**Bruno Dyck, *Management and the Gospel: Luke’s Radical Message for the First and Twenty-First Centuries.*** New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 302 pages.

Let me confess my initial suspicions about Dyck’s *Management and the Gospel*. Before I opened the book, I was predisposed against it. I have read too many works on the gospel *and* business/economics/management that begin by assuming the normativity of the latter and fit the former within it. The very title of Dyck’s work prepared me for one more version of that all too common genre. As I began to read his work my initial suspicions were confirmed. Dyck does not begin with Scripture, but with Max Weber, someone whose managerial rationality I find deeply suspect thanks to criticisms of Alasdair MacIntyre, John Milbank, and others. Dyck writes, “At its core then, this book responds to the implicit and explicit calls of Weber and many others to develop an understanding of management based on a rigorous analysis of the biblical narrative” (2). The only warrant for this claim was Weber’s reference to the “iron cage” capitalism produced, which Weber acknowledged did not fit well the “Judeo-Christian” ethic that gave rise to it. From that recognition Dyck extrapolates that a rigorous biblical exegesis might provide a better understanding of “management” and advance, rather than disrupt, Weber’s managerial rationality. Having read the title and introduction, I was convinced Dyck’s project was headed for serious difficulties. I was wrong.

Although I remain unconvinced about his claims to take up where Weber left off, Dyck’s essay on Luke’s Gospel as it bears on management is a remarkably interesting and insightful study. It begins with a convincing introduction to the Gospel of Luke that ably defends his central thesis: “Management” is “a dominant theme in the Gospel” and “its message is consistently countercultural” (3). He does not fit Luke to management theory, but develops the radical character of Luke’s “four-phase process mode to help readers implement changes” (3). However, Dyck is not a biblicist. He draws on a broad tradition of history and economic philosophy to illumine what is going on in the Gospels. Drawing upon Aristotle’s *chrematistics*, he distinguishes between a natural and unnatural approach to finance. The natural approach focuses on a “sustenance economics,” while the unnatural focuses on “acquisitive economics.” He then shows how Luke’s emphasis on *oikonomia* seeks to develop a pattern of management based on “benefaction,” which supports a “sustenance economics,” rather than one founded upon “patron-client” relations, which supports “acquisitive economics.” This simple, but insightful, hermeneutic bears excellent exegetical fruit.

Let me provide an example. The parable of the shrewd manager in Luke 16:1–15 has caused significant confusion for biblical interpreters. How can Jesus encourage what appears to be a manager who takes the finances entrusted to him by a rich man and first squanders and then “scatters” them? The rich man requires him to give an account of his “management” for his squandering, and the manager’s response is to reduce the indebtedness of the rich man’s debtors. The odd result is that the rich man commends the manager. Why? Here is where Dyck’s distinction between an acquisitive and sustenance economics and their correspondence to patron-client versus benefaction relations is illuminating. He writes, “A first-century interpretation suggests that Jesus was literally encouraging his listeners to follow the example of the shrewd manager and to redistribute worldly wealth in a sustenance economic beneficent way, that is, in a way that seems ‘unjust’ (*adikos*) based on patron-client acquisitive assumptions” (43). The crucial term is “scattering.” The manager “scattered” the rich man’s unjust acquisition of wealth based on a patron-client relation and turned it into a more just distribution based on benefaction. The result is not only a better distribution of wealth, but better communal relationships among the rich man, his debtors, and his manager. This is why the manager is “faithful.”

Dyck finds in Luke a four-phase process that forms the structure of his work. First is “problem recognition” followed by “action response,” which then produces a “changed way of seeing” that culminates in “institutional change” (9). This four-phase process constitutes four of Dyck’s six major divisions. After the introduction, he examines how Luke recognizes the problem of management in three chapters. He sets out the hermeneutical lens noted above and then shows its fruit not only in the parable of the shrewd manager, but also in the parable of the ten pounds (Luke 19: 12–27). Rather than reading the parable as a desire for the “nobleman” to increase his wealth through acquisition, Dyck again shows how his hermeneutics provides a reading of the parable much more consistent with the whole of Luke’s Gospel.

The second step in his argument examines “action response.” This section provides ample insight into the constructive “framework” for understanding management throughout Luke. The third section, “New Way of Seeing: Management, the Kingdom of God, Salvation and the Holy Spirit,” demonstrates how that framework constructs a more “holistic” approach to management. Dyck writes, “Management is not merely about producing and distributing goods and services—it is also about the meaning of life and, in Luke’s case, the meaning of Jesus’ life” (84). Jesus is the Word who manages God’s economy. The fourth step, “Institutional Change,” is a “how to” guide for implementing the new vision of managerial practice. It offers something of a Christian sociological plan for institutional change. Like much management theory, it comes with graphs and cycles and steps. Some of this will be more familiar to management theorists than theologians or Scripture scholars, but what Dyck is doing is obvious and convincing. He is narrating the practice of management through Luke’s Gospel. The fifth and final section sets forth “Implications for Twenty-First-Century Management Theory and Practice.” The section is important because it provides the warrant for the subtitle to Dyck’s book, “Luke’s radical message for the first and twenty-first centuries.” His point again is obvious. The historical exegesis he provides is not only for the first century. God’s economy has not altered such that we must fit it to our situation—we fit our situation to the divine oikonomia.

Dyck’s book is a must-read for every business and management school in Anabaptist, Protestant, or Catholic-related institutions. It should also be read by Scripture scholars. He provides solid historical evidence for his claims and does not offer superficial remedies. Having begun the book with suspicions, I left it convinced that he has made an important contribution. Management is about life, and not just any life—the life of Jesus himself.

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