

The Market Economy and Christian Ethics: Refocusing Debate through the Two-Kingdoms Doctrine*

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The seemingly intractable economic debates in Christian ethics evoke both strong defenses and deep critiques of the market economy. To suggest a way forward, I first analyze the kinds of argument that each side of the debate tends to make. I argue that the pro-market arguments tend to be protological and penultimate in focus, while the anti-market arguments tend to be redemptive-eschatological and ultimate in focus. Then I suggest that a version of the two-kingdoms doctrine allows us to appreciate the insights of both lines of argument without jettisoning one for the sake of the other. A free-market economy is a morally fitting organization for the life of God's common kingdom. Christians, especially in the visible church, are also called to embody, though imperfectly, the life of abundance and extravagant generosity that marks the eschatological kingdom of Christ, though it stands in some tension with market virtues.

Christian opinion about modern capitalism varies about as much as it possibly could, ranging from grateful praise of its virtues to calls for its abolition, from claims that of all economic systems ever attempted it best embodies Christian principles to claims that it stands diametrically opposed to Christianity. In between, many Christian scholars attempt to carve out middle ground that is cautiously affirmative yet attentively critical of capitalism.

A Christian reader of the pro- and anticapitalist works who strives for objectivity, I believe, ought to be struck by the compelling character of many arguments from *both* sides. These debates have attracted many intelligent writers who have constructed persuasive, winsome, and coherent cases for their positions. Unfortunately, these debates also seem to be intractable, with no clear path of

resolution before us. Daniel Finn notes the temptation to conclude that such debates are incommensurable, that is, that proponents of each side tend to operate in their own universes of discourse without any appreciation for the other side or common concerns to build on.¹

Simply hearing both sides' basic perceptions of what capitalism essentially represents is enough to make one appreciate how wide a gulf separates them. Is capitalism a system of greedy exploitation that leaves the masses "wallow[ing] in poverty and despair" and destroys true community and permanent relationships?² Or is capitalism an adventure of the human spirit that releases its creative energy in a way that enriches the poor, overcomes traditional bigotry, and fosters a host of virtues?³ It all depends on whom you read, but it is hard to believe that the two sides are describing the same phenomenon.

Whether the two sides are in fact describing exactly the same thing is probably a question that needs clarification. The debate, I believe, is not really about "capitalism," whatever that is exactly, but more specifically about economic organization through voluntary exchange in an open marketplace. On one side of the debate are those who want to see the market economy given a very wide berth within equitable and consistent constraints of the rule of law. On the other side are those who wish to see the market function only within severe constraints in a select number of areas of life, or who long for an entirely different basis for economic activity. Both sides, from opposite directions and to different degrees, see much amiss in the *status quo*.

One purpose of this article is to identify the kinds of arguments each side makes and to inquire whether a clearer understanding of how they make these arguments, and what kinds of evidence they deem admissible, may open a new way to seek to resolve the debates. One part of my argument is that the pro-market arguments tend to be protological and penultimate in focus, while the anti-market arguments tend to be redemptive-eschatological and ultimate in focus. In other words, though there are exceptions on both sides, Christian proponents of the market generally ground their case in the nature of the world and humanity as they have been created by God and compromised by sin (that is, an emphasis on protological conditions). They thus promote the market economy not as a perfect system but as the best economic organization possible in a world inevitably scarred by corruption and scarcity (that is, the market economy attains penultimate goods even if it cannot produce the ultimate good). Conversely, Christian opponents of the market generally ground their case in the redemptive love of God for the world in Christ and the inchoate manifestation of his kingdom in this world (that is, an emphasis on redemptive-eschatological realities). They thus subject the market economy to a withering critique in light of how far it falls short of the

love and harmony of the kingdom of God (that is, the market economy stands opposed to Christianity because it does not meet the ultimate criteria of God's purposes for humanity).⁴

The big question that follows, therefore, is whether one of these lines of argument is more appropriate for Christians who seek to evaluate the market economy and to understand their place within contemporary economic life. I suggest that both lines have their fingers on important aspects of the truth, though in terms of the precise question about the moral status of a globalized free-market economy, the promarket side rests on stronger theological footing. A free-market economy is (or at least has a strong claim to be) the best form of economic organization for a fallen world upheld by God's common grace under the covenant with Noah (Gen. 8:20–9:17); at the same time, a market economy falls radically short of capturing the economic relationships that characterize the eschatological kingdom of Christ. A version of the two-kingdoms doctrine not only helps one put this into perspective but also helps one embrace both lines, without jettisoning one for the sake of the other. A free-market economy is a morally fitting organization for the life of God's common kingdom (as I will call it), while the visible church is called to embody, imperfectly, the life of abundance, plenty, and extravagant generosity that marks the eschatological, new creation kingdom of Christ. Although Christians should not try to implement the eschatological economics as normative for their own civil societies, their ultimate devotion to Christ's heavenly kingdom ought to keep the profound limitations of the market economy always before them and to make them ever eager to sacrifice their worldly gains in the market as a testimony to the economic abundance of the coming kingdom.

In the first two sections of this article, I describe characteristic arguments utilized by strong Christian proponents of the market economy and characteristic arguments utilized by its strong Christian opponents. Then, in the final two sections, I suggest how a version of the two-kingdoms doctrine provides a way forward from these hitherto intractable debates. This way forward appreciates and incorporates the important insights of both sides and encourages among Christians a deep appreciation for the moral and material goods of a market economy and while also pointing to a unique, market-transcending, eschatological economic reality that Christians are to embody, especially in the church's corporate life.

The Protological/Penultimate Defense of the Market

In this section, I consider some of the characteristic arguments of strong proponents of the market economy among Christian writers. Although they themselves do not put it this way, their arguments tend to be *protological* in the sense that they focus on the opportunities and exigencies of this present world as created by God, fallen into sin, and upheld by divine providence. They do not typically defend the market economy as a demand of redemption in Christ or as a manifestation of the coming eschatological kingdom (though there are exceptions to this general rule⁵). Their arguments tend to be *penultimate* in the sense that they focus on the relative and provisional goods that the free market secures. They do not typically claim that the free market secures the highest and most important goods, which are indeed attainable but through other means. These writers are thus not implicated by the accusation of staunch market critic Andrew Kirk (from the “evangelical left”) that many Christians have “thrown their lot uncritically with a market economy.”⁶ The prominent Christian proponents of the free market described below are convinced that it is by far the most morally sound and humanly beneficial economic system, but they also recognize that it is not a perfect system, does not eliminate all evil things in society, and offers many temptations to sin.

A first example is Michael Novak, a Roman Catholic whose 1982 book, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, is still widely recognized as the most ambitious and enthusiastic theologically informed defense of the free market in recent memory. Novak states already in the book’s introduction, and echoes the theme repeatedly, that democratic capitalism is not the “kingdom of God” or the “City of God,” nor does it represent a “Christian society.” One of democratic capitalism’s main strengths, in fact, is that it is intentionally pluralistic, not imposing a single religious vision on society. Even so, in comparison to other economic systems democratic capitalism is the “most consonant” with the Judaic tradition and the Christian gospels and is the most successful at relieving poverty and removing tyranny.⁷ The theme of creation plays a key role in Novak’s case. He argues, for example, that God made human beings to be cocreators with him as they unlock the potentialities latent in creation and make it wealthier than God created it.⁸ Novak also emphasizes that an economic system must be adapted for human beings as they are, not as we might wish them to be; that is, it must be accommodated to sinners.⁹ A capitalist economy encourages the development of a range of virtues, claims Novak, but they are “relative virtues” and are instrumental rather than ends per se.¹⁰ We cannot expect Christian values such as turning the other

cheek to be practiced by most people most of the time.¹¹ Novak differentiates himself from proponents of liberation theology by emphasizing that the cogency of Scripture cannot be bound to any particular economic system but transcends them all. Scripture judges all economic systems and finds them wanting.¹²

Whether Novak's claims are always consistent and his theological arguments always sound is debatable,¹³ but these central themes of his book are overwhelmingly protological and penultimate in character. They are protological in grounding capitalism primarily in the character of the world and the human race as created and fallen. They are penultimate in arguing that capitalism brings many good things for human beings in this world, though it does so imperfectly and is not capable of realizing the most important things. Novak does not think the perfect should be the enemy of the good when it comes to evaluating the merits of capitalism as an economic system for the present world.

Since Novak's book, other Roman Catholics have defended the free market in a similar vein. Samuel Gregg, for example, claims that one's views on economics are largely a matter of prudence, although Christian principles set boundaries.¹⁴ While some interpretations and defenses of the market economy are incompatible with Christianity, others are not. He points to a traditional Roman Catholic anthropology of the image of God as a basis for rapprochement between Christianity and the market.¹⁵ He admits that commercial relations in the marketplace do not embody the kind of rich self-giving that we find, for example, in the family, but he does not see this as a problem: Different communities have different purposes, and the market does play many good functions in allowing people to serve each other. It brings together people of different backgrounds and reduces the potential for conflict by softening the intensity of political life.¹⁶ Robert Sirico offers arguments along the same lines. The Roman Catholic Church, he claims, does not teach economics but does teach many principles similar to the values of free-market thinkers. He points especially to the notion that creation is understandable to human perception, to the dignity of human beings made in the image of God, and to the vocation of humans to be creative as God himself is.¹⁷ Such anthropological convictions, as well as reckoning with the sober reality of human sin, permeate Sirico's work.¹⁸ The kingdom of God will not come by economic means.¹⁹ Jay Richards, another Roman Catholic writer, pursues similar themes. He claims that communism suffered from utopian delusions, in contrast to the Christian conviction that we now live in an in-between time before Christ's coming again, during which the world is not the way it ought to be.²⁰ Capitalism should not be measured against the standard of the kingdom of God but against other possible options in this life.²¹ Yet capitalism is very compatible with a Christian worldview.²² He emphasizes Christian teaching about the image

of God (which makes human beings, as God's representatives, wealth producers, and cocreators) and the reality of scarcity in the present world (in distinction from the limitless plenty of the kingdom of God).²³

Gregg, Sirico, and Richards, therefore, follow Novak in offering a protological and penultimate defense of the free market: These Roman Catholics refuse to identify the market economy per se as biblically mandated or as a specifically Christian system. They point to notions of creation and anthropology (rather than, say, soteriology and eschatology) as theologically foundational for thinking about economics and are grateful and content with the good things the free market provides even while they acknowledge that it cannot achieve the most important things.

A number of evangelical authors have also taken up the case for the free market along protological and penultimate lines, Brian Griffiths perhaps most competently.²⁴ Griffiths argues that the gospel cannot be used to baptize a particular economic system, but in Christian perspective the process of wealth creation is legitimate, and the market economy offers better prospects for believers to create authentically Christian structures at work.²⁵ There is no strict causal connection between the market economy and Christianity, but the former did arise within the context of a broadly Christian civilization and its origins are difficult to understand apart from values that Christianity encourages, such as personal responsibility, honesty, thrift, diligence, and respect for property.²⁶ In short, Griffiths does not want to claim that capitalism is Christian or that the market economy is the only system compatible with Christianity, but he believes that creating wealth with a concern for justice within a market economy "is compatible with Christian faith."²⁷ When discussing relevant theological themes, Griffiths sees great significance in the biblical doctrines of creation and anthropology: God has created the material world and calls human beings to work and to create wealth in this world as stewards who bear his image—a responsibility that continues despite the drudgery sin brings.²⁸ A Christian anthropology entails rejection of some common ways in which non-Christians defend capitalism.²⁹ Addressing Jesus' teaching on wealth and the kingdom of God, Griffiths emphasizes that the kingdom is spiritual rather than secular or political and that Jesus aimed to enunciate principles rather than policies aimed to reform the Roman Empire.³⁰ Jesus, like the Old Testament, did not find anything inherently wrong with wealth, though he did stress the responsibilities of those who possess wealth and the spiritual temptations that often accompany it.³¹

Griffiths' arguments, I suggest, are largely penultimate and protological, like those of Novak, Gregg, Sirico, and Richards. Griffiths refuses to identify the market economy as *the Christian* economic system, but thinks it brings many

good things and provides many opportunities to fulfill one's obligations before God. Although he has much to say about matters of salvation and eschatology, especially in his discussions of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, Griffiths argues that the coming of the kingdom here and now does not overturn humanity's protological vocation to be responsible stewards and wealth creators as image bearers of God. Other evangelical writers follow suit. Ronald Nash's polemical work, for example, decries the quest for a "Christian economics" and denies that one can deduce an economic system from Scripture.³² Yet among central considerations of the Christian worldview relevant for economics are the doctrine of God as creator, human rights, the biblical ethic (summarized in the Decalogue), and sin³³—matters protological in character.

The penultimate and protological also appear in other prominent writers who, at least occasionally, make forays into Christian theology in their defense of the market economy. For example, the mid-twentieth century German economist Wilhelm Röpke, a leading light of the *ordoliberal* school,³⁴ once asked on what ethical level one ought to situate the economic life of the free-market society. It is the level of the "average man," who moves on an "intermediate plane" rather than on the "summit of heroes." Its ethical climate is "imperfect, groping, provisional." This ethical climate may not exactly nourish the soul, but neither does it poison it, and it does promote an elementary justice and constantly improves the well-being of the masses.³⁵ This illustrates the penultimate perspective as I have defined it, radically nonutopian but profoundly appreciative of the true, though relative, goods that the market economy provides. Furthermore, the theology to which the Lutheran Röpke occasionally appeals is distinctly protological because it is primarily anthropological. He sees one's view of the human person as critically decisive in the debate between "socialists and nonsocialists." His view, "fashioned by the spiritual heritage of classical and Christian tradition," is of the human person in the likeness of God with a unique soul that is never to be treated as a means to a greater end.³⁶

The Eschatological/Ultimate Critique of the Market

I now turn to examine several writers, of varied theological and ecclesiastical provenance, who make *deep*, theologically shaped critiques of the market economy. That is to say, they are not content to tinker around the edges and to suggest reforms within a market economy but wish to undermine and deconstruct its foundations and to work toward the establishment of an essentially different kind of economic organization. In so doing they typically call Christians to

conform their economic life to the standards of love and communal generosity modeled by God in the gift of his Son as described in biblical portraits of Christ's kingdom. Thus, in distinction from the promarket writers described above, these critics are not content to appreciate the free market for its penultimate benefits and its basic fit with this world as (protologically) created, fallen, and temporarily sustained by God. They strive instead to conform economic life to the eschatological standards of the kingdom and to achieve its ultimate goals.

Kathryn Tanner provides an excellent illustration of this kind of deep critique of capitalism. She claims that Christianity has an "economic vision for the whole of life" that provides "a radical alternative" to the "inhumanities of the present system," leading her to compare "economy" as the production and circulation of goods according to the Christian story with "economy" in the usual sense.³⁷ An important part of her argument involves reflecting on notions of justice and ownership that typically underlie modern capitalism, asking instead whether the "idea of grace" could become "the incontrovertible and perhaps exclusive organizing principle of a theological economy."³⁸ This entails conflating God's grace in creation and in redemption, and it eliminates the distinction between a covenant of works and a covenant of grace as well as the idea of a substitutionary atonement in which Christ satisfies legal requirements.³⁹ God gives, for the good of his creation, without legally demanding anything in return or punishing for disobedience. Recipients of God's good gifts are called to imitate the divine pattern by freely giving of what they receive to all as they have need, with no regard to receiving anything in return. Their giving is nevertheless not self-sacrificial, for what one gives also remains one's own property and possession; conversely, the recipient draws on gifts as if they are his own property, while the giver also continues to reap their fruits. "The result is the possession and enjoyment of the very same goods in common."⁴⁰ Tanner recognizes that this "theological economy" seems like "a peculiarly singular, wild, and unworkable idea." Indeed it does, but she suggests a practical course of action in order to make it "come to life from within the belly of the beast ... generating a radically new form of economy from capitalism's own blood and breath."⁴¹ The basic trick is to find noncompetitive features already present within capitalism and to use them as "hooks for theological intersection and intervention" to advance this transformationist project.⁴² She offers many practical examples of how Christians might move forward in this task (though her suggestions often seem rather mundane and familiar, including her advocacy of "International Keynesianism," tax hikes for the rich, and the increase of so-called public goods).⁴³

Tanner's proposal thus constitutes an emphasis on the redemptive-eschatological over the protological. Put in another way, the redemptive-eschatological

swallows up the protological in a virtual collapsing of the categories of creation and redemption, justice and grace. She expresses no satisfaction with enjoying penultimate goods through a global market economy but calls Christians to reshape the world economy so that it increasingly reflects the ultimate ideal of communal life in fellowship with and imitation of the divine Trinity.

The Radical Orthodoxy movement shares many of the same concerns. Following the lead of their most prominent thinker, Anglican theologian John Milbank, proponents of Radical Orthodoxy seek to unmask and deconstruct capitalism at its core, for they see it as essentially anti-Christian. In its place, they desire an economy grounded thoroughly in a Christian ontology of grace.⁴⁴ I focus my remarks here on Stephen Long and Daniel Bell (both Methodists).⁴⁵

Long argues that the global-market economy is thoroughly anti-Christian. Its logic ends in nihilism, it rests on an Enlightenment liberal ideology, and it functions as a “simulacrum of the Catholic church” (offering a Stoic eschatological hope). It is a deformation of Christian theology that rests on a number of heretical notions, such as a God characterized only by absolute power.⁴⁶ Rejecting capitalism, the church is an alternative economy that prioritizes communal forms of sharing over private property rights. It elevates *gift* over *contract*, and its gift exchanges are rendered intelligible through the Eucharist and find their basis in the eschatological marriage between God and the church in anticipation of the ultimate goal where there is no more scarcity or poverty.⁴⁷ Although Long acknowledges that the church’s gift economy cannot completely supplant the global marketplace,⁴⁸ the church’s mission is to sanctify the world, and thus the Eucharist should illumine all economic exchanges.⁴⁹ Long’s analysis rests on a revised notion of the Thomistic nature-grace dynamic championed by the likes of Milbank and Henri de Lubac.⁵⁰ This involves complicated issues I cannot explain fully here. In brief, the Lubacean view denies the existence of a realm of nature that has some integrity, meaning, and purpose independent of God’s supernatural grace in Christ.⁵¹ As Long himself suggests, Milbank (to whom Long points as the most perceptive economic theologian⁵²) may end up collapsing nature into grace altogether, such that he has no need at all to distinguish creation from grace or creation from redemption.⁵³ Such convictions, I believe, explain precisely why Long does not recognize a place for a penultimate economic order that achieves true, though provisional, goods. All things share a single ultimate end—the vision of God—so that even business corporations must be assessed in terms of the supernatural order of grace.⁵⁴ Long also critiques Christian proponents of the market economy for their heavy emphasis on the doctrines of creation, anthropology, and original sin in assessing economic matters, and failure to deal sufficiently with Christology and ecclesiology.⁵⁵ In the terms I have been using,

Long faults them for having a protological focus at the expense of a redemptive-eschatological focus.

Bell's work reflects similar concerns. He contrasts capitalism with "the divine economy made present by Christ and witnessed to by the church."⁵⁶ He rejects any compatibility between Christianity and capitalism because the latter completely marketizes all of life, corrupts human desire, and distorts communion with God.⁵⁷ Bell's concerns are what I have labeled ultimate, rather than penultimate. He dismisses capitalism's enormous ability to produce wealth as inadmissible evidence, and argues that capitalism is inherently wrong because it actively works against humanity's renewal of communion with God and against its "chief end" of glorifying and enjoying God forever, that is, humanity's "ascent to God."⁵⁸ Bell notes that Christian proponents of capitalism praise it on theological grounds as being realistic about the presence of sin in the world and as nurturing God-given abilities to choose and create.⁵⁹ Bell finds this protological focus (to use my terms) seriously problematic, a denial of God's present activity of redeeming economic life in favor of a misguided view of Christ's kingdom as being not of this world.⁶⁰ For Bell, the divine economy that heals human desire from its corruption under capitalism is at work now—not only in the church but also in all of creation.⁶¹

Roman Catholic thinker David L. Schindler provides another outstanding example of what I call an ultimate approach to the subject.⁶² He identifies the "inner logic" of the liberal market economy as rendering people "homeless," that is, fragmented from their original ontological community with God and hence also with each other.⁶³ Wanting to look at wealth and poverty in terms of their "deepest and most proper meaning," he proposes an ontology of gift and gratitude.⁶⁴ The very character of things depends on whether they are integrated into a grateful sense of reality as gift. Thus an "economy of love deepens the reality" and thereby enhances the worth of everyone and everything involved in producing and exchanging goods.⁶⁵ Schindler acknowledges that one might object that his analysis reflects the "ultimate" or "ideal" yet practically is unworkable in the real world, but he dismisses the objection on various grounds.⁶⁶ Though he accepts in part Novak's (penultimate) concern that the market economy be evaluated in comparison with other historical economic systems, he insists that all systems must ultimately be compared to the human destiny that Christianity calls us to embody "here and now on earth, however much that call will be fully realized only eschatologically."⁶⁷ Schindler envisions this embodiment occurring not only in the church but also in all of life, for Christians are called to "transform whatever culture" in which they live.⁶⁸

Some neo-Calvinist writers also pursue a deep critique of the market economy—most prominent among them Bob Goudzwaard.⁶⁹ In his study of capitalism, Goudzwaard reflects on the ills of Western society by penetrating to “the central, religious motives which fundamentally direct a culture and its society,” with a special focus on the motif of *progress*.⁷⁰ That is, he wishes to lay bare the deepest spiritual springs from which cultures emerge. In a whirlwind tour of nearly a millennium of Western history, Goudzwaard traces the important changes he sees from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance and Enlightenment to the birth of modern capitalism in the Industrial Revolution and beyond.⁷¹ His verdict is that the prime cause of the Industrial Revolution was the development of faith in progress, and the real problem here was not economic growth or the rise in living standards, but the absolute priority granted to the advance of technology and industrial production.⁷² He laments the “narrowing of human relations and purposes to technical and economic achievements as ends in themselves.”⁷³ Goudzwaard concludes that the problems of capitalism are overwhelming and touch every part of the Western social order.⁷⁴ To solve the problem one needs to go to the root of things, not just trim the branches, and the root is the tension between “Western man’s will to dominate and his will to be free”: “Western man” seeks freedom yet only knows how to pursue it through a faith in progress that comes to dominate every detail of life.⁷⁵ The only way forward is to recover the meaning and value of human life outside its subjection to progress.⁷⁶ Thus, Goudzwaard’s self-conscious *modus operandi* is patently ultimate (rather than penultimate): He demands investigation of the deepest religious and spiritual roots of capitalism in order to offer a “diagnosis” of Western society as a whole, and, finding capitalism rotten at its core, summons readers to dig up the root rather than prune the branches.

As a final example, I mention Andrew Kirk, whose work exemplifies an approach characteristic of the so-called evangelical left. He, too, looks to ultimate and redemptive-eschatological considerations in support of his sharp critique of capitalism. This is most evident in the importance he ascribes to the idea of the kingdom of God. After identifying a familiar villain—the Christian who thinks the kingdom is only about individual experience now and getting to heaven later—Kirk points to the kingdom as “all about a new created order that touches every aspect of life, applicable in the present as well as in the future.”⁷⁷ Thus God’s reign has to do with all aspects of society, including provision for people’s basic needs, justice for the oppressed, food for the hungry, freedom for prisoners, and the reversal of all the consequences of evil, such as death, disease, famine, and violence. It entails the establishment of “a new kind of community based on

open and generous sharing in line with such legislation as that for the sabbatical and jubilee years.⁷⁸ Kirk therefore argues that evangelism and social action are part of the church's same vocation.⁷⁹ The church is to embody the values of the kingdom, but should also seek to extend those values to the broader society.⁸⁰ In short, the coming eschatological kingdom of God is to be realized in part even now, not only in the church but also in the broader society, and the nature of this kingdom is precisely what should provoke Christians to reject the oppressive and exploitative capitalist system.

A Place for the Penultimate: The Market Economy in Two-Kingdoms Perspective

Thus far I have argued that Christian proponents of the free market tend to use arguments that are protological and penultimate in nature while Christian critics of the free market tend to emphasize redemptive-eschatological and ultimate arguments. This raises the possibility that the seemingly intractable Christian debates over capitalism are not simply about obvious questions that all parties agree are important (e.g., does the market economy help or hurt the poor?) but are also, at a more important level, about the very kinds of biblical evidence and theological considerations that these parties deem admissible and relevant. For example, most of the writers discussed above would agree that the eschatological kingdom of God is marked by an abundance, a gift of divine grace, which in turn calls its citizens to a lavish generosity with one another, but this begs crucial questions: Does God call Christians here and now to seek to conform local and global economic systems to the gracious dynamic of this kingdom? Is there a legitimate place for an economic system that inevitably falls short of the standards and ideals of the eschatological kingdom but accomplishes provisionally good things in the present world? Is such an economic system inherently problematic for Christians precisely because it does not realize the standards and ideals of the eschatological kingdom? If there is a place for such an economic system, how are Christians to acknowledge and practice the "already" of the life of Christ's kingdom and not just push it off until the "not yet" arrives at his return?

I answer the questions above by asserting first that there is indeed a legitimate place for a penultimate economic system, which in turn gives ground for a qualified but genuine appreciation for the market economy and for Christian participation in it.⁸¹ I also assert that Christians are *simultaneously* to seek to anticipate the economic dynamic of the eschatological kingdom here and now, *without confusing or conflating the free market with the economic dynamic of the eschatological kingdom*. The theological ground undergirding this conclusion

is a version of the two-kingdoms doctrine, given its particular shape through an appropriation of Reformed covenant theology.

In my proposal, a penultimate economic system derives its legitimacy from the covenant with Noah after the great flood (Gen. 8:20–9:17). Under this covenant, God wills to sustain human society in its fallen state, to uphold a natural moral order, and to bring forth a number of limited, provisional, and temporal goods. This is a covenant of “common grace,” to use standard Reformed terminology. This covenant, however, is not redemptive in nature, offering no promise of the forgiveness of sins or everlasting life in a new creation. As I argue below, a market economy is impressively effective in promoting the limited but important purposes of this covenant: principally and foundationally, humanity’s procreatively fruitful filling of the earth (Gen. 9:1, 7), its governing animals and securing sufficient food to support a growing population (Gen. 9:2–4), and its responsibility to maintain right relationships among human beings through proportionate retributive justice (Gen. 9:6). This covenant remains in effect until the end of history (Gen. 8:22), and thus its terms continue to obligate humanity as a whole (Gen. 9:9–10, 12, 15–17) even to the present day, which suggests that all human beings have a moral interest in supporting a well-functioning market economy. I argue further, however, that God has also worked redemption in Christ through a series of other biblical covenants, particularly the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and new covenants (which the Reformed tradition has commonly regarded as an organically unified “covenant of grace”).⁸² In this redemptive work, God does indeed provide the forgiveness of sins and the hope of everlasting life in the new creation. In these last days, he has gathered the church as a unique people to himself and has called its members to lead lives that are distinct in many respects even while they continue to live peacefully and productively with people of other faiths in their broader societies.

These two great works of God—administered respectively through the Noahic covenant and the series of redemptive covenants—are the foundation, I suggest, for a biblically sound doctrine of the two kingdoms.⁸³ I will refer to these two kingdoms as the *common* kingdom and *redemptive* (or *eschatological*) kingdom. God calls the church to structure its communal life in many beautiful ways that anticipate the full realization of the life of the redemptive kingdom in the new creation. This includes a unique economic ethic that reflects the abundance of the eschatological kingdom—an ethic that cannot and should not be implemented in the economic structures of the common kingdom. Christians are called to put this eschatological economic ethic into practice, especially in the church’s communal life, even while eagerly and gratefully participating in the broader economic life of the common kingdom. Christians have the challenging task of

seeking opportunities to give witness to the eschatological economic ethic even in their common affairs, without thereby undermining the economic structures appropriate to God's governance of the world under the Noahic covenant.

Presupposing this general framework, I reflect on the Noahic covenant in the remainder of this section and ponder its implications for the economic life of the common kingdom.⁸⁴ I regard this as an exercise in prudential theological reflection, not an attempt to make dogmatic conclusions about economic organization that Christians are required to affirm as the result of direct biblical teaching.

At first glance, the requirements of the Noahic covenant do not seem to provide much fodder for thinking about economic issues. This covenant issues only three explicit rules: humans are to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Gen. 9:1, 7); they are not to eat meat with its blood in it (9:4); and, they are to enforce retributive justice against murderers (9:6). Yet on even a moment's thought, we recognize that these basic requirements must entail at least a little bit more than what is explicitly commanded. The first entails some sort of social structure in which children are procreated, cared for, and trained (i.e., the family). The second presumes that human beings will be eating, and eating specifically the plants and animals God gives to them (9:3). The third requirement, through utilizing the *lex talionis* formula, points to a general principle of proportionate justice that logically applies to other cases of wrongdoing beyond murder. Thus the requirements of the Noahic covenant might be summarized as follows: expand the human race through appropriate family structures, eat plants and meat in a fitting manner, and rectify wrongs of one person against another in equitable ways. I will refer to this as the "minimalist Noahic ethic." I call it "minimalist" because it requires the bare minimum of what the human race needs to do to survive (a very important matter because the Noahic covenant is a covenant of *preservation*). No procreating, no eating, no justice—no human race.

Thus far I have mentioned nothing explicit about economic life, but economic activity looms large immediately below the surface. This is evident first through some background considerations garnered from Genesis 1 and then through further reflection on what obedience to the minimalist Noahic ethic presupposes.

First, through its references to being fruitful, multiplying, and filling, to human authority over animals, and to eating, Genesis 9:1–7 draws readers' minds back to God's original creation of human beings in his image (1:26–28). The requirements of the Noahic covenant evidently are a republication of the requirements of the covenant of creation, though modified in ways appropriate for a fallen world. The original creation mandate, however, implicitly calls human beings to creative activity in this world in a way that mirrors God's transcendent creative activity. As God ruled and subdued the world in making and ordering it, so God

called those who bear his likeness to rule and subdue the world, after him and under him—continuing his own work in a creaturely way (a task that they begin successfully by naming the animals in 2:19–20, in imitation of God’s work of naming in Genesis 1:5, 8, 10). Thus God called human beings from the outset to *work*—to be active, creative, resourceful, and purposeful. Creative and purposeful labor, in collaboration with other human beings, is economic activity.⁸⁵

It is logical, therefore, to presume that as God sustains human beings in his image through the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:6) he expects them to continue doing what he made them by nature to do: to work creatively, resourcefully, and purposefully. Clearly some measure of creative, resourceful, and purposeful work is necessary in order to fulfill the minimalist Noahic ethic—necessary, that is, for the human race to survive and especially if it is to thrive (to whatever degree possible in a cursed world). Regarding its first basic requirement: Making children is easy—but bearing, nurturing, housing, and training them require considerable work. Regarding its second basic requirement: Eating a good dinner is relaxing and enjoyable—but clearing ground, planting seed, harvesting crops, hunting game, and cooking food require hard labor. In short, the very quest to keep the minimalist Noahic ethic requires purposeful and resourceful work, which means that human beings, just in order to survive and certainly if they hope in some measure to thrive, must do some serious economic thinking.

This conclusion is fairly obvious upon a little reflection but does not yet provide much insight into the character and dynamic of the economic activity required. Digging a little deeper, but without attempting to be comprehensive, I suggest several interconnected characteristics of the economic activity required if human beings are to pursue the minimalist Noahic ethic successfully: They must be industrious, broadly sociable, restrained (in the sense of delayed gratification), and innovative.

First, human beings must have some degree of industriousness in light of the fact that suitable provisions for even a small population but especially a growing population are not just there for the taking. At the least, provisions need to be found, and in most cases, something becomes truly usable only when mixed with human labor to produce a new product that is not exactly identical to its original form. Inevitably human beings face setbacks, in the form of droughts, fires, disease, and such things that make obtaining provisions all the more arduous. Thus in any community a significant number of people are going to have to be industrious if it is to make progress under the Noahic covenant.

This industriousness must be combined, furthermore, with a broad sociability. From the beginning God made “man” in the plural; he did not make mankind to be alone (Gen. 1:27; 2:20–24). It is easy to understand why philosophers have

long recognized human beings as social animals. To make a child takes two, and to feed, house, and train a child well takes a family. It takes a village—preferably a large one, or many neighboring smaller ones on friendly terms—in order to find a suitable partner with whom the child can one day form his own family and raise his own children. The larger the base of people who interact peacefully, the more opportunities for being fruitful and multiplying and the more division of labor can take place, increasing opportunities for people to specialize and gain expertise in particular activities, which in turn means more and better food, more and better housing, and more and better clothing. It seems to be a virtuous circle. The narrower the base of people who get along, and the more numerous the conflicts with neighboring groups, the fewer the opportunities to be fruitful and multiply, the fewer the hands to accomplish necessary labor, and the lesser the quantity and quality of goods—a vicious circle. To carry out the minimalist Noahic ethic with some measure of success requires industriousness with as much friendly collaboration as possible.

Human beings also need a significant measure of restraint in the sense of delayed gratification. Individuals and communities that immediately consume all the resources available to them run into trouble. It requires restraint to save some of the fruit on the tree for tomorrow, to store up some potatoes for the winter, to spare some of the edible animals so they can reproduce, to set aside seeds for next year’s planting, to store up wood for building rather than burning it all to stay cozy at night, and so on. What is more, before one can exercise such restraint one must have a measure of foresight and prudence. Without some thoughtful understanding of how the world works and a plan for the future, no one will see the point of delayed gratification. It also requires some respect for property. Practicing foresightful restraint means that people cannot just take whatever they want whenever they want it. Someone has to have a measure of control over particular items and to make decisions about what is consumed and what is set aside and for what purpose.

The final characteristic of economic activity I originally mentioned is perhaps the most momentous of all for pursuit of the minimalist Noahic ethic: Human beings must be economically innovative. Even many basic things people now take for granted—such as settled agriculture and domesticated animals—are *achievements* of human ingenuity and not simply givens of nature. Archeological evidence as well as Genesis 4:20 remind us of this. Throughout much of history many human beings were hunter-gatherers, and our hunter-gatherer ancestors on the whole may have been as healthy and nourished as our eighteenth-century ancestors on the whole, even those who lived in seemingly “civilized” or “advanced” places such as northwest Europe.⁸⁶ However, hunter-gatherers could

not be very fruitful in multiplying and filling the earth: It is hard to drag around many children when constantly moving from place to place, and even in fertile locations living off the fruit of the land by plucking and hunting is impossible once there are too many people in too small a space.⁸⁷

Therefore, to fulfill the Noahic mandate to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth people needed to do more than hunt and gather, and this required creativity and innovation. A good hunter-gatherer certainly needs many skills and much knowledge, but to step beyond hunting and gathering demands a degree of innovation that is wondrous to contemplate even in our own day of breathtakingly rapid technological change. It required settling in a single location, setting aside large blocks of land that could have been put to other use, and figuring out what things could be grown where, what things were useful to be grown (it is not immediately obvious that a stalk of grain might be turned into nourishing bread or tasty beer), when to plant and harvest, and how to keep the soil fertile. One can only imagine how many people starved experimenting unsuccessfully at all this. Yet people around the world—slowly, gradually—achieved it. Even once they settled and started figuring things out, it must have been no bargain. It was hard work and difficult to produce a sufficient number of calories to feed a growing population. Further innovation was necessary.

Domestication of animals helped immensely. Domesticated animals were not useful only for agriculture of course—dogs aided the hunt, and camels and horses were relatively excellent modes of transportation. However, agriculture was a great beneficiary: much better to put oxen at the plow than one's daughters. Human beings, we might forget, did not just find animals already domesticated and waiting around to be welcomed into kind homes. Perceptive, experimenting, and persevering human beings domesticated previously wild animals. Therefore, domestication of animals improved agriculture (and opened new possibilities for trade through better transportation) and thereby made further growth in population possible in the Noahic spirit.

Nevertheless, these advances in civilization progressed at an excruciatingly slow pace. Even in eighteenth-century Europe—by then the most technologically and economically advanced area in the world—the vast majority of people were literally dirt poor, laboring away (mostly on farms) without modern sanitation, modern medicine, or other modern conveniences, enduring very high rates of infant mortality and low life expectancy in general, eating diets with little variety, having little material to read (if they could read at all), and in many cases living all of life without traveling more than a few miles from their place of birth. People had achieved many remarkable innovations over the course of millennia, which did permit the human race to scatter over much of the earth, but world

population was still a small fraction of what it is today and most people were not exactly thriving, materially or in a broader cultural sense. The famous thesis of the English economist (and Church of England clergyman) Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) seems to have been largely correct when applied to human history up to that point: Small gains in technology bring corresponding spurts in population growth, but these cannot be sustained and end up increasing poverty, which in turn tends to bring the population rate down again.⁸⁸ The so-called Malthusian trap has much to do with the Noahic covenant (or at least humanity's difficulties in robustly keeping its basic requirements). To be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the earth requires sufficient food, and without sufficient food, a booming population suffers badly and soon dwindles again. No innovation means no long-term population growth; slow innovation means slow population growth.

Ironically, the entire human history of innovation and population growth turned a sharp corner precisely during Malthus's lifetime and in precisely his country of residence. Beginning in England somewhere around 1800 and spreading to numerous other places in the two centuries since, the Industrial Revolution sparked an unanticipated and unprecedented surge in innovation, accompanied by an exponential rise in living standards and a spike in population growth.⁸⁹ This has happened, furthermore, while the percentage of people engaged in agriculture has plummeted. Whereas a few hundred years ago the vast majority of the population even in supposedly advanced Europe had to work in agriculture just to keep a stagnant population from starving, now in early twenty-first century America (and similarly in other industrialized countries) something like 2 percent of the population works in agriculture and provides a much better diet to a much larger population. Fewer and fewer farmers feed more and more people, and the benefits of this impressive innovation to the human race go much beyond food in the belly. Freeing up 98 percent of the population to do things other than farming means more innovations in other technological and cultural arenas.⁹⁰ Farming is still a vital and honorable vocation, but it is better for the human race if everybody is not confined to do nothing but farming all the time.⁹¹ People with gifts in music, medicine, engineering, and a multitude of other things have opportunity to devote themselves to these tasks and to benefit and enrich their neighbors.

I have been observing that the past couple hundred years, in a slowly and unevenly but inexorably expanding area of the world, humanity has witnessed a surge in innovation, a burgeoning food supply, and tremendous growth in population. The human race, I therefore suggest, has been doing a considerably better job in fulfilling the minimalist Noahic ethic⁹²—that is, doing a much better job, overall and all things considered, because all is obviously not well in the indus-

trialized first world and the developing nations joining them. Nevertheless, the past couple hundred years, along with better conformity to the minimalist Noahic ethic, have also witnessed a harvest of human achievement beyond foundational concerns about procreation, food, and justice, as hundreds of millions of people have joined a broad middle class that participates avidly and productively in economic life and produces all sorts of scientific and artistic accomplishments that enrich human life in countless ways.⁹³ They have also witnessed the rise of modern medicine and hygiene (and a corresponding steady rise in life expectancy), the opportunity to eat food, read books, and hear music from all over the world in a single locale (and for many people even to experience these things firsthand through world travel), and the steady decrease in bias against, and increase in opportunities for, ethnic minorities and women—among so many other things.

What has happened over the past couple centuries in much of the world? Generally free economic markets have developed, undergirded by a stable rule of law, operated by a broad middle class of people who value work as such,⁹⁴ supportive of a range of human virtues,⁹⁵ and pervaded by an ethos of innovation.⁹⁶ In places that have joined or are joining this project, many millions have been lifted out of true poverty and have come to enjoy a plethora of benefits in the process. In places that have not joined the project, the vast majority of people remain mired in poverty. If we are allowed to assess modern capitalism by protological and penultimate standards—which is, I have been suggesting, to assess it through the lens of God’s providential purposes for the human race under the Noahic covenant of common grace, rather than through the eschatological and ultimate end of Christ’s redemptive kingdom—it has much going for it. I recognize that there are many possible objections even to this penultimate evaluation,⁹⁷ yet there seems to be a *prima facie* case for concluding that modern capitalism, at least, comes out looking considerably better than any other economic system ever developed in human history.

Anticipating the Eschatological: The Strange Economics of the Coming Kingdom

In the previous section, I presented many considerations suggesting that a free-market economy, if not *the* economic system required by the terms of the Noahic covenant, at the least is quite compatible with the moral vision of the Noahic covenant and seems to promote its purposes better than do other economic systems the human race has constructed. One general conclusion, therefore, is that the proponents of the free market considered earlier in this article were basically correct insofar as they defended it in terms I have described as protological and

penultimate. Conversely, the deep critics of modern capitalism, who assail it largely in redemptive-eschatological and ultimate terms, take discussion along the wrong path in demanding that a market economy answer to purposes and promote goals that an economic system for this present world is unable to attain.

At the same time, these critics grasp an important point: A free-market economy does fall far short of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and deserves to be radically critiqued from that perspective. As considered below, many statements in the New Testament (NT) stand in some tension with the practices and virtues of the market economy (many of which are commended in Proverbs and elsewhere in Scripture). To the extent that advocates of the free market try to smooth out these tensions by attempting too quick a reconciliation between the force of certain NT exhortations and prudent participation in the market economy, they jettison what is, to my mind, one of the most interesting and challenging elements of biblical teaching about economic life. The task, I believe, is not to bring the texts in tension into an oversimplified harmony but to recognize a two-kingdoms dynamic at work in them. Christians are not only to participate in the economic life of the common kingdom under the Noahic covenant (for which a market economy is relatively effective, all things considered) but also to embody and anticipate the economic realities of the eschatological new creation, especially in their corporate life in the church. This idea demands a fuller defense than I can give it here, but what follows are some basic considerations that support these claims and suggest how Christians might begin to live in ways that reflect these realities.

On many occasions, the NT speaks about economic life in terms that are completely unremarkable—unremarkable, at least, from the perspective of the original cultural mandate, the Noahic covenant, or a contemporary market economy, as discussed above. In these many texts, the NT presumes the validity of private property, the moral responsibility to work industriously, the vocation of believers to work alongside unbelievers, and the just expectation of payment or profit as a result of productive labor (e.g., Matt. 25:14–30; 1 Cor. 9:6–7; Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:11–12; 2 Thess. 3:6–12; James 5:4). Jesus, in Luke 16:1–13, while warning against devotion to Mammon, commends prudence and foresight in the use of worldly wealth in light of the coming kingdom: Handling material resources prudently is a test of fidelity to God. Such texts explicitly or implicitly encourage the so-called bourgeois or capitalist virtues.⁹⁸ The NT envisions Christians participating actively and profitably in the broader economic life of this world.

Yet this is not the whole of NT teaching relative to economics. Many things the NT says are remarkable in how they seem to upend the expectations of ordinary economic life and even, at times, to undermine some of the virtues required for

working responsibly and providing for one's own. Jesus, for example, tells his disciples not to "lay up for yourselves treasures on earth" (Matt. 6:19) and instructs the rich young ruler to sell all he has and give it to the poor (Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22), even though economic development (an implicit requirement of the Noahic covenant) is impossible without saving and investment, and Proverbs explicitly praises building wealth and passing it along to the next generation (e.g., Prov. 13:11, 22).⁹⁹ Granted, Jesus prohibits the former relatively (in comparison with heavenly treasure) and commands the latter only to a single individual (the rich young ruler), though the mere force and radical character of these exhortations are striking. Jesus also commands his disciples generally: "Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on" (Matt. 6:25). The force of this statement is probably best appreciated when we understand "do not be anxious" (μὴ μεριμνᾶτε τῇ ψυχῇ ὑμῶν) not as meaning "do not be neurotically worried" but as "do not be concerned." Jesus tells them to learn from birds that do not sow or reap and from lilies that do not toil or spin (6:26, 28). Economic success in this world demands diligence, foresight, and planning, and thus ordinarily requires considerable concern about sowing, reaping, toiling, and spinning. Jesus says: Do not be concerned about them.

Complicating the picture further is how Jesus advocated a lavish extravagance that may shock the thrifty capitalist soul. When Mary anointed his feet with a perfume valued at an entire year's wages, Jesus praised her and rejected the suggestion that the funds would have been better spent aiding the poor (John 12:1–8). This extravagant expenditure, intended to honor Jesus himself in his upcoming death and burial (12:7), scrambled all prudent calculations about economic value. Elsewhere Jesus praised another woman who made a puzzling decision from an ordinary economic point of view. This poor widow had nothing remotely resembling Mary's financial resources, yet her gift of two practically worthless coins to the temple treasury may have been even more lavish and extravagant than Mary's gift because these coins were all she had to live on (Mark 12:41–44). Not only does Jesus praise her seeming profligacy, but he also states that she gave *more* than wealthier people who donated far larger gifts. This is a strange kind of accounting not explained in any economics textbook. Jesus even says that the poor are blessed (Luke 6:20), contrary to all common experience.

Paul practiced the same kind of odd economics evident in Jesus' teaching. Most notably, he praised the Macedonian Christians, who faced "extreme poverty," for giving "beyond their means" (2 Cor. 8:3). The creation mandate, the Noahic covenant, and Proverbs provide good reasons to be generous, but giving *beyond* one's means when one is already very poor seems irresponsible and profligate.

The example of the early church, where some people sold investment estates and gave the entire proceeds to the apostles and where the saints provided for each other “according to their needs,” rather than justly giving “to each his due” (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37), also provides example of behavior that seems at least unsustainable and perhaps also a bit foolish.

I believe it is unavoidable to conclude that the NT says some things that work against the grain of prudent, thrifty, and purposeful participation in the marketplace. Some Christian proponents of the free market recognize that certain things Jesus and other NT writers say seem, at least at first blush, to steer Christians away from participating in a market economy.¹⁰⁰ Other writers—I think especially of Luke Timothy Johnson—argue that Jesus’ exhortations even within individual gospels are in tension with each other and cannot be brought into a neat systematic package.¹⁰¹ These writers do well to recognize the issue,¹⁰² and offer useful reflections on how Christians can pursue a coherently faithful economic life while taking all of the relevant biblical texts seriously. However, their discussions would be helpfully augmented, I believe, by placing them in a two-kingdoms context. Here, briefly, is what I have in mind.

It is not just that some NT commands stand in a certain tension with other NT (and Old Testament) commands but that the distinctive NT commands seem to presume a different kind of economic universe from the one we observe around us every day, a universe in which ordinary norms of accounting, investing, and responsibility do not hold. The NT *seems* at times to place Christians in a parallel economic universe, I argue, because Christians in fact *actually do* participate in a parallel universe of sorts. That is, Christians not only participate in the common kingdom of the Noahic covenant (for which God has established the ordinary economic realities familiar to us) but also participate in the eschatological kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The saints of old caught glimpses of this eschatological kingdom; but since Christ’s exaltation to heaven, the new-covenant people enjoy an unprecedented access to “the things that are above” (Col. 3:1–3). They are citizens *even now* of this heavenly kingdom (e.g., Phil. 3:20). One of the things that distinguishes this kingdom from the Noahic common kingdom is economic reality. The economic life of the common kingdom is protological—and furthermore exists under a curse (Gen. 3:17–19)—and thus requires human beings to be prudent, thrifty, resourceful, industrious, and foresightful if they are to thrive economically within it.

The eschatological kingdom is different. It is a realm of bounty and overflowing abundance (see Isa. 25:6; 55:1; Joel 3:18; Rev. 21:6; 22:1–3) where there is no more curse (Rev. 22:3). It is marked by *rest* rather than *work* (e.g., Heb. 4:9–10; Rev. 14:13)—which does not mean its inhabitants will be idle but reflects the

fact that its citizens have attained the original human destiny and are not striving toward it (Gen. 2:1–3; Heb. 2:5–10). One of the marvelous things about life under the new covenant is that God calls Christians to enjoy and embody the dynamic of this parallel economic universe even now, in the midst of their earthly pilgrimage. Jesus' unusual economic instructions noted above have nothing to do with preserving human society under the Noahic covenant, but they do show his disciples how to manifest the reality of the eschatological kingdom of God in the present (e.g., Matt. 6:25–33; 19:21–24; Luke 18:22–25). Jesus lauded lavish extravagance not as a strategy for raising standards of living but for calling attention to the value of his saving death and burial (John 12:1–8). Paul promoted excessive generosity not as public policy but as a free and spontaneous act (2 Cor. 8:3–4, 8; 9:7) among fellow believers in the church (8:4, 13–15; 9:1, 12), in imitation of the unimaginable generosity of Christ, for “though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor” (8:9; cf. 9:13). Christians, in other words, anticipate the new economic age through their union with Christ and citizenship in his heavenly kingdom. The Noahic covenant, conversely, is protological and not redemptive or eschatological: The exigencies of the present world, not the realities of the age to come, define its economics.

This also means, I suggest, that God intends Christians to embody this eschatological economics *primarily* in their common life in the church, not in their participation in the common economic life of the world. In all of the concrete examples in the NT, Christians practice their odd economics through giving and receiving with one another (see Acts 4:32–37; 2 Cor. 8–9). These texts do not instruct Christians how to run a thriving business. Yet insofar as Christians seek *first* the kingdom of God and practice unusual acts of excessive generosity, how could it not affect their businesses or attitudes toward saving and investment? Resources given extravagantly to the church's ministry become unavailable to expand one's business or fund one's 401(k). Honoring the economics of the kingdom provides regular reminder of and witness to the provisionality of earthly enterprise. Christians, sanctified by the Spirit in the ways of the age to come, presumably become the kind of people so accustomed to embodying the strange economics of the kingdom that they begin looking for ways to practice its customs even toward those outside the household of faith (cf. Gal. 6:10).

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that much of the Christian debate over the market economy can be understood as a fundamental disagreement over the theological evidence deemed admissible for evaluating an economic system. Christian

proponents of the market economy tend to present protological and penultimate considerations that highlight its many relative and provisional benefits for life in this world, which has been created by God yet scarred by sin. Christian critics of the market economy, on the other hand, tend to prosecute deep critiques in light of how far it falls short of the redemptive-eschatological and ultimate ideals of Christ's kingdom. Understanding the debate in these terms not only provides greater conceptual clarity about what participants are actually arguing about but also points to a constructive way forward. Thus, I have also argued that both sides of the debate have important insights that should not be neglected: The market economy indeed provides impressive benefits—material and moral—for life in this present world, although it does not meet the standards of the economic reality characterizing the new creation in Christ. Christians ought to have both a deep appreciation for the market economy and a profound sense of its provisionality in comparison to the abundance of the coming kingdom. The need for a twofold evaluation of the market economy need not be troubling to Christians, I have argued further, if approached through the lens of a two-kingdoms doctrine structured by the biblical covenants. Christians, called both to honor God's penultimate purposes established in the Noahic covenant and to embrace his ultimate purposes enjoyed in part even now through the new covenant, can give due support to lawful free markets in their civil life even while inadequately embodying the strange economic reality of the coming kingdom, especially in the corporate fellowship of the church.

It is not as though these two economic realities—or the two divine covenants and kingdoms that undergird them—are in fundamental antagonism. Both economic realities play a key role in God's unified grand plan for human history. Even within this history, the church itself must abide by a protological economics in certain respects (see 1 Cor. 9:3–7) and Christians look for opportunities to let the distinctive love of the coming kingdom overflow to those outside the church (Gal. 6:10). Furthermore, a well-functioning market economy does put into Christians' hands more resources with which to practice their eschatological economics in their personal and ecclesial lives.

Nevertheless, the presence of these two economic realities does create a certain moral tension. Perhaps the chief economic challenge for faithful Christians is not evaluating a market economy's strengths and limitations (both of which are readily evident) but determining in concrete circumstances how to honor the economic realities of both kingdoms without overlooking or despising one for the sake of the other. What is truly difficult is taking seriously, on the one hand, the idea that things such as building a business, buying good products, hiring employees, and investing in the stock of quality companies promote the well-

being of the common kingdom and are expressions of love to one's neighbors, and, on the other hand, the idea that excessive generosity to the church and its members is God's will for his people and a means for producing a strange kind of abundance even in the midst of ordinary poverty. Christians face the arduous task of cultivating a spirit of prudence, thrift, and resourcefulness in their common economic affairs that they must simultaneously, to some degree, joyfully set aside in order to show forth the wonderful bounty of the new creation.

Notes

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1. See Daniel K. Finn, *The Moral Ecology of Markets: Assessing Claims about Markets and Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11–12. Finn goes on to argue, however, that these debates are not in fact incommensurable, for the different parties wrestle with common issues even while providing different answers.
 2. The quotation is from Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 32. A number of writers claim that capitalism destroys communities and relationships, to be discussed below.
 3. Many writers make these claims; perhaps most energetically see Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982); and Deirdre N. McCloskey, *Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
 4. The person who may have come closest to making the claim I advance here is Craig M. Gay, though he focuses only on evangelical writers. He argues that a crucial difference between the evangelical right and the evangelical left on economic life concerns whether morality is based on a fixed created order (on the right) or is moving toward a not-yet-existing ideal society (on the left). See *With Liberty and Justice for Whom? The Recent Evangelical Debate over Capitalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 166. Elsewhere he claims that some on the evangelical right, but especially those on the evangelical left, see an “ultimacy” in economic life; see *With Liberty and Justice*, 9, 203. It has been suggested to me that Thomas Sowell offers a related, though nontheological, case to the one I present here in his *Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggle*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic, 2007). There are indeed certain lines of similarity, in that the writers I associate with the protological/penultimate perspective would generally fall into his “constrained vision” category and those I associate with the eschatological/ultimate perspective bear many resemblances to exemplars of his “unconstrained vision.” Yet

the correspondence is not perfect. One of the important points of dissimilarity in our respective analyses, it seems to me, is that while Sowell makes his case for a *conflict* of visions that seems perennially irreconcilable, I argue here that Christians ought to affirm *both* the protological and eschatological, the penultimate and ultimate. In other words, Christians need not see a conflict between them with respect to economic life because God is the author and Lord of both, even if certain tensions inevitably arise, which I discuss. What is crucial with respect to the present article is recognizing the different relationships that earthly economic life bears to the penultimate and the ultimate and evaluating the market economy accordingly.

5. Among the exceptions are E. Calvin Beisner, John Schneider, and David Doty. These writers, like their fellow Christian advocates of the market economy, appeal to the creation narratives and their emphasis on human beings as the image of God who have a high dignity and are called to labor productively in this world. See, for example, E. Calvin Beisner, *Prosperity and Poverty: The Compassionate Use of Resources in a World of Scarcity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 29–30; John R. Schneider, *The Good of Affluence: Seeking God in a Culture of Wealth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), chap. 2; and David B. Doty, *Eden's Bridge: The Marketplace in Creation and Mission* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012), chap. 2. Yet each of them also introduces strong redemptive and eschatological considerations in support of labor, wealth creation, and the market economy. This is especially prominent throughout Doty's book wherein he argues that the redemption of the marketplace is integral to the gospel and to the establishment of the kingdom of God; see, for example, *Eden's Bridge*, 1, 22, 131. See also Beisner, *Prosperity and Poverty*, 25, 30–31, 121; and Schneider, *The Good of Affluence*, 129, 165–66.
6. Andrew Kirk, *The Good News of the Kingdom Coming: The Marriage of Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1983), 29. Kirk equivocates on the meaning of "market economy." Given his earlier comments, Kirk seems here to equate "market economy" with "capitalism," which he makes evil by definition; see 28. Yet later, for example, he uses Brazil as an example of how capitalism is bad for the poor (though free-market advocates of that day, or today, would hardly have seen Brazil as an example of the kind of "market economy" they wish to defend) and argues against defenders of the market economy by criticizing all sorts of government regulations that he thinks are harmful (though free-market advocates are hardly supporters of extensive government regulations); see 62–65.
7. See, for example, Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 20–21, 28, chap. 2, 242, 338, 341, 359.
8. See, for example, Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 39–40. Novak, however, may be inconsistent with his earlier contentions when he claims here that by fulfilling this calling through being inventive, prudent, farseeing, and industrious we can build up and perfect God's kingdom on earth.

9. See, for example, Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, chap. 4 generally; see also 118, 350.
10. See, for example, Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 121–22, 126.
11. Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 352.
12. See Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 335; cf. 359.
13. As to theological soundness, I think of chapter 20, “A Theology of Democratic Capitalism” in *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, where Novak pursues several lines of argument that push the limits of plausibility. Here he claims, for instance, that the doctrine of the Trinity supports the idea of having a differentiated political economy, and that the doctrine of the incarnation teaches us to be realistic about sin and not to think that the world is going to change much.
14. Samuel Gregg, “Individualism, the Market, and Christianity: Can the Circle Be Squared?” in *Wealth, Poverty, and Human Destiny*, ed. Doug Bandow and David L. Schindler (Wilmington: ISI, 2003), 131–32.
15. Gregg, “Individualism, the Market, and Christianity,” 132–40. He affirms a certain kind of individualism but notes his disagreement with Milton Friedman’s notion of freedom in terms of “free to choose”; see 140–43. For Friedman’s work, see especially *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); and Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman, *Free To Choose: A Personal Statement* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980). Gregg offers similar anthropological reflections in another book where he refutes the idea of the human being as *homo economicus* (regrettably the basis for many economists’ defense of the free market) and discusses the concept of scarcity and its bearing on the human responsibility to work; see *Economic Thinking for the Theologically Minded* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), chap. 2.
16. Gregg, “Individualism, the Market, and Christianity,” 146–47.
17. Robert Sirico, *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2012), 20–22.
18. See, for example, Sirico, *Defending the Free Market*, 34–35, 61–62, and chaps. 9–10 generally.
19. See Sirico, *Defending the Free Market*, 135–36, where he quotes Wilhelm Röpke.
20. See Jay W. Richards, *Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism Is the Solution and Not the Problem* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 4, 26–27.
21. Richards, *Money, Greed, and God*, 32. While I personally agree with this statement and with Richards’ nonutopian emphasis, his discussion of the kingdom of God in earlier pages is regrettably vague and imprecise; see *Money, Greed, and God*, 30–31.

22. Richards, *Money, Greed, and God*, 7.
23. See, for example, Richards, *Money, Greed, and God*, 8, 64, 97–98.
24. Brian Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth: A Christian's Case for Capitalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985). Subsequent to my writing this article, a new book has appeared that deserves to stand alongside Griffiths' work as a highly competent presentation of a protological and penultimate approach to Christianity and economics: see John Bolt, *Economic Shalom: A Reformed Primer on Faith, Work, and Human Flourishing* (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press, 2013).
25. Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth*, 14.
26. Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth*, 27, 30–31.
27. Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth*, 117.
28. See, for example, Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth*, 34, 49–53.
29. For example, as created in the image of a personal God, the human being, too, is personal, not an impersonal *homo economicus* (see Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth*, 54); a biblical anthropology also refutes any Stoic view of possessive individualism (see *The Creation of Wealth*, 80–84).
30. Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth*, 44–45.
31. Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth*, 46–48; see chap. 3 generally.
32. Ronald H. Nash, *Poverty and Wealth: The Christian Debate Over Capitalism* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1986), 12.
33. Nash, *Poverty and Wealth*, 60–62.
34. For an intellectual biography of Röpke, see Samuel Gregg, *Wilhelm Röpke's Political Economy* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2010). On the distinctives of the German *ordoliberal* school, see Lawrence H. White, *The Clash of Economic Ideas: The Great Policy Debates and Experiments of the Last Hundred Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), chap. 9.
35. Wilhelm Röpke, *A Humane Economy: The Social Framework of the Free Market* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1960), 116–18.
36. Another example, much different from Röpke, is Deirdre McCloskey, a contemporary American economist. McCloskey's tone is overwhelmingly penultimate: American-style capitalism is not perfect but better than any alternative for a host of reasons. See *The Bourgeois Virtues*, 1, 27, 480–81, 505; cf. Deirdre N. McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), xii–xiii. She confesses to being “wishy-washy and empirical” rather than “pure and rational” in its defense—but we should keep

it because it works “pretty well.” See *The Bourgeois Virtues*, 3. Here she cites John Mueller, *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ralph’s Pretty Good Grocery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), a book that makes a robust case for the relative, albeit imperfect, virtues of a market economy.

37. Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, x.
38. Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, 49.
39. See especially Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, 46–49; cf. 5 and chap. 2 generally.
40. Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, 72–80.
41. Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, 87–89.
42. Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, 105–6.
43. See generally Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, chap. 3.
44. John Milbank asserts without equivocation that Christians “must *strive still to abolish capitalism*” in favor of a Christian socialism; see “Socialism of the Gift, Socialism by Grace,” *New Blackfriars* 77 (1996): 532–48 (italics his). See generally John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).
45. This Daniel Bell is not to be confused with the sociologist Daniel Bell who wrote famous works on capitalism several decades ago. Among others associated with Radical Orthodoxy, Roman Catholic theologian William T. Cavanaugh pursues many similar arguments; see, for example, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).
46. See, for example, D. Stephen Long and Nancy Ruth Fox with Tripp York, *Calculated Futures: Theology, Ethics, and Economics* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 3, 15–16, 65, 101, 170; and D. Stephen Long, *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 242.
47. See, for example, Long et al., *Calculated Futures*, 3–4, 185, 192–201; and Long, *Divine Economy*, 235.
48. See, for example, Long et al., *Calculated Futures*, 4, 204–5.
49. See, for example, Long et al., *Calculated Futures*, 13, 185; and Long, *Divine Economy*, 235.
50. For evidence, see, for example, Long et al., *Calculated Futures*, 149, 161, 165, 171, 181–82; and Long, *Divine Economy*, 3, 177–78, chap. 12, 242, 246–48.
51. See, for example, Henri de Lubac, SJ, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967); and John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: The Debate Concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). For a strong critique of de Lubac’s interpretation of Thomas by

- a contemporary Roman Catholic scholar, see Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).
52. This is clear from Long, *Divine Economy*, chapter 14, both in what this chapter says and in how it serves as the climax of the book.
 53. See Long, *Divine Economy*, 242, 248, 313.
 54. See Long et al., *Calculated Futures*, 123.
 55. See Long, *Divine Economy*, 10, chaps. 4–5.
 56. Daniel M. Bell Jr., *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 20. See also his earlier book, *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
 57. Bell, *The Economy of Desire*, 24, 88.
 58. See Bell, *The Economy of Desire*, 83–89.
 59. Bell, *The Economy of Desire*, 91.
 60. See, for example, Bell, *The Economy of Desire*, 112–14, 124–27.
 61. See, for example, Bell, *The Economy of Desire*, 146–47.
 62. David L. Schindler, “‘Homelessness’ and Market Liberalism: Toward an Economic Culture of Gift and Gratitude,” in *Wealth, Poverty, and Human Destiny*, 347–413.
 63. Schindler, “Homelessness,” 351–53.
 64. Schindler, “Homelessness,” 356.
 65. Schindler, “Homelessness,” 358–59, 363.
 66. See Schindler, “Homelessness,” 366–69. In my judgment, Schindler correctly identifies a crucial objection to his case but fails to answer what lies at the heart of it: A political community could never build an economy around his ontology because it is impossible, as a matter of law and justice, to determine objectively how much love people are actually putting into their work or how much extra worth their love creates in objects exchanged.
 67. Schindler, “Homelessness,” 400.
 68. Schindler, “Homelessness,” 396.
 69. Neo-Calvinism generally refers to a school of thought within Reformed circles over the past century that tries to build on and develop the thought of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. Among recent works seeking to popularize neo-Calvinist thought,

see Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); and Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). A seminal thinker for neo-Calvinism, and an obvious influence on Goudzwaard, is Herman Dooyeweerd, among whose important works is *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 4 vols., trans. David H. Freeman and William S. Young (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969). For a recent study of Dooyeweerd's thought, see Jonathan Chaplin, *Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011); on his economic thought, see Joost W. Hengstmengel, "Dooyeweerd's Philosophy of Economics," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 15, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 415–29. In addition to Goudzwaard's work cited below, another volume providing a deep critique of capitalism from a neo-Calvinist perspective (though proposing economic reforms that are not quite as radical) is W. Fred Graham, George N. Monsma Jr., Carl J. Sinke, John P. Tiemstra, and Alan Storkey, *Reforming Economics: Calvinist Studies on Methods and Institutions* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990).

70. Bob Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Society*, trans. Josina Van Nuis Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), xx–xxii.
71. See Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress*, parts 1–2.
72. Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress*, 56–57, 65–66.
73. Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress*, 112.
74. Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress*, 163.
75. Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress*, 182–83.
76. Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress*, 186.
77. Kirk, *The Good News of the Kingdom Coming*, 48–49.
78. Kirk, *The Good News of the Kingdom Coming*, 50–51.
79. Kirk, *The Good News of the Kingdom Coming*, chaps. 8–10.
80. See, for example, Kirk, *The Good News of the Kingdom Coming*, 122–23.
81. Of course it is not necessarily the case that accepting the legitimacy of a penultimate economic system will drive one to support the free market, or vice versa. One could accept its legitimacy but conclude that a socialist system best achieves the provisional goods of this life; or one could deny its legitimacy but conclude that the free market best conforms to the economic vision of the eschatological kingdom. Nevertheless, I do not think it is a coincidence that economically informed Christian writers who take a protological and penultimate approach tend to look favorably on a market economy while those who evaluate all economic activity in light of eschatological and ultimate concerns tend to be outraged at modern capitalism.

82. As summarized, for example, in the Westminster Confession of Faith, 7.3–6.
83. This follows the paradigm presented and defended in David VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). There are, of course, other versions of the two-kingdoms doctrine from that presented here. This doctrine is commonly regarded as distinctively Lutheran, and indeed it has been an important theme in Lutheran theology, stemming especially from Martin Luther's famous treatise, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed." See *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, ed. Walther I. Brandt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), 81–139. Similar but distinct forms of the doctrine have also been common in the Reformed tradition, nevertheless, as argued in David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). I regard my own two-kingdoms paradigm as a reappropriation and modification of older Reformed thinking on the subject.
84. Although it is not common, Christian writers occasionally reflect on the significance of the Noahic covenant for economic life. For example, see Donald A. Hay, *Economics Today: A Christian Critique* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), chap. 1; and Jean Lee, *The Two Pillars of the Market: A Paradigm for Dialogue between Theology and Economics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), chap. 3.
85. Along somewhat similar lines, Max L. Stackhouse reflects on how God, having created human beings in his image, called them to the formation of culture and the technological transformation of the world; see, for example, *God and Globalization*, vol. 4, *Globalization and Grace* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 136–37. Even economic historians have recognized the significance of the dignity accorded to work in the creation accounts in Genesis, in distinction from Greek ideas in which the dominant classes viewed nonsupervisory work with contempt. Genesis portrays work as natural to humanity and as intrinsic to its fulfillment of the divine project. See, for example, Alessandro Roncaglia, *The Wealth of Ideas: A History of Economic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 23–24.
86. See Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 19, chap. 3.
87. Many of the thoughts in this and the following paragraphs were stimulated in the course of reading Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997).
88. For a summary of Malthus's thought, see, for example, Roncaglia, *The Wealth of Ideas*, 159–62. See also Joyce Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 67, on the idea that Malthus was correct—about the past.

89. As one writer has recently put it, a graph of economic growth through world history would look like a hockey stick lying on the ground with its blade pointed up: millennia of stagnation with only the slightest and slowest of growth, followed by a sharp vertical turn around the year 1800; see McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity*, 2. William J. Baumol states, “average growth rates for about one and a half *millennia* before the Industrial Revolution are estimated to have been approximately *zero*....” See *The Free Market Innovation Machine: Analyzing the Growth Miracle of Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3.
90. See related comments in Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution*, 54.
91. By this point some readers will surely sense the significant differences between my presentation and the vision Wendell Berry has promoted in recent decades; for a brief essay by Berry that summarizes his critique of the modern globalized economy, see “The Total Economy,” in *Wealth, Poverty, and Human Destiny*, Appendix A. While I hardly see a globalized market economy (including corporate farming) as an unmitigated blessing, I do indeed have different views from Berry on the desirability of the division of labor, local food production, and many other matters, though I cannot interact with Berry’s work in any detail here.
92. I have been focusing on the first two of the three basic requirements of the Noahic covenant and reflecting on them in light of the creational background that God made image-bearing humans to work with creativity and purpose. The third explicit requirement of this covenant, pursuing proportionate justice to rectify intra-human wrongdoing, perhaps does not fit quite as well into the story that I have told. Obviously some sort of justice system is generally necessary for human progress, but improvements in the administration of justice have not spiked in recent centuries in the way that innovation, human population, and food production have. It is much harder to measure progress in justice administration. Nevertheless, with the rise of a broad economically independent middle class, the decline in prejudice against minority groups, and the development of new evidence-gathering techniques through modern technology over the past couple of centuries, I believe it is a safe bet that a randomly chosen member of a contemporary first-world society is considerably more likely to receive justice for a crime committed against him than was a randomly chosen member of a medieval European society or of most nonindustrialized countries today.
93. One common complaint about modern capitalism concerns its alleged dumbing-down effects on human culture generally. This is a complicated issue I cannot engage here, but it seems to me that there are weighty counterconsiderations to the popular complaints. For one thoughtful case challenging the conventional wisdom, see Tyler Cowen, *In Praise of Commercial Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

94. See especially McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues*, 75; cf. 44–45; chaps. 2–3. See also Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution*, 31–32.
95. See especially McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues*, 349–50, 507–8; and Mueller, *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery*, chap. 2. The theme of market virtues also arises in the work of other market proponents cited above, such as Novak, Sirico, Griffiths, and Röpke.
96. Among many discussions of the importance of innovation for modern capitalism, see, for example, McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity*; Clark, *A Farewell to Alms*; Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution*; and Baumol, *The Free-Market Innovation Machine*. Joseph Schumpeter, who coined the phrase “creative destruction,” was one of the first prominent economists to emphasize innovation as a chief feature of modern capitalism. See Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), chap. 7. On Schumpeter’s thought, see, for example, Roncaglia, *The Wealth of Ideas*, chap. 15; and Sylvia Nasar, *Grand Pursuit: The Story of Economic Genius* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), chaps. 5, 13. For insightful analysis of the function of entrepreneurship within an innovative market economy, see especially Israel M. Kirzner, *The Driving Force of the Market: Essays in Austrian Economics* (New York: Routledge, 2000), chap. 1.
97. Among important penultimate-type charges against the market economy are that it presumes a social system in which there are no common ends, that it disadvantages the poor in comparison to the wealthy, that it violates many concerns of “social justice,” that it promotes self-interest at the expense of the common good, and that it has a corrosive effect on its surrounding culture and social institutions. I believe these objections can be answered, but I simply do not have space to do so here.
98. As cited above, see especially McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues*; and Mueller, *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery*. My thanks to William Yap for sharing with me his research on Luke 16:1–13.
99. Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
100. See, for example, Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth*, 40: “If we take the text of the gospels seriously, it seems at first sight as if there is a grave inconsistency between the teachings of Jesus on the subject of wealth and poverty and the principles on which market economies depend for their success.... We applaud the market economy because it enables people to prosper. Yet prosperity was the very thing which Jesus warned against in his teaching.”
101. See generally Luke T. Johnson, *Sharing Possessions: Mandate and Symbol of Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981). Johnson seeks to resolve the tension by arguing that Christianity is not a code of behavior, but that our approach to material possessions

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reflects our basic response to God. Idolatry leads to possessiveness, though there is nothing inherently evil about having possessions. Christians must have discernment in particular circumstances to determine the proper response to God's call.

102. These writers do well in distinction from others who do not seem to recognize or wrestle with the tension, such as Nash, in *Poverty and Wealth*, 163–64, 169–70 (though I believe he does say some helpful things here about Jesus' teaching).