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Book Review: Christians in an Age of Wealth

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Christian Political Witness,

edited by G. Kalantzis and G.W. Lee. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014.

239 pp. \$26.00. ISBN 9780830840519

Reviewed by Micah W. Kubic, Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church, Kansas City, MO

In *Christian Political Witness*, Kalantzis and Lee present twelve essays originally written for the 2013 Wheaton Theology Conference. Each of the essays approaches a different aspect of the relationship between church and state, critically analyzing what it means to be Christian within a political context. The fundamental premise of the book is that “Christians must remind themselves that the primary locus of Christian political activity is the church” and that “the church’s politics cannot accommodate the privatization of religion [...] and the church is called to public witness” (p. 11). The contributors argue that an engaged church is urgently needed in the West, where the church is perceived to be in retreat and many religious leaders have fruitlessly sought to reverse this trend by de-emphasizing political issues. The book makes clear that such de-emphasis runs counter to the mandates of scripture, to the actual practices of the early church, and to the scale of the threats offered up by modern life. The essays presented in *Christian Political Witness* come from conflicting religious, theological, and ideological perspectives, but this serves to better demonstrate that political witness is not an ancillary element of the Christian life, but rather central to it. Particularly worthy of attention is the essay by Timothy Gombis, which convincingly refutes conventional wisdom about the supposedly apolitical, “other-worldly” theology of Paul. Also of note is David Gushee’s contribution, which notes the lack of a strong social teaching tradition among evangelical Christians. Gushee makes a strong argument for evangelical Christians to join Roman Catholics and mainline Christians in developing such a tradition, and sketches out some thoughts on what the central tenets of evangelical political witness should look like. Not all of the contributions are so erudite or persuasive, but *Christian Political Witness* is a significant contribution to the literature.

Christians in an Age of Wealth: A Biblical Theology of Stewardship,

by Craig Blomberg, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013. 271 pp. \$24.99.

ISBN 9780310318989

*Reviewed by Jeffery S. Gates, Information Services Librarian,
Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH*

In the pages of this well-researched, but readable, book from the *Biblical Theology of Life* series, evangelical theologian and prolific author Craig Blomberg discusses the place and purpose of wealth and material possessions in a Christian’s life. The author begins with the history and background of giving among Christians in the

U.S. and then gives a summary of biblical teaching about the goodness of wealth, sins concerning wealth, giving of wealth, and the importance of stewardship of wealth. The chapters in this second section are helpful but are tedious to read. In the last part of the book (the most practical part), Blomberg discusses the stewardship of wealth to individuals, governments, and churches and makes use of case studies and a question-and-answer format. "Government and Business as Stewards?" is the most controversial chapter, because the author evaluates capitalism and socialism in the light of the Bible and takes a medium position. All but the first chapter conclude with questions for reflection and discussion, such as, "Are there any areas of your life in which God might want you to enjoy his good, material gifts where you have been reluctant to accept them?" and "How do you react to the case study presented at the beginning and end of this chapter? Did Generic Suburban Church do anything wrong?" The author offers footnotes on most pages of this thought-provoking book, quotes on many pages, and scripture, subject, and author indexes at the back. Although too long for group Bible study, this book could be very helpful for pastors and Bible teachers who teach about stewardship.

Christ-Shaped Character: Choosing Love, Faith and Hope,

by Helen Cepero. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014. 181 pp. \$14.50.

ISBN 9780830835829

*Reviewed by Bruce Flanders, Director, Mabee Library,
MidAmerica Nazarene University, Olathe, KS*

This readable and well-organized book provides instruction and inspiration to those who wish to more closely pattern their lives after the model provided by Christ, as illuminated in scripture. Cepero, a previously-published author, adjunct instructor, and retreat leader describes nine spiritual disciplines using illustrations from her life experiences, as well as relevant scriptural passages, and provides useful interpretation and suggestions for application. The book is organized into three sections, each containing three chapters: Part One: Choosing Love (Choosing Life, Compassionate Hospitality, and Forgiving as We Are Forgiven); Part Two: Choosing Faith (Following Jesus, Embracing Vulnerability, and Living with Integrity); and Part Three: Choosing Hope (Paying Attention, Seeing Blessing, and Trusting Christ). The illustrations are memorable and poignant, and the suggestions for practical application, including various forms of prayer, are scripturally sound and valuable. Each chapter ends with a summary; thus, while this book will be profitable to the individual reader, it has been formatted in a manner that enhances its value to book clubs and small groups. Suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter lead the reader to additional resources. This book is written in a non-technical fashion, and thus is highly recommended for public and academic library collections.