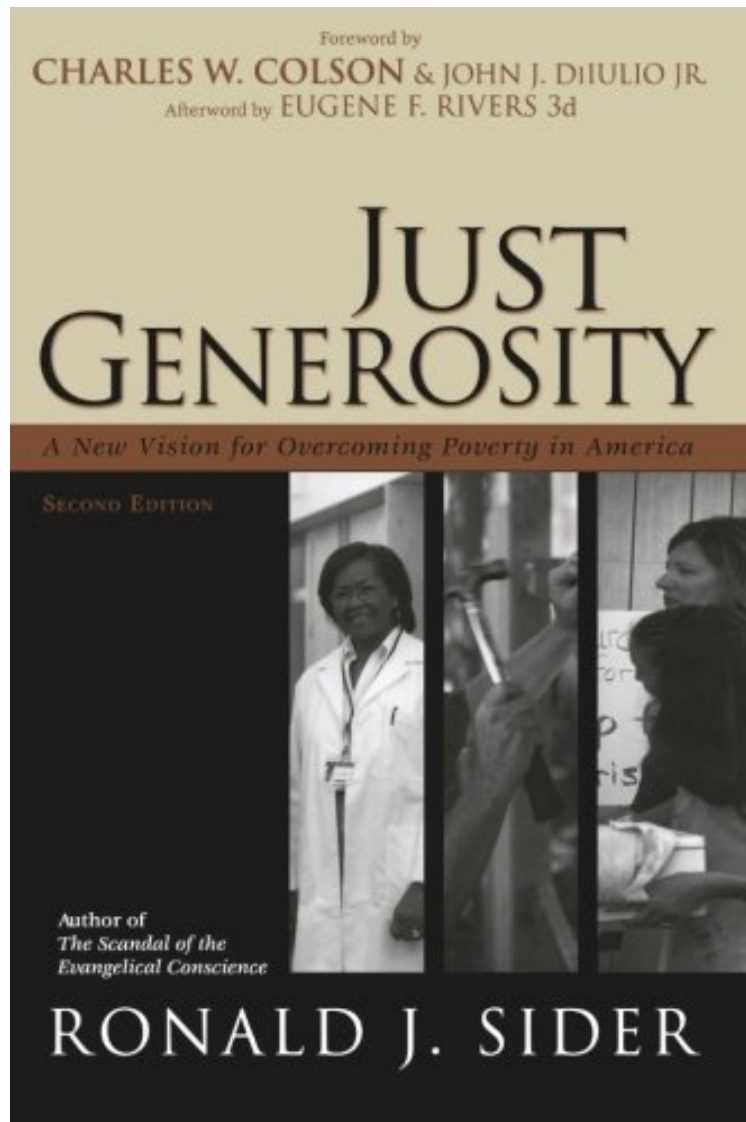


(Library ebook) Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America

Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America

Ronald J. Sider

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Ronald J. Sider : Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America:

27 of 29 people found the following review helpful. "Beyond Charity - A Critique of Sider's 'Just Generosity'"By Jean-Luc KriegAt the end of the introduction to his new book "JustGenerosity", Sider sets forth the agenda of this book. He writes: "This book seeks to define the problem, sketch a biblical framework, outline a comprehensive holistic vision and then develop" (p. 23) Accordingly, I will structure my critique and reflection of his book in reference

to this phrase. Definition of the Problem: Who the poor are is well described by Sider, including age groups, family-types, education-level of poor and the relation between poverty and race. He sketches well the major factors that cause poverty. I fully agree with him, that structural reasons, as well as behavioral ones, as well as sudden catastrophes all contribute to widespread poverty. Even though structural reasons play a major influence in facilitating wrong moral choices, the latter should yet be ascertained as a cause for poverty. All negation of this point of view tends to take away responsibility from poor people and thus disqualifies them as whole persons. I also appreciated Sider's good assessment that it is basically the wealthy who contribute to political campaigns, which as a result brings people into positions who represent the interests of those few wealthy, rather than the masses'. Biblical Framework: I fully agree with Sider's analysis and presentation of the biblical material and believe it is compelling in its call to do justice. Love without justice is simply unbiblical, because the Bible is clear that those who follow God are called to live justly and love mercy. Comprehensive holistic vision: Sider is consistent with the biblical material and with sociology when he brings the role of civic society into the discussion. It confirms the "biblical anthropology" that humans are not mere autonomous individuals, but are interrelated beings. In the same way it acknowledges a holistic view of people, who are neither solely directed by bureaucratic decisions, nor by individual moral choices. Hence, civic society plays a detrimental role in solving the pressing problems, because it is in civic society that people learn the values that make this very society function in a healthy way. Inner moral and spiritual renewal cannot be mandated but is nevertheless crucial if family renewal, for instance, is to come about. Sider displays a balanced view with regards to the role of government and civic institutions and their interaction as well as contribution to each other, which I deem to be the only way in which long-term solutions can be reached. However, Sider presents too few concrete examples of realistic ways, in which civic societies (like inner city churches) can be strengthened, who in turn would raise local leadership and thus strengthen the political power of the poor from within. Social Analysis: His explanation for the low work-effort of poor people, for instance, as well as his interpretation of how the inability of low-skilled men to earn enough to support a family, feeds into the disintegration of the family as an institution, are convincing. Moreover, he makes clear how family unfriendly government policy (tax-exemptions, etc...) encourages single-parent families. Sider's analysis with respect to the educational system is also compelling. He argues that a good educational system is absolutely necessary in the fight against poverty. In fact, high school dropouts produce high costs in the long run, which, in any case are carried by the taxpayer. Additionally he builds a strong case for the necessity of healthy two-parent families. Most of his bias toward this form of family-life derives, as he says, from Judeo-Christian roots, as well as the statistics who demonstrate, that children from two-parent families are less likely to experience poverty. Concrete Agenda: In most of the chapters 4-8 Sider develops quite concrete and seemingly good proposals, which could help alleviate poverty. Even though I won't go into details at this point, this is the bulk of the book that needs to be discussed in student circles, among policymakers, in civic societies etc... Yet, throughout Sider's social analysis and enlisting of concrete ideas for implementation, one great question remains: How can partnerships between governmental and faith based programs be established? How could more clergy-government coalitions come to life? How are inner city churches helped to seek the holistic wellbeing of their neighbors, if they themselves lack personnel resources and struggle hard to survive? Sider offers little concrete steps in this respect. He gives some examples, but these seem to be the exception. Sider makes clear that the political as well as the theological climate has changed, which makes it more favorable for Christians today to getting involved to fighting poverty. And this they must, if they call themselves followers of Jesus Christ. Overall I believe the book has the potential to reach a great number of people, because it presents, deals well with and offers, to some degree at least, practicable solutions to a highly problematic theme of our time. Will it accomplish what Sider has in mind, namely reaching millions of Christians, who in response, will get practically involved in addressing the issues at hand? We hope. We pray.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Baby Steps By Jstorm70 Ron Sider for years has been in tune with the outcries of the impoverished in the world. He has been using his gifts from God to write great books like these which brings to light the issues of poverty to believers and non believers. The idea of social justice is the dominant theme in this book, social justice being that every person is given the tools to succeed in our society. Sider sees education as the biggest area to focus on when fixing the problems with social justice. He lays out the statistics that show impoverished students are more likely to drop out before graduating high school, the lack of general success in higher education and the effects of these depressing statistics. Lower education, maybe even more so today with the lack of unskilled jobs, is a life-sentence to a difficult life. To go along with the challenge to improve our education system, Sider heralds the benefits of Inter-Faith agencies (non government agencies that receive support from the government). These groups enjoy the benefits of being run like small time companies with a defined goal, the people who are on the same page and a heart for the people they are serving. The government doesn't run nearly as smoothly. By using these agencies, Sider believes that the greatest good can be done to put a dent into the levels of impoverished in America. Overall, this book is baby steps in the right direction to fixing poverty. It is such a big undertaking that it will not happen over night, but Sider really does a great job of putting us on the right path to tackle such a big problem. By reading this book you will be more in tune with your brothers and sisters in economic despair.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Fair and Balanced By John R. Miller The debate over how best to help the poor seems to be polarized

around the logical conclusions of two seemingly opposed assumptions. The conservative assumption is that most people are poor because of the personal choices they make. The liberal assumption is that people are poor because of bad environments and injustice. The conservative point of view leads to public policies that reward personal initiative while allowing families to suffer the consequences of their bad decisions as a means of discipline. The liberal point of view initiates policies that redistribute the wealth through entitlements and public projects while attempting to change the environment through the force of law. The weakness of the liberal position is that it tends to enable poverty rather than eradicate it. The weakness of the conservative position is that it tends to ignore injustices and do nothing to remove the very real barriers to the upward mobility of the poor. Ronald Sider in his book *Just Generosity: A New Vision for Overcoming Poverty in America* argues that these are not competing assumptions but complimentary ones. "I have lived and worshiped with the poor far too long to side either with the liberal who quickly dismisses the way personal choices contribute to poverty or with the conservative who ignores the way complicated structural barriers make it difficult for many hardworking people to escape poverty" (p. 35). Sider's "Twelve Principles of a Just Society" is the foundation for his policy suggestions that make up over half of the book. While one may quibble with the details of the suggestions, on the whole they are a way out of the political rancor that characterizes the current debate. I highly recommend this book to all. It educates. It makes reasonable suggestions to open the discussion on how best to address these problems. Most of all it is irenic and offered in the spirit of brotherly love as opposed to the power politics that have come to characterize our political discourse.

Just Generosity calls Christians to examine their priorities and their pocketbooks in the face of a scandalous tendency to overlook those among us who suffer while we live in practical opulence. This holistic approach to helping the poor goes far beyond donating clothes or money, envisioning a world in which faith based groups work with businesses, the media, and the government to help end poverty in the world's richest nation. This updated edition includes current statistics, policy recommendations, and discussions covering everything from welfare reform, changes to Medicare, and the Social Security debate. "Sider's most important book since *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*." Jim Wallis, author, *God's Politics* "Sider knows how to lift up people in need. . . . [An] important and challenging book." John Ashcroft, former Attorney General of the United States

From Publishers Weekly Evangelical theologian and activist Sider gets down to specifics in this book about American social programs, which at points reads like a policy wonk's textbook. But it is not written so much for policy insiders as for the constituency of Evangelicals for Social Action, the organization Sider founded and for which he serves as president. Unlike other social theorists, Sider freely bathes his antipoverty program in biblical language and prophetic imperatives, but unlike many of his fellow evangelicals, he sees the government's role in addressing American poverty as inescapable. Sider's prescriptions do not fit into familiar left-right categories: while he argues for a "living wage," guaranteed government-funded jobs and universal health care, he also urges a national experiment for school vouchers, commends faith-based community service organizations and speaks urgently of personal responsibility and the breakdown of the family. One of the few evangelicals to have sat at table with both the conservative Christian Coalition and the left-leaning Call to Renewal, Sider seems to have learned from, and to genuinely appreciate, the policy goals of both sides. Notably missing from the book is the hard-headed strategy that has made the Christian Coalition so potent. Sider is more prophet than politician but by basing his policy arguments on something more than political expediency, he makes the somewhat tired idea of Christian politics seem plausible, even exciting, again. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Nationally known as the president of the Philadelphia-based Evangelicals for Social Action, Sider grapples with the socioeconomic data available on the extent and impact of poverty in America from both a liberal and a conservative perspective. Believing that, faithfully interpreted and lived, the Scriptures can provide the vision and motivation needed to reduce poverty dramatically, he spells out a set of proposals for a social policy that works toward that goal. Sider offers broad policy proposals regarding welfare and crime reduction and suggests that societal problems would be best handled by partnerships between governments and philanthropic organizations. Many readers will find his discussion insightful and his proposals for change resonant. The footnotes accompanying each chapter allow for further research, and a list of organizations provides practical resources. An essential purchase whose wide-based discussion reaches many segments of readers. ALeroy Hommerding, Citrus Cty. Lib. System, Inverness, FL Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Sider says we must do something--again and more--about poverty in the U.S. because the Bible tells us to. With impressive thoroughness, he demonstrates that both Old and New Testaments enjoin believers to help the poor become productive members of society and to use public as well as private resources to do so. He advocates lifting poor people's incomes above the poverty line by increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit, the food stamp program, and the minimum wage; making the dependent care and child tax credits refundable to low-income families; guaranteeing jobs to the able-bodied, long-term unemployed; providing universal health-care coverage; and other remedies that reek of liberalism. But like social conservatives, he insists that government benefices won't work well enough if the soul needs underlying the bad life choices and antisocial behavior of some of

the most persistently poor aren't met. As a minister who has long lived and worked in poor Philadelphia neighborhoods, Sider knowledgeably cites instances in which church-connected social services and specific church people have helped in even very desperate circumstances, and he cheers the charitable choice provisions of the 1996 welfare laws, which prevent state governments that contract with nongovernmental service providers from discriminating against religious agencies. In a book amazingly compact for the breadth of its coverage, Sider also takes up educational reform (especially school vouchers), family-support policy, ways that welfare might empower poor people, and more--all from the biblical perspective of evangelical Christianity. A clear front-runner among antipoverty policy tracts. Ray Olson