

PETER
BLOCK

WALTER
BRUEGGEMANN

JOHN
McKNIGHT



AN
OTHER
KINGDOM

DEPARTING THE CONSUMER CULTURE

"Inspirational and practical...a grounded call to compassion and justice."

—PARKER PALMER



PRAISE FOR AN OTHER KINGDOM

Whenever Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight get together on the topic of community, the outcome is both inspirational and practical. That's been the case for years, and it's the case once again with this fine book. At a time when so many are being left behind by our culture of individualism, competition, and consumerism, this book—with its emphasis on remembering that we're all in this together and have gifts that can help meet others' needs—is a grounded call to compassion and justice.

Parker J. Palmer, author of *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, *A Hidden Wholeness*, and *Let Your Life Speak*

Walter Brueggemann teams up with two veteran community organizers to not only astutely analyze our current North American context but also give us specific, practical ways we can move toward greater neighborliness for the common good. Hard-hitting judgment and joyful encouragement all in one book.

Will Willimon, professor of Christian Ministry, Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina, and United Methodist Bishop (ret.)

To change the conversation, it's necessary to understand what is wrong with the one we're currently having. Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight do just that. Original and illuminating. Prophetic and liberating!

Robert Inchausti, author of *Thomas Merton's American Prophecy*, *Subversive Orthodoxy*, and *The Ignorant Perfection of Ordinary People*

These gentle men, the authors of this book, are “waiting for a social movement”—one that will of necessity restore our neighborhoods and our humanity. They intuit it. *An Other Kingdom: Departing the Consumer Culture* is a statement of their longing. The book is not sentimental. John McKnight, for one, is a trained Alinsky organizer. He knows the realities of Chicago's streets, of its notorious projects, of its vibrant churches, of its very democratic soul. But he's rather hopeful of fundamental economic, social, and cultural transformation, reminiscent of economist Fritz Schumacher.

“Our basic intent in writing this book is to shrink the market as the primary means of cultural identity, schools as source of learning, systems as the source of care, price as the measure of value, productivity as the basis for being.” And so they have done. The movement they seek is waiting for us.

Susan Witt, Schumacher Center for a New Economics

An Other Kingdom is not just for people of faith, it is a gift for anyone who seeks to understand how we can become better at being human together. Its

authors are modern-day Magi. In place of gold, Peter, Walter, and John offer common wealth; in place of frankincense they offer mystery; and in place of myrrh they offer neighborliness. As the free market falls like a house of cards around our ears and the captains of industry draw our planet toward the precipice, this book offers sight of a sustainable and sustaining future.

Cormac Russell, author of *Asset-Based Community Development: Looking Back to Look Forward*, managing director of Nurture Development, faculty member of ABCD Institute, and lead steward for ABCD in Europe

We've had enough End Times theology based on fear and revenge. It's time for an End-of-Our-Time theology based on faith, hope, and love. That's what *An Other Kingdom* provides. . . . Unlike many books that merely tell us how bad things are, leaving us anxious and depressed, these author-activists provide us with an alternative vision of a neighborly society, one that draws upon our deepest sacred and secular traditions and is already being constructed by ordinary people in many local communities.

Walter T. Davis, professor (emeritus), San Francisco Seminary

Here begins the A-B-C of indigenous common sense in most cultures based on good relationships and shared meaning. An alternative culture detailed by Peter Block, Walter Brueggemann, and John McKnight is in actuality something extending from ancient patterns of survival. This (k)new language of covenant re-kindles trust and service to higher principles and helps us recognize each other again.

Manulani Aluli Meyer, former associate professor of education at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and world scholar-practitioner of Hawaiian and indigenous epistemology

For those who have that feeling deep inside them that something is seriously wrong with the reigning economy but cannot quite put their finger on it or cannot conceive of anything different replacing it, this book is crucial. . . . The language of this book is clear as it pushes us toward a different kind of life, a different way for life, and different conditions for living.

Olivia C. Saunders, New Providence, The Bahamas

This is the work of three wise elders who have spent a lifetime of inquiry into the human good. . . . *An Other Kingdom* questions and provides alternatives to the dominant assumptions that guide our aspirations, our choices, and hence our lives. As long as these local and global narratives remain unexamined, they will continue to have the power to persuade us and our neighbors to act unknowingly against our best interests. The language within is beautifully economic and precise. It is best read slowly with reflection, as one would read poetry.

Ward Mailliard, vice president and member of the executive board at Mount Madonna School, Watsonville, California



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KINGDOM



SELECTED OTHER WORKS BY

PETER BLOCK

The Answer to How Is Yes

Community: The Structure of Belonging

Stewardship

WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

Journey to the Common Good

The Prophetic Imagination

Theology of the Old Testament

JOHN McKNIGHT

The Abundant Community, with Peter Block

Building Communities from the Inside Out, with John P. Kretzmann

The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits

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DEPARTING THE CONSUMER CULTURE

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To all those who have struggled to show us the way to an other kingdom.



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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

—Matt. 16:3

The intent of this book is to interpret certain signs of the times. These signs have to do with the need to depart the consumer market culture we have come to take for granted. This culture, with its constellations of empire and kingdom, produces endless conversations about climate warming, restoring the middle class in the northern economies, worldwide immigration driven by poverty, and political instability. We talk about financial bubbles, accessible health care, economic growth and contraction. We all want more companies to come to town, more factory jobs, more graduates in education, less crime and violence, everywhere. We seek more consumption and faster growth.

The premise of this book is that these conversations, generationally passed on as seemingly based on knowledge, science, and the assumption of progress, miss the signs of the times. All of these conversations are painfully predictable and at times despairing. They are symptoms of something more fundamental. Our belief is that the current programs, investments, or changes in political leadership will make modest improvements but little real difference. If we want to follow the signs of the times, we have to look at how our core economic beliefs have produced a culture that makes poverty, violence, ill health, and fragile economic systems seem inevitable.

Economic systems based on competition, scarcity, and acquisitiveness have become more than a question of economics; they have become the kingdom within which we dwell. That way of thinking invades our