

Symposium on Gregory Clark's *A Farewell to Alms*

Editors' introductory note

Gregory Clark's *A Farewell to Alms* (Princeton University Press, 2007) has attracted more attention, both from economic historians and economists and from the general public, than any economy history monograph since Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman's *Time of the Cross* (1974). Who among us would not wish for reviews by a Nobel laureate in the *New York Review of Books* and by one of the world's foremost economists in *Science*? And the reviews keep coming.

In less than a year *A Farewell to Alms* has sold 25,000 copies in hardback. A paperback version is due in 2009. In the meantime, Princeton University Press has arranged translations into nine languages: Arabic, Chinese Simplified, Japanese, Korean, Chinese Complex, Italian, Vietnamese, Turkish and Portuguese.

The book is important, provocative and controversial. It has won a general audience for economic history with its own distinctive 'take' on key issues that have engaged scholars in the field since the days of Adam Smith and Karl Marx. The editors have accordingly invited four eminent scholars – two based in Europe, two in North America – to offer their reflections on the book. Their assessments are followed by a reply from Gregory Clark.