

fear and duress (216), mistake and good faith (*bonae fidei*) contracts (276), the model of constant and prudent man (236), legal and moral debt (388), immoral objects and motifs (420), restitution (514), unjust enrichment (561), just price (509); and also the way these authors solve the central legal concepts in contracts such as marriage (193, 234), invalid contracts by duress (226), formalism versus consensualism in the insolemn testament (330), and how contracts for sex and usury are immoral but can have legal consequences (419).

In conclusion, this is a useful guide for those who want a systematic and historical approach to the beginnings of modern common law and theory of contracts, with a deep study of the topics and a good comprehension of the relationships and different approaches to this subject (theological, philosophical, juridical, historical, and economic). It is also a very good contribution to the studies of this amazing and suggestive historical moment.

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Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty, and Early Christian Formation

Helen Rhee

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012 (279 pages)

Helen Rhee's *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich* offers a historical study of ancient (mostly pre-Constantinian) Christian engagement with the moral and spiritual weight of wealth and poverty. With adept and thorough engagement of primary and secondary sources, she expertly situates the moral teaching of the primitive Church on such matters as avarice, luxury, almsgiving, simplicity, wealth, social status, patronage, and poverty in their proper historical and social contexts. For those who hope to ground their economic ethics in the Christian tradition, particularly the early Church, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich* is an invaluable resource that sets a high bar for any future study.

Rhee's first chapter lays the groundwork of the social, economic, and theological context of early Christianity regarding wealth and poverty. It divides into four major sections, examining the economy and social structures of the Greco-Roman world, Judaic paradigms of wealth and poverty, New Testament practices and teachings, and the spread and developing social diversity of Christian communities in the pre-Constantinian era. Rhee summarizes that as numbers increased and Christianity penetrated the "upper echelon" of Roman society, Christians "dealt with growing social gaps within their local communities as they struggled to keep the eschatological hope alive and relevant to the changing reality" (48).

Her second chapter addresses wealth and poverty through the lens of Christian eschatology. She helpfully distinguishes between millennial and amillennial eschatologies, though her description of each seems a bit oversimplified. This, however, does not detract from her analysis: "Regardless of the varieties of the eschatological vision, it created an alternative reality by which the present world should be perceived and understood,

and it projected the hope for ultimate judgment into this world” (51). In this light, she recounts Christian expectations of divine judgment, the coming age, and the materiality of the coming kingdom, moving to Christian views of the rich, the poor, and almsgiving at the final judgment. The spirit of Christ’s saying, “I was hungry and you gave me food,” and so forth (cf. Matt. 25:31–46) carried over into early Christian understandings of the eschatological value of almsgiving, among other influences. Finally, she helpfully examines how the dualistic paradigm of earthly and heavenly riches shaped early Christian views of wealth and poverty.

In her third chapter, the lens changes to soteriology, beginning with a helpful analysis of the relationship between salvation and ethics in early Christian thought. “[T]here was no separation between ‘salvation by faith in Christ’s death’ and its manifestation in attendant good works,” she writes.

Salvation is not just a one-time deal with baptism. As a “seal of salvation” that brings about remission of sins, rebirth, and the gift of the Holy Spirit ... baptism rather marks a new beginning of a lifelong upward journey toward maturity and perfection in imitation of God, which requires constant vigilance, discipline, struggle against vices, and cultivation of virtues until the end. (74)

With Protestant readers in mind, she cautions that the early Christian understanding of this relationship “represent[s] not necessarily regression of Christian freedom and *sola fide* of later Protestant construction, but the intricate relation between spiritual and moral transformation and progress, without which salvation is incomplete” (75). It is in this light that she recommends reading ancient Christian exhortations to “redemptive almsgiving,” examining the issue in Alexandria, various apocryphal writings, and Latin North Africa.

The fourth chapter focuses on Christian community or *koinonia*. After surveying the social composition of early Christian communities, Rhee examines Christian appropriation of the Great Commandment, hospitality, women’s charitable ministries, and the classification of acts of mercy as acts of justice, focusing on Lactantius. This latter point can be controversial, so it is important to take it on Lactantius’s own terms. Citing his *Institutes*, Rhee summarizes,

God’s universal law prescribes that we provide for others through humanity [*humanitas*] what we provide for our own family through affection, which is the whole point of justice (6.12.21, 31); it is our duty and obligation to obey this natural justice and yet God reckons our works of justice as works of mercy and rewards them (with remission of sins) (6.12.41). (137)

Thus certain acts of natural justice are also spiritual acts of mercy. Rhee classifies them as “two sides of the same coin” (135), but the question of whether all such acts overlap in this manner could be explored in greater depth. That is, it is not clear that *all* acts of mercy are also acts of justice or vice versa, only that *some* are both.

Rhee examines how Christian care for the poor became institutionalized in the next chapter, centering on the bishop but implemented through lower clergy and other eccle-

siastical roles (such as the widows). The bishop in many ways functioned within the Greco-Roman understanding of patronage, for better or worse. In this context, however, I found her analysis of the development of fixed salaries for clergy to be wanting. She notes that the New Prophecy (Montanism) had been criticized as avaricious by early apologists for paying their clergy with donations, but she does not document how much they were paid in proportion to how much they gave the poor. Thus, it is unclear whether the fixed wages of clergy a century later would have been equally denounced. In particular, she notes the following proportion from the *Didascalia*: “whatever the widow receives from the people, the deacon receives double, the presbyter double, and the bishop quadruple” (148). This, to Rhee, “recalls the contemporary Greco-Roman practice of citizens and members of associations receiving public gifts in proportion to their status (not to their needs) as a way to confirm and reinforce social hierarchy” (148–49). While this may be true, one could also see it as an expression of 1 Timothy 5:17–18 NKJV: “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says ... ‘The laborer *is* worthy of his wages.’” Indeed, while the proportions might appear to be unfair, if we compare them to a contemporary nonprofit organization, where the director receives more than the workers and the needy each receive even less than the latter, the proportion would not be scandalous. Rhee even notes that bishop Cornelius of Rome had 154 clergy under him, and the ranks of Roman widows at the time numbered more than fifteen hundred (149). Given the greater administrative duties of the clergy and the bishop, merely stating the fact that each received a greater portion does not necessarily demonstrate any compromise with the secular social order, even less that the Church had embraced a practice consistently condemned only a century earlier.

In her sixth chapter, Rhee documents the general antipathy toward business and trade in the early Church. While wealth was not condemned as such, it was seen as a great temptation; one’s motives for acquiring it were seriously questioned; and its proper possession was conditioned by proper use. In this context, avarice and luxury were condemned as antithetical to Christian identity. In addition, almsgiving functioned as a positive boundary marker. However, the criteria for determining what is enough were ambiguous. Finally, she examines the transformation of Christian identity in the context of state patronage after Constantine and the monastic response, which created a new classification of “the poor,” that is, monks, whose vow of poverty typically “was more patterned after economic self-sufficiency than destitution” (184).

In her final chapter, “Christian Response in Contemporary Society,” Rhee begins by noting the significant difference of social context between zero-sum, ancient, agrarian economies and the sustained economic growth of modern, democratic capitalism. She then focuses on proper stewardship in the face of our particular challenges of avarice, materialism, and consumerism. In this light, she notes that the Church ought to take the lead by example in caring for the needy, as it did in its first centuries, and recommends a newfound embrace of the disciplines of simplicity and almsgiving. Happily, she steers clear of any particular policy recommendations, though she does note again the challenge

that some acts of mercy are also matters of justice. She mentions Roman Catholic social teaching as a positive integration of patristic principles with social ethics in our present context and ends, interestingly, with a critique and assessment of various so-called prosperity gospel movements that dominate the teachings of many Pentecostal and charismatic denominations worldwide. This chapter proved surprisingly careful and nuanced, but some terms, unfortunately, were employed without much explanation—“shalom” and “already and not-yet” in particular. While these phrases are common in certain Protestant circles (e.g., Reformed), not every reader would necessarily be able to track her meaning without greater explanation.

While noting a few concerns throughout, my assessment of Rhee’s study as invaluable does not change. Any who are interested in the subject of wealth and poverty in early Christianity would do well to begin with *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*.

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Church and Ethical Responsibility in the Midst of World Economy: Greed, Dominion, and Justice

Paul S. Chung

Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2013 (294 pages)

Paul Chung seeks to provide a critical interpretation of the history and trajectory of capitalism, particularly with respect to the relationship between Christianity and capitalism, in order to call for an ecumenical opposition to all forms of injustice and a movement toward a noncapitalistic world economic system. Chung, an associate professor at Luther Seminary, writes using an interdisciplinary approach, including elements of sociology, economics, and theology into his polemic. His purpose is not to develop mere theology or economics but to offer a comprehensive worldview.

The book begins by outlining Chung’s view of the Church’s responsibility in the world: to bring about justice for the oppressed. He then continues with a fairly thorough but rapid movement through several eras of world economic development. Chung starts with an overview of colonialism, in which he finds the roots of capitalism. He transitions from colonialism to a detailed analysis of Max Weber’s representation of the Protestant ethical influence on capitalism; in this discussion he closely follows Weber’s interpretation of the interrelationship between capitalism and Protestant moral theology, seeming to agree almost entirely with Weber. Chung’s critique of capitalism continues by outlining the perceived negative effects of industrial capitalism and the free market, especially as seen through the Industrial Revolution. Chung closely associates Christian missions with European colonialism and evaluates both movements through largely Marxist and postmodern lenses: that is, the advance of the Christian religion is inherently oppressive and the advance of the gospel imperialistic (93–95).