

so long as it is not overdone.

Sports as a secular state religion

Novak believes, if he believes in anything, in a gnostic spiritualism that rejects the fact that man is not merely a two-legged beast. He says this openly in the pages of his 1976 work. Novak lays out the thesis that American sports, especially since its mass penetration through television, have become a *civil or secular religion*, holding sway over the masses.

"The institutions of state generate a civil religion," writes Novak. "So do the institutions of sport. The ancient Olympic games used to be both festivals in honor of the gods and festivals in honor of the state — and that has been the classical position of sports ever since. The ceremonies of sports overlap those of state on one side and those of the churches on the other. . . . Going to a stadium is half like going to a political rally, half like going to a church. . . ."

But Novak is not saying that sports are mere *symbols* for religions. They satisfy "religious needs" of the popular masses, needs which he claims the churches are unable to satisfy or, at times, even grasp: "I am saying that sports flow outward into action from a deep natural impulse that is radically religious: an impulse of freedom, respect for ritual limits, a zest for symbolic meaning, and a longing for perfection. The athlete may, of course, be pagan, but sports are, as it were, natural religions. . . ."

"Among the godward signs in contemporary life, sports may be the single most powerful manifestation . . . sports drive one in some dark and generic sense 'godward'. . . ."

"Sports are religious in the sense that they are organized institutions, disciplines, and liturgies; and also in that sense they teach religious qualities of heart and soul. In particular they recreate the symbols of the cosmic struggle, in which human survival and moral courage are not assured. To this extent, they are not mere games, diversions, pastimes. . . . To lose symbolizes death, and it certainly feels like dying, but it is not death. . . . If you give your heart to the ritual, its effects on your inner life can be far reaching."

Novak sees sporting contests as teaching man of the existence of death through the concept of *losing*. In assigning such importance to death, Novak is mirroring Freud, who argues in several locations that life is the struggle between two opposing instincts, *Eros*, or the sexual drive for perpetuation of the species, and *Thanatos*, or death, a drive towards man's own destruction. The death instinct claims Freud is diverted from the individual towards the external world, and manifests itself as human *aggressiveness and destructiveness* — two qualities of the *human animal* which Novak says sports "joyfully" celebrate!

Arguing against a concept of sports as mere entertainment, Novak identifies the relationship between the individual fanatic and the athlete as psychologically the same as that between a priest and his disciples. But the priesthood being described is a *gnostic and pagan* priesthood, not that of Chris-

Divorcing creativity from morality

The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

by Michael Novak

The Free Press, New York, 1993

334 pages, hardbound, \$24.95

Michael Novak's newest book is yet another attempt on the part of a group of neo-conservative liberal capitalists in the American Catholic Church, to misinterpret Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, in such a way as to turn it into an apology for Anglo-American economic looting of both eastern Europe and Ibero-America. More sophisticated than Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, who attempts in *Doing Well and Doing Good, The Challenge to the Christian Capitalist*, (see *EIR*, Jan. 29, 1993) to portray the pope as having endorsed the Protestant ethic, Novak attempts to make his so-called "democratic capitalism" more palatable to Catholics by packaging it as a reflection of the Catholic ethic.

In his preface, Novak admits that this book differs from his earlier book, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*. He writes, "In 1981, when I was writing that book, I had not yet seen the link between capitalism and creativity, the crucial point in the Catholic ethic." Not to have seen the connection between human creativity and economics does not say much for Novak's previous understanding either of economics or of Christian morality. But instead of humbly reconsidering his understanding of economics in light of this failure, he has merely attempted to salvage his previous flawed concept of liberal capitalism by cloaking it in the Judeo-Christian concept of man as created in the image of God.

In reality, both Novak and Neuhaus reflect the same kind of Manichean tendency as Philip Melancthon observed in Martin Luther. They deny that the so-called material world, the world of economic policy, can or should be ordered according to the spiritual or moral values, which flow from the concept of man as created

tianity: The priests are elevated into a god status: "Athletes are not merely entertainers. Their role is far more than that. People identify with them in a much more priestly way.

in the image of God. Their essentially Manichean presumption that the material world is evil and that spiritual values are limited to personal, familial relationships, but do not extend to economic policy for humanity as a whole, leads them to the completely immoral act of defending the evils of liberal capitalism.

Novak correctly identifies human creativity as the true source of economic wealth and derives man's creative capacity from the fact that he is created in the image of God. However, by divorcing creativity from morality, he reduces man's capacity and responsibility to use his creative intellect for the good of his fellow man into a rationalization for his continued exploitation.

Moreover, by emphasizing what he calls "civil society" in opposition to the role of the state, he, like his collaborator Reverend Neuhaus, deliberately runs interference for the policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which Pope John Paul II referred to as the "Structures of Sin" in his 1987 encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.

If Novak were an honest man . . .

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the fallacy of Novak's approach to capitalism is to discuss the American System of political economy versus the British system. Novak, like Neuhaus, understands that there are two forms of capitalism. However, either through ignorance or design he completely confounds the two. Thus on the one hand he refers to himself as in the "Whig Catholic tradition" and cites the economic policies of Abraham Lincoln favorably as coherent with the social teaching of the Catholic Church. On the other hand, he includes Abraham Lincoln in a rogues' gallery of liberal capitalists such as John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, Friedrich von Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and Milton Friedman.

Like Neuhaus, he defines liberal capitalism as extreme libertarianism, in order then to claim that his brand of liberal capitalism is in the Whig tradition. Novak even goes so far as to offer Ayn Rand as his only example of a liberal capitalist, as if liberal capitalism began with the writing of *Atlas Shrugged*.

But as the leading economist of the 20th century, Lyndon LaRouche, has documented, the American Revolution was fought against the economic policies espoused by British East India Company employee Adam Smith in his *The Wealth of Nations*. Moreover, contrary to Novak and Neuhaus, Adam Smith's economic policies were not those of a "Christian moral philosopher," but rather of an

immoral hedonist, as is demonstrated by Smith's 1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

The American System was based upon the dirigistic policies of France's Jean-Baptiste Colbert and the physical-economic theories of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in direct opposition to the free-trade policies advocated by Adam Smith. If Novak were truly a Whig Catholic, he would acknowledge that the American System of economics inherited by Abraham Lincoln was first put into practice by Alexander Hamilton, U.S. treasury secretary under President George Washington, as *EIR* amply demonstrated in its special Jan. 3, 1992 issue dedicated to the bicentennial of Hamilton's 1791 *Report on the Subject of Manufactures*. Novak would then have to admit that this system promoted the development of manufactures through protectionist tariffs and through the issuance of credit by a National Bank.

Then he would have to admit that, in contrast to the liberal capitalist British system of Adam Smith and the related socialism of Karl Marx, the American System identifies the true source of wealth as the development of the "productive powers of labor." As LaRouche has documented, this concept is not only expressed by Alexander Hamilton in his *Report on Manufactures*, but is the crucial economic conception put forth in the economic writings of Benjamin Franklin's Irish-American collaborator Mathew Carey, his son Henry C. Carey, who was Abraham Lincoln's adviser, and Friedrich List.

Thus if Novak were honest, he would acknowledge that his recent discovery of the importance of the creativity of the human person to political economy is the central thesis of the American System of political economy, in opposition to the British system which he is advocating. He would also acknowledge that his attack on the state sector of the economies of Ibero-America and his support for the privatization of those sectors as demanded by the IMF and World Bank are coherent with the colonialist policies of free trade advocated by Adam Smith, and are in opposition to the policies of the American System or Whig tradition.

If Novak were to maintain that this American System of political economy were coherent with the social teaching of the Catholic Church, he would be right. For this system, like the social teaching of the church, rejects the axiomatic assumptions of both Adam Smith's liberal capitalism and Karl Marx's socialism, and identifies the primacy of man as *imago viva Dei*, the living image of God. — *William F. Wertz, Jr.*

Athletes exemplify something of a deep meaning — frightening meaning, even. . . .

"Once an athlete accepts a uniform, he is, in effect, don-

ning priestly vestments. It is the function of the priests to offer sacrifices. As at the Christian Mass, in athletics the priest is also the victim: He who offers and he who is offered