

*Greed*, by James M. Childs Jr.

Reviewed by [John R. Throop](#) in the [March 21, 2001](#) issue

Americans suffer from a debilitating disease that deadens the senses and causes people to panic and hoard. Persons of faith aren't immune to it. The disease is "affluenza" and one of its key symptoms is greed.

James Childs, professor of theology and ethics and dean of academic affairs at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, challenges the prevailing assumptions about getting, having and hoarding. He argues persuasively that even churchgoing Americans aren't self-reflective enough about our shared great expectations. Childs challenges our unquestioned belief in the power and primacy of the individual and our unswerving conviction that there is always more of everything ready for the taking.

Childs contrasts a biblical ethic--seen from a Lutheran perspective--with contemporary experience. He shows how Martin Luther's two-kingdoms theory provides a relevant basis for economic ethics. Scripture stresses the importance of community and covenant for shaping a sense of the common good and fostering sharing and mutual support. Creation itself witnesses that God made the world for sustainable growth, not unbridled consumption. Childs calls for an ethic of sharing, sustainability and solidarity with the poor--both here and around the world.

This approach guides theological reflection on personal and corporate economic priorities. Questions at the end of each chapter stimulate individual thought and group discussion. The book may prompt readers to cry "Enough!"--and then to rest in the enough of God.