, O'Conner insists, believed that "government has the right, if not the duty, to bring about … prosperity through economic intervention" (47). The Whigs concurred. Some political opponents, however—Jefferson, Madison, Jackson, and Van Buren—obstructed progress. Van Buren's defeat in the election of 1840 signaled the death knell for libertarian political policy. Now people wanted the government to be a "major player" in the economy (81). The economic debate "had essentially been settled in favor of the position of Hamilton and the Whigs" (83).

Skipping the Civil War and Reconstruction, O'Connor lands in 1886, covering an interesting Supreme Court decision, *Santa Clara County* v. *Southern Pacific Railroad*, in which the Court ruled that corporations had the rights of individuals. The decision, he charges, "helped to enable businesses to supersede the democratic process," but revealed again how the federal government shaped the economy (115–16).

The next three chapters treat the twentieth century. O'Connor predictably lionizes a sanitized version of the Progressives, celebrates the New Deal, praises the Great Society, and castigates the rise of the conservative movement for its antitax message. Although O'Connor acknowledges the influence of ideas—particularly those of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman (204–7)—on the conservative movement, conservative voters, he writes, welcomed the rollback of liberalism and criticized the welfare state because they were racists (188–89) or deluded into thinking that success in the United States came from individual initiative (198–99). American conservatism, which O'Connor considers a variant "interpretation of philosophical Liberalism" (204), created supply-side economics. President Reagan adopted the supply-side message, engineered reductions in income tax rates, and created huge deficits (239–40). Given this history, O'Connor implies that current economic policies are not historical aberrations and that the United States—*contra* the Tea Party—has always practiced democratic capitalism.

When O'Connor's case studies are analyzed more closely, however, democratic capitalism loses it explanatory power.

In the chapter on the Jefferson-Hamilton debate, O'Connor downplays the importance of constitutionalism, seriously weakening his treatment of the 1790s. At the beginning of the chapter, he writes that "there is no meaningful sense in which the policies [the Founders] instituted revealed some sort of essential American attitude toward the subject" (11). Here, O'Connor misses the point. The argument for the Founders' relevance assumes the importance of constitutionalism, the appeal to fundamental laws of the political order. While the Jefferson-Hamilton debate over economic policy in the 1790s incorporated political and philosophical components, constitutionalism played a large role in the debates, especially in Congress. The Constitution had just been ratified. During the ratification debates, Federalists had defended the Constitution from anti-Federalist charges of potential tyranny by saying that the proposed federal government would only be able to do what the Constitution allowed. James Wilson, a prominent nationalist, had made this argument in Pennsylvania, and other Federalists repeated it. The Constitution included economic provisions (especially in article 1, sections 8 and 10) regarding taxing and currency. Thus, when Hamilton proposed his financial plans to Congress, some representatives asked whether or not the Constitution allowed such policies. For example, during the debates on funding and assumption, certain congressmen, drawing from the English republican tradition, warned that the system would create a permanent monied interest that would corrupt the government. Others argued that the Constitution did not mention funding and assumption. Indeed, the legislature of Virginia in December 1790 passed a resolution declaring that Hamilton's proposal was unconstitutional and violated Federalist promises during ratification.

The same argument applied to Hamilton's Bank of the United States. During the Philadelphia Convention, on September 14, 1787, the delegates considered and rejected giving Congress a power of incorporation. Thus when former convention delegate Hamilton proposed that Congress charter a bank and former convention chair Washington signed this bill into law, Jefferson and Madison felt betrayed. Jefferson had warned in his opinion on the constitutionality of the bank that willful violations of the Constitution, if left unchecked, would lead the United States to centralized tyranny. Thus the debate between Jefferson and Hamilton was not solely a choice between free markets and state control or, as O'Connor puts it, between republicanism and liberalism (25–36). Constitutionalism played a major role and needs to be incorporated into any discussion of "democratic capitalism."

O'Connor's chapter on the Jacksonians and banking downplays another important factor in American political economy—federalism. He depicts Jackson and Van Buren as advocates of a laissez faire approach toward banking that eventually suffered defeat. However, as numerous scholars have shown, the debate about banking was much more complex. One historian of antebellum banking, Larry Schweikart, demonstrated that the division of power between the federal and state government allowed antebellum politicians to pursue different policies on each level. On the state level, particularly in southern states they controlled, Jacksonians did not pursue a laissez faire policy in regard to banking. They preferred a banking system that Democratic politicians could manipulate for political gain. Even on the national level, the Jacksonians divided over the proper approach to banking and currency. Some pursued a laissez faire policy, but Jackson himself, contrary to O'Connor's depiction, was no advocate of laissez faire banking. In 1829, he proposed to Amos Kendall his own plan for a national bank, which he failed to see to fruition. Federalism, therefore, further shaped American political economy, limiting what politicians could do and complicating the arguments over policy. Democratic capitalism again seems too imprecise a concept to encapsulate the American debate over political economy.

O'Connor's concept of democratic capitalism promises more than it delivers. In reality, the case studies presented in the book were more complex than indicated. There are some bright spots in the book. O'Connor's discussion of corporations in nineteenth-century America is clear and well conceived (86–94). Similarly, his treatment of John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* is a solid example of placing a text in context in order to understand its implications (190–200).

O'Connor's main contention was never in doubt. The book would have been stronger if he had delved deeper into the debates to show the complexity involved. Debates over economic policy in the United States have rarely been simple choices between free markets and state control. Other concepts and concerns—particularly political ones—have shaped political economy throughout American history providing a richer, more complex, and less satisfying narrative, whatever your political persuasion.

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After Capitalism: Rethinking Economic Relationships
Paul Mills and Michael Schluter
Cambridge, UK: Jubilee Centre, 2012 (191 pages)

Like many critiques of capitalism, this collection of papers contends that capitalism, though superior to communism, suffers from deep moral flaws. Throughout the book's thirteen essays, authors Paul Mills and Michael Schluter argue that many features of the modern structure of capitalism are at odds with biblical teaching regarding economic relationships.

According to the book's introduction, which comprises chapter 1, the ensuing thirteen chapters are a collection of papers originally written by Mills and Schluter as part of their ongoing participation in the Cambridge Papers Writing Group (CPWG). The CPWG was founded during the late 1980s as a think tank for the Jubilee Centre, a charity that encourages research and policy recommendations consistent with Christian teaching. Mills and Schluter are charter members of the CPWG, and the book contains their selected contributions on economics written over the 1993–2012 period.

In short, the book's thesis is that Christians need to work toward the reorientation of the economy away from conventional measures of economic success and prosperity such as labor productivity and GDP per capita. Instead, the authors argue, the primary aim of our economic activities should be richer relationships: both with each other and with our particular geographic locations. Toward that end, the introduction articulates seven foundations of a "divine economy," all of which presumably follow from faithful obedience to biblical principles: (1) superior measures of economic progress; (2) unfettered markets for goods and services but not for the factors of production; (3) personal financial relationships, rather than impersonal relationships via international capital markets in which lenders charge interest to borrowers; (4) commitments of individuals and families to a particular locality, thereby leading to richer relationships among extended families; (5) small government; (6) free enterprise; and, above all, (7) a renewed appreciation for and commitment to both richer relationships and deserved rest.

Many of the book's prescriptions follow from specific interpretations of key teachings from both the Old and New Testaments—though primarily from the Old Testament. For example, the authors take quite seriously the Old Testament prohibition regarding interest, and claim repeatedly that the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 affirms that particular prohibition, interpreting "reaping where one has not sown" as the unmerited receipt of interest payments. In the authors' view, by lending money to another a lender can reap all of the benefit from the arrangement (i.e., the interest) without assuming any of the risk. Their suggested alternatives include rent-to-own arrangements in cases