



Robert M Whaples (editor), *Pope Francis and the Caring Society*. Oakland, California: Independent Institute, 2017. Hard cover; 262 pp; \$24.95.

On first blush, one might think this volume is a paean to the social teaching of Pope Francis. While it is very fair and even charitable toward the Pope's social theories, it also seeks to correct or modify those theories when they do not correspond to the facts. The Foreword was written by the late scholar, Michael Novak; the several contributors are acknowledged experts in their respective fields, who endeavor to analyze and situate Francis' positions from within his own very limited experience of Latin America, and particularly of Argentina.

Their hope is that this engagement would lead Francis to a presentation of social theory which is more consonant with proven data from the world of economics and politics in dialogue with the Church's immemorial commitment to natural law theory. They ground their hope in the realization that Pope John Paul II espoused certain positions in his first social encyclical (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987) which, when respectfully challenged, were modified by him in *Centesimus Annus* in 1991 (in fact, he invited scholars to "educate" him at Castel Gandolfo one summer!). I am not very sanguine that these authors can expect a similar response from Francis.



Andrew Willard Jones, *Before Church and State: A Study of Social Order in the Sacramental Kingdom of St. Louis IX*. Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Press, 2017. Hard cover; 492 pp; \$39.95.

All too often, contemporary commentators on the social order of the Middle Ages speak of religion "dominating" the socio-political life of the era. Dr. Jones shows not only how inaccurate that description is but how it is merely an imposition of the modern presupposition that "Church and State" are dichotomous entities, which need to be kept separate, lest one (especially religion) overpower the other. The worldview of the "Age of Faith" was quite different as people lived integrated, holistic lives – not abiding in hermetically sealed compartments. This is hard to fathom, largely due to the havoc wrought by the Protestant Reformation.

The price of the book is hefty and the "read" is not for the faint-hearted, however, for one disposed to make the sacrifices entailed, a great reward is in the offing.