MARKET COMPLICITY AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

The marketplace is a remarkable social institution that has greatly extended our reach, so shoppers in the West can now buy fresh-cut flowers, vegetables, and tropical fruits grown halfway across the globe, even in the depths of winter. However, these expanded choices have also come with considerable moral responsibilities as our economic decisions can have far-reaching effects by either ennobling or debasing human lives. Albino Barrera examines our own moral responsibilities for the distant harms of our market transactions from a Christian viewpoint, identifying how the market’s division of labor makes us unwitting collaborators in others’ wrongdoing and in collective ills. His important account covers a range of different subjects, including law, economics, philosophy, and theology, in order to identify the injurious ripple effects of our market activities.

ALBINO BARRERA is Professor of Economics and Theology at Providence College in Rhode Island. His previous publications include Globalization and Economic Ethics (2007), Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics (Cambridge, 2005), God and the Evil of Scarcity (2005), and Modern Catholic Social Documents and Political Economy (2001).
Christian ethics has increasingly assumed a central place within academic theology. At the same time the growing power and ambiguity of modern science and the rising dissatisfaction within the social sciences about claims to value-neutrality have prompted renewed interest in ethics within the secular academic world. There is, therefore, a need for studies in Christian ethics which, as well as being concerned with the relevance of Christian ethics to the present-day secular debate, are well informed about parallel discussions in recent philosophy, science or social science. *New Studies in Christian Ethics* aims to provide books that do this at the highest intellectual level and demonstrate that Christian ethics can make a distinctive contribution to this debate – either in moral substance or in terms of underlying moral justifications.

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MARKET COMPLICITY AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

ALBINO BARRERA
For the street kids of Malate and the children of Ortol – so joyful and eager to learn more about God.
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*Acknowledgments*

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After the near-collapse of the global financial system in 2008 this new addition to *New Studies in Christian Ethics* is very timely indeed and is written with great wisdom and clarity. Albino Barrera’s previous contribution, *Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, 2005), attracted some very fine reviews. His rigorous training in both economics and theology really has given him an extraordinarily authoritative voice (that and an ability to write clear prose), matching so exactly the aims of the series: namely, to promote studies in Christian ethics which engage centrally with the present secular moral debate at the highest possible intellectual level and, second, to encourage contributors to demonstrate that Christian ethics can make a distinctive contribution to this debate.

*Economic Compulsion and Christian Ethics* was a top-down book, looking at the way in which markets can create economic hardships for some individuals and communities (so-called pecuniary externalities), whereas *Market Complicity and Christian Ethics* is more a bottom-up book, examining the various ways in which we are all complicit in the harmful effects of our market choices (including, but certainly not exhausted by, pecuniary externalities). Together the two books offer an unparalleled account of current market economics from a perspective within Christian ethics to which all those engaging in this area responsibly in the future will need to respond.

Albino Barrera’s new book is particularly helpful for those concerned with untangling what the complex and multilayered moral concepts of complicity, accountability, and responsibility entail in relation to modern market economies. Theologians and ethicists looking for easy answers will not find them here. Instead what they will soon discover is one of the most thoughtful and gifted Christian ethicists currently writing about these crucial economic issues.

It is a privilege and delight to be able to welcome this unique and important new contribution to the series.

Robin Gill
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