

acts “that should generally be avoided, and never pursued for their own sake, but which may be permitted or even enjoined for other reasons (as a means to other ends). These could be termed,” writes Williams, “justifiable physical evils.” He clearly distinguishes these acts from moral evils and thus tries to avoid proportionalistic moral reasoning. But the awkwardness persists a little later when he tries to analyze the slapping of a child. He says that this “should not be pursued for its own sake but may be pursued for the sake of a greater good (the child’s formation of character). In this case,” Williams argues, “intention becomes paramount and actually justifies an action that in and of itself would be reprehensible.” One sees the difficulty. Still, the chapter has much to commend it.

Williams supports Pope Benedict XVI’s claim that Pope Paul VI’s encyclical letter, *Populorum Progressio* is the “*Rerum Novarum* of the present age.” Chapter 6 and chapter 12 explore this line of thought. Williams argues well that the key to understanding Paul VI’s contribution to development in CST is his notion of integral human development. Benedict XVI clearly pursued this line of thinking in *Caritas in Veritate* as well as adding his own unique contribution by describing charity as the essence of the Church’s action in the social sphere. Williams certainly explains Benedict’s thinking with clarity.

Is Pope Benedict XVI—and Williams—correct in asserting that *Populorum Progressio* is the new *Rerum Novarum*? Certainly, many a commentator and theologian would balk at the assertion. The benefit of CST both prior to and after Paul VI’s pontificate is its *specificity*. The genius of the social encyclical tradition has been its acute analysis of social problems and its recourse to fundamental principles that prove to be invaluable in the practical order. For instance, there is the right to private property (Leo XIII), the principle of subsidiarity (Pius XI), the principle of solidarity (John Paul II), work and rest as personal, social and divine communion (John Paul II), and economic liberty and justice as an expression of human freedom and truth (John Paul II).

Williams has offered both teacher and student a wonderful resource. *The World as It Could Be* is a serious attempt to make Catholic teaching, Catholic learning.

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Business for the Common Good: A Christian Vision for the Marketplace

Kenman L. Wong and Scott B. Rae

Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011 (288 pages)

In a speech before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Calvin Coolidge argued that a press that maintained contact with the business currents of the nation was more reliable than a press divorced from business interests. He went on to say, “After all, the chief business of the American people is business. They are profoundly concerned with producing, buying, selling, investing and prospering in the world.” In the United States, businesses account for the bulk of jobs, output of goods and services, and retirement income. To

live in America, whether one is a Christian or not, is to be intimately related to business. Is business a necessary evil or something good that also promotes the common good?

Kenman Wong and Scott Rae examine this and other questions in their book, *Business for the Common Good*. In general, they see business in a positive light, although it is in need of transformation. In fact, the idea of transformation is crucial in their approach to business. The book is part of The Christian Worldview Integration Series. The editors of the series offer their viewpoint on integration in the front of the book, and the authors of the book explain their approach in the introductory chapter. It is clear from both introductions that they are operating within the “Christ transforming culture” approach as outlined by H. Richard Niebuhr.

Wong and Rae state their assumptions in the introduction. They mention five: (1) one’s calling is to be a colaborer with God in social transformation, (2) God works through people of varied faith backgrounds and through religious and secular institutions, (3) a broken world creates complications, (4) faithful Christian living cannot be captured by rules, and (5) business is both a target and an agent of transformation. The key terms in their book are *calling* and *transformation*.

Wong and Rae argue throughout the book that business is a legitimate calling for the Christian who wants to honor God and live faithfully in his or her walk with Christ. They also acknowledge that living faithfully may not always be easy when working in business both because we live in a broken world and because there are businesspeople who see profit as their sole motive and goal.

Most chapters begin with a conundrum faced by a Christian in business or by a Christian who is questioning a particular calling. For example, the first chapter, “Your Work Is an Altar,” contrasts two Christian friends who work in business, where one begins considering a move into the ministry and tries to convince the other that he should do the same if he wants to be faithful. The authors use the views of the two friends to examine the Christian idea of calling, the purpose of work, and a biblical view of work. The second chapter then tries to examine the shape of a calling to business.

The third chapter looks at how business can affect the Christian’s spiritual formation. This may be an aspect of business life that is often overlooked, but it is one that should be obvious. After all, everything that happens in our lives shapes us in some way. The experiences people have, their encounters with other people, including friends and family, strangers, and even enemies, and the choices they make affect their views and shape their character.

Other chapters examine questions involving wealth and success; ethics and the law; and relationships with employees, customers, and the environment. In sum, leaders and managers should think of serving their employees, marketing should be directed at serving customers, and firms should be stewards that serve the created order. The final chapter looks at various models that have arisen in recent years that try to identify ways businesses can be more “Christian” in some sense.

Wong and Rae propose a normative perspective for business, “transformational service for the common good . . .” (76). A Christian’s service should be, “characterized by

transformation of human lives and institutions that allows flourishing in all the ways God has intended” (77, emphasis in original). They claim that the traditional idea that firms should maximize profits and the emerging view of balancing stakeholder interests both fall short as guiding narratives. They acknowledge that profits serve important functions and are required for a business to continue to operate.

Even so, I think a weakness of the book relates to their handling of issues related to publicly held corporations. The authors mention Milton Friedman’s article, “The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profit,” but dismiss it without actually refuting the main position—that the officers of a corporation are making decisions with other people’s money. They are stewards and have obligations to the stockholders that a sole proprietor does not have. At the least, stockholders should be made aware if the officers of the firm intend to intentionally reduce profits in order to further other goals. Profit maximization does not imply poor treatment of customers or employees because a firm’s long-run viability and profitability often require honest and fair treatment of others.

Wong and Rae offer a thoughtful examination of various ways the Christian can view working in business as a calling, and some of the pitfalls that can befall a person working in the business world. They neither glorify nor denigrate business but see business as an inherent part of God’s creation and upholding of the world. Like all institutions in society, business can engage in doing good, but there is no guarantee all businesses will do so. We live in a fallen world. They are thoughtful and balanced in their discussion of how one can live as a Christian in business.

I find transformational service to be a helpful vision of the Christian life. I agree that it would make a good narrative for individuals and institutions, including business. Christians can and ought to strive to engage in transformational service in their work, whether they work in business, government, nonprofit organizations, or churches. Unless a person is among the leaders of an organization, he or she has limited power to effect organizational change of the type advocated in this book.

In a way, Wong and Rae offer a (Christian) fleshing out of the vision Coolidge offered in his speech to the newspaper editors. Coolidge spoke of the benefits to society of wealth accumulation—multiplication of schools, increased knowledge, and the encouragement of science among others. Then he added, “Of course, the accumulation of wealth cannot be justified as the chief end of existence.”

Similarly, profit is not the chief end of business but a means for an organization to continue to provide goods and services to consumers and employment for workers. By doing so, businesses contribute to the common good.

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