De-mything Economic Well-being; Biblical and Theological Responses to Economic Injustice

Issue 40 Editor: Andy & Carol Kingston-Smith

A warm welcome to this edition of Encounters, focused around the theme of economic (in) justice. A number of topics are considered which address economic issues of concern affecting us both here in the UK and in other contemporary global contexts. What emerges is the need to engage critically with ideologies, theories, structures and practices, which frequently lead to economic injustice(s) occurring in societies and cultures around us. These require both personal and corporate responses as part of the wider Christian community's engagement in contemporary mission contexts.

The first article, by German Professor Ulrich Duchrow, is a fascinating historical account of the roots of our economic malaise. Whilst lengthy, it is well-worth persevering to the end! His academic insights and the widespread interdisciplinary approach he adopts is remarkable, as are the far-reaching conclusions he proposes to reverse the toxic effects of excessive and life-destroying capitalism. However, this is no mere academic treatment; it proposes praxis-oriented guidelines that people of faith would do well to consider – it requires all of us to think about the way we live and the effects of our economic way of life.

The second article by Jonathan Ingleby deals with the assertion by many of our leaders that to safeguard our economic well-being (i.e. to protect our oil supplies and other wealth-generating resources), political decision-making leading to military action is justified, with the subsequent engagement of the full force of the 'war-machine' with enormous economic consequences on the ordinary lives of millions in targeted contexts. This approach often reflects the ideological prioritisation and implementation of Western economic policies.

One of the other great myths is that the majority world can be brought out of poverty solely through Western aid and the World Bank's programme of 'structural adjustment' linked to crippling loans provided under a narrow neo-liberal rubric. Christian Aid has been advocating in such issues around the world for many years, but Sue Richardson challenges us to consider the issue of taxation as being critical in alleviating poverty. Closing the loopholes so favoured by the rich and stimulating rigorous tax policies by majority world governments are much more likely to be effective in combating extreme poverty and building sustainable infrastructures, in the long-term.

Terry Lockyer draws our attention to the Brazilian context; a nation that is fast-rising out of the kinds of issues that Sue Richardson addresses. After a comprehensive survey of the Biblical narrative, Terry invites us to engage with the biblical concepts, and arrives at interesting conclusions for the church and the missions-community. Brazil, he argues, possesses great economic wealth, but the church has a long way to go in influencing life-affirming change in society.

Marijke Hoek reminds us of the positive contribution of early Christian business endeavours. The Quakers' impact and long-lasting legacy is striking, not least when considering how numerically small that community was. Marijke provides us with contemporary examples of organisations making an impact and challenges Christian business to, once again, remember the purpose of wealth generation; to lead to well-being for the many, rather than

self-aggrandizement for the few. This disparity was, of course, at the heart of the Occupy Movement's protest. James Butler's article critiques the role of the Church in its handling of the events last Autumn, proposes that the Church, rather than taking sides, should seek to re-imagine a space where voices from the margins may be heard, and where true worship leads to righteous living.

Jim Harries has worked in Eastern Africa for many years, and has experienced at first-hand the dynamics involved with Western economic investment, including that allied to missionary-service. Many of his criticisms and conclusions ring true from our own experiences in Bolivia, and remind us that our missionary-service is not conducted in an economic vacuum – many of our decisions and the implementation of our projects, are at best naïve, and often seriously damaging to the development of the local church as agent of transformative change.

Lastly, Janet Parsons provides a summary and review of Julie Clawson's book, Everyday Justice, which brings home the effects and impacts of many of our day-to-day decisions, often taken for granted or perpetuated uncritically. We are asked to reflect on our personal response to consumerism, in the light of the global consequences of our materialistic Western culture.

In conclusion, please check-out the jusTice initiative based at Redcliffe, where we seek to engage with many such issues. More details on the initiative may be found at http://www.redcliffe.org/SpecialistCentres/JusticeAdvocacyandReconilicationinMission.

In addition, you can follow us on twitter (@just_mission) or interact with our blog at http://justiceadvocacyandmission.wordpress.com. A key element of the initiative is a new MA course in Justice, Advocacy and Reconciliation in Intercultural Contexts, recently validated by the University of Gloucestershire for commencement this coming September (see http://www.redcliffe.org/Study/PostgraduateCourses/JusticeandMission). We will also be running a new undergraduate module looking at Christian responses to contemporary issues of justice; so lots of exciting new initiatives are taking place in these critically-important areas of life – demanding responses that critique current practice, and propose alternative solutions from within the Christian community!

We look forward to hearing from you, so please join the conversation by giving us your critiques, comments and questions!

Andy & Carol Kingston-Smith (Co-editors of Issue 40)

Lecturers in Mission at Redcliffe College

- **Article 4: A Biblical Perspective on Wealth, Poverty and Prosperity; Concluding with Reference to Mission and Economic Justice in the Brazilian Context**
  (Terry Lockyer, 5866 words, pdf 267 KB)

- **Article 5: Business that Seeks the Well-being of Society**
  (Marijke Hoek, 3014 words, pdf 212 KB)

- **Article 6: The Occupy Movement, Worship and the Imagination of the Church**
  (James Butler, 2791 words, pdf 189 KB)

- **Article 7: Westerners' Involvement in Projects in Africa: Hindrance, Help or Necessity?**
  (Jim Harries, 1343 words, pdf 1343 K)

- **Book Review: Everyday Justice: The Global Impact of our Daily Choices**
  (by Julie Clawson, InterVarsity Press)

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Biblical Clues to a New Economy

Dr Ulrich Duchrow, Professor of Systematic Theology, Heidelberg University, Germany, and co-founder and co-moderator of Kairos Europa, a European decentralised network of justice, peace and creation initiatives working in collaboration with churches, social movements, trade unions and non-governmental organisations both in and outside Europe for a more just and tolerant society

This article is the transcript of the talk given by Professor Duchrow at the *Eye of the Needle – Biblical Clues to a New Economy* Conference on March 24th 2012, held at the Vassall Centre, Bristol, and is re-produced here by kind permission of the author (Ed.)

Introduction

We are meeting in the midst of deep crises worldwide in a country that saw riots for justice last year and that has – like most of us in Europe and certainly in the USA – a government in the service of the actors in the financial markets who are protagonists in producing the most obvious crisis, the crisis of the financial system. So as brothers and sisters in Christ we are here, reflecting on our own role in the crises endangering the life of humanity and the earth, but also hoping for inspiration from God's spirit in making another world possible.

It is evident that the crises are not just a result of the misbehaviour of some immoral individuals but the result of systemic structures interacting with collective human and cultural ways of thinking and acting. I regard the different crises as an expression of a single deep crisis of our dominating Western civilization. And this has deep historic roots that have to be understood in order to analyze what is happening now and how alternatives can be developed.

I. The roots of today's structures and behaviours producing the crises

Today we experience the financial markets as the dominant force of our destructive civilization. However, they are but the climax of a development starting nearly 3,000 years ago. The context is the development of larger societies with growing division of labour and exchange of goods and services, using money connected with the legalizing of private property. Division of labour as such exists much earlier. But the question is how it is socially coordinated. I suggest it is possible to distinguish seven historical phases.

In **tribal societies** (**phase 1**) (before 3000 BC) there are no special institutions for the social coordination of labour. As they are small, their members organise the coordination by agreement and traditional rules.

The **archaic societies (phase 2)** (around 3000 - 8th century BC) in the form of city kingdoms and empires, also called hydraulic societies, institutionalised the social coordination of labour by way of conquest and administration.

A basic change happens through the **introduction of money and private property,** (**phase 3**) spreading increasingly between the 8th Century BCE and the 4th Century CE. [2] Among others, the Buddhist economist Karl-Heinz Brodbeck in his book „*Die Herrschaft des Geldes. Geschichte und Systematik*"(*The Dominance of Money: History and Systematic Analysis)* [3] sees the cause for developing money (and property rights) in the growing division of labour linked to the growing of societies with large populations involved in bartering. The bartering in these larger societies would not be possible without a unifying measurement. This unity in the diversity of commodities is money – but not as a "thing" separate from the social process of acknowledging its value. The calculation in the process of bartering changes the thinking and the soul of the people. Besides communicating by speech in words (*logos*) they communicate by calculating in money (*ratio*). In doing so, the *ego* of the individual gains precedence over the relations in community. This is furthered by the fact that in the process of bartering in the market the money owner has more power than the producer of a commodity.

Money as such offers access to the market while the product has first to be demanded in the market. Coping with this risk is only possible by having as much money as possible. This he calls the "objective" base for greed to accumulate money without limits. The other implication of this is that money gives the right to private property beyond personal property, so money gives access to the market, cushions the risks in the market, measures the exchange value and gives access to property rights. Combined with the development of hierarchies and classes in larger societies with the division of labour, money and property start to determine the economic, social and political power of people within societies.

So it is most important to understand that the introduction of money and private property not only changes the socio-economic structures, but also the thinking, feeling and behaving of the people. Equally, alternatives can only be implemented when dealing with both dimensions.

Let us have a closer look at the greed of people to accumulate limitless money. The institutionalisation of this greed was the introduction of interest, later complemented by other forms of profit. A debtor had to pay back more than he had borrowed, for example, to purchase seed in times of need. He also had to put up his own land as security. If he could not pay back, he lost his land and had to work as a debt slave for the creditor. Thus private property and money came into existence at the same time and led to debt slavery and loss of land. On the other hand, the creditors could collect more and more land, money, and debt slaves. This is what scholars have named as the emergence of a class society in Antiquity. [4]

So the result of the introduction of money and private property is the increasing gap between rich (big landowners and merchants) and impoverished people (landless, debt slaves etc.) in societies, thus creating increased suffering among the majority of people.

However, it is not yet the merchants and bankers who form the dominant class but rather those who are entitled to profit from the monarchic and imperial tribute and those who are able to enlarge their estates and make personal slaves through the new debt mechanism.

This leads to the period of **slave labour and serfdom based societies (phase 4)** (around 500 BCE - 13th century CE).

The *over-lapping of phases 3 and 4*, i.e. the property-money-interest economy linked with personal slavery, spread even more during the time of the Hellenistic Empires. Roman Law finally legalised the absoluteness of property (*"dominium est jus utendi et abutendi re sua, quatenus juris ratio patitur"* / ownership is the right to use and abuse/consume/destroy your thing as far as compatible with *ratio*, the logic of the law). As a matter of fact, the Hellenistic-Roman empires are characterised by the totalitarian linkage of the traditional dominance of military and political power with the property-money economy.

Part of this was already understood by Aristotle. [5] He analysed that money is not natural but introduced by humans as something basically new. It is measured and not measured by anything else. It mediates between the different needs of people. This is why people principally have the power to define what money is. It does not exist by nature but through the mutual recognition of what money should be and in what way it is valid. So the nature of money also includes the possibility of misuse.

This consists in the perversion of 'means' and 'end'. If money in a given community has to mediate the exchange of goods, necessary for the satisfaction of life needs, money accumulation as an end in itself, making money a commodity instead of using it as a common good for exchange, is not only a moral problem but destroys life. The person, not recognising his or her limits and so falling into the illusion of being able to buy endless means for life by endless accumulation of money, destroys the community and so finally himself because human beings can only survive as social beings. This is why Aristotle demands a political prohibition of taking interest and of monopolies as well as an ethical education of the citizens concerning these matters.

There is one further dimension inherent in the described developments: 'the male domination'. The most probable hypothesis for the advent of patriarchy is the Kurgan hypothesis. [6] It seems that, beginning around 4400 BC, nomadic Kurgan people invaded Eastern and Southern Europe, coming from the Eurasian Steppes. They built their power on cattle husbandry and superior military power in the form of horses. They overpowered the earlier matrilineal agrarian culture.

Around the same time in the Middle East the hydraulic cultures developed large irrigation systems by hierarchical forms of organisation. When private property and money came into use this male domination became reinforced by the fact that only men could own property giving them also the political power. In Ancient Greece e.g. the farmer ruled as head of the household (as *despótes*) over land, slaves, women and children. In Rome property is called *dominium,* the *pater familias dominus.*

Interim conclusion

Within the necessary social coordination of the division of labour from the beginning we observe different forms developing over the centuries. After mutuality and solidarity in the tribal societies we find various forms of coordination exploiting labour, particularly agrarian

labour. Those who appropriate the surplus of the production process by tribute and collective forced labour are the military and administrative classes in the beginning.

With the introduction of both private property and money (with interest) leading to the accumulation of land on the one side and loss of land plus debt slavery on the other side the solidarity of peasants is broken. Besides direct oppression, this introduces anonymous indirect forms of extraction of the surplus of production, enhancing the splitting of societies in rich and poor. This is not just a structural problem because money also changes the souls of the people. Besides communicating through speech and cooperation humans start calculating, including calculating each other in competition. So we face a psychological and spiritual, in addition to the structural, problem.

After the break-down of the Roman Empire the money economy also disappeared more or less. **Early Capitalism (phase 5)** is again the beginning of a "Great Transformation". This is the title of the pivotal book of Karl Polanyi on the subject. [7] The key of his thesis is that since the 14th century AD the market sets out to conquer one sphere of life after the other. The basic step is the privatisation of land through enclosures subjecting agriculture to the mercantile coordination of labour. This leads to a substantial increase of agrarian production but also to a monetarisation of relations. What this means is aptly described by Jeremy Rifkin,

> *Relationships were reorganized. Neighbours became employees or contractors. Reciprocity was replaced with hourly wages. People sold their time and labour where they used to share their toil. Human beings began to view each other and everything around them in financial terms. Virtually everyone and everything became negotiable and could be purchased at an appropriate* price." [8]

Another new key element at that time is the introduction of double book-keeping. Everything starts to be calculated as input or output with the necessary result of a profit. It is the beginning of the generalising question: "What is in it for me?" governing every *ego* today.

Industrial capitalism (**phase 6**) deepens the division of labour and increases the split between the classes. The division of labour reaches the production itself. In the factory production of the Industrial Revolution, workers only produce a tiny section of the product. The key is a new calculation of costs in order to increase the profit of the capital owners, controlling the means of production, at any cost. From an ecological perspective the decisive factor is the use of fossil energy. It is the time of what is called "Manchester capitalism". With this kind of mercantile coordination of the division of labour we observe a new stage of social and ecological destruction.

Under the conditions of industrial capitalism endless growth of capital requires unlimited material throughput in order to satisfy the growth of consumption within a limited planet. A seven-year old child can understand that this is impossible - however, liberal economists can't!

Today's **financial capitalism** (**phase 7**) even endangers the life of humanity and the earth as such. The key mechanism to produce this effect is to press the quest for high profits for

capital investments and credits on all productive and distributive sectors. Consequently, the productive companies need to cut costs wherever possible: dumping wages, firing people through rationalisation instead of using the productivity gains for shortening work hours, avoiding paying the ecological costs wherever possible etc.

Agriculture is being transformed into agribusiness, neglecting the consequences for the health of people and the fertility of the earth. Technical innovations are selected and used for higher profits, not for improving life quality. The production is geared not to satisfy 'needs', but to create 'desires' towards limitless consumption. All of this forces the economy to grow – disregarding the ecological costs.

Where production is not yielding high enough profits, financial capital goes into all kinds of speculation, destabilising the whole system as experienced since 2008. The State is taken hostage by transferring the private debts to the public budgets robbing the public budgets of the possibility to secure welfare and social security for the people. The situation is aggravated by the fact that through the globalisation of capital, tax evasion of all sorts also robs the public budget of the necessary means. All this leads to structural adjustments, internationally enforced by the IMF, controlled by the rich countries, now hitting not only the populations of the impoverished global South but also of the rich countries, like in Europe.

Looking back at all phases of the division of labour it becomes clear that there is a red thread: It is the extraction of the surplus produced within the division of labour. [9] The original basis of the surplus was agriculture, extracted by cities and empires. Since the introduction of money and private property it is the owners of money/capital who profit from the growing role of market relations taking over the coordination of the division of labour. This means that the capital owners systematically, but legally, rob the rest of society and the earth and even take the lives of millions each year. This is what Johan Galtung calls "structural violence".

But this structural violence is also accompanied by direct violence. A convincing analysis of the historical phases of the linkage of structural and direct violence in the capitalist world system can be found in Giovanni Arrighi's book, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times*. [10] He shows how each regime of capital accumulation is coupled with a political-military-territorial power: First Genoa and Spain with the first modern European Empire, second Mercantilism under Dutch hegemony, third Industrial capitalism, under the hegemony of Great Britain, followed by the USA in the 20th Century.

As of the 1980s financial capitalism prepares the neo-liberal period under US-hegemony and exerts a double pronged rule: using financial mechanisms, explained above, and, where this does not work, asking the imperialist forces to depose or kill leaders of rebellions against the empire of capital and to install dictators in their place, like in the cases of Persia (1953), Congo (1960), Brazil (1964), Indonesia (1966), Chile (1973) and many others. [11] Where also this is not enough the USA and the "coalitions of the willing" intervene militarily-directly, like many times in Central America and the Caribbean and in the three Gulf wars with at least two million deaths, as well as in Afghanistan.

Structural and direct violence are finally supported by cultural violence. As we have already seen, the introduction of money and private property with the growing division of labour and exchange did not only change structures but the souls of human beings. The calculation in money terms is increasingly getting priority over speech, changing the human relations profoundly. Through the increasing rule of money and private property in a "dis-embedded economy" (Karl Polanyi [12]), human relations have become ever more commercialised and individualised.

In the early 17th Century Thomas Hobbes formulated this capitalist market anthropology by defining human beings as individuals competing for ever more wealth, power, and reputation. [13] This "possessive individualism" corresponds with the new subject-object dualism formulated by Descartes. He defined the human being as "master and owner of nature." [14] Along the same lines, Francis Bacon understood science as power: "the power and the dominion of the human species over the entire world of nature" – including women and indigenous people (Naturvölker) as part of nature. [15]

This whole approach is presented as rational. However, reason as *ratio* is reduced to the means-end rationality. [16] The male owner-master subject is the calculating individual, called *homo oeconomicus*. Efficiency and competitiveness are the benchmarks disregarding the conditions of life on earth. Hinkelammert characterises him as the person, putting all energy in sharpening the saw, with which he cuts the branch on which he sits. The whole system is regulated by the pursuit of individual calculated material interests disregarding the non-intentional effects on the whole of society and earth.

This is how the irrationality of the rationalised, which we are experiencing today, develops. Karl Marx puts it this way: "Capitalist production thus develops technology and, as its logical conclusion, the processes of social production, only by simultaneously undermining the sources of all wealth – the earth and the worker." [17]

So, in looking for alternatives of life we have to deal always with the interaction between the logic and the political-economic structures on the one side and human beings, driven by this logic and subjecting themselves to the law of capital accumulation, on the other side.

II. Alternative visions in the Bible and the Axial Age

If it is true that capitalism within the context of modernity as a whole, economically, politically and culturally leads to death, it is not a question of optional morality or ethics we are dealing with; it is a matter of life and death. If humanity and life on earth are to have a future we *must* change the dominant logic, structures and our own spirituality, thinking and acting at the same time. Where are the sources, powers and actors for such deep conversion? Let us first look at the ancient times when the money-property economy started.

The philosopher *Karl Jaspers*, after World War II, raised the question of why and how there was a basic turning point in human history during the period of 800-200 BCE and what this meant for developing a planetary new order. [18] He had observed that at the same time there was a basic transformation going on in distant cultures like Israel, India, China and

Greece in parallel ways. He saw the meaning of the change in an intellectual and spiritual breakthrough, providing the categories and potentials for the following human history, driving humanity towards universal communication. The time before this period he regarded as prehistory; this is why he named this period the "Axial Age". He could not find one single cause for the parallelism in the different cultures. He characterised the new approach as intellectual and spiritual ("*geist*"), looking only marginally at the economic and political context. On the whole his – very valuable – book takes an idealistic approach.

In 2006 Karen Armstrong also published a book on the Axial Age. [19] It is a detailed study of the cultures and religions in China, India, Israel/Judah and Greece during that period – admirable in depth and breadth. She starts from the present dangerous situation of our planet asking for a spiritual revolution transcending modernity; so she is also looking to the "Axial sages" for inspiration,

> *Their objective was to create an entirely different kind of human being. All the sages preached a spirituality of empathy and compassion; they insisted that people must abandon their egotism and greed, their violence and unkindness…each tradition developed its own formulation of the Golden Rule: do not do to others what you would not have done unto you. As far as the Axial sages were concerned, respect for the sacred rights of all beings – not orthodox belief – was religion. If people behaved with kindness and generosity to their fellows, they could save the world (XVIIIf).*

With this kind of approach she had to, and did, study the contexts of the respective Axial cultures. However, her main interest relates to overcoming war and violence; she touches economy only in passing. She also does not really harvest the consequences of her penetrating insights in the Axial spiritualities for the transformation of our present political economy, anthropology and spirituality.

This is what *Jeremy Rifkin* in his book *The Empathic Civilization* [20] tries to do, building – among others – on Armstrong's research of the Axial Age. This is also an admirable study, however, his hope for a decisive victory of empathy through modern communication techniques and what he calls "distributed capitalism" seems to neglect the analysis of the institutional and personal power of property and money as well as their influence on the other sectors of Western civilisation.

So how do we interpret the Axial Age? We have seen how the introduction of money, private property and interest in societies with a growing division of labour split the societies into rich and poor. The necessity to use money as measuring means of exchange provided the objective base for stimulating greed towards the limitless accumulation of money and property. The struggle against the new economy and its social and psychological effects, spreading increasingly since the 8th Century BC, can first be observed in Ancient Israel. Is it just by accident that this Century is regarded as the start of the Axial Age?

My thesis is that it is exactly the new economy, based on money and property, which prompts the Axial Age's religious and philosophical revolution. This economy was not only splitting societies into rich and poor and increasing the violence beyond the traditional direct

oppression of the peasants by the king and the aristocrats; it also changed the hearts and the thinking of the people as we have seen. This, of course, required not only a response on the power level of the political economy but also on the anthropological, psychological and spiritual levels. Exactly this is characteristic for the cultural and religious transformations of the Axial Age in Israel, India, China and Greece. I limit myself to the biblical heritage.

However, before I turn to Ancient Israel and the Jesus movement, let me begin with a caution. It is not possible to simply take the insights of the religions and philosophies of the Axial Age and apply them as a response to the crisis of our civilisation. Even religions are highly ambivalent. They can be used and perverted by political and economic powers to serve particular interests, even increasing injustice and violence. This is why we have to go through a (self-) critique of religion before we are equipped for the critique of modernity from the perspective of the Axial sage, and before we can turn to a new vision and practice of a life-giving culture. Critique of religion – however paradoxical this may sound – is a primary task for religion if it wants to live up to its true mission and original potentials.

This can already be seen in the Bible itself. Here we find an ongoing (self-) critical evaluation of the tradition. It finds its classical form in Jesus' message of God's reign, God's domination-free order, criticising all forms of oppression, legitimated by religion. In this perspective there is no pure text. Each text leads us into the conflict between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the dominating world order.

But there is one clear criterion to judge each text and use of the text – in the words of the Apostle Paul: "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world (i.e. the Plebeians in the Roman Empire, the Proletariat in modernity etc.), things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are…"(1 Cor. 1:27ff.). So reading the texts in this critical perspective from below can never fail. This is the biblical yard stick to carry out the critique of religion – a never-ending task.

In this critical perspective we can see several approaches in the Bible trying to overcome the negative effects of the new money-property economy linked to several kinds of political power.

Firstly, the historically-first critical reaction to the new economy is the protest of the great prophets in the last part of the 8th and the whole of the 7th Century BCE. Amos and Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others call for justice and righteousness, lost through the new property rights and money mechanisms. They claim that, with the cancellation of justice and the rights of the poor, Yahweh, the liberating God of Israel, has also been abandoned. For knowing God is identical to doing justice to the poor (Jer. 22:16).

Secondly, the prophetic interventions of the 8th and 7th centuries did have consequences. This can be seen by the legal reforms from this time and later. The first happened in the Southern Kingdom, probably after the experience of the catastrophic fall of the Northern Kingdom (722 BC). The codified result of this can be found in the so-called Book of Covenant (Ex 21-23). These beginnings were confirmed and unfolded in the second reform, the core of which can be found in Deuteronomy. The third reform is the Holiness Code

(Leviticus). They introduce preventive laws like the prohibition of taking interest, but also corrective laws like the Sabbath year, asking for the cancellation of debts and the release of debt slaves every seventh year.

The key is there must be no absolute property of land. Land must not be a commodity, but is entrusted to all families as productive property for use, because the land belongs to God and, therefore must be the basis for the means of life for all families (Lev. 25:23). Also, the Ten Commandments have to be understood in this context. Within the people of the liberating God there must be no exploitation of human labour, nor gods legitimating this, "I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other god into my face." The Tenth Commandment adds the prohibition of the greed for accumulation, "Neither shall you greedily desire your neighbour's house or field…or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Deut. 5:21).

This Torah could only be implemented after exile, when Judea, during the time of the Persian Empire, enjoyed semi-independence. Ton Veerkamp has just published a fascinating book on the political history of the Great Narrative of Israel. [21] Nehemiah, sent by the Empire to be governor in Judea, and the priest Ezra, play a central role in this. Up to their time the alternative to the normal orders of exploitation was but a minority position in Israel, represented by the great prophets and king Josiah (641-609 BCE). Only when Nehemiah had political power to introduce the Torah with full participation of the people could the society of Judea implement the fundamental new order of autonomy and equality.

This is why Ton Veerkamp calls this order "Torah Republic". God is identified with this new basic order, overcoming exploitation of the many and accumulation for the few. In order to implement this, the society of Judea had to separate itself from the other peoples and their gods. This was not done because of ethnic reasons, but because of implementing justice without antagonistic classes. Of course, this led to the resistance of the elites, but implanted a revolutionary vision into the history of humanity, inspiring not only Jesus and his movement, but countless people and groups up to this day. At that time the oral and written traditions of the people of Israel were put together in the form of the five books of the Torah, together with the books of the prophets, relating this vision to all future generations.

Thirdly, when the Hellenistic Empires start to become economically and politically totalitarian, the Judeans cannot implement the Torah anymore and respond by different forms of resistance. The key text for this period is the book of Daniel, showing different forms of non-violent direct action. Jesus is building on this apocalyptic resistance tradition, adding another element.

Fourthly, is the development of alternative, small scale communities, organising themselves in the form of a solidarity economy. This approach is picked up in the primitive church (cf. Acts 4:32ff.). Ton Veerkamp in his new book on the political history of the Great Narrative of Israel illuminates these findings by relating Paul to the question of the implementation of the Torah in the Torah Republic. [22] Here it was possible to live the alternative of Yahweh by separating the community from the peoples following the normal exploitation order, but with the totalising of this order in the Hellenistic and Roman Empires, Paul realised that this had become impossible. So in order to implement the Torah a world revolution was necessary. It

could happen by building new communities all over the Empire where Jews and Greeks (*gojim*), men and women, masters and slaves, whom the Empire was dividing, lived together as the body of the Messiah in equality and solidarity (*agape*).

Fifthly, linked to these struggles for an alternative political economy in Israel and the Jesus movements there are efforts to discover what it means to be really human. The prophet Ezekiel, during the Babylonian exile, is the first to discover the humanness of God (chap.1). On this basis, the priestly Genesis narrative speaks about the relational female and male couple, created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28). The priestly Holiness Code summarizes the consequence: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18).

Daniel 7 sees the kingdom of God with a human face overcoming the imperial predatory beasts. Jesus links the knowledge of God with the love of the neighbour in the sense of the Levinas translation of the verse: "Love your neighbor – it is yourself". Paul deepens this insight by critically analysing the co-opting of the law through greed and power, so that it becomes a law of death. In contrast he promotes the fulfillment of the law through love, solidarity between the different groups, divided and driven against each other by the Empire (Rom 13:8-10).

So we can identify five biblical options in dealing with the market economy and empire, as well as the calculating subject, which goes along with them. They are:-

1. Prophetic critique of economic and political power in the perspective of creating just relations in society;
2. Legal regulation of the system as long as there is a chance to reform it;
3. Resistance in the case of totalitarian empires;
4. Living alternatively in small groups becoming a kind of leaven in society – even forming networks of solidarity between those groups throughout the empire (cf. the collection of the Apostle Paul for the poor in Jerusalem, 2 Cor. 8-9).
5. The discovery of relational love/solidarity as the alternative to the imperial Roman law that kills as well as to the distorted human way of life, captured by the sin of greed.

These biblical approaches could be complemented by other responses from religions and philosophies of the Axial Age. Let me only mention Buddhism. Here the main starting point is the liberation from the illusion of the *ego*, greedily and aggressively trying to accumulate and to defend the possessions, thus creating suffering. The way out has to be found by walking the eightfold Noble Path, including the realisation of the knowledge of mutual inter-dependency of all living beings, empathy and loving kindness. Each person is called to walk this path in the context of communities (*sanghas*).

Islam can be interpreted as another wave of the Axial Age spirituality.
As outlined above, in reality we face the ambivalence of religions. Besides sectors who try to live up to the liberating aspects of the original impulses of the Axial Age we find sectors in complicity with the dominating system. As this is globally endangering life, my conclusion is that the liberating sectors of faith communities have to build up alliances of solidarity for life in just relations among themselves and together with social movements. According to Matthew 25: 31ff, Jesus sees those who care for the satisfaction of the basic needs of the

people (hunger, thirst etc.), as the ones who finally are accepted in the eyes of the human one – regardless whether they carry the label of a Jesus follower or not. Together they can form groups of healing and liberation from the Roman system in those days and from the capitalist mentality and practice today.

III. How to implement the biblical visions today?

On the basis of our analysis of modernity and the Axial Age the key question is how to develop a new understanding and practice of human life in liberated just relationships and how to organise the political economy accordingly.

In this context it is of help that even in Western sciences new thinking – similar to the perspectives of the Axial sages – is emerging. For example, brain research has discovered that the human being has a natural tendency towards empathy through the so-called mirror neurons. They explain why we spontaneously feel pain when we see pain in another living being. There is also a tendency towards cooperation. [23]

Relational psychology points into the same direction of *homo empathicus*. [24] William Fairbairn, Heinz Kohut, Donald Winnicott and others have demonstrated that sociability is the primary drive in human beings, while aggression is a compensatory response, when the primary drive is violated by biographic experiences. Subjectivity is grounded in inter-subjectivity. Even biology has discovered that many animal species besides primates participate in the mirror neuron system, showing empathy. [25] Already the later works of Darwin (*The Descent of Man* and *Expressions of the Emotions in Man and Animals*) realised the emotional, social nature of animals.

"Darwin came to believe that the survival of the fittest is as much about cooperation, symbiosis, and reciprocity as it is about individual competition and that the most fit are just as likely to enter into cooperative bonds with their fellows." [26] Even certain schools of economics are rediscovering the commons (e.g. Elinor Ostrom), and economic happiness research is revising the significance of wealth accumulation, putting the main emphasis on successful relationships.

David Korten, choosing life as the guiding metaphor, has outlined the consequences of these insights for an economic paradigm transcending capitalism and a centrally-planned economy. [27] Building on research results of biologists like Lynn Margulis he designs an economy patterned after the model of living organisms. They work in a de-centralised, yet coordinated, self-organising way. No cell is allowed to grow disproportionately – this would be cancer (like capitalism). No cell dominates the rest (like a centrally-planned economy). Rather every cell cooperates with the whole for the survival of the whole. Institutionally, this approach can be complemented by the concept of the commons. It avoids the absoluteness of private property as well as that of State property, concentrating economic and political power at the top.

This concept has also deep theological implications. In his draft of a guilt-confession of the churches Dietrich Bonhoeffer formulates, "The church confesses her guilt in relation to all ten

commandments…She was not able to communicate God's care credibly enough so that all human economic activity would have received its task from this perspective." [28] This means that the whole economy must be built on God's gifts, to secure the life of all creatures – in opposition to commodifying nature in the interest of accumulation of capital (cf. Lev. 25:23).

On this conceptual basis Korten proposes a strategy under the formula "*Starve the Cancer – Nurture Life".* [29] Working for a life-enhancing economy we have to withdraw energy from the dominating death-bound, cancerous system, while at the same time we develop life-oriented economic activities and institutions. How could this strategy be unfolded and concretised?

We can withhold legitimacy and energy from the system by various means. First, we can demystify the myths and blatant lies by which capitalism, especially in its neo-liberal imperial form, justifies and smokescreens its premises and consequences. [30] Take, for example, the myth that technological development destroys jobs. What if the productivity gains were used to shorten work hours instead of being drawn into capital accumulation? Or the claim that capitalist globalisation creates growth and welfare for all? What if the social and ecological losses of this approach result in a net minus? Or take the theory that the financial system works best in a self-regulating market?

The financial crisis is a chance for people to start distrusting these mainstream economic theories. A second step to withdraw energy from the system is defiance, saying a clear 'No' to the system as such and implementing the 'No' through boycotts. The Lutheran and Reformed World Communities as well as the WCC declared their clear 'No' in official Assembly decisions between 2003 and 2006. The Reformed Accra Confession [31] is the most well-known text of these, saying e.g.,

> *(18) We believe that God is sovereign over all creation. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24.1).*
> *(19) Therefore, we reject the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God's covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life. We reject any claim of economic, political, and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule.*

Nurturing life is made possible by a double strategy. Firstly, it can be implemented on a small scale when people at the local/regional level or as members of an intentional organisation choose to work in post-capitalist ways. [32] One example is the Local Exchange and Trading Systems (LETs), another cooperative banks. There are 35 alternative banks in Europe coordinated in I.N.A.I.S.E (International Association of Social Finance Organizations). [33]

Another key field of action is energy production. The energy of the future, sun, wind, water and biomass is available in de-centralised forms. Every community can make itself independent of the big capitalist corporations controlling the energy market. In Germany our

best example is *Schönau* in the Black Forest, having gained complete energy self-reliance. Finally, basic foodstuff can be produced and marketed locally/regionally by producer-consumer cooperatives. Another name for this type of small-scale economy is the social or solidarity economy. [34] All of this people can do while the dominating system is still in place. But this is not enough in itself because the system is constantly threatening the survival of the small scale alternatives, so we need to address the macro-structures at the same time.

Therefore, the second part of the strategy is to regain the control of the macro-system by and for the people in order to re-appropriate the gifts of God, robbed by the capital owners and their political and ideological servants, for the life of all people in harmony with nature. The starting point must be the goods and services for the satisfaction of the basic needs of people: water, food, energy, housing, health, education, transport etc. It is here where people can be mobilised and build alliances between social movements, trade unions, faith communities etc. for resistance and alternatives.

If it is true that the misuse of money and private property is at the roots of bad socio-economic, political and psychological developments starting almost 3,000 years ago and that it is here where the religions of the Axial Age are looking for alternatives we have to concentrate here, too.

The first structural question, therefore, is about how to organise property beyond the false alternative of absolute private or state property. Here all kinds of alternative cultural traditions, including socialist ones, come into play. There is not just one property order, but a host of legal and institutional options as Franz Hinkelammert and myself have shown in designing a new property order from below. [35] Key is that the people affected are the subjects of the ownership arrangement. Here are some examples of such struggles,

i. For water and energy as common good against privatisation
ii. For education, health and transport as public services
iii. For a life-giving agriculture
iv. For the worker's co-ownership and control of the means of production in industry
v. For organising enterprises not according to the criteria of the maximisation of profit but of the common good (that this is possible is shown in an Austrian Attac initiative growing from 0 to more than 500 small and medium sized enterprises within two years [36]).
vi. For allowing all people the same ecological footprint (e.g. towards the goal of reaching emissions of 2 tons of carbon-dioxide per year/person in order to limit the global warming to 2 degrees Celsius)
vii. For tax justice etc.

Attac-Austria has also brought together several proposals, being discussed in the alternative movements and academic community for years to redesign the money and the finance system. [37] The key is that money is no more a commodity, but a common good, and banks are organised democratically. In all brevity let me summarise those proposals,

1. Banks are no longer allowed to create money through interest bearing credits (debt money) as already Rowbotham and others have demanded. [38] Money is provided only by

democratically-controlled central banks. Internationally the old proposal of Keynes is taken up to create an international central bank issuing a neutral reserve currency, the *bancor*, now called *globo*. The national currencies are flexibly fixed to this standard, being devalued or revalued according to changing strengths of the respective buying powers.

2. Banks are democratically-organised according to subsidiarity (not nationalised!). The local/regional banks are the basis. Their only task is to collect savings and to give credits from the savings. They are non-profit institutions. There is no interest for either savings or credits, only fees to cover the administration of the bank and costs for balancing out the losses of inflation as long as this exists. For larger credits the local banks feed provincial or national democratic banks. This integrated system also takes over risk investments for socio-ecological projects. Stock markets cease to exist. A first necessary step is to dismantle system-relevant banks that are too big to fail. They have been politically built up during the last 30 years, so they can be split into smaller pieces politically as well.

3. All present casino instruments of the financial markets like derivatives, hedgefunds, rating agencies etc. are closed down.

4. There is no income on capital anymore. Income is generated from work. The income differential may be 20 times the minimum wage. Inheritance is limited to the equivalent of 500,000 €; beyond that it will be taxed at 100%. In the case of enterprises, the common good enterprises are in the hands of the employees anyway. Those belonging to a family may be distributed in a balance between family tradition and equal chances for all working for the families. E.g. up to ten million € may stay in the ownership of the heirs, the rest becomes the property of the employees. There may be other models as the example of the enterprise Hoppmann in Germany shows. [39] Here the heir transformed his inherited enterprise capital into a foundation, governed democratically by the employees and himself.

5.The present over-indebtedness of States can be overcome by making the exorbitant wealth, gathered in the last 30 years of neoliberalism, repay the debt in various ways:-

> (1) by a financial transaction tax of e.g. 0.1% resulting in an annual sum of 272 billion € in the EU.
> (2) by an average 2% progressive tax on assets beyond 1 million resulting in an annual sum of 500 billion € in the EU. This would only hit the upper 10% of the population owning two-thirds of all assets (the total being e.g. in Germany 8 trillion €)
> (3) by a 25% tax on income on capital (as long as it exists).This would amount to about 250 billion € in the EU. The problem of tax havens can be solved by prohibiting or taxing transfers to them, easily technically-controlled via the clearing systems for payments.
> (4) finally, by increasing corporation tax Europe-wide. This requires the dismantling of tax competition between the member states of the EU. This would bring a further 130 billion € into public hands.

6. These four devices would not only bring about *1150 billion €* into the public budgets annually to repay the debt but it could also be the lever to prevent new debt States beyond the present ceiling of 60% of the GNP. Especially, when the central banks will be

empowered to provide the States with money, the following rule could be applied; whenever a State contracts debt beyond the 60% they will be sanctioned to increase the four taxes until the debt is balanced again.

These are some of the necessary and possible steps and means to transcend capitalism, the very essence of which is to make capital grow on the basis of money as a commodity and absolute private ownership of the means of production. A political economy along these lines will not create a paradise. There will be conflicts. Therefore, representative democracy, because it has been co-opted by the Empire of capital, will have to be complemented by direct and participative democracy in order to find people-centered solutions in the frame of a people-driven economy. The present crisis shows that without a democratisation of economy there will be plutocracy and no democracy.

It needs no mentioning that these proposals are in line with the biblical vision to ban exploitation and accumulation of wealth by the few at the cost of the many and the earth. As Jesus asked people to choose between the God of justice and Mammon, humanity today has to choose. This is most difficult for those who live in the illusion they can be winners while the situation of the majority of people and the earth is deteriorating. Continuing in the present way of capitalism and modernity will be suicidal. Becoming human in just relationships and developing the political economy accordingly will help us to find a way towards life in dignity – also for our children and grand-children.

Notes

[1] Building on HINKELAMMERT, F.J./Mora, H.M.: *Coordinación social del trabajo, mercado y reproducción de la vida humana.* San José/Costa Rica: DEI, 2001

[2] Cf. DUCHROW, Ulrich / Hinkelammert, Franz J.: *Property for People, Not for Profit: Alternatives to the Global Tyranny of Capital.* London and Geneva: Zed Books in association with the Catholic Institute for International Relations and the World Council of Churches, 2004

[3] Brodbeck, Karl-Heinz, 2009, Die Herrschaft des Geldes. Geschichte und Systematik, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt. See also Sozialgeschichtliches Wörterbuch zur Bibel, hg. von Crüsemann, F./Hungar,C./Janssen, C./ Kessler, R./Schottroff, L., 2009, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh, Art. Geld.

[4] Cf. KIPPENBERG, Hans G.: *Die Typik der antiken Entwicklung, in: idem, (ed.) Seminar: Die Entstehung der antiken Klassengesellschaft.* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977

[5] Cf. Brodbeck, op. cit. 412ff.; *Duchrow, Ulrich*, (1995) 1998, Alternatives to Global Capitalism - Drawn from Biblical History, Designed for Political Action, International Books with Kairos Europa, Utrecht, 20ff

[6] Cf. RIFKIN, Jeremy: *The Empathic Civilization. The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis.* London: Penguin Books, 2009, p. 22f. with further literature, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurgan#Kurgan_hypothesis

[7] POLANYI, Karl: *The Great Transformation.* New York [u.a.]: Rinehart, 1944. Cf. also Duchrow/Hinkelammert, op.cit. chapter 2

[8] RIFKIN, Jeremy: *The Biotech Century.* New Y: Putnam, 1998, 40f

[9] Cf. Hinkelammert/Mora, op.cit. 193ff

[10] G. Arrighi, 1994; cf. DUCHROW, Ulrich: *Europe in the World System 1492-1992,* Geneva: WCC, 1992

[11] Cf. PERKINS, John: *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man.* San Fancisco: Berret-Koehler Publishers, 2004; DUCHROW, U./Eisenbürger, G.,/Hippler, J. (ed.): *Total War Against the Poor: Confidential Documents of the*

17th Conference of American Armies, Mar del Plata, Argentina, 1987. New York: New York CIRCUS Publications, 1990

[12] *Polanyi, Karl*, op. cit.

[13] Cf. Duchrow/Hinkelammert, op. cit., chapter 2

[14] Cf. DUCHROW, Ulrich/Liedke, Gerhard: *Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice and Peace.* Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1989, pp. 65ff

[15] *ibid*

[16] Cf. HINKELAMMERT, Franz: *Das Subjekt und das Gesetz. Die Wiederkehr des verdrängten Subjekts.* Münster: Edition ITP-Kompass, 2007, chapters 1 and 9 (in English to be published in our new book "Transcending the Spirituality of Money")

[17] Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, Werke Bd. 23, Das Kapital, Berlin/DDR. 1976, S. 530 (Complete Works Vol. 23, Capital)

[18] JASPERS, Karl: *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte.* Zürich: Artemis, 1949 (Engl. ed. *Jaspers, Karl*, 2010, The Origin and Goal of History, Routledge Revivals, UK.). Cf. also EISENSTADT, Shmuel: The Axial Age: The Emergence of Transcendental Visions and the Rise of Clerics. *In: European Journal of Sociology* 23 (1982) Nr. 2, S. 294–314

[19] ARMSTRONG, Karen: *The Great Transformation. The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions.* New York: Anchor Books/Random House*, 2006.* As far as I can see, she does not indicate that she takes her title from the pivotal study of *Karl Polanyi*, op. cit.

[20] *Rifkin, Jeremy*, 2009

[21] VEERKAMP, Ton: *Die Welt anders. Politische Geschichte der Großen Erzählung.* Hamburg: Argument/InkriT, 2011, 117ff

[22] *ibid*., 253ff

[23] Cf. BAUER, Joachim: *Warum ich fühle, was du fühlst - Intuitive Kommunikation und das Geheimnis der Spiegelneuronen.* Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2005 6. Aufl.; idem, 2008, Prinzip Menschlichkeit: Warum wir von Natur aus kooperieren, Heyne, München; Rifkin, op. cit. p. 82ff

[24] Cf. DUCHROW, Ulrich/Bianchi, Reinhold/Krüger, René/Petracca, Vincenzo: *Solidarisch Mensch werden. Psychische und soziale Destruktion im Neoliberalismus - Wege zu ihrer Überwindung.* Hamburg/Oberursel: VSA in Kooperation mit Publik-Forum, 2006; Rifkin, op. cit. p. 55f

[25] Cf. Rifkin, 2009, p. 82ff

[26] Ibid. p.91

[27] KORTEN, David: *The Post-Corporate World: Life after Capitalism.* West Hartford, CT/SanFrancisco, CA: Kumarian Press/Berret-Koehler, 2000, p. 103ff

[28] D. Bonhoeffer, Ethik, DWB, vol. 6, 131ff.: „*Die Kirche bekennt sich schuldig aller 10 Gebote...sie hat die Fürsorge Gottes nicht so glaubhaft zu machen vermocht, dass alles menschliche Wirtschaften von ihr aus seine Aufgabe in Empfang genommen hätte.*"

[29] Korten, op. cit. 262ff

[30] Cf. e.g. JENKINS, David: *Market Whys & Human Wherefores: Thinking Again About Markets, Politics and People.* London: Cassell, 2000

[31] http://warc.jalb.de/warcajsp/news_file/The_Accra_Confession_English.pdf

[32] Cf. DOUTHWAITE, Richard: *Short Circuit: Strengthening Local Economies for Security in an Unstable World.* Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1996

[33] http://www.inaise.org/en/node/11

[34] For Europe see http://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/?lang=en; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarity_economy.; http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economia_solidária

[35] Duchrow/Hinkelammert, op.cit., ch. 7

[36] Cf. FELBER, Christian: *Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie. Das Wirtschaftsmodell der Zukunft.* Wien: Deuticke, 2010

[37] Cf. ibid. 50ff. and FELBER, Christian: *Retten wir den Euro.* Wien: Deuticke, 2012; http://www.attac.de/aktuell/krisen/bankentribunal/programm0/forum-der-alternativen/alternatives-finanzsystem/

[38] ROWBOTHAM, Michael: *The Grip of Death: A study of modern money, debt slavery and destructive economics.* Charlbury/UK: Jon Carpenter, 1998

[39] BELITZ, Wolfgang (Hg.): *Hoppmann - Eine unternehmerische Alternative. Mit demokratischer Beteiligung und sozialer Gerechtigkeit zum wirtschaftlichen Erfolg.* Lengerich u.a.: Pabst, 2011

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Economic Injustice – a Mythological Perspective

Dr Jonathan Ingleby, Former Head of Mission Studies and Honorary Fellow, Redcliffe College

Introduction

Many years ago when I used to teach about 'culture' I would begin with a definition ('the integrated system, characteristic of the members of a society, of learnt attitudes and behaviour patterns leading to a world view') that suggested to my students that essentially culture is 'all in the mind'. Even what seems to be a very concrete expression of a culture – something like its architecture – is the product of mythological thinking. Myths of this sort have always been the indispensable foundation of the powerful political, economic and social movements that make up a culture. The fascist culture of the Third Reich, to take an obvious example, was informed by a number of myths to do with racial supremacies and historical entitlements. Further, though myths are not necessarily or essentially evil, they often are.

The Industrial-Military Complex

It is easy to underestimate ideologies. There is always a danger that when we consider economic injustice – as we are trying to do in this essay – the first thing that comes to mind is institutions and organisations, made up of something very recognisable, namely people with jobs, working at specific sites, often producing certain goods and services. Take, for instance, the industrial-military complex, an excellent example of something which has produced multiple economic injustices. This is not, of course, because of the jobs, sites, goods and services, but because the industrial-military complex has grown into a means whereby wealthy nations have imposed their will on other nations to their economic advantage. But my big point is this. They have been able to do this, not only because they have the institutional structures, but also because of the widely believed myths that support their behaviour, myths such as 'redemptive violence' and 'security'. In order to make my point I want to take this example – the industrial-military complex – and the two supporting myths – 'redemptive violence' and 'security' – and look at them in a little more detail.

First, let me say something about the industrial-military complex itself. The US defence budget is the largest in the world by far, and Britain's is the second largest. According to the 2010 edition of the *Economist Pocket World in Figures* [1] the United States spent $552.6 billion on defence in 2007 with the United Kingdom second with $66.3 billion. Together these nations are responsible for many injustices, most of them only possible because of the vast size of these military budgets. The mythological framework also allows them to perpetrate these injustices with something like a good conscience. As I hope to show, myths such as 'redemptive violence' and 'security' are the fuel in the motor of something – the industrial-military complex – which otherwise would appear to be so irrational and monstrous, that public opinion – to extend the metaphor – would bring it to a standstill.

The 'Redemptive Violence' Myth

'Redemptive violence' as a myth has been beautifully explained by Walter Wink [2] (with the help of Paul Ricoeur) and I only want to sketch in the details here. Basically, the idea is that violence is permissible if it is in a good cause, particularly where it is used to counter *unjust* violence. It is the Wild West ethic. In the typical Wild West story a town is being terrorised by evil outlaws. A gunfighter appears, who by superior gunfire can subdue the enemy and set the citizens free. Sometimes the gunman is the sheriff (or a new sheriff) but more often he is a lone trouble-shooter who is above the law. He comes in, does the business, and then leaves as mysteriously as he came, and it is this mysterious feeling which helps to heighten the mythological quality of the story. Of course, in any law-and-order story there is a debate about the proper use of violence. On one view a duly appointed sheriff has the sort of authority that includes the use of force within certain limits. In the same way, a police force, or a trans-national force, like the UN peacekeepers, may have the right to use force in well-defined circumstances. In these cases, however, the use of violence lies within the notion of lawful procedure. The final appeal is to the law, while the final appeal in the case of 'redemptive violence' is to violence itself, or to a 'justice' defined by the enforcer; a 'justice' which all too often consists of 'might is right'.

The 'Security' Myth

A second myth is that of security, that is to say the absolute right of the powerful to use any means that come to hand to secure themselves against possible threats, including the threat to their standard of living. There are many examples of this myth in action in quite recent history. Some of the most deadly examples might be: the decimation of the native populations of North America and Australia to provide land and 'security' for the white settlers; the annihilation of a whole class, the Kulaks, in Soviet Russia, to save the communist experiment from its enemies; the attempted systematic destruction of the Jewish people to 'cleanse' (notice the word) the German people.

Security in recent times has been particularly linked with counter-terrorism, and the 'war against terror' has thrown up multiple injustices, large and small. I mention just three of them. The first is the death of many Iraqi civilians in a war which was supposedly to protect the West from weapons of mass destruction – and so improve its security (the war was later billed as the means towards the overthrow of a tyrant, but this only became the major rationale after it was clear that there were no weapons of mass-destruction). If the actual reason for the war was securing access to oil (which it may well have been) then that is even more sinister, because the security of Britain and the United States also depends on adequate oil supplies.

On a smaller scale there is the use of drones in Afghanistan and even within the borders of NATO's 'ally', Pakistan. It is clear that in virtually every drone strike innocent people are killed. In such a strike the victims cannot defend themselves in court, for example, by showing that they are ignorant of what is going on and therefore innocent. They are simply slaughtered by some 'higher power' that they have never met, or even seen at a distance. It is a worse situation, from a justice point of view, than, say, bombers that cause civilian casualties in a war-time bombing raid, because such bombers, at least in theory, have a military target within an

enemy country (the deliberate targeting of civilian populations, as done by both side in World War II is, of course, inexcusable). Drones by contrast work in a 'mixed' situation where many of the casualties are simply going about their business without any thought of war. Even the so-called enemies who are being so deliberately and precisely targeted, might be able to prove their innocence if they were given the chance.

A third example would be the use of torture to extract information which might (or might not) be useful in preventing a terrorist attack, and so increase 'security'. But then we know that all sorts of powerful people use violence, including torture, to protect their security. We condemn this example of 'ends justifying the means', while condoning it when it plays in our favour. President Assad of Syria sees himself as the head of his country's legitimate government. Why should he not shoot, maim and torture those whom he rightly sees as threatening his government? In other words, when we put our security first, we quickly become terrorists ourselves. Policemen acting outside the law, or using such methods as torture, are still acting unlawfully even though they are policemen and think that they are serving a good cause.

Leaving the Empire - Conclusion

In John's Apocalypse we read about some of the commercial activities carried on by the Roman Empire (18:11-20) including the economic injustices that were part of this. Christian people living in the Empire were ordered by God to leave, 'so that you will not share in her sins' (18:4). This could not have meant to leave the Empire in a geographical sense – there was nowhere to go. It meant rather that they must leave the structures of economic injustice that they were part of. As Twenty-first Century Christians, we need to work on this idea. Commerce is not necessarily wrong, but exploitative commerce certainly is. Is it really possible to work justly within the industrial-military complex, for example? We need to think about it, and not only about who pays my wages, but where I shop, where I go on holiday, indeed my whole life-style. Also, as I have tried to demonstrate, our Christian consciences can be easily deluded by the powerful myths that excuse, validate and promote these structures of economic injustice.

Notes

[1] London: Profile Books, 2009 p. 103

[2] *Engaging the Powers*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992 pp. 13-3

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Economic Justice Matters; The Iniquity of Unfair Trade and Global Tax-dodging

Sue Richardson, Church Relationships Officer, Christian Aid

Background

For more than 60 years Christian Aid, a development agency and charity supported by the British Churches, has worked to alleviate poverty and its injustices in some of the poorest nations of the world and with some of the poorest communities. Over six decades our way of 'doing development' through partnership with groups and organisations from the Majority World has been refined by experience and by the challenges that those partners have brought to our attention, so we have learned that to be effective the development process needs to draw upon the solutions that emerge when the poor become the drivers of that process and that it must engage the energies and mobilise the resources that even the very poorest can bring to bear on their own problems.

The Christian faith believes that charity is a virtue and encourages generosity to those less fortunate, but the experience of the persistence of poverty, over time and despite the efforts of generous donors, illustrates that poverty is multi-dimensional and complex, and is reinforced, and often even created, by systems and structures that underlie the relationships between North and South, between rich and poor in our world. Yet these systems and structures are often not critiqued, having emerged over historical time and being regarded as normative by those who shape them and benefit from them.

There is a popular aphorism about the importance of development that goes: if you give a man a fish you feed him for a day, but if you teach him to fish he can feed himself for life. This is regularly used to explain the desirability of moving on from emergency aid and giving to people only what they need to survive, to delivering development projects and programmes. However, in itself it begs some questions. The ability to fish is useless if there is no access to seashore or river bank because that is owned and controlled by another. Without investment or some capital support, fishing remains at the level of subsistence whilst real change in the prospects of the man and his dependent family requires active participation in economic systems of trade, marketing, savings and loans, training and education, skills development and the exercise of power within all those exchanges.

There are so many points at which the development process can be hindered or brought to a complete stop because of an unequal operation of power in any one of those areas and it can also be affected by the operation of systems beyond the personal and communal levels where the individual feels able to have influence. Christian Aid, through its funding, can mobilise capital through microcredit schemes, can provide training and enable access to information for technical improvements, and it can assist in the formation of co-operatives for marketing and production. However, there are still areas of international policy which are beyond immediate influence.

Debts and Charity

In the 1990s one economic focus was on the indebtedness of Majority World nations to the multilateral financial agencies which were predominately under the influence of the developed world – the USA, the EU, Australia, Canada and Japan. In 1995, I hosted a visitor to the East Midlands from Zimbabwe. Lyn Mukunoweshuro was a young woman of 28 who had benefitted from the liberal education policies of the newly-independent Zimbabwe and had found a role using her business skills with a co-ordinating organisation enabling small rural producers to come together to enhance their productivity and their access to market. Her organisation received funding from Christian Aid and whilst she was grateful, she told Christian Aid supporters across Leicestershire, for the £20,000 that was made available every year, she questioned its impact on the larger scale while her country was required to pay many millions of pounds more to international agencies in debt repayments on earlier and contested borrowings.

Her advocacy enabled Christian Aid donors to understand that to be effective in addressing poverty demanded more from them than simply donating money; it also required that they raise their voices to their own representatives in the UK Government about injustices in policy at national and international level.

At that time Christian Aid was engaged in a public campaign on International Financial Institutions and their programmes of Structural Adjustment in debtor nations that had the effect of reducing the economic sovereignty of their governments by enforcing policies of privatisation of national enterprises, increasing the export of commodities (even if the global result was a fall in international market prices) and the reduction of funding for public services combined with the extension of charges for the beneficiaries of education and healthcare. [1]

The Jubilee 2000 campaign alerted the general public of a wide international community to the absurdities of making the very poor pay for the financial polices of their often unrepresentative governments and the fluctuations of the international financial markets. As a result, large scale debt relief was proposed and, in some cases, actually delivered. The amount of debt cancelled would have taken an organisation like Christian Aid more than 1,000 years to raise through traditional fundraising.

In the run-up to the Millennium I had another African visitor, Christopher Mwakasege, from a debt-lobbying group in Tanzania called Tasoet, which was also supported by Christian Aid. In the presentations he gave, Christopher was anxious to encourage support for debt cancellation for his nation, but also informed his audiences that debt relief would mean little to Tanzania if the country could not earn its way in the world by a more equal participation in international trade.

Just Trading

As the first decade of the 21st Century unfolded, Christian Aid extended its campaigning on that very issue. From the early 1990s the organisation had made a significant contribution to the awareness amongst consumers of the need for 'Fair Trade', and to the growth of a market for products certified as being the result of fair trading relationships in British supermarkets. Although commanding a rapidly growing segment of the market, it was

obvious that fairtrade alone could not address the inequalities of global trading relationships that had developed, as prices for raw materials and unprocessed commodities plummeted over two decades, alongside the systematic exclusion from the markets of the rich world of processed goods from Majority World nations by a series of tariff charges, customs levies and quotas.

A series of campaigning actions encouraged Christian Aid supporters and the general public to bring pressure to bear on the controlling members of the World Trade Organisation – again the USA and the EU - to recognise the difficulties experienced by emerging economies as they tried to compete in a global market place where powerful multinational interests enforced rules that were designed to create global free trade, but which seemed, in their operation, to penalise the less powerful and bolster the existing advantage of the major global economies. [2]

The attempt to reform the World Trade Organisation has stalled for the moment. The aim of renegotiating multilateral agreement amongst trading nations has failed despite annual meetings of the World Trade Organisation and countries have fallen back on bilateral agreements which are not always based on the needs of poor countries and their economies. But even as the trading discussions continue, another element in the financial interactions of nations has come to the fore.

A Question of Tax

The resources that have funded development for richer nations and which continue to make the provision of services for well-being available for their populations have come in the main from tax revenues paid by the population and by their wealth-generating enterprises. However, tax payment is not always popular and as economies have globalised it has become possible to use the complexities of many financial arrangements and loopholes in tax legislation to move profits beyond the reach of tax and, by dint of creative accountancy, to limit the amount of profit declared in higher tax zones in favour of presenting it in places with lower tax regimes.

These two practices, opaqueness in financial transactions and the existence of places where tax is low or non-existent (tax havens), have reduced the revenue available to all governments for public spending, but have the most serious and damaging effects on poorer nations facing the challenges of delivering investment in infrastructure and services needed by their populations. For Christian Aid it is another area of legitimate concern and action in terms of the effective use of the donations received for development from ordinary people and communities in the UK.

Tax, not aid, is the most sustainable source of finance for development, as not only does it allow governments to generate revenue from their own economic activity, but it promotes the accountability of those governments to their own people, enhancing democracy. To highlight these processes is to indicate how public policy assists or hinders development and for Christian Aid, as an agency of the churches, it is a public expression of the theology that inspires the organisation and motivates its supporters.

Relationships, both Human and Divine

This theology is understood as essentially about relationship. The Old Testament evidences the establishment and development of God's relationship with his creation and particularly with the human beings in that creation. Jesus speaks of a relationship of unity with the Father and invites all those who follow him to model their relationships on that unity, both with Himself and with the neighbour whom God has created and whom they are commanded to love.

Our world witnesses to the breakdown of relationship and the consequences of it. Broken relationships result in inequality, injustice, poverty and violence and our experience of those things impairs our relationship with God, who is described as essentially just. Working for development is a way of repairing broken relationships on a large scale and must include the removal of inequality and injustice which are features of our current ways of relating as rich and poor on our planet. Paying tax is a sign of our understanding of the relationships on which our society is based. It demonstrates the mutuality of contributing to and serving the well-being of all by all in whatever ways that we are able and the awareness that in our complex world we delegate the provision of much general care to the State. Therefore, the State has a right to regulate those contributions through tax.

The Churches are also challenged to be a prophetic voice when times are difficult and issues are contested. There is a general feeling that taxes are to be avoided and that wealth is linked to worth and its pursuit is without moral effect. There is also a pervading sense of fear that there simply is not enough to go around, what Walter Brueggemann calls the 'myth of scarcity', [3] so that anything that is acquired must be held tight and augmented against the possibility of future want. But we believe in a God who promises life to all and life in abundance, if we can lose our fear and trust in His willingness to provide for all.

The Hebrews fleeing slavery in Egypt were fed in the wilderness with manna, but found that hoarding excess was a waste of energy as the extra simply went bad. The man whose harvest increase demanded the building of new barns had no-one to celebrate with but his unwelcome guest, Death. The disciples were challenged by Jesus to undertake the feeding of 5,000 by thinking outside the market economy and falling back on what was given to share. The economy of God understands the concept of 'enough'; the Eucharist reminds us that when we offer bread and it is blessed, broken and shared, all who come to the table will receive.

Tax and the Poor

Christian Aid believes that due payment of tax is important for poor nations and poor communities, but unless there is financial transparency within multinational enterprises and an end to tax havens, the poorer nations of the world will continue to lose as much as $160 billion annually in legitimately-owed revenue [4]. $160 billion is approximately one and a half times the annual sum of global aid from rich countries to poor, and it is several times larger than the $40-60billion that the World Bank estimates is needed annually to meet the UN's Millennium Development Goals, which are intended to halve poverty by 2015. If that $160 billion was allocated according to present spending patterns in poor countries, and with the

same degree of effectiveness, the additional revenues would save the lives of 1,000 children a day under the age of five. [5]

When your tax is deducted at source, as it is for me and many of us in regular employment, it is quite difficult to understand how it is possible to dodge the responsibility to pay tax on seriously large profits. If you are a very wealthy individual or a large corporation with interests in a number of countries you can use a number of strategies to hide away money or reduce liability to tax.

Tax Havens

`There's a building in the Cayman Islands that houses supposedly 12,000 US corporations. That's either the biggest building in the world or the biggest tax scam in the world', Barack Obama, US President has been quoted as saying.

The Cayman Islands are one of more than 60 'tax havens' around the world, many of them Britain's Crown Dependencies like the Channel Islands, Hong Kong and the Bahamas. Others are European nations with favourable tax regimes like Switzerland, Luxembourg, Ireland and the Netherlands. Companies are registered there and monies are transferred through accounts there as part of larger trading practice.

It has been estimated that more than half of world trade – at least on paper – passes through tax havens [6], over half of all banking assets and a third of multinational company investments are routed via tax havens [7], and in 2010 the IMF estimated that the money on the balance sheets of small island tax havens alone amounted to $18 trillion – about a third of the world's financial wealth [8].

Tax havens, therefore, lie at the heart of the global economy. They facilitate two forms of company tax dodging known as 'abusive transfer pricing' and 'false invoicing'. This is where trade occurs, either between related subsidiaries of the same multinational or unrelated companies. Where these follow the market price, this is completely legitimate. However, increasingly, products are not sold at the market value but at values manipulated to avoid having to declare a taxable profit in countries where tax rates are high.

Goods and commodities are exported at knockdown prices from the country where they are produced to depress profits artificially and dodge tax. The buyer then sells them on at the true market value. Alternatively, goods from the industrialised world are sold to developing countries at inflated prices to enable the 'buyer' to shift large amounts of capital abroad while reducing the company profit margin and minimising its tax liability.

This is one of the most pervasive forms of international tax evasion. Its complications can be illustrated with a commonplace example – a humble banana in our fruit bowl.

In *reality* a multinational company sells and ships the banana directly to a supermarket which then sells the banana directly to us. *On paper*, the route is more roundabout – via one or multiple tax havens:-

A company in a banana-producing country sells a banana to a subsidiary company in a tax haven at a very low price – the same price that it cost to grow the banana in the first place.

As a result, it looks like there's little or no tax to pay in the country where the banana was produced. The subsidiary in the tax haven then sells on the banana to a subsidiary in another country at a very high price - by claiming (on paper) that high-cost financial services have been incurred in the tax haven. The profits made on the sale of the banana by the subsidiary company in the tax haven are very high, but the company pays little or no tax on this profit because of the low tax rates in the tax haven. No questions are asked about these high profits, thanks to the secrecy in the tax haven.

It is not the fact that tax havens have low or non-existent tax rates that is the problem. It is the secrecy that is also an integral part of the service they offer which allows companies and individuals to hide what they are up to.

Tax losses to poor nations are also compounded by the weakness of revenue systems in the countries of the South, who lack the information and the power to reveal tax evasion and enforce payment. Wealth is also transferred through unbalanced trading agreements or contracts between a powerful transnational corporation and a government lacking the capacity to make full use of its resources itself. These are often encouraged by the international financial institutions responsible for economic development, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Popular campaigns and lobbying, however, by Christian Aid partners amongst others, in countries like Bolivia and Zambia have persuaded Governments to reverse these agreements and face up to the resulting antagonisms in order to retain a fairer share of the value of their own resources, whether it is gas in Bolivia, or copper in Zambia.

There is the perennial question about the effect of corruption on the responsible investment of revenue by poorer nations in development. Christian Aid does not deny that corruption is a problem, but is convinced that a functioning tax system and reliable revenue removes many of the incentives for corruption and grows the capacity of civil society in any country to hold its own representatives to account, which is the sign of a mature democracy. There is also the counter-charge to be considered, that the adoption of less-than-transparent practices by companies and individuals in the 'developed world' is also a type of corruption and should be addressed with equal resolution.

Christian Aid wants both the British and Irish governments to look at the role played by their own jurisdictions, and their own institutions, in facilitating tax evasion in the developing world. We want transnational corporations to have to publish accounts on a country-by-country basis. These must show where profits are made, and taxes paid, so that abuse can be quickly spotted. We want banks to be required to disclose the ownership of all foreign entities to which they supply services, so the information can be exchanged with the countries in question. We also want both governments to support the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the EU, in their efforts to regulate tax havens. All havens must be required to automatically provide information about those using their services, and sanctions should be imposed on those that do not comply.

These sound like ambitious goals, and they are, but they are attracting interest in the media and within UK and EU policymaking. Like the campaigns on debt and trade, the questions of tax are drawing in donors and charity supporters who are growing in confidence that they can question the usual ways of doing economics and can change some of them.

The Bishop of Derby, Dr Alistair Redfern, is on Christian Aid's Board and also has a seat in the House of Lords, from where he raises questions about tax and its implications for justice. In a recent article in the Church Times he reminded readers of the Church's history of action on debt in the Jubilee 2000 campaign and urged them to address the iniquity of tax dodging:-

"*In November leaders of the G20 countries will meet in Cannes to discuss the global economy. This is a unique chance for the Churches to lend their voices to the campaign for more openness from companies and tax havens, so that developing countries have the information they need to challenge tax-dodgers.*

Like the Jubilee debt campaign, the Churches can play a part in challenging the structures that keep people poor. The Church of Scotland, and the Baptist and the Methodist Churches have all lent their voice to the campaign. Now the Church of England has an opportunity to do the same.

We pray daily for God's Kingdom to come on earth, as it is in Heaven. Here is a very practical way of enabling that peace and justice to advance into millions of lives, and into the structures through which our common life needs to work." [9]

Christian Aid is grateful for his encouragement and hopes that many who have previously wondered what international economics have to do with development will understand and be moved to raise their voices alongside his, in this movement for justice.

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Notes

[1] *Who Runs the World?*, Christian Aid's campaign on the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank 1995

[2] *Trade for Change,* Christian Aid's campaign on the international trade rules created and monitored by the World Trade Organisation

[3] The Liturgy of Abundance, the Myth of Scarcity in Brueggemann, W. (2000), *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope*, Fortress Press: Minneapolis

[4] The figure of $160billion comes from the work of a number of academics who have examined the abuse of global trade. Amongst them, Raymond Baker, a senior fellow at the US Centre for International Policy, and guest scholar at Washington DC's Brookings Institution, says that 7 per cent of global trade involves trade-related false accounting to evade tax. Professor Simon Pak of Pennsylvania State University has found figures as high as 10 per cent for some countries

[5] This number came from extrapolation of Raymond Baker's more conservative figure, and calculated the tax lost if 7 per cent of developing countries' trade involved false accounting. Christian Aid then looked at historic and current revenue patterns in poor countries, and estimated the implied impact on infant mortality rates if this US$160billion had been used by governments with the same effectiveness as at present. There would, of course, have been benefits in a number of different areas to which tax revenues contribute, but we have only quantified the effect in the area of child mortality

[6] Figure quoted in Nicholas Shaxson's, `*Treasure Islands: Tax Havens and the men who stole the world'*, Bodley Head, 2011, based on a statistic quoted by the Paris Group of Experts in 1999 and based on research undertaken by J. Christensen and M. Hampton. Evidence indicates the share has grown since 1999

[7] See Ronen Palan, Richard Murphy and Christian Chavagneux, `*Tax Havens: How Globalisation Really Works*', Cornell University 2010

[8] IMF Working Paper, WP/10/38, Feb 2010

[9] *Global Looters Who Act in Secret,* Rt Rev Dr Alastair Redfern in the Church Times 28 Oct. 2011

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A Biblical Perspective on Wealth, Poverty and Prosperity; Concluding with Reference to Mission and Economic Justice in the Brazilian Context

Terry Lockyer, Latin Link, Brazil

Creation as Good

In Genesis Chapter 1 God declares creation 'good' no less than seven times. [1] These declarations indicate both "the perfection of creation and its conformity to divine will" [2] and whilst no direct conclusion can be drawn from them in relation to manufactured goods, [3] they indicate that the material world itself cannot be declared evil as other Ancient Near Eastern Cultures held. [4] In its original sinless state creation was inheritably good and according to Genesis 2:15, man was placed within this "perfect environment," Eden, to work and take care of it. [5]

Despite the requirement to work, however, there is no indication that in Eden this work was arduous or that it ever resulted in poverty, exploitation or shortage. As such, it is reasonable to assume that afflictions such as these resulted from the Fall and sin's entrance into the world. For, as Johnson concludes "disobedience leads to broken relationships, and greater pain in our experience of life." [6]

God's Promise to Abraham

With the call of Abraham, God launched His plan of redemption by instructing Abraham to leave his father's household, his people, and his country (Gen. 12:1-3). [7] At the same time God promised Abraham that his descendants would be a great nation who would possess Canaan (12:7, 15:7), a land later described as 'flowing with milk and honey' as an expression of its abundance (Ex. 3:8).

Although Abraham never saw the complete fulfilment of this promise, as he never lived permanently in the Promised Land, for the most part Abraham and his descendants were blessed with abundance, materially (Gen. 13:2, 24:34-35).

Yet, despite this blessing, it is difficult to suggest that either their material abundance always resulted from their faithfulness to God, or that the lack of it always correlated directly to their unfaithfulness. Abraham's acquisition of livestock and slaves in Egypt as a result of lying (Gen. 12:10-20), and Joseph's attempt to do right which resulted in his unjust, and presumably impoverished, imprisonment (Gen. 39), are sufficient evidence that such a direct parallel cannot, and should not, be drawn. [8]

The Mosaic Law

During the wilderness years the Israelites were completely dependent on God. Each morning when they arose they found manna on the ground. During the same period, neither their clothes wore out (Deut. 8:4) nor did they lack anything (Ne. 9:21). It is therefore reasonable to assume that in the wilderness none should have gone without, or fallen into poverty.

With the introduction of the Torah came an attempt to regulate the life of a chosen, yet sinful people, who were to move from the above system to living in the Promised Land of abundance. The basic rule was that if they obeyed God's Law, which included specific instructions in relation to finances and the use of property, they would enjoy God's blessing in the form of prosperity, and freedom from illness (Deut. 6:1-3, 7:12-15). [9]

However, as the stark words of Deuteronomy 15 indicate, this would almost certainly never be the case. Whilst verse 4 portrays God's ideal, "that there should be no poor among you", verses 7-11 acknowledge God's acute awareness that Israel would never fully obey the Law in the socio-economic realm, and thus there would always be poor among them. God commanded that such poor must be treated open-handedly (v.11) [10], the specific details of which the Law would subsequently spell out.

The Land

Despite God's curse on the land after the Fall (Gen. 3:17-19), in the predominantly agricultural world of the Old Testament, land was essential to life. Its loss or infertility [11] could spell disaster. It is, therefore, not surprising that fertile land was considered a blessing, [12] nor that on entering the Promised Land God should instruct that it be divided fairly among the clans (Num. 26:52-56). This action ensured that each family, independent of social standing, had land and a Divine right to it. Despite the right however, the Israelites could never consider the land fully theirs to do with as they pleased. They were, at best, only ever tenants of that which God owned and as such were required to obey His commands in relation to it (Lev. 25:23, Ps. 24:1).

God Commands Days and Years of Rest and Restoration

Once a week on the Sabbath the Israelites and their households were commanded to rest (Ex. 23:12). Every seventh year, the Sabbatical year, the land was to be un-worked beyond collecting what grew naturally (Ex. 23:10), and every fifty years was to be a Jubilee year, during which time the land was to be returned to those to whom it had originally been allotted (Lev. 25:1ff).

As Blomberg rightly observes, such laws effectively limited the accumulation of material wealth by reducing the time available for work. [13] Work, though present in Eden and encouraged afterwards (Pr.12:11), was never to become an idol. Furthermore, even though some families would certainly fare economically better than others over time, the principles

and practices of the sabbatical and Jubilee years should have ensured that these differences never became excessive, as a continual system of redemption and redistribution should have operated. Periodically debts were to be cancelled (Deut. 15:1-18), slaves released (Ex. 21:1-11) and, as previously noted, land returned. Though some might fall into debt, landlessness, or even slavery, poverty among God's people should never have been permanent.

Tithing

Despite the apparent simplicity of tithing which is often portrayed, the biblical concept is anything but simple. Whilst Leviticus 27:30-33 mandates that one-tenth of all produce belongs to the Lord, and Numbers 18:21-32 requires that this should be given to the Levites, Deuteronomy 14:22-29 states that the Israelites should consume their tithe at a special festival for two years and that every third year it should be stored and used to provide for the needs of the Levites, aliens, the fatherless and widows. [14]

Whilst clearly a full discussion of this apparent discrepancy is beyond the scope of this work, [15] it is appropriate to note that in all the texts mentioned there is one clear emphasis. Tithes were to be used to provide for the needs of those with little or no other means of support. The Levites received no allotment of land and thus were completely dependent on the tithe (Deut. 18:1-3).

The tithes stored every third year were to provide for society's most vulnerable and potentially impoverished members, the aliens, the fatherless and widows, (as well as the Levites). As Meeks suggests, the unlikelihood of a family being able to consume a full year's tithe in one festive event (Deut. 14:22-26) requires that "the abundance of the feast was meant for sharing with strangers and sojourners, as well as widows and orphans", [16] as presumably other more affluent individuals would have had more than sufficient of their own.

The General Law

Alongside the above which should have worked in favour of the poor and marginalised, the Law also guaranteed for the Israelites' day-to-day care. For example, interest was forbidden on loans made to them, as was profit on food sold to them (Lev. 25:35-77). They were to be paid promptly (Deut. 24:14-15) and items essential to their livelihood were not to be taken in pledge (Deut. 24:6). In short, their day-to-day situation was not to be worsened by the actions of others. Furthermore, the Law's prohibition of farmers harvesting right to the edges of fields, collecting produce that fell to the ground or going over the field a second time (Lev. 19:9-10) should also have ensured that the land continued to provide, at least in some measure, for the needs of the poor through gleaning.

It is thus reasonable to conclude, as Wright does, that if the Israelites had upheld the Law "an impressive and systematic *welfare program* for those who were truly destitute" (italics his) would have existed. [17] Moreover, not only did the Law require the above but it also issued stark warnings of Divine judgement against any who flouted them through exploitation (Ex. 22:21-24).

The Wisdom Literature

As is evident from the above, obedience to the Law should have ensured that at least some form of equality existed among God's people, by minimising the long-term effects of poverty.

In the early years, with most people working the land to some extent, this seems to have been achieved, as excavations of Tenth-century BC Israelite towns [18] reveal dwellings of uniform size and layout. [19] However, as excavations from just two centuries later reveal, something of a socio-economic revolution took place, as larger better-built dwellings of the affluent now occupied one sector, whilst the smaller inferior dwellings of the poor occupied another. [20]

Although it is impossible to investigate all the reasons for such changes here, one fact is generally accepted. It occurred and was strongly influenced by the establishment of the monarchy. [21] Historically, Israel had been a nation of peasant farmers [22] "without a central government, capital city [or] professional army." [23] With the arrival of the monarchy all this changed as the differing socio-economic classes formed; [24] classes under which some lacked nothing at the King's table (1 Kings 4:27-28), whilst others suffered and became poorer under the yoke of forced labour (1 Kings 5:13-18).

This was a situation that would eventually contribute heavily to the divided kingdom through the "bitter resentment on the part of the non-Judahite Hebrews, because their traditions of tribal freedom and equality were being trampled on through forced labor and heavy taxation", [25] for, as Samuel had warned (1 Sam. 8:10-18) and, as Klein states, "a king would not bring justice at all, but [instead] both the people and their property would be appropriated to serve the king's self-aggrandizement. [26] It is into the above backdrop that Wisdom and prophetic literature is written.

Even a casual reading of the book of Proverbs reminds its readers that wealth and prosperity do not normally simply appear. Instead, they generally result from hard work and diligence (12:11; 21:5) and that a lack of them, at least at times, results from the opposite. [27] 'A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of hands to rest and poverty will come on you like a bandit' (Pr. 6:10). [28] At the same time however, as the words of both Qoheleth (Eccl. 5:16) and Job (1:21) remind their readers, earthly wealth and prosperity should not be overvalued for 'naked we came into the world and naked we shall depart'. The inference of this is that if earthly wealth has any value at all it is linked to how it is used in this lifetime and not the next.

Given the emerging upper classes, it is not surprising that the book of Proverbs also makes references to socio-economic injustice as a cause of poverty and oppression. What is surprising, however, is the extent to which it does so. For as Gottwald observes, over two thirds of the proverbs, addressing the issue of poverty, acknowledge socio-economic injustice as its cause. [29] This is a situation which God indicates He will neither ignore nor leave unpunished (Pr. 14:31; 21:13), and which also clearly indicates that sin has a

corporate nature to it. The sins of one individual can, and do, affect the level of suffering experienced by others.

Finally, although Deuteronomy 15:11 suggests that some may never find relief from poverty and affliction in their earthly lifetime, the Wisdom literature in no way endorses the idea that a *laissez-faire* attitude should be adopted in relation to their situation. Like the Law, the Wisdom literature repeated the call for open-handedness and generosity to be shown to those in need (Ps.41:1; Pr.14:21).

The Prophets

As Wright argues, "[i]t would be difficult to exaggerate the extent of [the prophets'] engagement with the struggles of the poor in Israel" [30] because they indicated that, after idolatry, Israel's failure to deal justly and generously with the poor and marginalized is the most significant factor in the two kingdom's judgements. [31]

From those that coveted others' possessions (Mic. 2:1-3), or accumulated numerous houses and fields (Isa. 5:8), to those responsible for dishonest business practice (Hos. 12:7-8, Am 8:4-7), or those who failed to ensure justice for the poor (Am 2:6-7; Isa 10:1-4), to those that took forbidden items in pledge or trampled on the poor (Isa. 1:21-26, Am. 2:7-8; 5:11-12), [32] the Lord condemned them all, as He deplored the accumulation of riches at the expense of others.

The Prophets, as God's spokesmen, may have looked for, even expected, some form of equality under the Law but their message was clear, "people are in poverty because they are victims of the injustice of others" [33] (again emphasising the corporate nature of the effects of sin). Arguably, the most damning account is the book of Amos, where "Yahweh's concern for the plight of the poor and the decadence of the rich pervades." [34]

The New Testament

In the sermon on the plain (Lk. 6:17ff), Jesus pronounced a series of blessings on the poor and woes on the rich. Although, as Perriman observes, the nature of rhetoric requires that these verses are not taken as absolutes for all individuals, they do however, reflect a good general summary of Jesus' position in relation to issues of wealth and poverty. [35] Whilst wealth and prosperity may ultimately not exclude individuals from entering the Kingdom, they are clearly portrayed as major obstacles.

The "tragic account of the crippling power of wealth," as Hughes puts it, [36] found in the pericope of the rich young ruler (Mk. 10:17-31), vividly demonstrates the harsh reality that, in many cases it would be truly easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom. For whilst wealth in itself might not be sinful, the love of it certainly is, (1 Tim 6:6-10), a point that Jesus made blatantly clear to the Pharisees (Lk. 16:13-15).

It is, thus, not surprising that Jesus warned His listeners to guard against greed, that life does not consist of material abundance (Lk 12:15), that man cannot serve both God and mammon (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13; 2); and that treasures are better stored in heaven than on earth (Mt 6:19-21). Furthermore, in the light of the Law and God's concern for the poor shown throughout the Old Testament, it is also not surprising that Jesus should declare that after loving God, the love for one's neighbour is of greatest importance (Mk. 12:31-32). It is also not surprising that Paul should instruct Timothy to command the affluent in Ephesus to be generous and willing to share (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

What is surprising, however, is that the teaching of Jesus appears to go further than the Law in relation to whom generosity must be shown. Whilst the Law required that generosity and care should be shown to the poor among God's people (essentially the aim of the collection in 2 Cor. 8:1ff) [37], the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk.10:25-37), and Jesus' commands in Luke 6:27-36 necessitate that the scope of neighbourly love and generosity be radically extended to include complete strangers and even enemies. [38] "Only by these means can they [Jesus' followers] live out their lives in the sphere in which they have heard from Jesus the good news to the poor." [39]

It is also evident that Jesus` teaching in the parables of the sheep and goats (Mt. 25:31-46), which fittingly ends Jesus' formal teaching in the Gospel with the scene of the great judgement, [40] also goes further than the Old Testament in its teaching. Although due to the ambiguity of the term "the least of these brothers of mine" (v.40), commentators have vigorously debated to whom Jesus requires that generosity and compassion be shown (needy individuals in general or specifically needy Christians?), [41] an important new insight remains.

Whilst, like the Old Testament, the pericope requires, at the very least, that Christians demonstrate care and generosity to those in need among God's people, the implications for those that fail to do so have now changed. No longer will God, as in the Old Testament, simply judge those that fail in this area, but now Jesus indicates that they may also suffer more severe consequences; for the Son of Man will judge all humanity and during that judgement those that fail in this area may experience devastating eschatological consequences (25:41-46).

It is a possibility which, as Santa Ana suggests, should at the very least "make us understand the importance of our concern for the poor." [42] This is especially the case when one considers that the pericope does not indicate that those condemned to eternal punishment for their apparent inactions (v.41-46) were in anyway responsible for creating the needs that they overlooked. [43]

Having reached this conclusion however, it must also be stressed that whilst the above might appear to support 'salvation by works', which understandably most Protestants would reject, it need not necessarily be considered as such. As Rienecker [44] and Hagner correctly deduce, the pericope does not imply this but rather that "the deeds of mercy [mentioned] in the present passage are symbolic of a deeper reality," [45] that of being a true follower of Christ. In the face of the needs mentioned, those that are truly righteous will naturally respond with appropriate deeds of mercy. [46]

The Early Church

Of all the texts that relate to the use of material possessions in the early Church probably the best known is that of Acts 4:32-36. [47]

> *All the believers were of one in heart and mind. No-one claimed that any of his processions were his own, but they shared everything they had. […] There was no needy person among them. From time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sale and put the money at the Apostles feet and it was distributed to anyone who had need.*

Whilst some authors, such as Miranda, have suggested that these verses imply a form of communism [48] this proposition is unlikely; for if the early church was characterised by the communist ideal of collective ownership then Luke's use of the term 'from time to time' (v.34), which implies an ongoing practice, [49] along with Peter's words to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts. 5:1-11) in relation to their right to dispose of money gained from the sale of their property as they wished, would be inappropriate.

It is thus reasonable to assume that private property was retained in the early church; a proposition further supported by the fact that some of its members, such as the Ephesians mentioned in 1 Timothy 6:17, were apparently wealthy. Furthermore, it is also reasonable to suggest that New Testament teaching does not necessarily oppose the enjoyment of wealth. Jesus' attendance at the wedding in Cana (Jn. 2:1-11) and His apparent approval of the lavish use of expensive perfume in Matthew 26:6-13 suggests that some extravagances ('heart' matters notably), even if only occasionally, are permissible.

This said however, Acts 4:32-36 does clearly demonstrate the early Christian church's willingness to distribute resources, which came into its possession, to those in need (v.34b-35). This was something apparently done to such a degree that Luke could boldly use the language of Deuteronomy and claim, "there were no needy people among them" (v.34a).

It is also evident that whilst Paul, like the Law, encouraged (2 Cor. 8:7-15), and even commanded generosity (1 Tim. 6:17) in the early church, it was not his intention that its members should practise generosity to the point of becoming impoverished themselves. Despite the fact that Paul commended the Macedonians for doing so (2 Cor. 8:1-3), his words to the Corinthians clearly indicates that the underlying intention is that each believer, as an expression of love, should give in accordance with their means (2 Cor. 8:8-12) in order that there might be greater equality between them (2 Cor. 8:13).

Paul's quotation of Exodus 16:18, '[h]e that collected much did not have too much, and he that gathered little did not have too little,' (2 Cor. 8:15) directly after his challenge to the Corinthians to give, adds weight to this argument, as well as suggesting the futility of hoarding for an uncertain future. [50]

Summary and Conclusion

It is reasonable to suggest that despite the entrance of sin into the world, had the Law been upheld there should have been no long-term poor among God's people. The Law provided, especially through the Jubilee and cancellation of debt, a continual system of redemption and redistribution that should have ensured that the poor enjoyed periodic chances of redemption from their situation as part of their divine right.

It is also reasonable to suggest that the originally good creation, given to humanity to work and enjoy, should always have provided for the basic needs of God's people. For although, wealth and prosperity were not guaranteed to all, the Law required that those that were so blessed must practise generosity and live in such a way that the day-to-day needs of society's most vulnerable members were met.

In relation to the causes of poverty and affliction, whilst Scripture acknowledges that they may result from an individual's laziness, it, more commonly, attributes these problems to oppressive social structures and the sin of others. The sins of one individual clearly can, and often do, adversely affect the level of suffering experienced by others. Furthermore, Scripture indicates that God not only finds this situation deplorable but will also ultimately judge those responsible for it.

Whilst much of the New Testament teaching on wealth and poverty reiterates that found in the Old, it also goes further. Firstly, it requires that generosity and compassion be shown not only to the impoverished living among God's people but also to complete strangers, and even enemies. Secondly, it suggests that those that fail in this area may not only experience God's judgement but may also suffer eschatological consequences, even if they are not directly responsible for causing the needs they overlooked. It is thus reasonable to conclude that whilst ecclesiastical giving might be important, it can never replace the sustained Scriptural call for almsgiving and generosity to be practiced on a one-to-one basis as needs arise.

It is also evident from Scripture's teaching on tithes, and the early churches' use of its financial resources, that an important and appropriate use of the ecclesiastical funds is that of caring and providing for society's most vulnerable members, both in order that poverty and affliction might be alleviated wherever possible, and also in order that the Scriptural goal of there being 'no poor among us' should move closer to becoming a reality.

Despite Scripture's repeated call for acts of generosity it does not require that generosity be practised to the point of impoverishing the giver. Rather, as both the Old and New Testament indicate, as a result of such practice, there might be some form of equality in that none are poor. It is, thus, also reasonable to conclude that if impoverished individuals are expected to tithe or give offerings then some other system of redress must be in place to ensure that their situation and suffering are not increased as a result.

In relation to those that do prosper; whilst Scripture does not rule out wealth, the ownership of property or even the occasional extravagant use of the same, it clearly teaches both the ongoing need for generosity and compassion and also the potential peril of wealth. As such,

it is reasonable to conclude that if some individuals do prosper they should in no way feel completely at ease with their wealth, so long as poverty and suffering prevail, even if they have already participated in ecclesiastical giving.

Seen in the above light, perhaps John Wesley's advice forms the most appropriate model for Christian Stewardship: Christians should earn all they can, save all they can, and give all they can. [51] By doing so, they might not only be encouraged to work hard and be generous but also escape the perils of wealth, whilst helping to ensure that the Scriptural goal of there being 'no poor among us' moves closer towards becoming a reality.

Mission and Economic Justice in the Brazilian Context

I turn now to consider some contextual application. As is so often the case in biblical studies, establishing a biblical perspective on a given subject is far easier than attempting to implement it. In the case of Brazil, where I have worked as a missionary for the last eleven years, this is almost certainly true when one considers the above conclusions in relation to the question of mission and economic justice.

At the dawn of the 20th Century Brazil, along with the rest of Latin America, was very much neglected in terms of mission. Considered by many to be already evangelised, due to the dominant presence of the Roman Catholic Church, Brazil did not even feature on the agenda of the 1910 Edinburgh Conference.

Thankfully, over time this situation changed and as a result of the often extraordinary efforts of early Protestant missionaries, who criticised and rejected Catholicism as an inadequate expression of the truth, many small churches, and later denominations, were born. From these humble beginnings a century ago, it is now estimated that there are as many as twenty six million evangelicals in Brazil today and the number is still growing. [52] Evidently, since the beginning, evangelism has been seen as being of paramount importance both to missionaries serving in Brazil and those that have been led to Christ.

Yet, despite the continued criticism by many evangelicals, Brazil's Catholic Church has certainly left its mark in the country in terms of caring for the poor and marginalised; not least through its extensive network of *Santa Casa* hospitals and clinics.

This is not to say that missionaries and Brazilian Evangelicals have not also played their part. In fact there are many good social projects set up and run by them. Projects such as *Instituto Cristão Evangelico* in Anapolis, central Brazil which continually cares for around seventy impoverished and orphaned children [53] and the outstanding work of *Monte Horebe* [54] among the poor of *Itaperuçu* in southern Brazil, are examples of this.

Yet one cannot help but make a comparison between the scale of poverty and suffering in Brazil and the alleged number of Evangelicals that now exist as a result of missionary efforts, both by nationals and non-nationals; surely there is more that could be done.

Perhaps, historically, this has been justified by the impoverished nature of the country and its runaway inflation. [55] However, in recent years Brazil has gone, economically, from strength to strength. Only recently Brazil was acknowledged as the 6th [56] largest economy in the world, thereby overtaking the size of the UK economy, and whilst unjust levels of inequality still prevail, Brazil has also finally begun to make some advances in this area too. [57] Brazil can no longer be considered a poor country even if many of its inhabitants are still impoverished; it is, by all accounts, now a very rich nation.

It is true that these economic changes do not mean that all Brazilian Evangelicals, or Evangelical churches, have suddenly become wealthy overnight, but, put simply, it does mean many Brazilian Christians and churches are, or soon will be, in a better economic position than they have been for a significant number of years, and here, in my opinion, lies the challenge both for missionaries and national Christians; for with new found wealth comes new found responsibility. This responsibility, furthermore, lies not just at an individual level, but also at an ecclesiastical level. The Biblical mandate that *there should be no poor among us* (Deut 15:4) is as relevant for Brazil today, as it was for Israel over 3,000 years ago; not just within the church but also outside it.

As the country's wealth continues to grow, as most economists predict it will, there is going to be a greater-than-ever urgency to practise, preach and inspire others to live out a more appropriate biblical model in relation to wealth and prosperity in the midst of a country that continues to be plagued by poverty, corruption and economic injustice.

The key words for missionaries in the Brazilian context, will need to change from the likes of *church planting* and *evangelism* (both of which, as the numbers of Brazilian Evangelicals clearly demonstrates, the national Christians are already experts at) to those that reflect and inspire *generosity* and *social reform;* for those sending missionaries to Brazil, and those that answer that call, this may well mean a paradigm shift in both their thinking and training.

No longer should the primary focus be on the missionary's ability to *preach the Gospel and evangelise* in the Brazilian context. Instead, perhaps, their ability to foster, teach, practise and preach a more biblical understanding of wealth, prosperity, poverty and suffering may now, and in the future, be of greater importance.

To some extent this may already be happening, as during my time in Brazil I have seen an increased move away from what might be called 'traditional mission,' with many missionaries now choosing to serve full-time in social projects, rather than churches. However, what I am suggesting and what I am praying for goes beyond this.

My hope and my prayer, is that missionaries will not just come to serve the poor in Brazil, but rather that God will raise up individuals and missionaries that have the ability to inspire Brazilian Christians and churches not only to care more passionately for the poor and marginalised but also to seek to change the very systems and structures that cause their suffering in the first place, so that, like the community in Acts 4:32-37, one day Brazil might also be able to boldly make reference to Deuteronomy 15:4 and state *that there are no poor among us.*

This might seem like an unattainable dream, but reflecting on recent events in Brazil and how the relatively small Brazilian gay movement has managed to force changes in Brazilian law and practice in relation to marriage and other issues, [58] one just cannot but wonder what might be possible if all the vast number of Evangelicals spoke out with one sustained voice against social injustice, corruption and poverty.

Notes

[1] Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 31

[2] Wenham G.J, (1998), *Genesis 1-15,* (WBC.) vol. 1, Waco: Word, p.38

[3] Perriman A., (2003), *Faith, Health and Prosperity: A report on 'Word of Faith' and 'Positive Confession' Theologies by The Evangelical Alliance (UK) Commission on Unity and truth among evangelicals*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, p.156

[4] Peskett H., Ramachandra V., (2003), *The Message of Mission,* Leicester: IVP, p.34 & 37

[5] Wenham G.J, (1998), *Genesis 1-15,* (WBC.) vol. 1, Waco: Word, p.87

[6] Johnson R., Johnson T., (2001), *Discovering Genesis,* Leicester: Crossways, p.38

[7] Wright C., (2004), *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God,* Illinois: IVP, p.77

[8] Blomberg C., (1999), *Neither Poverty nor Riches,* (NSBT), No 7, Leicester: Apollos, p.36

[9] Perriman A., (2003), *Faith, Health and Prosperity: A Report on 'Word of Faith' and 'Positive Confession' Theologies by The Evangelical Alliance (UK) Commission on Unity and truth among evangelicals*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, p.158

[10] *ibid*

[11] See the book of Ruth for a vivid example of this

[12] Out of the forty-six promises in Genesis to Judges only seven do not mention the land. (Wright C., (2004), *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God,* Illinois: IVP, p.78)

[13] Blomberg C., (1999), *Neither Poverty nor Riches,* (NSBT), No 7, Leicester: Apollos, 1999*,* p.43

[14] Cf. also Deut. 26:12-14

[15] For further discussion on this subject see Blomberg C., (1999), *Neither Poverty nor Riches,* (NSBT), No 7, Leicester: Apollos*,* pp.46-49

[16] Cited in Blomberg C., (1999), *Neither Poverty nor Riches,* (NSBT), No 7, Leicester: Apollos, p.47

[17] Wright C., *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God,* p.173

[18] For example the Israelite town of Tizar

[19] De Vaux R., (1997), *Ancient Israel,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp.72-73

[20] *ibid.* p.73

[21] Perriman A., (2003), *Faith, Health and Prosperity: A Report on 'Word of Faith' and 'Positive Confession' Theologies by The Evangelical Alliance (UK) Commission on Unity and truth among evangelicals*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, p.163

[22] De Vaux R., (1997), *Ancient Israel,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p.72

[23] Perriman A., (2003), *Faith, Health and Prosperity: A Report on 'Word of Faith' and 'Positive Confession' Theologies by The Evangelical Alliance (UK) Commission on Unity and truth among evangelicals*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, p.69

[24] *ibid*

[25] DeVries, S J., (1998),*1 Kings*, (WBC), Vol.12, Waco: Word, p.xxiii

[26] Cf. Klein, R.W., (1998) *1 Samuel*, (WBC), Vol.10, Waco: Word, p.79

[27] Wheeler S.E., (1995), *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: the New Testament on Possessions,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p126

[28] Cf. also 12:11; 14:23; 19:15; 21:7; 23:20-21)

[29] Cited in Blomberg C., (1999), *Neither Poverty nor Riches,* (NSBT), No 7, Leicester: Apollos, p.65

[30] Wright C., *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God,* p.175

[31] *ibid*, p.164

[32] Cf. Deut. 24:12-13

[33] De Santa Ana J., (1977), *Good News to the Poor,* Geneva: World Council of Churches, p.5

[34] Stuart D., (1987), *Hosea-Jonah*, (WBC), Vol.31, Waco: Word, p.191

[35] Perriman A., (2003), *Faith, Health and Prosperity: A Report on 'Word of Faith' and 'Positive Confession' Theologies by The Evangelical Alliance (UK) Commission on Unity and truth among evangelicals*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, p.169

[36] Hughes D., (1998), *God of the Poor,* Carlisle: OM Publishing, p.95

[37] Martin R.P.,(1986), *2 Corinthians,* (WBC), Vol.40, Waco: Word, p.257

[38] Nolland. J., (1998), *Luke 9:21-18:34,* (WBC), Vol.35a, Waco: Word, p.293

[39] *ibid.* p.301

[40] Hagner D.A., (1993), *Matthew 14-28,* (WBC), Vol.33b Waco: Word, p. 740

[41] Cf. *Hagner on Matthew*, p. 744, for more information relating to this debate

[42] De Santa Ana J., (1977), *Good News to the Poor,* Geneva: World Council of Churches, p.19

[43] *ibid* p131-132

[44] Rienecker F., (1998), *Evangelho de Mateus*, Curitiba: Editora Evangélica Esperança, p.410

[45] Hagner D.A., (1993), *Matthew 1-13,* (WBC), Vol.33a, Waco: Word, p.746

[46] *ibid.* p.743

[47] Cf. also Acts 2:42-47

[48] Miranda J.P., (1982), *Communism in the Bible,* London: SMC Press, p.1-2

[49] Witherington reaches the same conclusion of the similar text found in Acts 2:44; (Witherington III B., (1988), *The Acts of the Apostles,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p.162)

[50] Wheeler S.E., (1995), *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: the New Testament on Possessions,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, p.83

[51] *The Use of Money,* http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/serm-050.stm

[52] For more details see:- http://www.jmm.org.br/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1191&Itemid=275

[53] The *Instituto Cristão Evangelico* currently has no web site however it can be contacted at the following address: Av Bernardo Sayão, 300 lt 99999, Jd das Américas - Anápolis – GO, Brazil

[54] See http://www.montehorebe.org

[55] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_history_of_Brazil for further information on Brazil's economic history

[56] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_%28nominal%29

[57] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Brazil

[58] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Brazil

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Business that Seeks the Well-being of Society

Dr Marijke Hoek, Co-editor, *Micah's Challenge; The Church's Responsibility to the Global Poor* and Co-ordinator, Forum for Change, Evangelical Alliance

Introduction

In a country where the pay gap is widening to Victorian levels, where estimated corporate tax avoidance stands at £35 billion, where executive pay rise is 49% and child poverty levels are considerable, it seems clear that some live in the best of times while others live in the worst of times. Beyond our nation's boundaries, the desperate plight of the world's poorest calls for fundamental change.

In the midst of this "tale of two cities"', a dialogue is awakening as to how we can live more justly. The existential questions vocalised by the Occupy crowd resonate with many worldwide and reflect the search for a more economically-just and loving way of life. Though vulnerable in our time of economic-shaking, these transformational moments have the potential to lead to radical, biblical propositions.

The Judeo-Christian concept of *shalom*, well-being that is communal and personal, must be rediscovered in the public debate to develop a commitment to political, economic and cultural transformation which benefits poor communities as well as redeeming the rich from their relational and inner poverty. Part of the answer to the question of how we create a more economically-just society lies in enterprise, for business has the potential to bring social reform, model justice and equality, and reduce poverty.

Both the historical and contemporary Christian community is full of inspiring and faithful expressions of entrepreneurship for the common good. In the midst of the dominance of the City and in a culture of captured imaginations, Christians are involved in imaginative work. We need such Christian imagination in all spheres of life, business included, that will energise the alternative economics of God's kingdom.

A historical glance – 'Chocolate lessons' from the Quakers

When we consider a more just economic paradigm, we do well to look at some historical examples. In the 18th Century the Quaker community made up only 0.2% of the population, yet their contribution to the transformation of Britain is substantial. The Society of Friends was the first Christian group which denounced slavery and did not permit any of its members to own slaves. Besides modeling such faithfulness in their own household, they also pursued a political line of engagement when in 1783 they presented the first substantial anti-slavery petition to Parliament.

In addition to their involvement in the Anti-Slavery Society, the Quakers were active in the Peace Society that campaigned for an end to war and in famine relief organisations. Quaker business ventures such as chocolate companies (Cadbury, Fry, Rowntree and Terry), the steel industry (railways), and engineering, significantly merged virtue with entrepreneurship. [1] These businesses were supported by Quaker banks (Lloyds, Barclays) and by the 1700s,

the modern banking system was beginning to emerge. Quakers had a reputation for honesty and fairness.

Cadbury

Let's zoom in on some entrepreneurial dynasties. Sir Adrian Cadbury considers that the Quaker business ethic and innovative character was derived from their Christian faith. [2] God inspired them to imagine the world anew rather than accept the *status quo* as they followed "the Divine Light within themselves". John Cadbury's (1801-1889) involvement with the Temperance Society influenced the direction of his business enterprise, providing tea, coffee, and chocolate as an alternative to alcohol in an era of significant alcohol-related causes of poverty and deprivation amongst working people.

George Cadbury (1839-1922) was committed to helping the less privileged, "we can do nothing of any value to God, except in acts of genuine helpfulness done to our fellow men". Such commitment to the less privileged shaped the working conditions in the Cadbury factories, as well as housing, pension, medical and dental care for their staff. Every summer, Cadbury provided food and entertainment for 25,000 children from the deprived areas of Birmingham. "I have for many years given practically the whole of my income for charitable purposes, except what is spent upon my family." However, 'charitable purposes' is too narrow a description; 'reform' would be more apt. Successive generations of Cadburys were catalysts in wide-ranging social reform. Their Christian faith motivated their involvement in campaigns aimed at ending poverty and deprivation in Victorian Britain.

Rowntree

Joseph Rowntree (1836 –1925) was a Quaker philanthropist and businessman, perhaps best known for being a champion of social reform and the chocolate business. He was deeply interested in improving the quality of life of his employees, providing them with a library, free education, a social welfare officer, a doctor, a dentist and a pension fund. In 1904, he gave half of his money to the Rowntree trusts dedicated to social reform, which continue his philanthropic work today. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation still funds research that seeks to understand the causes of social problems (poverty, poor housing, and other forms of social exclusion). Its Housing Trust manages affordable housing and care homes for the elderly and disabled and its Charitable Trust works for Quaker ideals including international peace and justice.

Others followed a similar path. Jesse Boot's concern for the poor extended to selling "honest medicines" at cut prices that could be afforded by those who needed them; a concept he called "philanthropic retailing". These English Protestant entrepreneurs lived modest lives, spearheaded trustworthy businesses and practiced philanthropy. Historically, they understood the whole of life as a vocation; a sacred space of worship through deeds of love, righteous service and commerce. Peter Heslam writes, in *Transforming Capitalism: Entrepreneurship and the Renewal of Thrift* [3], that "what mattered was not worldly riches but a richness towards God expressed in gratitude, generosity and a life of virtue." For these, and many other Christian entrepreneurs, it was natural that business would have a transformational effect.

This kind of genius that combined nobility and entrepreneurship is rooted in an understanding of faithful citizenship that measured success in terms of communal well-being rather than personal enrichment - the alternative economics of the Kingdom.

An alternative O*ikonomia*

At the start of the recent banking crisis, Katherine Bucknell, partner of a City banker reflected in her account of 'a desperate City wife', "how did we become so undisciplined? What allowed us to say to ourselves 'you deserve it' when we knew full well that people elsewhere were ill or starving or working in sweatshops?...perhaps we will all discover some of the kind of wealth that cannot be measured in monetary terms". [4] The current crisis poignantly asks questions about management of our personal and communal household.

The Biblical character, Job, monitored the humility of his character and the righteousness of his behaviour. Justice for his labourers, exercise of (judicial) power, compassionate care for the poor, honouring the image-bearing identity of each individual and correct stewardship of his property and God's creation, were important aspects of his life's account (Job 31:13-23). His account gives us a great overview of Israelite ethics. As frequently occurs in the Scripture, Job placed *tzadeqah* ("righteousness" - a life of right relationships) and *mishpat* (justice) alongside one another (Job 29:12-17).

The *Mishpat*, or justice, of society concerns how we treat the vulnerable. History testifies to a rich Judeo-Christian heritage of advocacy. The prophets were the social commentators of their time, advocating legislation that would shield the poor. In the Third Century, the African author Lactantius describes the perfect justice that sustains the human society in which wealth is used "not for present profit but for justice, which alone endures forever" (*The Divine Institutes*, 6.12). The Church Fathers developed their thinking concerning social consciousness and justice in the light of the Scriptures and applied it to the circumstances of their times, affecting not only individuals but also socio-economic structures, and political dimensions. Advocacy and policy went hand in hand. [5]

Besides our individual lifestyle and character, the corporate expression and character of society demands our attention. As Ron Sider comments, "evil is far more complex than the wrong choices of individuals. It also lies outside us in oppressive social systems and in demonic powers that delight in defying God by corrupting the social systems that his human image-bearers need". [6] Sinful humans build imperfect and sinful social structures. In the Western world today, Christians are part of a catalogue of unjust structures that contribute to poverty through market economies, international trade, natural resource and environmental depletion, and food imports from poor nations.

In Ancient Greek, *oikos* referred to the house and everything included, such as extended family, slaves, farmland, etc. *Nomos* means act, law, or principle. Our word 'economy' was born from these two roots forming the word *oikonomia, so* the word literally means "the principles to maintain our house". Whether that 'house' is governmental or familial, the values that underlie and the principles with which we structure our 'house' are crucial. Economics – *oikonomia* – concerns the responsible way we administer the household for the common good. In *The Mission of God*, Chris Wright states that the Old Testament combination of "righteousness/justice" is at the heart of ethical teaching and suggests the

nearest English expression would be “social justice”, with the warning that this cannot be seen as a static phrase, since the Hebrew twin theme is dynamic, i.e. things you do. [7]

Counter-cultural business

Each culture tells and lives out a narrative that is to some degree incompatible with the gospel. In *The Globalization of Pentecostalism* Harvey Gallagher Cox writes, “Christian theology, if it is truly biblical theology, must always be prophetic. It must constantly expose those points at which any culture engenders false values which are destructive to God’s will for the human community.” [8]

However, while Christians must develop a critical theology of the culture, as James Davison Hunter observes, the Christian community has uncritically assimilated itself to the dominant culture and its way of life, and has failed to give a rigorous critique and offer an alternative. In his book, *To Change the World,* he calls for a faithful presence in which Christians enact God’s *shalom* in the circumstances in which He has placed us, and actively seek it on behalf of others. [9] So we need to develop a critical theology of *oikonomia* and subvert the dominant narrative of global capitalism by offering an alternative; a pursuit of business that has its home in faith and virtue and is concerned with the well-being God intended for the wider community and for His wider creation.

“Good business will not answer the world’s problems, but we will struggle to solve the problems of the world without it,” writes banker James Featherby in *The White Swan Formula: Rebuilding business and finance for the common good*. [10] The entrepreneurial gift can be employed to create opportunities for jobs and prosperity; not a prosperity that is narrowly defined but one that more faithfully pursues the well-being God intended…and there are numerous creative contemporary examples to celebrate.

Contemporary vignettes

The ‘Base of the Pyramid enterprise’ is based on an understanding of enterprise that serves, as its name obviously indicates, the ‘base of the pyramid’. It aims to work with the very poorest of people, understanding their needs and aspirations in order to provide good quality, socially-valuable products or services that are affordable to them. A true social enterprise will also develop products that have a social and environmental benefit and ideally create new enterprise in the developing world.

An example of a ‘base of the pyramid’ enterprise in the UK is Toughstuff. [11] The company develops affordable and lightweight pocket-sized solar panels for the developing world, enabling kids’ education during power cuts and darkness, and, thereby, providing a good, cheap and safe alternative to kerosene lighting. The connecting cables enable the vital improvements in information, communications and secure banking that radios and mobile phones provide and the enterprise stimulates local entrepreneurship.

The ‘Transformational Business Network’ is a network of business and professional people that brings community transformation through sustainable business solutions to poverty. The Network support projects in developing countries that create jobs empower the poor and transform communities. It has created, and is sustaining, over 20,000 jobs in 62 projects in

22 countries, with a total direct or indirect investment of £55 million. Examples range from the design and production of a safe cooking stove (preventing many accidents that occur when cooking on unstable stoves placed in crowded, confined spaces) to the creation of jobs. [12]

Microcredit banking is changing the world, as modeled by Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, pioneer of microcredit and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006. In the UK, Five Talents supports micro-finance initiatives in developing countries. Through training and small loans, Five Talents helps to establish and nurture small businesses. Training in business skills combined with loans for stock, equipment, raw materials, land, premises etc. are provided to help establish grocers, hairdressers, bakers, brick-makers and shoe-repairers. Each business builds economic independence for the individual entrepreneur, their families and the families of those they employ. Employment and independence bring dignity and the constructive relations furthermore open communities up to Christian witness.

"Those who engage with the business of economic transformation, which is the opening of the world to justice and the freeing of the world to a future of hope, are in my view doing work that is not just good but sacred," according to Bishop Selby. [13]

Conclusion

Jeremiah instructs the people of God to seek the welfare of the society in which they live whilst in exile; to seek its well-being, peace and prosperity, and to pray to the Lord on its behalf (Jer. 29:7). His letter to the exiles gives the Israelites a theological and historical framework for their experience in which he advises them to settle, for the long term, maintaining their distinctiveness and serving the common good, for the welfare of their conquerors was linked with their own. In sketching this alternative reality and inspiring a new imagination, Jeremiah uses the word *shalom* - the idea implies restored human relationships as well as reconciliation between God and people. Its concept is well-being in its entirety; social, spiritual, emotional, physical, cognitive and material. So, the concept has a communal focus.

We are not called to adjust to the dominant script of the world, but to live faithfully reflecting the alternative script given by God. While business has the capacity to serve the common good, it equally holds the capacity to oppress, increase injustice, and harm people and the environment. Whilst we may function in a culture that prefers profit over welfare, greed over generosity and success at the cost of integrity, we need to think through a constructive subversion of the frameworks of social life in every sphere of life. Such subversion is creative and constructive.

Heslam advocates for the integration of Christian worldview, belief and virtues in entrepreneurship (including the mindset and habits it requires), in education and in both domestic and international economic development policy. He writes that "the Holy Spirit can work in and through the spirit of enterprise, helping businesses to contribute to human and environmental well-being." Commenting on the Parable of the Talents, concerning stewardship that serves God's purposes, he notes that "the fearless words and actions of the first two servants, who 'put the money to work', reflect a God who inspires the kind of imagination, productivity and responsible risk-taking that characterises the thrift needed to

convert the bareness of money into the fruitfulness of capital. Having made this conversion, which underlies all investment and entrepreneurial activity, these two servants are welcomed into God's *shalom* economy: 'I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness." [14]

Once the focus is on well-being, the evaluative questions concerning 'success' focus upon the creation of opportunities for the hopeless, the increase of well-being to the lowly, the valuing of each individual in the creative process, etc. The discernment of God's good, pleasing and perfect will for His world (Romans 12:1) requires a whole-life stewardship. Our corporate and individual 'spiritual act of worship' takes place in the everyday-ness of business life; in the sanctuary that is this world. The life of Christ awakens consciousness, disrupts routine and deepens insight. It inspires a commitment to live justly and gives hope for the renewal of all things.

May we all live richly towards God.

Notes

[1] Heslam, P.S., (2010), *Transforming Capitalism. Entrepreneurship and the Renewal of Thrift*, (Ethics Series E156), Cambridge: Grove Books Ltd, p.20

[2] "Beliefs and Business: the experience of Quaker Companies" - a talk in the Faith Seeking Understanding series by Sir Adrian Cadbury, May 2003. See http://www.leveson.org.uk/stmarys/resources/cadbury0503.htm

[3] Heslam, P.S., (2010), *Transforming Capitalism. Entrepreneurship and the Renewal of Thrift*, (Ethics Series E156), Cambridge: Grove Books Ltd, p.23

[4] "After Lehman Brothers: desperate City wives" *The Times*, 17 Sept. 08. http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/the_way_we_live/article4769062.ece

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[8] Cox, H.G., (1999), 'Pentecostalism and Global Market Culture: A Response to Issues Facing Pentecostalism in a Postmodern World' in Dempster, M., Klaus, B.D., Petersen, D. (eds.) *The Globalization of Pentecostalism. A Religion Made to Travel,* Carlisle: Regnum, pp.387-8

[9] Hunter, J.D., (2010), *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 231

[10] Featherby, J., (2009), *The White Swan Formula. Rebuilding business and finance for the common good*, London: London Institute of Contemporary Society

[11] www.toughstuffonline.com

[12] www.tbnetwork.org

[13] See Sanderson, T. (2012), Microfinance – Commercial or Social?, *Faith in Business Quarterly Journal* 14:4, pp.22-27 at http://www.fivetalents.org.uk/images/general/MicrofinanceCommercialorSocial2.pdf

[14] Heslam, P.S., (2010), *Transforming Capitalism. Entrepreneurship and the Renewal of Thrift*, (Ethics Series E156), Cambridge: Grove Books Ltd, pp.19-20

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The Occupy Movement, Worship and the Imagination of the Church

James Butler, PhD Candidate

Introduction

In the first week of the Occupy Movement's occupation outside St Paul's Cathedral, St Paul's made two mistakes. Initially they wrongly assumed that there was such a thing as neutral ground, and after realising their first mistake they made another in thinking they could play the role of 'honest broker'. Let me explain.

At the beginning of the occupation sides were drawn and everyone waited to hear what St Paul's' view would be. It mistakenly thought that staying silent was to express 'no opinion' and to remain outside the debate in some neutral ground. In reality it found that by remaining silent it was seen as siding with the banking sector, inadvertently giving support to its desire to have the occupiers forcibly removed. What's worse is that in remaining silent, instead of staying out the way, it became a wall of protection around the banks because most of the debate centred around St Paul's and how St Paul's should respond, rather than about the City of London and the Banking Sector.

On realising this mistake St Paul's tried to take a different role, still supposedly on the outside, attempting to host the debate by modelling itself as the 'honest broker.' In doing this St Paul's tried to fool itself that it should have 'no position' and that it was able to create the neutral ground rather than joining the debate itself. The mistake that both St Paul's and the press fell into was to think that there were only two places you could argue from; within the Occupy Camp or within the City. In contrast, what the Occupy movement successfully achieved was to create a space which encouraged creative engagement with the issues and brought a focus on the City which hadn't been achieved before.

Jesus and the Pharisees

Jesus often found himself being asked to decide between one camp and another. When asked by the Pharisees if they should pay taxes to Caesar (Matt. 22.15-22) he gave the answer, "so give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's," which allowed him to stand on his own in the discussion and not be subsumed into a pre-existing debate. Straight after this, seeing that he had not aligned with the Pharisees, the Sadducees then tried to recruit him for their cause, to which his answer was straight – "you are in error" (Matt. 22.29). Jesus managed to navigate a political minefield without being recruited for a particular cause. However, he remained outspoken on what needed to change and focused his listeners on what was important.

Is it possible for the church to similarly find such a voice about the current economic crisis?

The Problem

Although there is debate about the cause and scale of contemporary economic problems, it is broadly recognised that there are issues with the way banks have behaved over recent

years leading up to the financial crisis. For some, the blame lies with a small minority of irresponsible individuals, for others it shows a complete failure of neo-liberal capitalism, with most people's views falling somewhere in-between the two. Depending on how you view the problem depends on how you see the solutions.

The Proposed Solutions

The person appointed by the Bishop of London to lead its own investigation into capitalism is Ken Costa, who is heavily involved in Holy Trinity Brompton Church and the Alpha Course. He is a retired investment banker who was formally the Chairman of Lazard International, an investment bank. Writing in the financial times he talked about the need to rediscover morality within the banking Sector. [1] Phrases such as "it is the pressing need to reconnect the financial with the ethical" at least show an understanding that there is a problem. Unfortunately, as is clearly shown in Ken Costa's contribution to the debate for the Oasis People's Parliament, this is understood mainly as a personal morality issue. [2]

He seems to take no account of structural sin or that there might be a good, or bad, way to structure the banking system. For Ken Costa it appears that banks and the banking sector are amoral, and that the bank's ethical behaviour is solely based on the behaviour of individuals within it. He is right to suggest that many of the resources to rediscover ethical capitalism are already present within the system, but it often takes voices from outside to rediscover those values. This is not just a case of having to find moral people, but a deeper exploration of the morality of the values and practices at the heart of the system is required.

Another mistake is to think that the solution is greater regulation by the State - the argument often used by those opposed to the current system. This shows both a lack of imagination and a mistaken understanding of the relationship between the State and the financial sector. A successful financial sector is vital for a fruitful state, and, therefore there is something of a common interest. Thus, it cannot be assumed that the State is capable of acting independently from the financial sector, or that it will act morally itself. It is also misguided to think that further regulation would cause the financial sector to be more moral as lawyers and accountants seem to have found ways around many of the laws up until now.

What is needed is creative imagination to reimagine these businesses and relationships. Stagnant discussion on the 'pros' and 'cons' of a free market economy and greater State regulation has become entrenched and monotonous. Is the solution to our economic problems either more capitalism or greater State regulation, or are there more options? The question for the church is whether, like Jesus, it is able to engage in the debate in such a way which opens up new possibilities and values the right things?

Church as Prophet

One of the roles of the Old Testament prophets was to disrupt the *status quo* to highlight the injustices of the society. Isaiah 58 cries out against the hypocrites who follow their religious practice without realising that the way they are living is completely at odds with what they are praying for. The Biblical prophets were sceptical of the way things were and questioned the structures and practices which many took (and still do take) for granted. There is a difference between asking questions to see how things could be done better and deconstruction with

no attempt to offer solutions. The prophets questioned, antagonised and disrupted but they also brought fresh revelation and helped encourage hope and imagination, which discovered new ways of doing things and recovered old practices. This is exactly what is needed in the current economic climate; a church which will question and disrupt unjust practices and encourage people both to rediscover old practices and imagine and hope for new ones.

The Value of Occupy

The Occupy movement was able to do some of this reimagining by bring the debate into a new arena. The Occupy camp could be described as a Temporary Autonomous Zone or TAZ where, as part of a protest, a different space is imagined where democracy is practised and all voices are heard. The 'jazz hands' to show agreement, which was widely mocked in the press, encouraged active participation from all in those in the camp, and the human microphone (where one person speaks and everyone around them repeats what is said so that what they are saying can be heard over a wider area) was a physical sign of the way the movement embodied each other's voices. Yes, it is idealistic, and that is exactly the point; to contrast a closed and distrusted system with one which is open, democratic and hopeful. The expectation isn't that this system would be the one the country adopts, but to highlight, in no uncertain terms, that there are different ways of doing things.

Luke Bretherton points out, "the invitation of the [Occupy] movement is to enter, if only for a day, an alternative future. Utilizing both an intensive (and at times seemingly interminable!) commitment to consensus decision-making and through embodying imaginative alternatives to a neo-liberal vision of globalization, the hope is that different constructions to the current political system, patterns of property ownership and capitalist modes of production and exchange can be generated." [3]

The space that was created by Occupy captured the imagination of the country, and people who wouldn't normally share a 'political opinion' felt able to contribute something to the debate and began to wonder if something might change after all.

The Church as a New Space – Political Worship

Worship, like the practices of the Occupy Movement, is political. This might seem an unusual and perhaps uncomfortable statement to make in this secular age when we are told that worship is a private affair, but true worship has always been political. The worship of the early church was political. To claim that Jesus is Lord, was to categorically state that Caesar wasn't; a claim that was immediately counter to the Roman cult and therefore political. When the church came to describe itself it didn't use the religious word 'synagogue' but a political word, *ekklesia*, a word used to describe the voting assembly in the Roman Empire. By being a gathered community it was part of public life i.e. the political realm. Wannenwetch in his book *Political Worship* warns us that, "if we fail to understand the assembly of believers politically, 'church service' and 'moral service' necessarily fall apart." [4] When worship becomes a private and individual pursuit the church has misunderstood its calling to be Christ's body on Earth.

By gathering in worship the Church is making a political statement and engaging in a political act. It is proclaiming a primary allegiance to Jesus. Worship cannot be made to easily

conform to a particular sphere of life. It is beyond any particular political system and makes a total claim on the life of the worshipper. Like the Occupy Movement, worship creates a new space where a different world can be imagined.

Brueggemann, when writing about the Psalms and their role within the worship of Israel describes them as both responsive and constitutional.[5] Praise is a responsive act; praising God for what he has done and who he is, but it is also one which constructs the theological world in which the worshipper interacts with God. The liturgy shapes the world in which they live so they are able to see the world rightly, from God's perspective.

In worship, be it praise, prayer, preaching, communion, service, celebration, baptism etc., we remember who we are in relation to God and to each other. It is in worship that we set our sights again on our Creator and understand ourselves both in relation to each other and to God, and learn to see the world rightly. Both High Church communion and Pentecostal worship are very different practices but serve a similar role in helping to realign worshippers with God's ways and help them to see the world rightly in relation to Him.

The Jubilee is a good example of a reimagined society which is born out of worship but rooted in everyday life. There is a 're-neighbouring' process at work, where through worship, the Israelites are reminded of their place before God, as those rescued from slavery and given the promised land, and reminded of their kinship and their responsibility to each other. The Jubilee is set up in such a way that debt cannot be passed down generations, and there is always an understanding of mutuality and responsibility to each other. Jubilee says it is unacceptable to become wealthy at someone else's expense because all things belong to God and all things are received as 'gift' from a generous and loving God.

There are examples of similar creative and imaginative ideas of re-neighbouring society today. Community organising as practiced by groups such as London Citizens seeks to bring ordinary citizens from across London together, to understand their common needs and goals, and work together to build power to demand what is needed in their neighbourhoods, such as a living wage, safer streets, affordable housing and fair treatment of asylum seekers. They do not engage through the existing structures, but create a space and a powerbase from which the existing structures can be held to account and encouraged to do what they have already promised to do.

It should not surprise us that it is in worship and prayer that we find inspiration for new ideas, and see the world in new ways, finding new ways to approach problems. When churches saw the way that farmers in Lesser Economically Developed Countries were being taken advantage of, the imaginative response was the Fair Trade movement. When churches saw how crippling debt was to many of the poorest countries in the world they came up with the Drop the Debt campaign. We can point to countless examples where the church, in worship, has imagined a different way which has challenged the *status quo*, and brought about lasting change such as co-operatives, credit unions and debt counselling. As we look around we see the church imaginatively engaging, on the ground, day in and day out.

But be warned, worship is not a quick-fix method to seeing the world rightly. Rather, it is through the practices of the Church, that, over time, we learn how to live. We might call this discipleship. Just as it is in the context of a worshipping church that the Bible is best interpreted, so it is in the context of the worshipping church that our collective imagination is renewed as to how the world should be. Worship and the practices of the church are what shape us and train us to make good decisions and to live rightly. They also widen our

horizons beyond ourselves, beyond our family, our church, our town or even our country, to understand all that we do in the context of our world, both in relation to our near, and far, neighbours, and to God.

The church in mission is a worshipping church, one engaged in the work of God in the world. We desperately need to come together in worship and reimagine the future. This isn't a simple choice of the free market versus state control. The church, through its worship, can create a new space which can open up new opportunities and help us to see the world rightly. We need new ways for people to hold banks accountable, to remember their responsibility to each other and envision what a more just world might look like.

Imagination and the Economy

The Church has a role to play in re-energising a stagnant debate. It needs to engage imaginatively and prophetically in all areas of society. Engaging with individuals, churches should be encouraging their congregations to think seriously about finances, wealth, debt and generosity as part of their worship. Locally, the church can engage with particular needs around it resulting from economic problems. Credit unions, debt counselling, living-wage campaigns and campaigns for local jobs are all ways that churches have engaged imaginatively and prophetically with particular needs in their neighbourhoods. On a national, or even international, level the church should engage in the debate, highlighting and challenging injustice and imaginatively exploring ways that value the right things.

The Church and Occupy

The Church needs to follow Occupy's lead, not in baptising the Occupy Movement, but in joining the debate and creating its own space from which to be heard. It needs to rediscover its prophetic voice to question and agitate, but at the same time to create those spaces, through its worship practices, to reimagine the way society operates. It does not need to align with a particular political party, but like Occupy, it may be able to create a space from which it can speak. We believe that the whole Church is uniquely positioned to see how the world truly is, and to bring those perspectives into the discussion as to what 'ethical capitalism' might look like.

Notes

[1] Ken Costa, Why the City should heed the discordant voices of St Paul's, Financial Times 28 Oct 2011, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3cb2bf14-009b-11e1-ba33-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1jKoYHxNi

[2] See http://charitiesparliament.org/events/upcoming-events/2011/12/7/ethical-capitalism-

[3] Luke Bretherton, The Real Battle of St Paul's Cathedral: The Occupy Movement and Millennial Politics, 31 Oct 2011, http://christianitycontemporarypolitics.blogspot.com/2011/10/real-battle-of-st-paul-cathedral-occupy.html

[4] B., Wannenwetsch, (2009), *Political Worship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.31

[5] W., Brueggemann, (1988), *Israel's Praise*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p.1

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Westerners' Involvement in Projects in Africa: Hindrance, Help or Necessity?

Dr Jim Harries, Author of *Theory to Practice in Vulnerable Mission: An Academic Appraisal* and *Vulnerable Mission*, Chairman to the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission (www.vulnerablemission.org) and cross-cultural Missionary in East Africa

"If you (the white man) weren't here,
it might have proved possible for this programme to be supported locally,
but because you are with us, that is impossible".

Introduction

The above comment was made to me by an African colleague in Western Kenya a few months ago. It is a comment that confirmed what I had already been suspecting was happening. I have been trying since then to think how I could articulate the implications of that comment to friends and colleagues in 'donor countries'.

Money from the West

The part of Africa I live in is very used to receiving donor funds from the West. Western donors and would-be-donors are frequent visitors. Such visitors are often struck by the local poverty. They try to do something about it and many choose to work through the church.

The primary means Westerners use in their attempt to resolve issues of poverty in Africa is money. Amongst the reasons for the dominance of this means is that local people have become accustomed to presenting their problems in such a way that money would seem to be the solution. Being presented with the solution to a problem which simply needs their finance is also preferred by Westerners who do not want their lives to be inconvenienced. Money can these days easily be transported internationally whereas the results of personal involvement are prone to being 'messy'. Money-solutions do not inconvenience or interfere in unpleasant ways with the routine lives of Western donors concerned.

The Effects of Outside Funding

Such financial reductionism unfortunately has side-effects. One of these is what I may call 'the occlusion of intelligence'. If what is needed from the West is money, this implies that the foundational difference between the West and Africa is the availability of money. Outside provision of that money, while it may compensate for its absence, is likely to occlude the perhaps more important and detailed question of why money is not available locally in the first place.

The provision of money from outside can easily prevent the development of an alternative local-source. Such outside provision has the effect of closing the eyes, ears and even 'minds' of donors and would-be donors. This closing of the senses and minds occurs as a result of the widespread primary priority of money. Put another way, whereas any other

service offered is of a particular nature, money as a product can be used in a variety of ways. Therefore, people on the whole will prefer the freedom implicit in the receipt of money in preference to a service given *in lieu* of money. This prioritisation of money supply acts to exclude other alternative activities by Westerners from the scene in the poor world. This means that those who the poor aspire to imitate (i.e. Westerners) withdraw and are rendered invisible, and in turn donors become ignorant of that to which they are contributing.

De-skilling and Dependency

It should be clear that one effect of the above is de-skilling. That is; a de-skilling of donor peoples (the West) because they become ignorant of contexts other than their own. In addition, it brings a deskilling of recipient communities, who learn to depend on outside sources of credit instead of developing their own.

Another effect of this practice is that funds coming from Western sources makes it increasingly difficult (or very nearly impossible) for local people in much of Africa, and presumably other parts of the majority world, to conceive of a Western man being other than a generous donor to whatever project they are involved in. In turn, as a result no African in their right mind will contribute significant quantities of their own finance to a project in which a Westerner is involved.

The fact that local people will not contribute to such a foreign-funded project means that foreign initiated/funded projects will remain dependent on foreign funds. Because dependence on foreign funds leaves a project impervious to local critique, the potential for such projects to adjust to local conditions is minimal.

People's interest in a foreigner will be for his or her money. Whatever additional wisdom or insights a foreigner has will be largely irrelevant to the success or otherwise of their project. Locals won't tell a foreigner where a project might be going wrong if this may result in a cut in funds. As foreigners' ramblings become less and less in tune with the local context, as a result of their being excluded from the arena of implementation, so the value of their wisdom in relation to the project will continue to fall. This will result in it being even more in local people's interests to make the case that money alone is the appropriate solution to all their problems. We have come full circle.

I am afraid that the above insights do disqualify a lot of the initiatives for the poor world that sometimes acquire great acclaim. Almost any wisdom, innovation, technology etc. will be said to be desperately needed in Africa, as long it comes with money or the prospect of making money.

The Challenge of Local Income-generation and Sustainability

Some who consider their intervention into Africa to be particularly valuable see the raising of local finance as a means to its ongoing sustainability. Therefore, some Westerners try to incorporate an income-generating component into their African project (whatever it is) in an attempt to ensure its continuity even should donor funds fail. What these people regularly forget is that in the absence of a mechanism that obliges the local people concerned to use income that is generated *for* the project, that in the opinion of the Westerner deserves it,

locals may have other ideas as to where or on what such income is best spent. As a result attaching an 'income generating' piece to a project is a far cry from an assurance of project sustainability.

Transformative Change without Subsidy

Sustainable changes in lifestyle do not arise primarily from the use of targeted subsidies, but from changes in people's hearts and minds. This is because people will invariably attempt to use their hearts and minds in making decisions on how to allocate available resources. Unfortunately, an approach to a people that includes financial contributions often does not enable a donor to engage in a close learning of the context that would enable understanding of the kind of mind-changes needed, and even less on how to achieve them. Because of the kinds of distortion mentioned above, sustainable changes in people's hearts and minds are best achieved by interventions that avoid the use of outside subsidy.

The tendency for Westerners to bring subsidies for their activities of whatever nature that they engage in Africa is, unfortunately, by some of the means mentioned in this short article, a major cause for the failure of their projects. Subsidy is, therefore, an impediment to the adoption (or indeed adaption) of many excellent ideas and processes that could have been of benefit to the poor world.

As a resolution to this, and related difficulties, the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission advocates that some Western missionaries and development workers rely on local funds in the engaging of their ministries.

Notes

[1] I refer to imitation in the positive sense – presumably imitation of those who have achieved 'development' is an important means by which people in the poor world can aspire to acquire it. Imitation depends on the visibility (typically the presence) of those who are to be imitated. The case that I here make is rooted in a certain understanding of linguistics and epistemology, for details of which see articles listed at:-

http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/articles/index.html

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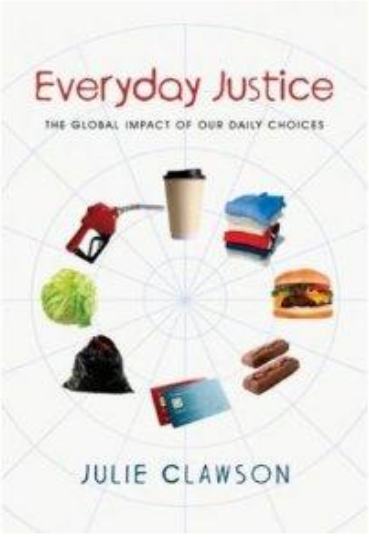
Everyday Justice: The Global Impact of our Daily Choices



Reviewed by Janet Parsons, Former MA Student, Redcliffe College

Publisher: InterVarsity Press
ISBN: 978-0-8308-3628-4 2009

Julie Clawson's understated little book appears at first glance to inhabit the life-improvement genre but turns out to be a linchpin for Christian ethics. Its purpose is to raise awareness that what we choose to eat, drink, wear, use up and throw away is crucial to others and an expression of faith.

Clawson served as a pastor in Chicago and now lives in Texas. She is a young mother and a prolific blogger on emerging Christianity, social justice and the power of the individual as a God-partner for change. She admits that media coverage of injustices as serious as those in Darfur in 1997 are overwhelming and we fail to see how we can make a difference, so she uses anecdotes, a clutch of incisive data, reasoned argument and the Scriptures to draw the reader gently ('*don't panic*') into a commitment to small changes in their lives, which she says will alter their theology and make each a part of Jesus' 'good news to the poor'.

Her own awareness of justice issues began with a closer look at coffee, which has become a stylish consumer product and a big earner for the five companies that dominate growers in the poorest nations. In Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia, farmers have lost their land to transnational corporations that give them jobs but deny them a living wage and safe working conditions. She cites Malachi 3:5, God will judge, 'those who defraud labourers of their wages'.

Chocolate tells a similar story. In the case of one nation, Cote d'Ivoire, half the population earns its living from cocoa. To meet export demand, labourers (many of them children) are trafficked in from as far away as Mali. Once under the control of gang masters, they are brutalised. There is more slavery today, the author observes, than in the days of the Atlantic slave ships, so we need to buy fairly traded goods, she says, and promote Fair Trade.

Each chapter focuses on an aspect of consumer extravagance that links to injustice, and Clawson casts her net well beyond food and drink. Enough fuel is burnt in the USA to provide everyone's whim for easy travel, controlled temperatures and electronic entertainment. But people can opt for small changes, like using a bike occasionally and switching things off. Individuals can't solve global warming but everyone needs to accept their part in it, such as in the destruction of farmland and fish populations from oil extraction in the Niger Delta and other subsistence areas. Clawson is good at joining the dots; lost livelihoods lead to unrest and then even relief agencies cannot work effectively.

She insists that what happens beyond one's line of vision really matters. If we deny the needs of others through greed, we deny the image of God in them. Do we really want to buy the shirt produced by a girl whose parents owe the factory owner for medical bills, who forces her into sex just to keep her job? Do we want food grown with unregulated pesticides that poison ground water in East Africa or India before it is shipped to us? We can 'buy cheap' or we can recognise the true costs borne by others and future generations. She says it is time that we had ethical labelling on what we buy.

The opening vignette in the chapter on *Waste* involves a shopper dashing around a discount store stocking up on toilet paper, disposable diapers (nappies!), plastic picnic plates, bottled water and storage bags, satisfied that she is being efficient and saving money, until she has to pay and realises she has spent hundreds of dollars on what is destined to become 'trash'. Clawson then raises the spectre of the 'plastic soup', larger in area than the USA, that floats on the currents of the Pacific.

She is even-handed in admitting that the USA discards more than any other nation and emits greenhouse gases at an equally horrendous rate. Yet the book is Amero-centric in a more general sense. Had she adopted the perspective of a world citizen, her contribution would have been even greater. The depth of her research supports it. She could show, for example, how Western European nations have the ethic and technology for recycling that all industrialised nations need to adopt. Or, she could ground her principle of living with less 'stuff' in the 'natural recycling' of the Two-thirds World and show that there is something to learn there too. The American perception needs to broaden into the global frame.

The book's final topic is loans from Western banks and the International Monetary Fund, which, far from lifting vulnerable economies, have entrapped and destroyed them. The author sets out this complex topic with a depth of understanding that refutes any allegation that this is just a lifestyle manual. She expresses hope for the movement for debt cancellation that was inspired by the world's churches in the tradition of Jubilee. The problem is she published before the full impact of the economic crisis and the report that showed 'shockingly little progress' made by the G20 nations to relieve debt. [1]

This does not detract from Clawson's positive attitude and emphasis on *praxis* as she challenges every Christian to join God's rebuilding of his Kingdom. In the 'mustard seed movement' for everyday justice, living for self is simply no longer an option.

Notes

[1] *Making the Grade; The Group of 20s Commitments to the World's Poorest*, Jubilee USA Network, June, 2010, p. 3

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