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Introduction to Christian Economics (Book Review)

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and work can overcome self-pity, complaint, and depression.

"Truth-telling" urges us to give the encouraging compliment now, at the time it is deserved; " 'M' Is for a Merry Heart" is a light and loving tribute to the author's mother, Katherine Howard; "The Shock of Self-Recognition" mocks our egocentric severity and reminds us of the joy, forgiveness, and refreshment of the Resurrection; and "Housework and High-flown Ideas" is the best brief rejoinder to the stridency of feminist extremism that I have read. Elliot's strongest argument is the testimony and example of her own life; she ends her answer by affirming

Strange that I have no wish to do it over again the Hardesty-Scanzoni way. Strange that my memories of marriage are such happy ones and that I want to live out the rest of my life as a woman, even a single one, without the chips on my shoulder that certain feminists are trying to persuade me to carry.

I am not half through the volume with my comments, but I recommend that you read also, and especially, "In a Hospital Waiting Room," the title essay, "Twelve Baskets of Crumbs," "Confessions of a Teacher," "Some of My Best Friends Are Books," "Speaking and Thinking" (on "The Care and Feeding of Public Speakers"), "What About the Aucas?" and "A Modern Pastoral." Elisabeth Elliot is a pre-eminent contemporary literary artist, and she writes out of the Scriptural vision of the Sovereignty of the Covenant God and the Kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ over every aspect of our lives, human history, and His universe.

An Introduction to Christian Economics, by Gary North, the Craig Press, 1975, 413 pages, \$6.50. Reviewed by Evert Van Der Heide, Instructor in Economics.

The Christian who is concerned with integrating the various segments of life with his Christian perspective would, no doubt, be expecting a great deal from this book. He would be looking for direction as to what economic areas should be of particular concern for the Christian and ways in which to incorporate peculiar Christian attitudes. But I'm afraid that the reader would be somewhat disappointed. While the author does view certain economic problems as particularly relevant to the Christian, he fails to convince the

reader that what he does is significant. Several of his arguments are noticeably weak. North's underlying concern is to argue in favor of the "free enterprise" system and against government on a Biblical basis. This theme comes out in almost every chapter.

The book is best seen as consisting of two parts (although it is divided into four). First, North deals with problems of money and monetary theory. The major problem is the problem of inflation. The entire section rests on the beginning assumption that inflation is immoral. North interprets Isaiah 1:22 ("Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water") to be a commandment by God against inflation. This is contrary to the exegesis of most Bible scholars who interpret the verse in the spiritual sense. North recognizes the difference and makes an argument for a "physical" interpretation, but his proof is far from conclusive. Since this is the beginning assumption of the section on money, the remainder of his arguments are substantially diluted. (North admits that the validity of his remarks on money rest on this assumption.)

The author is concerned with the system of money creation as one of deception and possible ruin. A fractional reserve system implies that bank depositors could not all be satisfied with funds if all were to seek to withdraw their money simultaneously. In addition (and more importantly), the quantity of money in circulation is determined by government. And since government has been causing inflation through increases in the money supply, the citizenry has been deceived. For North, the deception is less significant than the existence of an immoral inflation.

The second section of the book deals with problems which are more interesting, such as the economics of women's liberation, property taxes, urban renewal, and financing the Kingdom of God. Given that all of earth's resources belong ultimately to our Heavenly Father, the Christian's response must be one of responsibility and stewardship. North, therefore, spends his time arguing for the most efficient techniques of resource distribution, namely, the free market system. In every chapter he demonstrates how intervention by government, through laws and regulations, causes misallocation of resources.

North, it would seem, makes a mistake by focusing exclusively on this task of striving for efficiency. While it is refreshing to see a Christian writer knowledgeable in economics, it is disheartening to see the lack of concern for responsibility in social relationships. We must be concerned with equity considerations as well

as efficiency. North errs when he states that Jesus did not have a social message other than an overall plea for peace. The relevance of Jesus' teachings are seen, rather, as pointing toward a "free enterprise" system of economics, which North feels was demonstrated by the economic climate described by Jesus in His parables.

It is evident that we can not accept North's interpretation. We must be more concerned with the treatment of human beings within the economic system. We must sacrifice some efficiency to carry out these objectives. A more significant discussion would have dealt with the issue of whether the church should act as the instrument for social aid today, rather than government, or even, if such a step would be possible.

In summary, the economic content of the book is good. Many false notions are addressed. However, the material is limited in its scope and lacks effectiveness. Many of the arguments raised are questionable or unconvincing. Most importantly, the book does not challenge Christians to programs of thought and action which are in line with the teachings of Christ. It may well be that the type of system under which we operate is of secondary importance.

The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing, edited by David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge, Abingdon Press, Nashville and New York, 1975, 304 pages. Reviewed by John M. Zinkand, Professor of Classical Languages.

The editors, both professors in the Church History Department of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, have produced an impressive volume at a very critical time.

Marshalling fourteen essayists, they have covered the three areas mentioned in the subtitle. For many years the American public has not been aware of Evangelicals. Equated with "Fundamentalists," they have been identified as members of some strange minority. But in today's press the term "Evangelical" is becoming more well-known. A Gallup Poll conducted in mid-September, 1976, showed that one in three questioned (actually 38 percent) claimed to have had a "born again" experience, that was a turning point in his or her life. (See Des Moines Register, Sept. 26, 1976.)

But what do Evangelicals believe other than that they must have such a personal commitment to Jesus Christ? This question is dealt with in the first section by John H.

Gerstner, Kenneth S. Kantzer and Paul L. Holner. The first two are fairly well known to most readers of Pro Rege; Holner, of Yale Divinity School, however, is an ex-evangelical. The inclusion of his contribution has brought about some criticism. But this reviewer concedes that our best critics are often those who are "on the outside." Let this whet your appetite: Holner states that

The very roughness and somewhat abrasive dimension of the evangelicals, who are usually trying so volubly to stay straight on the God of the Bible, gives me, at least, the impression that God is not the invention of the churches. He does not show a placid hand. He is not a genial benevolence nor a surrogate for moral value.... But there are some rough edges (in evangelicalism) not made by God (p. 69).

The contributors handle such matters as the identification of Evangelicals. If Gallup's findings are valid, are there evangelical Roman Catholics? How are "Fundamentalists" to be distinguished from "Evangelicals"? Are Seventh-Day Adventists within the camp? And what is the situation in the Black Churches?

William Pannell in "The Religious Heritage of Blacks" notes that

virtually all students of the black church recognize a fairly high percentage of what could be called "evangelical sentiments" within it, but little or no serious attempt is made statistically to isolate them. This is in part due to the fact that "evangelical" has never been a term in wide use within mainstream black Christianity.... There has never, however, been a fundamental-liberal controversy with Black Christianity in America (p. 121).

He admits that the black church has not produced a major theologian; Christianity for blacks has been more activism than strict theology.

Similar valuable insights are found in this volume. The reviewer commends the editors for this crucial work. That they chose Abingdon Press rather than one of the evangelical publishers (located in Grand Rapids and the Chicago area) shows good strategy. Too often evangelicals write about evangelical subjects, publish in the evangelical press and speak, for the most part, to their evangelical friends. This work should reach more "outsiders," sharpen the evangelical witness, and critique our own lack of unity and social awareness.