

The editors, authors, and publisher are to be commended for their innovative contribution to the field of American studies. Users, however, must understand the purpose underlying this encyclopedia's design. Those students who seek to use it as they would other dictionaries and encyclopedias of religion will be sadly disappointed, but those who seek understanding of the place of their topics in a variety of contexts will be greatly aided in their explorations. Perhaps the best use of the *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience* will be in conjunction with more traditional reference works, rather than in place of them. The *Encyclopedia* provides the insight that makes the traditional approach to the "nuts and bolts" meaningful. As such, it will soon become an indispensable reference work for a variety of studies in both the field of American religion and the broader arena of American culture.

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Maynard-Reid, Pedrito U. *Poverty and Wealth in James*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987. 136 pp. Paperback, \$8.95.

Pedrito Maynard-Reid offers a stimulating and important contribution to the growing number of studies that combine traditional exegetical method with insights from the social sciences in the study of moral issues in the NT. Through a detailed study of four passages (Jas 1:9-11; 2:1-13; 4:13-17; 5:1-6) the author explores James' teaching and seeks to discover what James means when he speaks of rich and poor.

The methodology employed is different from some works that utilize sociological exegesis. Maynard-Reid does not begin with general sociological models which are then used to analyze the text. Rather, he starts with the text itself and attempts a socio-historical description that includes the historical and linguistic methodology of traditional exegesis. This is a strength of the work. Too often exegetes who utilize sociological methods of interpretation are tempted to bend the text to fit models and theories that are formed from data that may or may not be truly applicable. This work not only avoids that temptation, but it also offers valuable social analysis of the actual data supplied by the text.

There are, however, elements in Maynard-Reid's methodology which are not clear. For example, he criticizes those who use sociological models for not leaving room in their methodology for the divine and non-rational element in the NT writings, but nowhere does he make it clear how this element makes a distinctly methodological difference in his own work. And with regard to exegetical method, this work appears to be much stronger on analysis than synthesis. The reader looks in vain, for instance, for clear summaries of the four major passages that back away from the

social, historical, and linguistic details and show the meaning of the passage as a whole.

The basic thesis of the book is that the terms "poor" and "rich" in James do not refer primarily to spiritual categories but describe genuine socio-economic conditions. James is seen to stand in line with the OT prophetic pronouncements of doom and with the Jewish apocalypticists who proclaimed judgment when he takes the financiers (chap. 2), rich merchants (chap. 4), and wealthy agriculturists (chap. 5) to task for their partiality, oppression, and exploitation. He is not calling them to repentance, but announcing coming judgment and their impending doom.

Maynard-Reid believes that this pronouncement comes from James, the brother of Jesus, and is addressed to Palestine at a very early time (before A.D. 50) when there was not yet a clear demarcation between Jews and Christians. This view of the background of James is both unprovable and highly questionable. It is hard, for example, to square James' address to the "diaspora" with a Palestinian destination in spite of what Maynard-Reid says on page 9, where even he must admit that the evidence he draws from Foakes Jackson and Lake for the Palestinian Jews being a "dispersion" does not specifically apply. In addition, there are a number of specific exegetical points that many would consider questionable.

None of this, however, detracts from Maynard-Reid's basic thesis, which is certainly correct—James does treat socio-economic realities. Maynard-Reid adequately supports his thesis through both analysis of the text and extensive use of historical background material. When he is through there can be no doubt that the terms "rich" and "poor" are terms with socio-economic significance in James. This convincing presentation of the thesis is the book's greatest strength. Its foremost weakness, on the other hand, is its failure to speak in a more specific way to the question of the relevance of James for issues of poverty and wealth in contemporary society.

Maynard-Reid does tell us that James attacks the rich to offer practical comfort to the poor and oppressed and that this attack also harbors a strong social justice stance. He also says that James shows that the poor are to be patient and not attempt to overthrow the rich by violent means to obtain justice. He even tells us that James reveals that our social involvement in the present is as important as our personal religious practices, since personal religion is meaningless without social commitment. But no suggestions are offered to inform readers about the shape of legitimate social involvement and responsibility in the modern world.

Perhaps Maynard-Reid feels that this would go beyond the scope of his study or the bounds of proper exegesis. Yet his analysis cries out for some word about what all of this means specifically for modern Christians. This final lacuna of the work does serve as a stimulus to our own moral

thought, but it would be helpful to know where Maynard-Reid would want that thought to take us. Thus a review of the present work must end with a hope that we will see another book that builds on the present to address this extremely important issue in contemporary society and Christian moral thought.

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Nash, Ronald H., *Poverty and Wealth: The Christian Debate Over Capitalism*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986. 216 pp. Paperback, \$8.95.

According to Ronald H. Nash, Christians need to care about the poor; but, he asserts, they need to do it from a position of knowledge, not one of ignorance. Good intentions are not enough. Those intentions need to be rooted in sound economic theory if they are to avoid disastrous results. Nash has not the slightest doubt that social policies such as the War on Poverty have harmed the poor. He is deeply concerned about what he considers to be the predictable results of all forms of socialism. In particular, his concern focuses on the fact that even conservative evangelical thinkers seem to be allured by various economic theories that are tinctured with socialistic concepts. "Evangelical publishers like Eerdmans and InterVarsity," for example, "produce a steady stream of books recommending socialism as the only economic system that is consistent with the Bible" (p. 11). *Poverty and Wealth* aims its guns at all such "error."

The purpose of this book, notes Nash, is not to produce a Christian system of economics, because "there is no such thing as revealed economics" (p. 12). Rather, it emphasizes the distinction between good and bad economics, with good always being defined as unregulated capitalism that is untrammled by governmental attempts to spread the nation's wealth among its citizens. Such tasks are best left to the private sector. Governmental interference, he claims, is a mistake that only leads to the need for greater interference to straighten out the mess. This process goes on *ad infinitum*. The only solution, asserts Nash, is for the government to stand back and let capitalism, informed by Christian principles, do its good work.

The real purpose of *Poverty and Wealth* is to inform conservative Christians on these economic truths, so that they will not be led astray by destructive theories. As a result, the first part of the book is an exposition of the Austrian theory of capitalism as set forth by Ludwig von Mises and his colleagues; the second section is an exposé of anything that partakes of socialism; and the third part discusses what these good and bad theories