

## Editorial | From Christian Political Economy to Christian Socialism

The phrase “Christian Political Economy” comes from the historian of economics A. M. C. Waterman, and it specifically refers to Christians, often clergy such as Thomas Robert Malthus and Richard Whately, who, following in the footsteps of Adam Smith, were early practitioners of the new science of political economy from 1798 to 1833, specifically in Britain.<sup>1</sup> Some, following Waterman, mark a “separation” after this period, in which the paths of Christian theology and economic science parted ways.<sup>2</sup> Yet one might push back the date to the Revolution in Paris in 1848, illustrated on the cover of this issue with an anonymous painting of the burning of the throne of Louis-Philippe on February 24. The next generation of Christian social activists, again in Britain, would see renewed interest in Christian engagement with the economy, but this time through the likes of Christian socialists F. D. Maurice, J. M. Ludlow, and Charles Kingsley, whose Christian socialist brotherhood began in order to forestall in Britain the wave of revolution that swept across Europe from Paris in 1848.

The extent to which economics took a positive turn away from religious principles, and the extent to which Christians took a normative turn toward the alternative of socialism at the exclusion of political economy, is precisely the question this theme issue of the *Journal of Markets & Morality* explores through its first four articles, all originally developed for the Acton Institute’s Second Annual Academic Colloquium in 2022, on the theme “From Christian Political Economy to Christian Socialism.” The articles for this theme issue are guest edited by Stephen Meardon, associate professor of economics at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, and Paul Oslington, professor of economics and theology

at Alphacrucis University College in Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia. My thanks to both for their help evaluating submissions and planning this issue.

Ross B. Emmett's article "Nineteenth-Century British Christian Socialism"<sup>3</sup> originated as the conference's plenary lecture. Emmett sets the stage with a detailed examination of the origins and internal variety of Christian socialism in Britain and its trajectory away from its original focus on worker cooperatives to advocacy for state intervention in later instantiations of the movement. Next, my own article "The Origins and Aims of F. D. Maurice's Christian Socialism"<sup>4</sup> hones in on Maurice in particular and how reading him in the light of recurring patristic motifs in his work casts his involvement in a different, more evangelistic light than the current literature on his Christian socialism. Richard Turnbull then charts a concurrent path of Christian social engagement in his article "Evangelicals and Business in Nineteenth-Century Britain."<sup>5</sup> Turnbull outlines the moral commitments of English evangelicals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that included a more positive view of Adam Smith, business, and markets, on the one hand, and a rejection of both exploitative business practices and Christian socialism, on the other. Finally, Bradley W. Bateman details the parallel, and in some cases quite different, journey to Christian socialism of clergy, economists, and activists in the United States in his article "Christian Theology and American Economics."<sup>6</sup> Together, these articles advance our understanding of the history of the relationship between theology, economics, and socialism and lay a groundwork for further historical and constructive scholarship in the future.

This issue also contains two articles not submitted for the theme. The first is Erik W. Matson's article "Economics and the Moral Theology of Mutual Benefits,"<sup>7</sup> originating as the Acton Institute's 2022 Calihan Lecture. This article, nevertheless, helpfully augments those of our theme by exploring the origins of classical political economy in Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith. The second of these articles, Wilson Whitener and Alexander W. Salter's "Wealth and Commerce in Eastern Christian Thought,"<sup>8</sup> strikes out into new territory by offering a historical and constructive approach to the moral status of wealth and commerce in Orthodox Christian theology.

Together, the articles in this issue should challenge scholars today to take seriously the wide variety of Christian perspectives on economics and business, as well as the historical circumstances that motivated sometimes divergent and conflicting paths. Ideas matter, and labels can help us categorize the ideas that have shaped academic disciplines and the course of history. But human persons, created in the image of God, cannot be reduced to labels either. With the courage to listen to stories we might otherwise ignore, we may find our own understanding expand under the influence of even the unlikeliest of sources, even if we ulti-

mately remain unconvinced by their perspectives. I am grateful, at least, for all I have learned in editing and contributing to this issue.

—Dylan Pahman, Executive Editor

## Notes

1. See A. M. C. Waterman, *Revolution, Economics and Religion: Christian Political Economy, 1798–1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
2. See Ross B. Emmett, “Economics and Theology after the Separation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity and Economics*, ed. Paul Oslington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 135–52.
3. See Ross B. Emmett, “Nineteenth-Century British Christian Socialism: Association rather than Competition,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 26, no. 1 (2023): 7–25.
4. See Dylan Pahman, “The Origins and Aims of F. D. Maurice’s Christian Socialism: A Consideration of Patristic Motifs,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 26, no. 1 (2023): 27–49.
5. See Richard Turnbull, “Evangelicals and Business in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 26, no. 1 (2023): 51–67 .
6. See Bradley W. Bateman, “Christian Theology and American Economics: From the Free Market to Socialism,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 26, no. 1 (2023): 69–84.
7. See Erik W. Matson, “Economics and the Moral Theology of Mutual Benefits: Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 26, no. 1 (2023): 85–103.
8. See Wilson Whitener and Alexander W. Salter, “Wealth and Commerce in Eastern Christian Thought,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 26, no. 1 (2023): 105–25.