

BOOK REVIEWS

Ingeborg Gabriel, Peter G. Kirchschräger and Richard Sturn, eds. *Eine Wirtschaft, die Leben fördert, Wirtschafts- und unternehmensethische Reflexionen im Anschluss an Papst Franziskus [An economy that supports life. Economical and business ethics reflections following Pope Francis]. Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 2017. 353 pp.*

This collected volume deals with the major ecologic-social crises caused principally by the current configuration of the global economic system. The title of this book represents a programmatic answer to the often-cited words of Pope Francis from *Evangelii Gaudium* (shortened as: EG) „Such an economy kills” (EG 53). This assertion of the Pope refers primarily to an economy of exclusion, inequality, and financial speculation that only focuses on its material dimension (idolatry).

The present volume gathers papers of distinguished scholars both in German and English. It attempts to analyze the contemporary socio-ecological crisis from different perspectives such as (Christian) social ethics, economics, and political science. Consequently, the book explores several alternative solutions based primarily on the social ethical doctrine of the Catholic Church on the current socio-ecological crises. The papers address topics such as fundamental questions of economic ethics (Gabriel Ingeborg), social justice (Georges Enderle, Richard Sturn), social market economy (Markus Vogt and Gerhard Kruij), financial economics and

ethics (Bernhard Emunds and Wilfried Stadler), ecological challenges (Stefano Zamagni and Franz Gassner), and business ethics (Michael Pirson).

In the Introduction (p. 9-22), the editors present a global view of the current status of the economy that aims „to acquire the material basis of existence for all people” (p. 9). Several extremely important problems are found at the global level, which require an ethical corrective to achieve a better configuration of the socio-economical global system. For instance, the significant amount of people that are living in absolute poverty (785 million people in 2015), the concentration of wealth, the tax avoidance by global business actors and banks, the necessity of financial norms as well as social and ecological standards for commodity markets, and finally the problematic conception of permanent economic growth - are crucial challenges for the world economy. These challenges are considered urgent by Pope Francis, as expressed in the *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). However, the aim of the Pope is not to convince the world to be against an open market economy, but rather to pose the question

which type of liberal market economy has the most favorable ecological and social consequences for the entire world and for the next generations, too. Therefore, Pope Francis starts a debate about these big challenges that is continued in *Laudato Si'* (2015; shortened as: LS) in which he analyses global justice in the light of the limited resources of the world and offers ethical impulses for creating institutions that promote justice on local, regional and international levels.

Next, I will present two papers that make very clear, on the one hand, the inner interdependence between ecology, social and human dimension, and on the other hand, the approach of Pope Francis to the ecological debate.

The first article "Ökonomie – Theologie – Sozialethik. Divergenzen und Konvergenzen" (English: "Economics – Theology – Social Ethics. Divergence and Convergence") by Ingeborg Gabriel describes the biblical-theological basis of a Christian economic ethics, and addresses at length an anthropologically based criticism of the most important anthropological and ideological premises of modern capitalism, and finally draws several conclusions regarding the current economy and economic science from the point of view of both individual and social ethics (p. 23).

Starting with the well-known book by Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), Gabriel addresses the following question that is actually a paradox: How could an economy such as capitalism with its high regard for wealth emerge on the ground of Christian civilization with its skeptical view regarding wealth? (p. 24).

The first part discusses both the remarkable success as well as the social

ethical "heresies" (gr. *hairesis* as partial truth) of the modern western economics. The economic theory of Adam Smith is based on the value of freedom of the individual who is able to set up their own aims according to their private interests. Remarkably, this type of existential configuration has become normative in modern society. As a result, the anthropological concept of *homo oeconomicus* suffers mainly from three limitations: (a) lack of inclusion of human sociability and relationality; (b) reduction of the human person to their role as worker and owner; (c) amalgamation between the empirical and ethical (p. 29-33). The second part of the paper analyses universal equality as well as the general framework of economic competition. Due to the complexity of the global market system, Smith's principle of the "invisible hand" functions imperfectly because of a lack of equality of market participants (how can a peasant from Nepal who sells their harvest to survive compete with a multinational agrocompany?). Furthermore, Ingeborg Gabriel's approach criticizes both the substitution of morally dependent human action through conveniently justified actions as well as the idea of endless progress that serves as a basis for the entire project of modernity including its economics. Infinite economic progress is definitely not possible in a finite world. Consequently, the anti-statism of the economic mainstreams is analyzed as a heresy (partial truth) from a philosophical viewpoint. The state is needed also in a free market economy since the realization of all economic activities depends of several preconditions that are or must be guaranteed by the state (jurisdiction, currency, education etc.). At the same time, principles such as social justice and the common good are to be realized by the

state and are a precondition for a functioning democracy. The third part of this paper provides ethical and economic reflections on an economy that supports common welfare based primarily on Catholic social teaching. Summing up, ethics should return to the center of the economy and play a role at individual (protection of freedom of the individual) and institutional (concerning the common good) levels in order to increase humanity and justice in society.

Stefano Zamagni's paper offers an explanatory model for the current global situation and stresses several features of a new economy examined in the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*. The first thesis explores the interrelation between ecological and social problems: "The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together" (LS 48). The second thesis views the ecosystem "as a global common good" (LS 23; 174). The third thesis examines the "economic biodiversity", which has three dimensions: the material, the socio-relational and the spiritual. These are closely interconnected, and should be maintained in equilibrium overtime (p. 139). In the fifth chapter Zamagni focuses on solutions to the current environmental crises. These are: a) creating a World Environmental Organization (WEO) with the right to sanction; b) transformation of existing power structures; and, c) a new view on consumer and corporate responsibility. The conclusions stress the message of hope expressed by Pope Francis that should imply more involvement of the individual: "to not consider oneself either merely a result a processes that fall outside the control or as a self-sufficient entity with no need to entertain relations with others" (p. 152).

The present volume definitely deserves attention in the Orthodox world, because the economic, ethical, and ecological challenges should be discussed in local Orthodox churches more frequently and in depth. As the analyzed papers show, the ecological questions are strongly connected to the anthropological and social questions, and accordingly to ethical-theological questions; the Churches cannot remain indifferent with regard to such questions. Whereas the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, an advocate for the conservation of our environment (he is also called the "Green Patriarch",) is perhaps the only positive exception in that he considers the environment. The other Orthodox local majority churches – maybe due to a stronger than necessary nationalist focus – are neglecting on the one hand, the global challenges of the world including the economy, and on the other hand, a pan-orthodox common ecclesial initiative to address these urgent questions. However, it would be preferable that all Christian churches cooperate in an ecumenical way in order to promote global standards for economics and ecology so that the social and human dimensions become much more important in the political decision-making process.

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