

BUSINESS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

By Kenman Wong and Scott Rae

*Reviewed by Brian Porter,
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Kenman Wong, Professor of Business Ethics at Seattle Pacific University and Scott Rae, Professor of Philosophy, Religion, and Ethics at Biola University, have collaborated before on the book *Beyond Integrity: A Judeo-Christian Approach to Business Ethics*. Their new offering is *Business for the Common Good*, a thoughtful and engaging book that addresses faith integration with work and business. Although other books have been written in this genre, Wong and Rae bring a fresh viewpoint and make a significant contribution. Four qualities make *Business for the Common Good* an important book to read and one of the better books on the topic of faith integration with business.

First, *Business for the Common Good* is a comprehensive broad-based book. In ten chapters Wong and Rae tackle a range of topics facing business people, offering an insightful faith-based perspective on subjects such as *work as a calling, wealth and ambition, the global economy, marketing, ethics, leadership, stewardship, and corporate social responsibility*. Although the book is intended to be read in its entirety, each chapter is sufficiently significant to read or study on its own. For example, the chapter “Your Work Is an Altar” is compelling by itself, making a prima facie case for the nobility of all work, and that work, particularly in the “secular” professions, can be an altar of service to God. Although Wong and Rae are not the first to propose this concept, their arguments are among the most convincing.

Second, although *Business for the Common Good* is an innovative book that advances new ideas in faith integration, it is also a thoroughly researched book that acknowledges and examines what has been written and studied previously on the topic. Most pages of *Business for the Common*

Good have multiple footnotes that list sources. The book is so well documented that readers may want to use the book as a starting point for any topical study pertaining to faith integration with business. Key writings and seminal sources that are included in the footnotes provide a helpful starting point to find out more on a particular topic.

Third, *Business for the Common Good* offers multifaceted responses to engaging topics. Unlike some faith integration books that err on being simplistic, Wong and Rae avoid cliché ideas, acknowledging that issues are complex and that answers are not easy. They offer nuanced viewpoints that encourage readers to rethink preconceived positions. The authors consistently challenge conventional business practices without being overly judgmental. The chapter “Marketing: Serving Customers” is a good example. Wong and Rae argue that marketing can play an indispensable role in human flourishing, yet they discuss practices that need to be changed if marketing is to be more in alignment with a Christian vision for business. For instance, marketing that focuses on unconscious motives may increase sales, but it is not consistent with a Christian perspective of business.

Fourth, *Business for the Common Good* is replete with real world examples. Being both professors and consultants, Wong and Rae have numerous stories and anecdotes from their work (classroom and business) that will resonate with the reader, helping to illustrate important points and the complexity of integrating faith in business. To demonstrate that “secular professions” are altars to God, Wong and Rae tell of a woman named Karen that was treated with a brain tumor. Thanks to the latest innovations in science, medicine, and business, Karen has made a com-

plete recovery. Karen's husband, marveling at the wide variety of people, products, and services that were coordinated and necessary for Karen's treatment, makes the tongue-in-cheek, but astute, observation, "I'm sure glad these people didn't feel called to leave their business to 'serve the Lord.'" Other stories inspire the reader to embrace a vision for business as a transformational service for the common good. Broetje Orchards is one such case, a massive (over 5,000 acres) family owned farm that integrates faith in their business. Besides donating 60 to 75 percent of after tax profits to charitable organizations, Broetje

serves its workforce, largely immigrants, in innovative ways, such as operating a Christian school, a ranch for troubled youth, and a day care where no one pays more than \$7 per day. Broetje Orchards thinks of itself as being in the *social-work business* as much as it is the *apple business*.

Business for the Common Good is recommended for all people of faith that participate in the world of business. Wong and Rae have written a comprehensive book that is well researched and offers in-depth ideas to challenging questions. If only one book on faith integration is to be read, this may be it.