

In Memoriam: Rupert J. Ederer (1923–2013)

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On Thanksgiving Day, 2013, one of the SCSS's charter members and a member of our Board of Advisors, Dr. Rupert J. Ederer, died at the age of ninety. Ederer was also a Pope Pius XI laureate, having received the SCSS's highest award, the Pope Pius XI Award for Contributions toward the Building Up of a True Catholic Social Science, in 1997. He was an eminent Catholic economist, Professor Emeritus of Economics at the State University of New York College at Buffalo, and America's—possibly the world's—leading authority on the great Catholic economist Fr. Heinrich Pesch, S.J. (1854–1926) and his economic system called *solidarism*. Ederer devoted his long retirement to translating and making available in English for the first time most of Pesch's works, including his magisterial *Lehrbuch*, and promoting solidarism. Solidarism, or the solidarity system of human work, is an economic system based squarely on Christian and natural law principles. In case one might think that solidarism was just a theory bandied about by a few obscure Catholic thinkers of yesteryear, it should be pointed out that there are some indications that it may have influenced the famed Solidarity trade union movement in Poland that opened the door to the collapse of Eastern European communism.

Ederer was born in Bavaria, Germany, in 1923 to a staunchly Catholic family who immigrated to the Buffalo area when he was three years old. That enabled them to escape what he called the “dark night” of 1933–45, the Nazi period. He was first introduced in a serious way to Catholic social teaching and to Pesch's work as a seminarian. He later decided that he was not being called by God to the priesthood, and served in the U.S. military during World War II. He received his B.A. from St. Bonaventure University and later, seeking to pursue graduate studies in economics where he could learn more about Pesch, became a student of noted Catholic economic scholar Fr. Bernard Dempsey, S.J., at St. Louis University. He completed his M.A. (1950) and Ph.D. (1954) there and also commenced his career in college teaching.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, Ederer taught at a number of Catholic institutions: St. Bonaventure, Quincy College (now Quincy University), Canisius College, and Rosary Hill College. So, all his experience in Catholic higher education after his seminary studies both as a student and professor was under Jesuit and Franciscan auspices. Amidst his teach-

ing, he also worked as a research consultant for the Switchmen's Union of North America in the second half of the 1950s and for thirteen years starting in 1954 was a lecturer for the New York State School of Industrial Relations (which was connected with Cornell University). He began his eighteen-year stint at SUNY-College at Buffalo (or Buffalo State College) in 1967. Besides Catholic social teaching, his specialty fields in economics were the history of economic thought, comparative economic systems, and labor relations.

Ederer retired from teaching in 1985 to devote his full efforts to translating and editing Pesch's works and to writing about Catholic social teaching and current socio-economic questions. His first book, *The Evolution of Money* (1964), brought together what might be called "technical economics" and the history of economic thought. Following this were: *The Social Teachings of Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler* (1981), a translation of the significant writings of the nineteenth-century Bishop of Mainz, Germany, whose ideas are thought to have influenced the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (as Pesch's were thought to have influenced *Quadragesimo Anno* later); *Ethics and the National Economy* (1988), a translation of a short work of Pesch's that presents the basics of solidarism; *Economics as If God Matters* (1995; revised/expanded edition 2011), which discussed and commented on each of the major social encyclicals; *Liberalism, Socialism, and Christian Social Order*, which was a translation of a four-volume work of Pesch's (2000-2001); *Teaching Guide to Economics: The Satisfaction of a Nation's Wants As the Purpose of the National Economy and Production*, another translation of a writing by Pesch (2003); his translation of Pesch's multi-volume *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, which was the Jesuit economist's great work (2002-03); his previously published excerpts from the *Lehrbuch* under the title of *Heinrich Pesch on Solidarist Economics* (1998); and *Pope Pius XII on the Economic Order* (2011). I was privileged to write the preface to one of the volumes of *Liberalism, Socialism, and Christian Social Order*, entitled *The Christian Concept of the State*, and the foreword to the 2011 edition of *Economics as If God Matters*. The latter and the volume on Pope Pius XII were published in the SCSS's Catholic Social Thought Book Series with Scarecrow Press/Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. While Ederer's translations of Pesch are certainly crucial to keeping solidarism in the mind of the English-speaking world, his book on Pius XII is perhaps the seminal work on the social teaching of the heroic and courageous pope of the World War II era, who is often overlooked in this area since he issued no major social encyclicals. Ederer also published articles fairly prodigiously in mostly Catholic publications over the years, such as *The Review of Social Economy*, *The Wanderer*,

Fidelity, Faith and Reason, and *The Catholic Social Science Review*. He was an active scholar almost up to the time of his passing. The fact that these were all far off the radar screen of mainstream economics and social science generally did not trouble Ederer, since his embracing of solidarism—and, for that matter, Catholic social teaching—was something that he knew would hardly put him at the center of the economics profession. The contemporary liberal economists were not interested, nor were the “conservative” ones (many of the latter were really classical liberals of a sort). Ederer, however, was happy to espouse economic perspectives—along with political, social, and cultural ones—that were neither left nor right, but Catholic. He always understood what was sound economics, to be sure, but he always believed that the rightful autonomy of economics as a discipline did not mean that it was divorced from ethics or Catholic truth. He knew, like any solid Catholic thinker or scholar, that truth is indivisible.

Ederer’s son, Dr. Martin Ederer, followed his father’s footsteps onto the faculty of the State University of New York-College at Buffalo, where he is a history professor. He is also an SCSS member. Ederer is certainly missed by his loving family: his wife Gisela, the younger Dr. Ederer, and his daughter, Mary Whelan. He will also be missed by all of us who would like to see economics and the social sciences generally reflect fully the truths that God has ordained for man to live by. It is hoped that other Catholic social science scholars will pick up where he left off.