

themes that enable people to act in ways that achieve what is good and just. Employing a Weberian framework, he proceeds to develop a series of normative claims regarding what constitutes good and just economic acts, many of which echo or amplify concepts proposed by John Rawls' account of justice. Unlike Luther, however, eschatology rather than creation plays the central theological role from which Rich draws a series of maxims involving relationality and participation that enact, or at least anticipate, the coming of God's kingdom. This enables Rich to affirm a market economy that is not based exclusively on self-interest but includes a love of neighbor—a kinder, gentler capitalism.

Chapter 3 analyzes Rich in light of Luther. Although the author is in many respects sympathetic with Rich's project, a number of problems emerge when assessed through the lens Luther provides. To take one example, Scripture plays a less central role in Rich's methodology. Consequently, his moral maxims are general rules of thumb rather than the clear commands of the gospel regarding how neighbors should be treated in economic and commercial relationships. If Luther is taken seriously, it is difficult to imagine how a market economy could be a little less self-interested. Additionally, Rich's account of justice is more dependent on Rawlsian themes than on eschatology, which purportedly plays the central role in Rich's project. The ensuing ethics is thereby curiously more suited to a liberal emphasis on contractual relationships rather than on bonds of neighbor love that anticipate God's kingdom.

The conclusion offers a final summary of the book and brief reflections on the state of contemporary theological social ethics. Although these reflections are sparse, they do not detract from the author's careful and detailed study of moral theological methodology in which economics serves as a revealing source of the various issues and problems at stake.

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Christians in an Age of Wealth: A Biblical Theology of Wealth

Craig L. Blomberg

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014 (271 pages)

As part of a series devoted to applying biblical theology to life, Craig Blomberg has done a service to biblically focused people by examining biblical texts on various aspects of stewardship and wealth. This is more than a catalogue of texts, though two-thirds of the book is devoted to examining them as required by the series editor. This book flows well and readably from Blomberg's pen. It also serves as a worthy update of his 2001 IVP book, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches*.

After an opening essay decrying our (mostly Protestant) stingy giving and consumerist spending, including a shot at lavish mega church buildings, he begins to focus on how wealth could be used corporately to help those in need (among us) and the poor (away from us).

The next chapter, ostensibly on the biblical goodness of wealth, seems instead to be focused on the prosperity gospel. He gives a credible telling of the goodness of creation and our purpose as God's stewards. His focus is not on God's bounty, a topic of Jonathan Edwards' (not cited), but on the prosperity gospel's errors. He shows how the kingdom will, in fact, fulfill all the promises for abundance but not now. His treatment of wealth in the Bible is a series of brief commentaries on the various passages chosen.

As for generosity, Blomberg presents well Mary's generous ointment but neglects the generosity found in the Matthew 20 parable of the landlord who paid identical wages to those who worked all day or for an hour. He comments on Mary's devotional gift rather than on the generous but "unfair" gift of the landlord. Apparently his intended audience is those who are new to the topic of wealth and who would benefit from seeing many texts before getting into weightier issues.

As he enters Acts, he wisely notes that we are not called to trade places with the poor but that we are to be generous on every occasion. He gives three worthy models for how churches can help people. His section on helping the poor is brief and introductory but worth including.

The next two chapters deal with sin and generosity. He comments on Job and on all the relevant verses relating to greed from Ecclesiastes before warning us about Ananias and Sapphira. This seems to be a good commentary on a catalogue of relevant verses rather than an argument. He has good insight into the combination of personal piety and social concern.

When it comes to giving, tithing, and taxes, he emphasizes that the tithe is not normative or even semi-normative for Christians today. Giving is an area where we can be especially duplicitous by giving cheerfully but still ignoring the needs of people and ministries. We must be, as he writes, sincere, faithful, and generous. He understands that we must pay taxes but also that mere humanitarian help will not benefit the souls of humans. He concludes the section on explaining texts with a chapter on resisting materialism/mammon to fulfill our proper allegiance to Jesus.

Having covered the texts, Blomberg's final chapters are practical and involve useful case studies. Considering the individual as steward, Blomberg teaches wisely about budgeting, the graduated tithe, luxuries, surplus, missionary support, and contentment. He notes that work is good in itself; this is a welcome emphasis.

His chapter on government and business is focused instead on capitalism and socialism. He gives a balanced presentation demonstrating a good grasp of the issues such as limited good, incentives, dramatic CEO pay, and the middle class. He ignores the statist nature of socialism and seems to confuse destitution with relative poverty. He appears to think that Europe has found a successful "third way" between socialism and capitalism. He equates government spending and foreign aid with helping the poor as if all such spending actually helps. He is limited by his popular view of social justice. On the impact side, he fails to explain that socialism has killed its hundreds of millions while capitalism, for all its problems, has raised its billions from poverty.

Nevertheless, Blomberg refuses to be extreme and ends with an engaging testimony of his own journey. He helps us come to grips with the fact that capitalism is only as moral as those in its market system who either deploy private savings or consume the goods we produce. His final chapter on the role of the church is worthy and could effectively be used to train new leaders of churches.

Whenever one of the doctors of the church becomes knowledgeable about topics of wealth, savings, consumption, and other aspects of the economy, it is a good thing. When he also relates that to the Word of God, it is even better. Craig Blomberg has done these well, and his book is worthy.

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