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the broader category of the spiritual. That concept, with the wide range of meanings it encompasses, also encompasses Du Bois. His was a deeply spiritual vocation. But perhaps the force of Blum's analysis would have been blunted by such a re-framing. In any case, he tells us that he "wrote this book to learn religion and spirituality from Du Bois" (273). And we in turn are enabled to learn from him.

***United States Welfare Policy: A Catholic Response.* By Thomas J. Massaro. S. J. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2007. xi + 257 pp. \$59.95 Cloth, \$26.95 Paper**

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Thomas J. Massaro, SJ, places his book in the genre of "religious social ethics addressing issues of public policy" (3), requiring bridge building between two disparate worlds: contemporary public policy debates and religiously grounded social justice claims. He has built his bridge between the contentious realm of welfare policy and relevant ideals from Catholic social thought (CST). After reviewing Catholic social teaching to identify key ethical principles for social policy, Massaro moves to a detailed ethical critique of contemporary welfare policy beginning with its historical context. This critique includes an analysis of the provisions of the 1996 creation of the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) program, a review of its implementation, and the ongoing debate about its reauthorization. As the book makes clear, welfare reform and its aftermath raise troubling ethical concerns from the perspective of Catholic social principles.

The 1996 welfare reform legislation was based on the "culture of dependency" critique of entitlement programs proposed by conservative observers such as Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead. TANF's elimination of the welfare entitlement, its work requirements, and time limits on the receipt of cash assistance all were aimed at altering incentive structures for the poor. Massaro points out that this approach relies on both a psychological shift in welfare recipients' orientation to work and the private sector's delivery of job opportunities that can lead to

self-sufficiency. The ethical issue arises from the absence of “any provision and funding for actual job opportunities” (106). Catholic social teaching’s insistence on respecting human dignity and not placing people in impossible situations demands attention to the ways in which people denied welfare assistance might gain access to jobs that provide an adequate income.

Of course, champions of TANF point to the collapsing welfare rolls, modest reduction of poverty rates, and the absence of the severe social catastrophe that some liberal critics had predicted as proof of the reform’s success. Supposedly, welfare recipients responded to the “get tough” approach by taking responsibility for their economic circumstances. In a careful review of studies measuring TANF’s impact, Massaro points to a more complex reality hidden in rosy portrayals of its success. Despite employment success for some welfare leavers (although most of the “successful” remained poor), increasingly dire conditions among those living in extreme poverty offset these successes. Worrisome, as well, is the impact on family life, a key Catholic ethical concern, as seen in the increase in “child-only” welfare cases, which often involve separation of children from their mothers. There is also evidence of an increase in abortions in states that impose “family caps” (limits on the number of children eligible for assistance). Massaro’s evaluation, in light of CST principles, of welfare reform’s impact undermines claims of unqualified success and points to serious ethical concerns.

In his chapter on Catholic advocacy regarding welfare reform, Massaro offers a detailed analysis of five guidelines that, from a CST perspective, ought to guide welfare policy, but concludes that none “carried the day” (140) with lawmakers despite concerted advocacy from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, and other Catholic organizations. For example, CST demands a policy focused on reducing poverty, not just welfare dependency. However, TANF contains many measures designed to force welfare recipients into the workforce with little attention to whether available jobs will move them out of poverty. The dominant focus on declining welfare caseloads as a measure of the program’s success despite most welfare leavers’ persistent poverty shows the policy’s disregard for Catholic principles, argues Massaro.

Whenever Congress reauthorizes the 1996 welfare reform legislation, it is unlikely that it will make changes that support the integrity of families, acknowledge barriers to employment for some recipients, focus on the needs of children rather than the failures of their parents, and offer

more social supports to the working poor. Massaro concludes his book on a pessimistic note, worrying that the Church's sex abuse scandal has undermined U.S. Bishops' credibility as advocates for the wellbeing of children. While he is right to note this concern, the book's overall analysis suggests that the failure of CST to influence American welfare policy goes much deeper than any lack of credibility on the part of its advocates. After all, TANF was implemented before the sex abuse revelations, and the bishops still had little impact on the shape and form of welfare policy. As Massaro's account makes clear, Americans seem resistant to perceiving welfare policy through the lens of CST. Concerns about the work ethic and personal responsibility of the poor consistently override "religious concerns about healthy family life, parenting priorities, and social justice" (141). If we want a welfare policy that is more in line with CST, we need both more understanding of the cultural and historic factors that resist acknowledgement of CST principles and more empirical research on why policymakers seem impervious to Catholic voices advocating a CST-informed approach to the needs of the poor. Those engaged in these tasks will find this book a valuable resource in setting out what religious social ethics require of a more just welfare policy.