

or enjoyed as a gift of God and shared with others” (315)? Baker’s implied answer is that property and land are to be shared, and apparently equally. His source for this equality appears to be the law of gleaning about which he writes that the law demonstrates that the “landless have as much right to benefit from it (the land) as the landowner” (238). Yet, the law of gleaning seems only to allow the poor to take the leftovers and does not grant them full equality with the property owner. Furthermore, while the biblical laws impose limitations on the farmer, the Bible allows a person to maximize his wealth subject to these limitations, as occurs in any firm in a modern economy. This maximization in a competitive market can benefit society by increasing the number of goods in the economy.

Notwithstanding the few questions raised here, and they are few relative to the breadth of material presented in the book, this book can surely serve as a valuable reference source for all students of the Bible as well as for those contemplating the relevance of biblical laws to modern life.

—Andrew Schein (e-mail: aschein@netanya.ac.il)
Netanya Academic College, Israel

Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception

Bruce W. Longenecker and Kelly D. Liebengood (Editors)
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2009 (336 pages)

The volume, *Engaging Economics*, contains thirteen essays by various theologians and biblical scholars, as well as an introduction and afterword written by one or both of the editors. As the subtitle suggests, almost all of the contributed papers have been grouped into two sections. As described by the editors in their introduction, the seven chapters as laid out in the first category “explore the interface between economics and a healthy section of the New Testament,” while the five chapters in the second part “examine the reception of particular New Testament texts in the patristic age” (7). The initial section of the book also includes a chapter by Peter Oakes, in which he outlines three possible relationships between economics and the biblical text: the use of economics as an analytical framework, the gathering of economic evidence as the aim of interpretation, and the employment of economic evidence as a resource for interpretation (13).

The chapters in the first major section are ordered in a basic, sequential manner with respect to the biblical canon. After exploring the legacy of property and possessions in the Torah, Stephen Barton maintains that wealth is employed as a symbol by the gospel writers in the following manner:

Matthew—wealth as a symbol of the moral life

Mark—detachment from wealth as a symbol of eschatological faith

Luke—economic relations as a symbol of salvation and judgment (the gospel of Luke), and wealth practices as a symbol of unity in the Holy Spirit (the Acts of the Apostles)

Based on his examination of the Gospels, Barton draws four major conclusions: (1) economic practices are not at all marginal to Christianity; (2) early Christianity represents a *re-narration* of what really counts and how to attain it; (3) the gospel *radicalizes, intensifies, confounds, and disrupts* culturally dominant notions of economic goals and means (emphases in the original, in both cases); and (4) there is both continuity and discontinuity with other patterns of value and exchange in early Christianity's past and present. One of the key arguments is that neither accommodation to the materialism of our present age nor the complete renunciation of contemporary economic life "is a truly Christian performance of Scripture" (58). As an alternative response, Barton suggests turning to the lives of the saints, as well as to Christian worship, for guidance and inspiration.

Most of the other chapters in this section concern themselves with particular issues that arise in specific gospels and epistles, as well as in the Acts of the Apostles. Brian Capper explores the question of whether the communal nature of property holdings that is described in some portions of the book of Acts constitutes an example of "virtuoso religion," which implies a level of spiritual commitment that might be associated with groups such as monastic orders, as opposed to lay persons. Aaron Kuecker maintains that the transformation of personal identity that comes about as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit brings about "a radically reoriented economic praxis that privileges the 'other' over the self in economic exchange" (82), and offers Barnabas as a primary example of this new identity. John Kloppenbergh investigates the principle of reciprocity, which he describes as "a characteristic of agrarian societies" (106) in the context of the "measure for measure" verses that can be found in the gospels of both Mark and Luke. David Downs explores the question of whether the relationship between God and the apostle Paul is one of patronage, a form of social exchange that was prominent in the Roman Empire. Downs concludes that this was not the case due to the observation that "patronage in the Greco-Roman world was a potentially exploitative relationship based on social control and power," as well as the fact that Paul never speaks of God in this manner (156). The final two chapters in this section are linked to issues that are derived from specific books: Mariam Kamell's treatment of matters of wealth and poverty in James, and David Horrell's exploration of the socioeconomic status of the believers who are profiled in 1 Peter.

As mentioned previously, the chapters in the second section of the book focus on the understanding displayed by early Christian leaders of specific passages of Scripture with economic implications. Bruce Longenecker discusses the issues surrounding the proper interpretation of the poor whom the apostle Paul admonishes believers to remember in Galatians 2:10, while David Wilhite contrasts the teachings of Paul and Tertullian on the question of whether widows should remarry from a perspective that he defines as "theo-economics." In his examination of the book of Revelation, Grant Macaskill concludes that while "the economic aspect of Revelation's critique of Roman imperial power is a vital part of the work as a whole," the early church fathers tended to focus on "other aspects of Roman life, notably idolatry" (259). Christopher Hays examines the theological founda-

tions of compassionate ministry to the poor in the early church through a consideration of the various motives for almsgiving: the extension of charity, the search for community, the practice of self-restraint, the desire for forgiveness, and the avoidance of judgment. In the last chapter, Robert Kitchen provides a description of how a particular Christian community practiced an ascetic approach to stewardship in the fourth century, by using Abraham and Zaccheus as biblical examples.

This volume constitutes a valuable resource for Christian scholars from all disciplines who are engaged in economic analysis in any way. The contributors clearly possess a comparative advantage in biblical interpretation (relative to their brethren in other fields of study), and have provided a great service to their colleagues by applying their expertise in a manner that does not reveal a predetermined position regarding the potential application of theological understanding to current matters of controversy.

—Paul R. Koch

Olivet Nazarene University, Bourbonnais, Illinois

Politics for Christians: Statecraft as Soulcraft

Francis J. Beckwith

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010 (176 pages)

In this slim but ambitious volume, Baylor University professor of philosophy and church-state studies Francis J. Beckwith makes his contribution to the InterVarsity Press Christian Worldview Integration Series, of which he is coeditor. Offered for Christian college students seeking to relate their studies to their faith, the poignant arguments and copious references contained in these books will also be of use to scholars whose academic training did not systematically address the relationship among the methods and findings of their discipline, on the one hand, and the principles and teachings of religion, on the other. In this sense, these works are poised to advance integration in the classroom and in academic publishing as well as in dormitory halls.

The series preface, written by Beckwith and coeditor J. P. Moreland, advances a sevenfold defense of Christian integration. If the Bible's teachings are true, then these teachings, properly interpreted, ought to provide "an incredibly rich resource for doing work in [one's] academic field." Indeed, the holistic character of their vocation obligates Christians to realize this potential within their respective spheres of influence. Conversely, because Christians acknowledge God as the author of nature and reason, they are bound to seek the truths he reveals through the various scientific disciplines and to demonstrate the reasonableness of their faith wherever it is or can be questioned. The alternative—a sharp division between sacred and secular sources of knowledge—tends to reduce faith to a "blind act of will," implicitly paving the way for an antireligious worldview. Christian integration as participation in a war of ideas is therefore a vital part of that spiritual warfare to which Christians are called. Shaping the concepts by which human actions and lives