Endnotes

1 Schneider thinks my *Neither Poverty nor Riches* (1999) should have drawn more lines of continuity between the garden and the patriarchal blessings (p. 42). I think he has ignored the significant discontinuity between this theme in the Old Testament in general and in New Testament teaching. Cf. The same problem on p. 67, nn. 5–6.

2 I am puzzled as to why Schneider thinks my comments about the Zebedee family's wealth are understated (p. 135, n. 55). As for assuming that most of the Twelve were from among the 70–80% poor of the country, it is simply because it seems Jesus did reach out to all classes of people and, apart from information to the contrary, it would be natural to assume that the majority of the apostles fit the majority of the demographics. I see no principles of homogeneous grouping in the Gospels to suggest that it would be "equally reasonable to think that the others came from comparable economic backgrounds [as the more well-to-do disciples]" (p.136).

3 See Chilton (2000), especially pp. 3–22.

4 To the extent that Schneider does refer to this material he relativizes it, in a curious way, by labeling it prophetic. He relies exclusively on Luke Johnson's and David Moessner's understanding of Luke's central section as a kind of Christian Deuteronomy, a carry over from several scholarly studies of the 1950s–70s but largely rejected by most scholars today—see my chapter in France and Wenham (1983). Indeed, a weakness of Schneider's New Testament chapters is that he follows almost exclusively Johnson's take on virtually every passage in Luke and Acts—perspectives that are often right, in my opinion, but which seldom expose Schneider to the breadth of possibly valid exegetical options.

5 Schneider (1994), pp. 15–16.

6 Campolo (1997), p. 23.

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■■■

Delight, Danger, and Duty: *The Good of Affluence* and Current Research on Wealth in the Gospels

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The dawn of the twenty-first century presents an opportunity for reflection on the global ascendancy of capitalism and its meaning for Christians. Ironically the dominance of market economies with rising living standards gives pause to some Christians, particularly a number of those in the increasingly affluent West. The Church has not before faced such a moment. For such a time as this, theologian John Schneider has written a provocative study affirming abundance as explicitly part of God's design for humankind. Schneider undergirds his argument by prodding Christians to work carefully through not only an analysis of Biblical teaching on wealth but also his interpretation of "economic culture." Schneider ultimately calls upon Christians to find delight in the modern culture of wealth.

My discussion of Schneider's work primarily seeks to evaluate his treatment of the Gospel teachings on wealth in light of the ongoing discussion among economic historians, New Testament scholars and others of the nature and relevant features of economic activity in first-century Palestine. In doing so I hope to encourage Christian economists to more carefully consider how our understanding of the teachings of Jesus on economic concerns might be informed by recent research. *The Good of Affluence* (*TGA*) challenges us to reconsider the ways in which Jesus' life and teachings affirmed the ultimate spiritual significance of economic life. Secondarily, I offer some brief thoughts on *TGA*'s perspective on the culture of capitalism.

Schneider is explicit about his intended audience, people active in the business world who are in pursuit of God. For them Schneider states that his purpose is to supply Biblically-informed thinking on "what being affluent means in our time" (p. 2). He pursues his study mindful of the problem that "Christian tradition going back to very ancient times has been mainly negative in its judgments on the morality of affluence" (p. 2). In part this conclusion reflects the fact that throughout most of Church history the vast majority of Christians have lived in a culture of poverty. For this very different era of great affluence, Schneider seeks to recover the "full biblical narrative" (p. 3) on wealth. Here lies one of the strengths of Schneider's work: an attempt to closely trace the theme of material affluence in the Scriptures on the basis of a carefully developed hermeneutic. Devoting three chapters to the Old Testament, Schneider highlights the ways in which God's calling to human dominion and material delight is developed in the redemptive history of Israel. In three chapters on the Gospels, and one on Acts and the epistles ("Narratives of Wealth in the Early Church"), he emphasizes the essential continuity of this message for the people of God to follow the Savior "in differing forms of material delight" (p. 162). For the most part *TGA* is successful in supporting its affirmation of the Biblical theme of material abundance, as I hope to show by locating its arguments in relation to contemporary discussion.

Consider first how Schneider's thesis differs markedly from several other examples of Christian thinking about modern affluence. The blessings of material creation are recognized in the recent literature of Biblical Theology and ethics, yet the emphasis is much more on spiritual hazards. Thus in *The Midas Trap* (1990), because of our time and place, we are given a vigorous word of warning by Biblical exegetes and theologians of the dangers of material preoccupation that attend widespread affluence. Kenneth Kantzer declares "Self-indulgent materialism has seized most of Western civilization in an iron grip" (p. 111) and calls us to take heed to the dangers of idolatry attached to wealth.

Another counterpoint to Schneider's thesis is provided by Sondra Wheeler's work (1995). While placing less stress on this historical moment, she nonetheless seeks to develop a relevant ethic of moral discernment regarding possessions from the New Testament. Wheeler limits her analysis to four passages (Mark 10:17–31; Luke 12:22–34; 2 Corinthians 8:1–15; James 5:1–6) and mines each for its moral guidance (pp. 39–106). She proceeds to place these ethical lessons in the context of the wider New Testament canon, then develops four themes regarding wealth: a stumbling block; a competing object of devotion; a symptom of economic injustice; and a resource for human needs (pp. 127–133). Wheeler concludes that the moral status of wealth in the New Testament is arrestingly complex; the texts lay great weight on both the perils to salvation and the responsibilities attendant to ownership.

The theme of duty is emphasized among New Testament scholars who draw upon particular social-scientific concepts to understand first-century Palestinian economic life. Perkins (1994), Hanson and Oakman (1998), Malina (2001) and others have identified the significance of reciprocity for the use of wealth. Reciprocity involved the social obligation to provide goods as gifts or trade goods at standardized prices. Reciprocity was "a sort of implicit, nonlegal contractual obligation, unenforceable by any authority apart from one's sense of honor and shame" (Malina 2001, p. 94). Douglass North recognizes that such instances of non-market allocation of products in antiquity were prevalent where property rights were not well-defined and enforced (1996, p.12). As others such as Polanyi, Arensberg, and Pearson (1957) and Finley (1992) have shown, both "friendship" and "kinship" relationships carried reciprocal obligations.[1] "Kinship" involved familial obligations, while "friendship" carried obligations to mutual aid, "as in Jesus' description of the friend who comes at midnight to demand bread so that he can show hospitality to a sudden visitor (Luke 11:5–8)" (Perkins 1994, p.48). When the Lord said "It is more honorable to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), it was an invocation of general reciprocity, to share one's possessions with those in need without expectation of immediate repayment, "a general economic principle in the inauguration of God's reign" (Hanson and Oakman 1998, p.128) which one might expect remains true for believers today.

Recently Craig Blomberg's study (1999) has presented a significant contribution in which the themes of duty, danger, and (to a lesser extent) delight are drawn out and evaluated in light of developments in the Biblical canon. Blomberg provides an extensive treatment of the Biblical (and intertestamental) literature on wealth with special attention to the "ways in which the principles of the original text can be practised in changed contexts" (p. 30). Blomberg is conscious that currently the relevant context is what he terms "the hegemony of capitalism" and inquires as to "the ways in which it is or is not compatible with biblical teaching" (p. 26) by way of making application to modern Christian discipleship.

Blomberg's analysis reflects a broad understanding of much of the current research on both the Scriptures and the economic features of ancient Israel. He engages in a careful inductive exegetical study of key passages to develop a Biblical theology of material possessions. Working methodically through the Pentateuch, wisdom and prophetic literature, Blomberg highlights the theme of "material blessings for covenant obedience or diligent industry," the only major theme which does not "reappear in one form or another in the New Testament" (p. 84). Material blessing also brings obligation, for in the Old Testament economy, "material blessing is never viewed as an end in itself. An abundance of resources was to be shared with the nations and particularly with the needy" (p. 83). In his analysis of Jesus' instruction in the Synoptic Gospels (both the parables and the remaining teachings), Blomberg affirms "there is room for the periodic celebration of God's good, material gifts, even at times to a lavish extent. But these celebrations will be the exception, not the norm" (p. 145). Furthermore, we should be aware that good "material possessions are simultaneously one of the primary means of turning human hearts away from God" (p. 244). Blomberg's analysis of the New Testament balances more evenly than Wheeler's the teachings on the goodness of material wealth with the spiritual dangers wealth may bring; nonetheless, his emphasis is on "the overarching paradigm of generous giving" in following Christ in "self-denying sacrifice" (p. 146).

Schneider's interaction with much of this recent scholarship offers Christian economists an invitation to apprehend and ponder anew the economic world of the Gospels. For example, he acknowledges that the forms of acquisition and enjoyment in ancient Palestine were governed by the common perception that wealth existed in a finite amount. Schneider suggests that "ancient Christian teaching on acquisition and enjoyment emerged in economic conditions very unlike" modern capitalism, since "the primary form of wealth was land—a fixed commodity" (p. 31). Yet we should understand this viewpoint was applied not merely to the land or its produce. Other scholars such as Perkins (1994), Hanson and Oakman (1999) and Malina (2001) contend that the perception of a world of "limited goods" was prevalent throughout ancient Palestine and applied across all commodities. Malina affirms that

> . . . the people presented in the pages of the New Testament would see their existence as determined and limited by the natural and social resources of their village, their preindustrial city, their immediate area and world, both vertically and horizontally. Such socially limited and determined existence could be verified by experience and lead to the perception that all goods available to a person are, in fact, limited (2001, p. 89).

In this context, Schneider contends that accumulation and consumption of goods above subsistence was often understood to be unjust. Schneider surmises that "when someone consumed a nonessential item (that is, enjoyed it) she or he was depriving someone else of the only means available for assistance (charity)" (p. 31). Enjoyment of goods beyond subsistence seemed to fly in the face of the provision of mutual aid necessary in the ancient Palestinian agrarian economy. For those with single land holdings of small size (archeological evidence suggests an average of six to nine acres), "many engaged in mixed farming in an effort to meet the family's basic dietary requirements—vines, olives and grain" (Freyne 1995b, p. 609). The vagaries associated with dependence upon agriculture are evident in the Gospels, which depict at times a surplus of produce and others a bare subsistence (Stambaugh and Balch 1986, p. 68). Reciprocity meant that when one peasant experienced a poor crop for a variety of reasons, there was an obligation upon others in the extended family or village who had engaged in trade to provide assistance.

This discussion of duty and the zero-sum economic worldview is brought to bear in *TGA*'s evaluation of Blomberg's contention that moderation sums up the Biblical teaching on the ethics of wealth and possessions. Here we come to the core of Schneider's differences with Blomberg, differences that are in many ways also key to understanding the current state of evangelical dialogue on wealth. Blomberg's emphasis on moderation precludes the godly believer from enjoying extreme wealth; indeed, he cites "Jesus' and Paul's concern to live simply, particularly while engaged in ministry, so as to afford no unnecessary cause for bringing the gospel into disrepute" (p. 246). Blomberg is careful to say that "these extremes cannot be quantified, and they will vary widely under different economic systems and depend on personal attitudes" (p. 245). He recognizes that the "lump sum of wealth" mentality was fairly pervasive in first-century Palestine (p. 90), yet, unlike Schneider, surprisingly appeals to its continuing relevance today. Blomberg is concerned that when income is not directed towards use for the Kingdom, but rather is merely accumulated and hoarded, Scripture warns that it will "likely be destroyed or disappear before being put to good use." He adds "by definition, such a surplus prevents others from having a better opportunity for a reasonable standard of living" (p. 245). Blomberg contends Luke's parables of the rich man and Lazarus, and of the pounds, teach us that hoarding is a sinful practice which "if left unchecked proves damning" (p. 245). We must examine *TGA* in more detail to consider why Schneider argues for a much different understanding of Jesus' teaching on wealth.

TGA devotes one chapter to a discussion of the "economic identity" of Jesus, locating his life in the first-century economic world. Schneider observes the common wisdom on this matter:

> . . . it passes without question that he was born and grew up in poverty, that his followers were mainly poor people, that together they adopted lives of poverty during their public mission, and that his primary audience was the poor multitudes. Coupled with this picture of his life is a radical interpretation of his teachings. We commonly hear it stressed that Jesus condemned the rich and that he blessed the poor in the very literal terms of economic class (p. 117).

In portraying the radical nature of Jesus' life and ministry quite differently, Schneider carefully delimits differing kinds of poverty in first-century Palestine. He distinguishes between the very poorest of that society, which included homeless beggars and street children, and the working poor, which itself was made up of at least two different groups—

day laborers and slaves, and landless peasants. In my judgment, Schneider rightly spurns the notion that Jesus and his closest disciples stemmed from the working poor and chose a life of poverty during His ministry. In Galilee, Jesus carried out his work as a *tekton* (carpenter/builder in Mark 6:3) prior to his public ministry, apparently as part of a Palestinian middle class. Jesus, the twelve disciples, and even much of his larger circle of followers were for the most part participants in Palestinian small businesses, trades and small-scale agriculture.[2]

TGA refutes the assertion that Jesus condemned the rich as a class, yet also rightly argues that much of their wealth was often tied to the practice of redistribution. Both Roman and Jewish authorities engaged in "the politically or religiously induced extraction of a percentage of local production, the storehousing of that product, and its eventual redistribution for some political end or another"; in Palestine redistributive institutions included Roman taxation as well as the tithe and payment at the Temple (Oakman 1996, p. 129). Schneider recognizes that in the Palestinian zero-sum world, redistribution could often be associated with evil, for " . . . the acquisition of wealth typically (almost necessarily) happened by means of war, taxation, or (presuming a difference) outright theft. The old habits of acquisition were thus mostly immoral, to say the least" (p. 31).

Schneider rightly spurns the notion that Jesus and his closest disciples stemmed from the working poor and chose a life of poverty during His ministry.

Redistributive practices generated hostility towards the wealthy; the people and practices that made for widening economic inequalities were out in the open. King Herod Antipas and his royal family were among the wealthiest individuals, and the Roman tax collectors also often enjoyed large incomes, as well as social opprobrium. Publicans were key agents in a rent-seeking system in which they purchased from the Roman authorities the right to collect taxes from the people of Israel. In their employ were the chief tax collectors (such as Zacchaeus) and smaller tax collectors (possibly including Matthew) who established toll booths often as a means to gouge the people. Schneider rightly states: "We will comprehend the New Testament more fully if we understand that financial advantage in Israel often implied direct involvement with political evil and injustice" (p. 120).

Research on some of these abusive redistributive practices has influenced various strands of the modern "third" quest for the identity of the historical Jesus (Powell 1998). One such strand depicts Jesus' ministry "as fomenting a social revolution on behalf of peasants" (Powell 1998, p. 52). So both Horsley and Hanson (1985) and Crossan (1991) suggest his ministry is part of the peasant rebellion against Roman oppression, though they do not describe Jesus as an advocate of armed resistance to the Roman authorities. Schneider is explicit in rejecting this liberation perspective on Jesus' ministry, while recognizing the evidence of significant income inequality in ancient Palestine (its exact magnitude being impossible to determine).

One significant facet of economic life in Jesus' day that Schneider mentions briefly is the growth of reliance on market exchange. He observes a "high degree of specialization" in Roman Palestine and notes "the abundance of crafts and special industries indicates a lively circulation of goods" (p. 122). Current research on the ancient Palestinian economy further indicates that markets functioned actively as a means of resource allocation in the ancient Mediterranean world. This is suggested by studies of the archeological evidence of growing intra- and inter-regional trade as well as increasing specialization and monetization once the Principate ended (Freyne 1995a; 1995b; 1998). Evidently the reign of the Caesars extended the rule of law in Roman territory and provided a significant enforcement mechanism for the terms of exchange. Examining the nature and extent of price behavior, economic historian Peter Temin characterizes the early Roman Empire as having "primarily a market economy" (2001, p. 169). There is strong reason to believe that the Roman provinces in the eastern Mediterranean region, including Palestine, were increasingly reliant on market-based allocation in the first century.[3]

Some idea of the extent to which there was dependence on market exchange in first-century Palestine is suggested by research on economic activity under Roman rule. Safrai (1994) highlights the many transactions in the Palestinian village markets in animals, land, slaves, and agricultural produce. These were transactions "between households, and supplementary to their regular occupations or pastimes" (p. 231). Applebaum (1976) points to the dispersion of various crafts in both Jerusalem and small villages. Within Palestine, there is also evidence of growing market activity in Galilee. Schneider notes that recent scholarship has rejected the depiction of Galilee as an "economic backwater" (p. 126). Excavation efforts at Sepphoris (near Nazareth) have suggested the presence of significant construction activity in the area as this key city was rebuilt in the early first century. In addition, the economic import of Galilee itself has become increasingly appreciated. Freyne notes Galilee's location "as the hinterland of the great Phoenician coastal trading centers of Tyre and Sidon, as well as Ptolemais/Acco" and elaborates on the significance for Galilee as a first-century center for trade:

> This gave it immediate access to the sea-lanes that were so important for availing of the more extended opportunities for trading which the hellenistic age

> provided. Equally, caravans of traders and merchants going to the east had to pass through or around Galilee. It seems legitimate to infer that the material evidence from a later period in terms of coins, ceramics and glass-ware, which have been found in the Upper Galilean sites, are indicative of older patterns of contacts through trade . . . (1998, p.156).

Even before the time in which Jesus was working as a *tekton* in Galilee, the building of the port at Caesarea and development of roads in Palestine gave evidence of "a rapidly developing economy already under Herod the Great" (Freyne 1995a, p. 28). Perkins points to the archaeological evidence of ". . . the volume of shipwrecks, the expansion of population, [and] the extensive building projects" which suggest "a flourishing economy" (1994, p. 51). I examine these developments, argue that reciprocity was being more and more supplanted by market exchange in first-century Palestine, and look at the possible influence of these developments on Jesus' teaching in a recent paper (Noell 2002).

Consideration of the economic world of first-century Roman Palestine is very helpful for understanding Jesus' radical demands concerning riches, to which *TGA* devotes two chapters. In his chapter on "The Radical Jesus as the Lord of Delight," Schneider engages those who have read the evident hostility towards wealth in the Synoptic Gospels as leading to a call for (permanent) dispossession and disinvestment (Schmidt 1987; Gordon 1989). Schneider adroitly exegetes a number of the "wealth-negative accounts" and suggests that despite apparent tensions there is a unified theme of material delight which is to guide the disciples of Christ.[4]

As an example, consider how Luke's theme of the spiritual hazards associated with possessions culminates in Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler (18:18–25). Jesus tells him that he must sell all his possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor in order to inherit eternal life. Did Jesus' injunction mean a literal rejection of having possessions, for acting otherwise would lead to spiritual death? Such an interpretation would characterize the material world as evil. It also flies in the face of the actions of Jesus, which included eating with tax collectors and enjoying the bounty of support from his followers. Schneider further argues that Jesus' disciples in fact did not live at a subsistence level, for the Gospel writers record examples of disciples with material means who had not abandoned all their possessions: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, who had a house in Bethany; Peter's mother-in-law, who owned a large house with servants; and other women whom Jesus depended on for financial support. Nonetheless, we do find here a broader warning about the need for dispossession by those who have gained wealth through some form of exploitative redistribution. To the disciples, Jesus does not issue a call to reject material goods in following him, but rather "Jesus directs them not to be rich in a manner that affirms the corrupt and corrupting system and the ways of the people who rule and profit most from it" (Schneider, p. 153).

This understanding of Jesus' instruction is supported by the deliberative placement in Luke's narrative almost immediately afterwards (19:1–10) of the encounter with Zacchaeus, which provides a telling counter-example to any suggestion of the requirement of dispossession for all Jesus' followers. No ordinary tax collector, Zacchaeus was in fact "the archbishop of tax collectors," and a "contractor who gave jobs to men such as Matthew" (Marx 1979, p. 151). As a customs official, who collected a tariff that "had to be paid not merely at the ports but also at the boundaries of individual cities and tetrarchies" (Applebaum 1976, p. 686), he met Jesus in Jericho, "a frontier post between the Roman province of Judea and Peraea" (Stambaugh and Balch 1986, p. 78). Zacchaeus apparently gouged a number of the poor who passed by his post; Blomberg suggests that he likely commandeered "extortionary profits" (1999, p. 140). Schneider observed in his earlier study (1994) that one might expect Jesus to extend the demand for dispossession to Zacchaeus and make him provide the proceeds to the poor. Instead Jesus is willing to enter and dine in this man's home without a word of condemnation of his occupation or demand that he sell all his possessions (1994, p. 135). Furthermore, Jesus receives the promise of Zacchaeus to give half of his possessions to the poor and to apply the Old Testament codes of justice to himself by returning fraudulent income fourfold, in order ". . . to cover all the possible instances of theft that might have happened under his watch as a supervisor of the tax collection system" (Schneider 2002, p. 165).

These two encounters are part of Luke's narrative of Jesus' teaching en route on his public journey to Jerusalem (9:51–19:27). After arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus instructs the apostles, "But now if you have a purse, take it; if you have a haversack, do the same; if you have no sword, sell your cloak and buy one" (Luke 22:36). No longer is the requirement of dispossession affirmed. Gordon observes that

> It is difficult to gauge the import of this change of instructions, but it could mean that in the era to come, when Jesus is not with them as he has been, the apostles must take a radically different attitude toward possessions than the one which was appropriate for their sojourn with him (1989, p. 67).

Such an approach was in fact adopted by the "inner circle of disciples." They did not entirely abandon their possessions but only "left them for a while." In the end, "they did not divest themselves of property. For instance, after Jesus' death and resurrection, Peter seems to have brought his boat and nets out of storage and gone back to fishing (John 21)" (Schneider, p. 162).

Jesus' teaching on wealth is extended further in the parables, which *TGA* selectively examines in the chapter entitled "Parables of Affluence." Drawing on occasion from the insights of Johnson (1977) and Pilgrim (1981), Schneider exposits four Lucan parables on the rich and their riches, two of which are considered briefly here: the rich fool (12:13–31), and the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31). These parables emphasize the themes of wealth's dangers and duties, respectively, for "The one is the more deeply personal spiritual challenge that comes from being affluent. The other is the moral consequence in society of our not rising successfully to meet it" (p.172). Here Schneider nicely develops the teaching of the two parables as complements. In the first case, the rich fool's sin is not desiring financial security; rather, it is coveting material well-being as the end of his existence. In the second case, the rich man failed to realize that wealth brought a moral obligation towards his poor neighbor—Lazarus, whom he knows by name (p. 178), thereby tying into a secondary theme of *TGA*, namely that moral obligations are tied to moral proximity.

TGA also demonstrates from Jesus' parables that delight can be expressed in the form of risk-taking and the pursuit of economic gain. An example is found in Luke 19:12–27 (the parable of the pounds). Here the two servants who invested their funds and doubled them are lauded by the nobleman and promised the opportunity to rule over some cities. Schneider contends, "It is a parable that honors the *enlargement* of people who would become stronger, and would make their master stronger, through the creation of wealth" (p. 189). He adds, "the parable (in its context) is a strong warning against those who would erode the strong, aggressive, competitive spirit of behavior (particularly economic behavior) among Christians who believe that their king has given them pounds to trade until he comes" (p. 190). In a parallel teaching in Matthew 23:14–30, the parable of the talents, Jesus speaks of the servants who doubled their original funding as lauded by the master and promised even more funds. Risk-taking and economic gain are endorsed by the master. Perhaps reflecting the growing reliance on market activity in his day, Jesus' teaching challenges the perspective that any increase of possessions through trade is inherently exploitative. It is, of course, problematic to make too much of the affirmation of economic gain in these parables in light of the rest of Luke's emphasis on (at times) the need for dispossession.[5]

It is this facet of the thesis of *TGA* that I would like to see further developed. The complexity of Jesus' teaching on wealth needs more exploration, in at least two directions. On the one hand, consideration ought to be given to Jesus' warning about the desire to be affluent in the parable of the seeds; it is "the cares of the world, and the delight in riches, and the desire for other things" which choke the growth of the good seed (Mark 4:19 ff.), as France observes (1979, p. 8). Jesus affirms that one may engage in ungodly delight in wealth and live in service of mammon. On the other hand, further attention could be paid to the various *pericopae* in the Synoptic Gospels that are full of references to the economic situation in Jewish Palestine (Shillington 1997, p. 11). While Jesus often portrays the rich "as empty, desperate, evil, and lost to God" (Schneider, p.167), it is nonetheless true, as Hengel observes, that "it is striking that in his parables he often depicts the social milieu of Galilee with its great landowners, landlords, administrators and slaves, without engaging in any specifically social polemic . . ." (1974, p. 28). Indeed, there are several examples of parables in which Jesus speaks of the pursuit of economic gain as an expected phenomenon and employs market-style reasoning. Two parables on the nature of the kingdom of heaven compare it to the search for enrichment. Each of them "accept[s] the goal of large returns. A man covers up a treasure he has found in a field, then sells all he has and buys the field . . . (Matthew 13:44). Similarly, a trader in search of fine pearls finds a precious one and puts all his assets into buying it (Matthew 13:45)" (Grant 1990, p.14). Schneider's argument would be further served by developing the concept of delight in value added found in these *pericopae*.

Schneider's handling of difficult texts is, in the main, convincing and supportive of his call to the modern Christian to take delight in material abundance without neglecting the spiritual hazards and moral duties associated with wealth.

This suggestion regarding delight in wealth creation might be extended to *TGA*'s discussion of the economic culture of capitalism. Schneider finds no injustice in the "modern habits" of acquiring and enjoying wealth, unlike the world of Jesus, in which redistribution often produced immoral inequality of incomes (p. 34). Moreover, Schneider seeks to "prove that modern habits of acquisition . . . seem unexpectedly to meet requisite tests for moral virtues. So to the extent that this is true, to the degree that these habits define the culture of modern capitalism, there is no justice inherent in capitalism. On the contrary, there is unexpected virtue in it" (p. 23). However, Schneider does not differentiate among the various modern "cultures of capitalism", i.e. the peculiar institutional features of capitalism that differ in practice between North America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South America, and other regions. Clearly, in each of these regions the relative dependence upon private and governmental initiative and direction for shaping the habits of acquisition differs, in some instances quite dramatically. Economists will want to see how one might use Schneider's analysis for evaluating the manner(s) in which the virtues of risk-taking and wealth creation are shaped in differing forms of capitalism, e.g. spurring technological change, shaping the structure of markets, and most significantly for questions of affluence, redistributing income.

My sense is that Christian economists will benefit greatly by reflecting on *TGA*. Read alongside of the current developments in research on the Gospels, Schneider's work is of great benefit in understanding more of the features of the largely agrarian first-century Palestinian economy and its governance by the Roman Empire. Yet more importantly, Schneider highlights the facet of Jesus' identity that is quite often neglected, Jesus as the "celebrative King," a Christ of delight as well as compassion. Though the comprehensiveness of *TGA* could be slightly improved, Schneider's handling of difficult texts is, in the main, convincing and supportive of his call to the modern Christian to take delight in material abundance without neglecting the spiritual hazards and moral duties associated with wealth. Some of his readers may judge that there is not enough weight put upon the Biblical teaching on self-sacrifice, but any such criticism is more than countered by Schneider's development of "a crucial distinction that is too seldom made between the carnal lust of hedonism and the dignity of royal delight which God blesses" (p. 60). For modern affluent Christians, this is indeed a time for such a distinction to be pondered and applied.

Endnotes

1 North affirms that personal "kin" relations are characterized by intimate knowledge which, in effect, keeps transactions costs relatively low, so that "reciprocity societies can be considered as a least-cost trading solution where no system of enforcing the terms of exchange between trading units exists" (1996, p. 165).

2 Here Schneider follows the work of Hengel (1974), Pilgrim (1981), and Blomberg (1999) in portraying Jesus not as a poor day laborer but instead as part of the lower middle class.

3 Temin makes note of the varied evidence of market-established prices in the Roman Empire: "Tenants paid rent on their apartments in Rome, employers paid wages to free workers and rent for slaves, travelers paid for food and drink for themselves and their animals" (2001, p. 173). He further demonstrates that price movements in fact affected the allocation of resources in grain and other foodstuffs. For trade in the city of Rome itself, the shipping of goods across the Mediterranean, and exchange between Roman provinces in Egypt and northern Africa with other parts of the Empire, "there were enough market transactions to constitute a market economy . . . [so that] markets in the early Roman Empire typically were equilibrated by means of prices" (p. 170).

4 Schneider makes a key assumption about the coherency of the Gospel writers on wealth: "Luke, who stresses the topic more than do the other Gospel writers, does not give us a spiritual and moral perspective that Matthew, Mark, or John would flatly contradict" (p. 8). This is in contrast with the ways in which Luke's approach is often understood by modern New Testament scholarship.

5 Indeed, Schneider qualifies his argument while affirming the place of the pursuit of economic returns:

> Quite obviously, Jesus did not pronounce an unqualified blessing upon economic gain. His life and teachings all demonstrate the conditions for godliness that must exist before our gains become true enlargement of his kingdom, before they become fruitfulness. However, if those conditions have been recreated, then the creative, productive economic life becomes something that is absolutely true to our humanity and to the identity of God (pp. 190–191).

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In Defense of Delight

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I wish to thank the editors of *Faith & Economics* for devoting much of this issue to a symposium on my book, *The Good of Affluence*. It is gratifying to know that they think it is worth this kind of attention. Let me also thank the contributors to this symposium—for both their affirmations and thoughtful suggestions and criticisms. I divide my reply to their comments into two main parts—the economic and the theological.

The professional economists (Robin Klay, Ken Elzinga and Edd Noell) on the whole approve my handling of economic matters. But a few objections do come up in the others' essays, and they warrant brief replies.

First, Biblical scholar Craig Blomberg expresses incredulity at my reference to there being twenty-five nations worldwide that have "successfully deployed capitalism." Since the truth of this figure has no bearing on my argument (and since it seems uncontroversial in the literature), I simply defer to my source, which is Hernando de Soto's pathbreaking work, *The Mystery of Capital*.[1] Blomberg thinks it a failing that (in my book) "nothing is said about all the post-Soviet republics where capitalism to date has largely failed." (It has failed, he explains, since no Christian morality exists "to temper" the widespread "human greed" in these places.) Now I make no claim that capitalism is successful there. It obviously is not—it fails there and elsewhere—hence the subject of de Soto's book. But as for the explanation of why capitalism works in the West and almost nowhere else (not the mere absence of Christian morality), I strongly recommend the recently published conference volume of *Markets & Morality* for a discussion and debate among leading theorists.[2]