

in what he calls the “public discourse,” his inclination to regard “public” as being synonymous with “governmental” is revealed by his characterization, at a later point in the book, of British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s “third way” as “a delusion” (p. 210). In criticizing the attempt to form partnerships between the public and private sectors in order to achieve certain social objectives, Hutton states forthrightly that in areas such as health care and education, “the advocacy and defense of the public realm is important in itself” (p. 210).¹ How might we, as Christian economists, respond to this conclusion as an expression of our commitment to public justice and faithful stewardship?

Chapters 3–5 reflect the rather familiar (and not terribly original) argument from the conventional left that American society is saturated with inequality and greed, although Hutton does take American “liberals” to task in the third chapter for what he regards as passive resignation in the face of the “conservative” onslaught. In the judgment of this reviewer, chapters 6–9 are more interesting, even if one does not accept Hutton’s overall thesis. Chapter 6 is entitled “The Globalization of Conservatism,” and its thrust is reminiscent of Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz’s argument that some proponents of globalization have associated this phenomenon with “accepting triumphant capitalism, American style.”² Chapter 7 explores the “special” relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States, with Hutton maintaining that Britain should align its economic policies and institutions more closely with its colleagues in the European Union than with the United States. Chapter 8, entitled “Europe Works,” presents a challenging case, based largely on case studies of successful European enterprises, for what Ronald Dore has characterized as “stakeholder,” as opposed to “shareholder,” capitalism.³ Chapter 9 extends some of the arguments presented in the two previous chapters while drawing distinctions between the various forms of European capitalism, especially the difference between what Hutton calls the “Rhineland capitalism” of Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands, and the social-democratic framework shared by the Scandinavian nations.

At the end of the book, Hutton asserts that there are three crucial domestic battles which must be “won” in order for the United States to “rejoin the world.” U.S. citizens must: (1) attack the Wall Street view of wealth creation as short-term financial engineering; (2) insist that the United States offer a robust social contract, one in which the bottom 50 percent of Americans are offered a fair chance and protected against life’s unavoidable hazards; (3) struggle to relegitimize the public realm and see to it that America, above all else, lives up to its own criteria of democracy.

The third “battle” identified by Hutton raises some compelling issues. What does it mean to “relegitimize” the public realm? Is it possible to affirm this goal *without* necessarily signing on to Hutton’s definition of “the public realm” or his specific views on economic policy? What are the implications of this discussion for the actual or potential responsibilities of public institutions which are multinational in nature?

One final thought: from an educational standpoint, this

volume proved to be quite effective in encouraging students to consider arguments that they may not have previously encountered. Hutton’s prose is rather polemical at times, especially in the book’s early chapters, but on the whole, I concluded that it was a valuable addition to the instructional design of my course.

Endnotes

- 1 An interesting discussion of the issues associated with public-private partnerships in the delivery of social services is provided by Minow (2002).
- 2 Stiglitz (2003), p. 5.
- 3 Dore (2000), p. 10.

References

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Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions

Steve Rundle and Tom Steffen. 2003. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. ISBN: 0-8308-3227-0. \$16.00 (paper).

Reviewed by Scott Brunger, Maryville College (TN).

Having been a second-generation missionary, I jumped at the opportunity of reviewing *Great Commission Companies* and was not disappointed, though I have further questions about them. I recognize that when my father helped launch the Hong Kong Products Fair in the early 1950s, it encouraged entrepreneurship that eventually created jobs for the million Chinese refugees who poured into the city-state raising its population to three million. Their entrepreneurship helped the churches in Hong Kong whose real estate by 1997 was worth more than all the foreign contributions made throughout their history. God can certainly work through business as well as other ways.

The book’s preface suggests that globalization is part of God’s plan: “Globalization is helping undo the modern dichotomy between spiritual and worldly professions, in part by bringing business of all sizes into countries that are in desperate spiritual and economic need” (p. 6). To their credit the authors recognize the world’s desperate poverty by citing World Bank statistics on the proportion of the global population living on less than one dollar a day and the challenge of persistent religious persecution under globalization (pp. 68–70). They are aware of the problems of globalization, though not critical of the role of secular

businesses in exploiting workers or tolerating human rights problems.

The authors' means for overcoming this dichotomy are Great Commission Companies (GCCs), which are described in the first six chapters of the book. GCCs are defined as companies that are socially responsible, income-producing, bringing glory to God in their relationships with customers and suppliers, promoting local churches, and focusing on the least evangelized and least developed parts of the world (pp. 41–42). Because GCCs are desirable firms in any society, they can be tolerated where other forms of Christian mission would be summarily rejected.

GCCs must be managed by “kingdom professionals, who are called and gifted for service in the marketplace” (p. 37). The authors contrast kingdom professionals with missionaries who are dedicated to evangelistic proclamation rather than the success of the firm. St. Paul's tentmaking ministry is the authors' model of an evangelistic businessman.

In comparison to secular firms, GCCs have more stakeholders. Their business plan is combined with a Great Commission Plan. Advisors on both plans sit on their Board of Directors. To economists skilled in the mathematics of constrained optimization, adding more constraints would not raise the profit-making potential of the GCCs. We would suspect that some of the success of these firms is assured by skilled business managers working for compensation far below what the market would offer them. However, Christian economists should recognize that these kingdom professionals attain satisfaction from the challenges of serving more stakeholders in a more challenging environment than their secular counterparts, even when the kingdom professionals are receiving lower compensation. As long as Christians recognize that material compensation is not an ultimate goal, we are outside the neoclassical paradigm.

Having worked for five years for an African church, I do not make the strong distinction that the authors stress between kingdom professionals and ordinary missionaries. For example, over a century ago the Basel Mission was successful in introducing to local chiefs commercial cocoa production as an alternative source of revenue that was incompatible with the slave trade. Missionary entrepreneurs, despite their fixed salaries, demonstrated their evangelistic message amid civil wars. Like the example of my father mentioned at the beginning, missionaries can act like kingdom professionals.

At the same time I can recall missionaries who considered themselves in business, who were wasting capital. My wife and I would cringe whenever a Bible-peddling couple showed up in their van unannounced at dinnertime to be fed and housed. They bragged that they were living off their earnings selling scripture, but their donated van was driven across the Sahara Desert to be sold eventually for plane fare back to Europe, their lodging was at our expense, and their peripatetic lifestyle prevented them from having meaningful relationships with African churches. However brave, they were not entrepreneurs creating value, nor were they successful missionaries. The authors' distinction between kingdom professionals and missionaries certainly applies to

their case.

The second part of the book gives five case studies of GCCs that were ultimately successful. The first four illustrate a matrix of ministry models (p. 44) which classifies a GCC on the basis of whether the firm is independent or allied to mission agencies and whether it does pioneering ministry or facilitates it. Chapter 7 is devoted to a handicraft company that is independently supplying Christian bookstores in the United States and does pioneering mission work in a Muslim society. After some false starts, including having a Christian worker arrested for stopping work to lead prayer, it is earning foreign exchange and providing jobs to the Christian minority population that benefits from employment. Chapter 8 covers Homestead Partners International, which is independent and facilitates missions. It renovates housing in the United States to give 51 percent of its profits to mission work. Chapter 9 describes Pura Vida Coffee in Seattle, which allies with mission work in Costa Rica to facilitate income earning there. It markets gourmet fair trade coffees in the United States. Chapter 10 discusses an engineering firm located in China that allies with mission organizations to do pioneering work. Its success in starting factories in remote locations leads the government to tolerate its mission work. The final example of an international telephone service company does not fit the theoretical matrix since it both employs missionaries and finances missions. This case provides a refreshing acknowledgement that reality seldom fits comfortably into our theories.

Great Commission Companies is designed for college students or church mission study groups. Good questions given at the end of every chapter encourage further thinking.

My questions may require a sequel to this path-breaking book: (1) Where are the examples of Christian women's firms? Microfinance programs and mission handicraft efforts have created many of them. What special ministries do they provide? What are their unique problems? (2) What happens to GCCs in social or political crises? After all, the likelihood of crises deters businesses from swarming into poor countries. Do the GCCs have contingency plans like well-run multinational corporations or does their faith in God's providence leave them vulnerable? Do their mission backers bail them out while local competitors fail? (3) What is their policy about cooperating with the U.S. government and its espionage agencies? Many multinational corporations allow themselves to be used by their government. They reap the distrust of the local population along with frustration that they fail to favorably influence foreign policy. That distrust and frustration would be detrimental to the evangelization effort. To assume that GCCs integrate spiritual and business motivations means that political issues cannot be avoided.

Despite my questions, I find that *Great Commission Companies* sketches a hope-filled aspect of globalization for regions of the world that need a new model of private business and of evangelization. It also challenges Christian college students and congregations to think about their business careers as ministry. ■