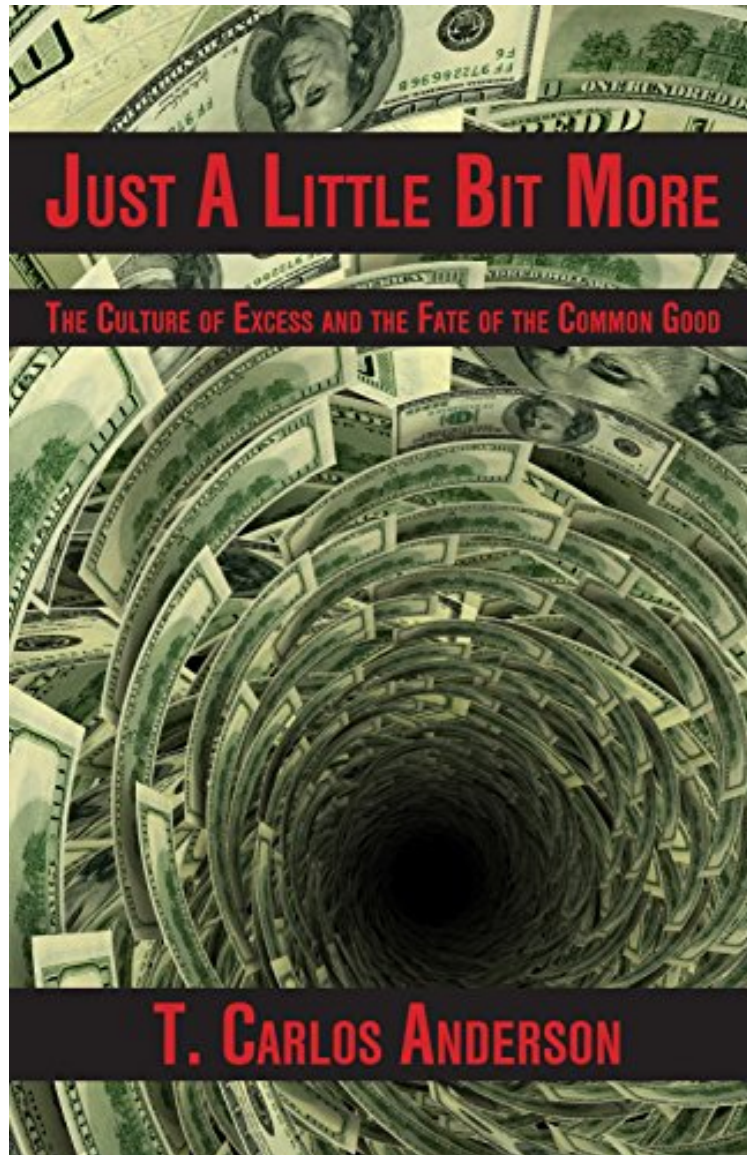


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# Just A Little Bit More: The Culture of Excess and the Fate of the Common Good

*T. Carlos Anderson*

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**T. Carlos Anderson : Just A Little Bit More: The Culture of Excess and the Fate of the Common Good** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Just A Little Bit More: The Culture of Excess and the Fate of the Common Good:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. If You Care About Our Society, This Book Is For YouBy Ruthie HowardJust A Little Bit More is a scholarly work which presents a compelling argument for the need for a true

economic democracy in America to cure some of the inequities created by our current capitalistic system. Ultimately concerned with the impact on the common good, this book represents a personal tour d' force on the part of Mr. Anderson, who has completed exhaustive research and offers thorough documentation in support of his hypotheses and conclusions. Far from being one-sided, the author presents a fair and balanced examination of an economic system which excessively rewards the wealthy while penalizing those in our society who are most in need. Approach this book with the understanding that it reads more like a college level textbook. There is no fluff here. These are difficult concepts to grasp and not every reader might agree with all of Mr. Anderson's conclusions; however, in the end you will not only be much better informed but also enlightened by Just A Little Bit More. I say "thank you" Mr. Anderson.....and BRAVO! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An excellent book for serious discussion

By Suzanne Although, as others have said, this is not a light read, it is written so clearly that the average reader can comprehend the social, political, and economic situation in which we find ourselves today: a capitalistic system which is increasingly unregulated and is controlled by a few who have largely abandoned the concept of "the common good." Just a Little Bit More focuses on three time periods: the Gilded Age of the late 19th and early 20th century, the 1920's, and the period that began in the 1990's and continues on today. We now find ourselves struggling with the definitions of success while living in a world that places little value on "the common good" and has, in fact, replaced that concept with a winner-take-all type of consumerism fueled by unbridled greed and ever growing wants. With the disintegration of a commonly shared perspective of the common good, wealth accumulation has become the new American religion. Many of us recognize the dangerous level and effects of out of balance economic self-interest, but we need a better understanding of its causes, its history and of the whys and hows of our current situation. We need to recognize and shatter the myths than support our acceptance of vast accumulation of wealth by the few. This book moves us toward a greater understanding. As a pastor, Anderson comes from a perspective which promotes a life and a ruling system that cares for all of its people, one in which the citizens do not resemble the citizens of Sardis or Laodicea so to speak. But this is not a book which limits itself to a Christian readership. He has promoted his work through thorough, secular, historical evidence and events. This book could be used in a college classroom as well as a Bible study. One need not be a believer to understand that "unenlightened self-interest can lead to injustice and societal ruin." (p. 206) Although capitalism seems to have entered the 21st century as "the best structure to provide food, opportunity and prosperity for great populations," it is a system in which wealth that can be siphoned from below and accumulate upward to the few, leaving disadvantaged members of society marginalized. The system's natural unchecked behavior is the opposite of "trickle down" economics. To work for us, rather than against us, any system must be socially accountable. It is useful to know that this is not a capitalist bashing book. Anderson feels that the market system has generally served us well and can continue to do so as long as forces exist to regulate and create boundaries limiting its excesses. No human system, however, can be allowed free reign; checks and regulations must provide needed boundaries. Although greed is capitalism's fuel, unfettered greed and an absence of concern for the common good can destroy the balance and can destroy us. We must heed the warning that "liberty produces wealth, and wealth destroys liberty." Anderson points out how the economic/political pendulum swings between egalitarianism and valuing the common good vs. self-interest and social Darwinism, and although he is calling for a balance between these competing forces, I cannot help but wonder if our acceptance of the current economic reality will allow that pendulum to swing back before it destroys us. Anderson seems to have faith that it can.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Be Prepared to be Surprised

By Kerry Nelson So one day, a few years ago, I was playing golf with T. Carlos when he surprised me with the news that he was working on a book. I didn't see that one coming. I asked the obvious question, expecting to hear that he was writing about doing ministry in a bilingual congregation, maybe something about the spirituality of golf...but a book on economics and the role of money in the developing American culture? I did not see that one coming. So I eagerly bought it as soon as it came out in paperback...then I bought it again when it came out in Kindle. This book is a must read! I loved his use of metaphor (the pendulum swinging between excess and correction), the historical shifts in understanding and practice, the insights into the major players along the way, the treatment of theology within the practical imaginations of Americans. The book is extremely well researched and will surprise the reader many times each chapter with the simple reaction, "Wow, I've never heard of, thought of, or seen that before." It is a complex book but not strident or pedantic. It is a balanced and revealing treatment of the shifts in our culture from production to consumption, from pay as you go to borrow as much as you can, from the creation of the great middle class to the increasing marginalization of the 99%. My sense is that we live our lives, vaguely aware that there are vast unseen forces that make many decisions for us, that carry us along while remaining in the shadows. The idea and reality of money, the sense of what makes for a good life, the great questions of enough or the difference between needs and wants...all of this is touched upon in Just A Little Bit More. I look forward to using this book in adult study groups at church and have already found myself re-reading sections as I continue to ponder the information I discovered the first couple of times through. If you care about money, about our future, about finding a sane path through life, you have to read this book.

Is America a Christian Nation? According to author T. Carlos Andersen, the true religion of the land is the confluence of commerce, materialism, and consumerism. Andersen, defining religion as "ultimate concern," claims our true devotion is found in material pursuits. It's been a good religion; it has fed, clothed, sheltered, and employed millions of Americans. It can go too far, however. When these pursuits become excessive, the religion breaks bad and the common good suffers.

"Just a Little Bit More engages in a critique of the god of mammon, lamenting that the concept of the common good, so central to American history, has fallen out of favor. T. Carlos Anderson believes liberty and egalitarianism need not fight with one another. They can coexist in such a way that all can have enough." Bishop Mike Rinehart, Gulf Coast Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America "Anderson proposes a return to the value of egalitarianism and practice of economic democracy as the way of deliverance from the regressive inequality under which we suffer. The reader is provided incredible detail of our current economic, cultural, and religious crisis. He expresses confidence that as in previous eras the pendulum finally shifted to correct the drive to economic excess through the mechanisms of political democracy, so our awakening to the present crisis can lead to an urgently needed corrective in our time." Dr. Craig L. Nesson, Professor, Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa "A masterpiece . . . I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to live in a world with a more equitable distribution of the world's assets and resources. It ought to be required reading for every church leader." Kathy Haueisen, author of *A Ready Hope* and *40 Day Journey with Kathleen Norris* "Anderson's book is an extensive chronicling of the people, movements, and streams of thought that have led us on the quest to want just a little bit more. In the role of a theologically aware social critic, he reminds me of Niebuhr. He is deeply embedded in the Christian tradition, but has listened carefully to many other voices and thus speaks a reasonable, balanced, and authoritative public word. Anderson shows us the way back toward commitment to egalitarianism that has become lost over the last century." Dr. Phil Ruge-Jones, Professor of Theology and Philosophy, Texas Lutheran University T. Carlos Anderson dots *Just a Little Bit More* with fascinating asides on everything from the original egalitarian provenance of the retail price-tag in the 1870s to the introduction of luxury suites in Texas Stadium in the 1970s, a symbolic cultural moment when our "privileged elite began to separate from the rest of us." Anderson, above all, writes with a purpose. He's hoping to help Americans understand that an egalitarian ideal helped create the United States. We need that ideal, Anderson helps us see, now more than ever. Sam Pizzigati, journalist and author of *The Rich Don't Always Win* From the Back Cover "Writing on behalf of the common good, the author asks how the American economy can benefit all, not a few. As currently structured, it can't. T. Carlos Anderson argues for an egalitarian approach to fiscal matters. Anderson knows that money talks, but it is a one way conversant. He wants economic democracy to be the new standard to define a system that has lost a sense of proportion. The reader will benefit immensely in seeing how we have shaped the system we are a part of and what can lead to a new way of doing economics that embraces the common good." Peter L. Steinke, leadership consultant and author of ten books, including the influential *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach* About the Author T. Carlos (Tim) Anderson works as a bilingual Protestant minister in Austin, Texas. He has previously lived and worked in Chicago, Houston, and Lima, Peru.