unreasonable secularist assumptions. Highlighting this problem is important, not least because of the hegemony exerted by Rawlsian thought throughout much of the acad-
emy. This ascendency includes a number of Christian scholars (some of whom were once regularly consulted by Protestant and Catholic leaders on public policy questions) who are, more or less, in thrall to the Rawlsian concept of justice.

Given the fixation of many secularists with lifestyle “liberationist” issues, the reader will not be surprised that several of George’s essays focus on questions such as abortion, homosexual “marriage,” and euthanasia, but these essays also raise important questions about the coherence and effectiveness of approaches to public policy by Christian leaders over the past twenty years. In this respect, many will be struck by the strength of George’s critique of the American Catholic Bishops Conference and some of their staff bureaucrats during the period in which Cardinal Joseph Bernardin wielded great influence within the Conference. One suspects that this essay may encourage scholars to engage in a longer—and, some might say, long overdue—critique of what various commentators have labeled “the Bernardin project.”

Yet, for all his criticisms of secular orthodoxy and those Christians who (as Cardinal Francis George once famously remarked) apparently regard the New York Times as their primary source of Revelation, George is not a Christian who wants to reside in a ghetto and pretend that modernity never happened. He is very comfortable with many modern institutions that many liberals claim as their own. Nor is George opposed to pluralism. Much of this book is directed to showing how Christians may speak coherently of a “reasonable pluralism” in ways that Rawls (who, ironically enough, coined the term) and other secularists cannot.

But given the tendency of some to label George as a “conservative,” many will be surprised to learn that there is, in fact, a type of “liberalism” that George believes can be integrated into orthodox Christian belief. It is, in fact, a liberalism that rebuffs the culture of death and embraces a “liberal” range of practices and institutions in the name of a freedom directed to truth. In George’s words:

This is not the liberalism of abortion, euthanasia, and the sexual revolution. It is the liberalism, rather, of the rule of law, democratic self-governance, subsidiarity, social solidarity, private property, limited government, equal protection, and basic human freedoms, such as those of speech, press, assembly, and, above all, religion... It is the liberalism of Lincoln and the American founders, of Newman and Chesterton, of the Second Vatican Council and John Paul II: A liberalism of life (56).

Much work is, however, needed to deepen understanding of the full implications of this liberalism. The Clash of Orthodoxies only sketches an outline. One especially important question requiring reflection is the extent to which institutions such as dem-
cratic self-government and private property depend upon secularist premises for their coherence in the modern world. The answer to this question will effectively determine whether the liberalism of which George speaks is possible.

Leaving aside this issue, the enduring strength of George’s book is that it shows Christians how to engage in discussion of complex policy issues by taking our capacity to reason seriously without reducing reason to mere rationalization, ideology, or sophistry. In the end, this requires not just great faith in man but also profound trust in the God who created us. It involves believing that human reason is ultimately oriented, despite its limitations, to knowledge of the Divine and his creation. Though daunting, the pursuit of knowledge through reason is not a task that Christians should ever shirk, because as George remarks, “Whoever sincerely seeks truth, existentially as well as in the scholarly disciplines, seeks—and thereby honors—the God who is Truth” (316).

—Samuel Gregg

Acton Institute

The Search for Social Salvation: Social Christianity and America, 1880–1925

Gary Scott Smith

Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2000 (545 pages)

At a time when the President of the United States is arguing that federal funding for faith-based initiatives should be made available for alleviation of the nation’s social ills, The Search for Social Salvation might well serve as a reference for the advocates and the opponents of such a policy. Smith argues that the social Christianity movement of the period from 1880 to 1925 involved a broad base of individuals and denominations, that the achievements of social Christianity were constructive, and that the impact of social Christianity upon American society was widespread, long-lasting, and influential.

This study offers compelling accounts of individuals and organizations motivated by biblical convictions and personal faith to help remove the causes of social evil and ameliorate the suffering of those who were caught in the grips of a host of social ills that plagued the United States during a time of industrialization, increasing immigra-
tion, and prejudice. In describing the breadth of the Social Gospel movement, the author carefully and thoroughly incorporates the role of women, blacks, business and political leaders, novelists, evangelicals, and mainline denominations.

During the late nineteenth century and up until the 1910s, the author contends, Protestants put aside theological differences as they engaged in what amounted to the “moral equivalent of war.” This diverse group of combatants believed that biblical principles and the real potential for establishing the kingdom of God on this earth would transform culture. Business leaders such as John Wanamaker and Arthur Nash tried to demonstrate that the golden rule could be adapted in commerce and industry.

Inasmuch as some leaders, including Walter Rauschenbusch and Vida Scudder, espoused Christian socialism, and others, including the more conservative, evangelical leaders of the Men and Religion Forward Movement, were seemingly poles apart, their
unity under the banner of social Christianity was truly remarkable. The range of the social issues they addressed was equally remarkable: low wages and poor working conditions, political corruption and penal reform, drunkenness and prostitution, improving schools and strengthening families, public health and human rights. Despite the inclusive nature of the movement, white Christians fell far short in terms of cooperation with leaders of the African American Church. Black clergy, especially Reverdy Ransom, and lay leaders were concerned about many of the same issues as white activists but carried the added burden in their struggle against racism, lynching, and all manner of discrimination.

Although social Christianity did not win the battle, Smith points to the fact that it won some skirmishes, slowing the advance of the enemy and frustrating the spread of malevolent and malignant forces. The movement played a significant role in deflecting the appeal of radical ideological and political forces. In espousing many policies of Progressive politics and influencing nationally prominent politicians including Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and William Jennings Bryan, it prepared the way for New Deal reforms and the Civil Rights movement.

Why, then, did social Christianity come apart by 1925? Smith concludes that the movement failed at several points. It lacked theological clarity, it advocated practice without establishing underlying principles, and it was unduly optimistic about the socially redeeming power of love and persuasion. Moreover, World War I, the rise of Bolshevism, and cultural as well as ideological differences further undermined the unity of believers. The division between liberal and fundamentalist churches grew, thus straining bonds that had prevailed for almost four decades.

Leaving no doubt that the historical record supports the soundness of his thesis—that social Christianity was promoted and sustained by a broad alliance of American Protestants, Smith has created a work that is even more important because of the story he tells. The Search for Social Salvation is an account of people of Christian conviction and compassion who responded to the blight of social injustice that, for countless millions, led to lives of despair. This is a good news story that deserves the attention of twenty-first century readers.

Smith’s research demonstrates the power of the individual and the value of voluntary cooperation in an open society. This study also illustrates the vulnerability and weakness of a social movement that relied too greatly upon the strength of convictions without cultivating principles that form a lasting foundation.

Having spent more than a decade working on this book, Smith synthesizes an enormous amount of source material. The Search for Social Salvation will be a valuable resource for students of American culture, not just for those who study the history of the church.

—Marshall K. Christensen
Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon

Prophet of the Christian Social Manifesto:
Joseph Husslein, S.J., His Life, Work, and Social Thought
Steven A. Werner
Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 2001 (187 pages)

Most American Catholics nowadays who devote themselves to “social concerns” have shrunk the magisterial social teaching to a few choice texts from Rerum Novarum, Mater et Magistra, and the writings of Pope John Paul II that happen to serve their favorite cause. The attention, for example, that John Paul II gives to the natural law, the problem of secularism, and the defense of the traditional family, just to name a few, are largely filtered out of contemporary discourse. The American “social concerns” crowd feels much more comfortable when the pope talks about global warming or capital punishment.

The example of Jesuit social thinker Father Joseph Husslein (1873–1952) offers a refreshing contrast to this contemporary intellectual fashion. Steven Werner shows him as a scholar who formed his thought by the teachings of Leo XIII, especially Rerum Novarum. Indeed, Husslein had done this so completely that his writings anticipated many developments that later appeared in Pius XI’s Quadragesimo Anno. From 1909 to 1931, Father Husslein published numerous books and articles, applying Catholic social teachings to the problems of the day. His crowning work, The Christian Social Manifesto: An Interpretive Study of Encyclicals Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI, published in 1931, received the praise of Pius XI in a letter written by Cardinal Pacelli, who would later become Pope Pius XII.

Werner admits in his introduction that Father Husslein is a largely forgotten figure. The challenge for Werner is to show that his subject is not best left forgotten. He succeeds in part. Certainly, his work will be a valuable resource for students of American culture, not just for those who study the history of the church.

—Marshall K. Christensen
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