

# **Book Review: Global Neighbors: Christian Faith and Moral Obligation in Today's Economy**

by Carrie Cavanaugh



Global Neighbors: Christian Faith and Moral Obligation in Today's Economy is a collection of essays spawned by a colloquy at the Institute for Reformed Theology. The Reformed tradition has historically viewed the whole world as God's and so they have strived to apply their faith to redeeming the world at large. But this tome is far more than a rehashing of traditional theological application. Rather, it is a refreshing and challenging new look at the economic issues we face in the new global economy in which we find ourselves.

Although this book is not directed solely at business leaders, it does highlight their positions of influence in the moral landscape of the economy. In fact this book made me realize how every business choice brings with it moral implications.

The first part of the book focuses on the question, "who is our neighbor"—drawing upon the parable of the Good Samaritan as a bold declaration of the attitude we are to have as Christ followers. This question isn't a simple one when we are confronted with questions over who jobs go to—our countrymen, or less fortunate foreign workers. Although the most helpful insight I came away with from this section was that our neighbor is

the one God brings into your life, just as the Samaritan's journey brought him to the place where the victim lay, still this is no excuse to care only for those near at hand. This is becoming ever more important to realize as a global economy causes our decisions to impact the lives of

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people half a world away who we may never meet face to face. It's all too easy to ignore the plight of people we never speak with, but that doesn't negate our moral obligation.

Subsequent chapters reexamine current economic models in light of the biblical paradigm. Although American Christians have traditionally upheld the free market system as biblical, there are weaknesses that should be addressed. And further, these weaknesses are derived from aspects of the theory that are not biblical. The authors point to the failure of the market economy in

third world countries because the citizens of these countries have no capital with which to enter the market. Thus, the poor become poorer while the rich become richer. They explain that as much as the free market theory has to offer, it is fundamentally flawed as it defines people as economic units that operate with only their own best interest in mind.

Although much of what I'm describing may not be directly relevant to your situation as a ministry leader, you do partake in the global economy and this book is excellent at bringing forward the questions that leaders of organizations need to be asking themselves—questions about fair pay and wise use of this world's resources, questions about vocation and how to create jobs that allow for your staff's engagement of their full potential as an image bearer of God, questions about where to focus your efforts to mend this broken world. I appreciated that the contributors to this book weren't dogmatic in applying answers to these questions because I think the right thing to do will be uniquely shaped by the specific circumstances of each situation. But they did give thoughtful direction and challenging goals to set our eyes upon. Really, it is exciting to be a part of God's redemptive work in this world!