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# Evangelical Review of Theology

A Global Forum



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# Editorial Introduction

THIS EDITION MARKS one of the first efforts of the World Evangelical Alliance's Council for Business and Theology. The Council is part of the WEA's Business Coalition, which includes two other councils (Business & Ministry Finance, and Business & Global Strategies), and provides a worldwide platform for ministries, institutes, speakers, funders and experts dealing with issues regarding business, finance and economy from a biblical point of view. The Council for Business & Theology exists to provide a platform for the best global theological voices on business, economics, and finance.

The articles and reviews contained in the following pages are the first step in providing this platform, in this instance aimed at a more scholarly audience because we believe that it is vital to engage theologically before moving to the level of practice. By engaging the global church in this process of theological reflection, we hope to establish some common ground while sharpening our collective thinking in the worldwide evangelical church.

## Articles and reviews

It is only right, as an evangelical publication, to begin with biblical theology, and the first two articles set the scene from the Old and New Testaments. We open with Chris Wright, whose analysis of the Levitical Jubilee law is foundational for a Christian system of economic social ethics. He points out the ways in which the Jubilee, and its appropriation by Jesus in his own preaching, give us a paradigm for economic relations and a guide for the church in

speaking to society around economic issues.

Kar Yong Lim then shows us that economics is not confined merely to the Old Testament and the teaching of Jesus, but that there is an economic harvest to be reaped from the apostle Paul's writings. Paul engages with a particular economic issue in a way which establishes principles which stood in opposition to both his own contemporary culture, and to the values often held dear in our own day.

We then have four systematic and applied contributions. Myk Habets and Peter McGhee present a cross-disciplinary paper, taking the theology of Thomas Torrance of priestly and mediatorial roles in creation for humans and applying it to a study of spirituality in the workplace. Emiola Nihinlola develops a distinctive ecclesiological perspective in relation to the challenges of societal structures in Africa, including economic structures. John Jefferson Davis provides us with a theological framing of what is often a conflict with business and its immediate economic interests, and proposes a new paradigm that takes into account theological principles from creation.

And finally, Miroslav Volf contends that the traditional evangelical understanding of work as a calling is theologically inadequate, and that a pneumatological approach to work is needed. We hope that publishing this extract will stimulate not only a desire to read the rest of Volf's book, but that it begins a process for many of our readers of critically evaluating the theological basis for understanding work. Other key writers in this area include Paul

Stevens (who argues for the primacy of calling), and Darrell Cosden (who like Volf writes in conversation with earlier work by Jürgen Moltmann).

The first three of our reviews focus on leadership (reviewing Al Erisman's *The Accidental Executive*, Thomas Schirrmacher's *Leadership and Ethical Responsibility*, and David Brooks' *The Road to Character*), a vital aspect of business. The final review is of *Business for the Common Good*, by Kenman Wong and Scott Rae, which takes a broader and more systemic approach to the intersection of theology and business. There are also several short reviews of some other helpful books.

### Wider resources

Alongside the articles and reviews, we want to encourage our readers to make use of the resources that are now easily accessible around the world.

The most important of these is the Theology of Work Project (<http://www.theologyofwork.org>) which has a vast array of high-quality articles and information, including a commentary on the whole Bible with application to the workplace.

An organisation which merits particular mention is the Lausanne Movement, which fosters three issue networks around topics mentioned here (Business as Mission, Marketplace Ministry, and Tentmaking), as well as other related issue networks (Cities, Creation Care, etc.).

For theological reflection on economic issues, a key resource is the Journal of Markets and Morality, published in a free open access form by the Acton Foundation ([\[marketsandmorality.com/index.php/mandm\]\(http://marketsandmorality.com/index.php/mandm\)\).](http://www.</a></p>
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There are many other organisations and groups focused on faith and work issues, often making high-quality resources freely available, and we encourage you to look at the website of the Council for Business and Theology for links to these.

To further assist, we have provided a handy list of books and resources, briefly annotated and classified into some different categories. This list is found at page 87.

### Future plans

From this point, we want to develop the theological conversation in two key directions. The first is around economics and the structure of society. All too often, public engagement by churches on economic issues has been marked by ignorance, or by churches co-opted to a political agenda (left-wing and right-wing, in different places and times). In these conversations we need to include both economists with their systemic and technical expertise, and biblical scholars with their exegetical skill.

The second key direction is around the meaning of work, which is closely tied to the less-studied issue of the place of business in society. Within the global evangelical church, the innate value of work (deriving from its creation mandate) is widely acknowledged—but often only nominally. Business is often regarded as having a contingent value: we might set up a business as a platform or enabler for mission, or encourage workers to see their workplace as primarily a forum for personal evangelism. Until there is

an evangelical consensus on the theological meaning of work, it is likely to be difficult to shift this deep-seated contingent understanding of work. Is work primarily a calling or a charism? What is the place of christology in understanding work—surely a vital part of a genuinely ‘Christian’ theology of work?

We need to work towards a common understanding on these issues, so that the evangelical church around the world can have a prophetic voice to society.

### **Acknowledgements**

This journal edition could not have been produced without the contributions of many people. First among those are Prof Thomas Schirrmacher, who is the editor of the ERT, and Rev Dr David Parker, the executive editor. Both have been very gracious in allowing us to take over the journal for this

issue, and exceptionally supportive throughout the whole process. It would have been quite impossible to complete the issue without their wonderful help.

The contributors of the articles and reviews are of course the ones who have done the real work of producing the content we all benefit from. We want to especially thank Chris Wright and Miroslav Volf for arranging the republication of their existing (and noted) works.

**Timo Plutschinski**

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# Theology of Jubilee: Biblical, Social and Ethical Perspectives

Christopher J. H. Wright

THE JUBILEE (*yobel*) came at the end of the cycle of seven sabbatical years. Leviticus 25:8-10 specifies it as the fiftieth year, though some scholars believe it may have been actually the forty-ninth—i.e. the seventh sabbatical year. And some suggest it was not a full year, but either a single day as an event within the fiftieth year, or an intercalary month after the forty-ninth year, with the same calendrical effect as our system of leap years. In this year there was to be a proclamation of liberty to Israelites who had become enslaved for debt, and a restoration of land to families who had been compelled to sell it out of economic need sometime during the previous fifty years.

Instructions concerning the jubilee, and its relation to the procedures of land and slave redemption are found entirely in Leviticus 25. But it is referred to also in Leviticus 26 and 27. It is an institution which has inspired much curiosity, in ancient and modern times, and in recent years it has come to prominence in the writings of those

committed to radical Christian social ethics. Our purpose here is to see what it may contribute to a biblical understanding of holistic mission.

The jubilee was in essence an economic institution. It had two main points of concern: the family and the land. It was rooted, therefore, in the *social* structure of Israelite kinship and the *economic* system of land-tenure that was based upon it. Both of these, however, also had *theological* dimensions in Israel's faith. So we must look briefly at the jubilee from each of these three angles.

## I The Structure of OT Israel's Faith and Society

### 1. Social: Israel's kinship system

Israel had a three tier pattern of kinship, comprising the tribe, the clan, and the household. Gideon's modest reply to his angelic visitor shows us all three: 'Look at my clan—it is the weakest in the tribe of Manasseh; and

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**Chris Wright** (MA, PhD, Cantab), an ordained Anglican minister, who taught at Union Biblical Seminary (UBS) in India from 1983. In 1988 he became Academic Dean, and later Principal of All Nations Christian College, UK. He has been International Director of the Langham Partnership International from 2001. This article is an edited extract from his book, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2004) and is used with permission.



I am the least in my father's house' (Judg 6:15). The last two smaller units (household and clan) had greater social and economic importance than the tribe in terms of benefits and responsibilities relating to individual Israelites.

The father's house was an extended family that could comprise three or four generations living together, along with servants and hired employees. This was a place of authority, even for married adults like Gideon (Judg. 6:27, 8:20). It was also the place of security and protection (Judg 6:30ff.). The fathers' houses also played an important role in the judicial and even military functions, and was the place where the individual Israelite found identity, education and religious nurture.<sup>1</sup> The jubilee was intended primarily for the economic protection of the father's house, or the extended family.

## 2. Economic: Israel's system of land-tenure

Israel's system of land-tenure was based on these kinship units. As Joshua 15-22 makes clear, the territory was allotted to tribes, then 'according to their clans', and then within the clans each household had its portion or 'heritage'. This system had two features that stand in complete contrast to the preceding Canaanite economic structure.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on Israel's kinship system, see Christopher J. H. Wright, *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990; Reprint Paternoster, 1996), ch. 2; and, Christopher J. H. Wright, 'Family,' in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 761-769.

### a) Equitable distribution

In pre-Israelite Canaan the land was owned by kings and their nobles, with the bulk of the population living as tax-paying tenant farmers. In Israel the initial division of the land was explicitly to the clans and households within the tribes, under the general rubric that each should receive land according to size and need. The tribal lists of Numbers 26 (especially note 52-56) and the detailed territorial division of land recorded in Joshua 13-21 are the documentary evidence that the original intention of Israel's land system was that the land should be *distributed throughout the whole kinship system as widely as possible*.

### b) Inalienability

In order to protect this system of kinship distribution, family land was made inalienable. That is, it was not to be bought and sold as a commercial asset, but was to remain as far as possible within the extended family, or at least within the circle of families in the clan. It was this principle which lay behind Naboth's refusal to sell his patrimony to Ahab (1 Kgs 21), and it is most explicit in the economic regulations of Leviticus 25.

## 3. Theological: God's land, God's people

The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land belongs to me; for you are 'guests' and 'residents' with me. (Lev 25:23).

This statement, at the heart of the chapter containing the jubilee, provides the hinge between the social and economic system described above

and its theological rationale. It makes two fundamental statements about the land Israel lived on, and about the Israelites themselves. These are crucial to understanding the rationale for the jubilee.

### a) God's land

One of the central pillars of the faith of Israel was that the land they inhabited was YHWH's land. It had been his even before Israel entered it (Ex 15:13,17). This theme of the divine ownership of the land is found often in the prophets and Psalms. Far more often than it is ever called 'Israel's land', it is referred to as 'YHWH's land'. At the same time, although it belonged to YHWH, the land had been promised and then given to Israel in the course of the redemptive history. It was their possession, their inheritance, as Deuteronomy repeatedly describes it.

So the land was in Israel's possession, but still under God's ownership. This dual tradition of the land (*divine ownership and divine gift*) was associated in some way with every major thread in Israel's theology. The promise of land was an essential part of the patriarchal *election* tradition. The land was the goal of the exodus *redemption* tradition. The maintenance of the *covenant* relationship and the security of life in the land were bound together. Divine *judgement* eventually meant expulsion from the land, until the *restored relationship* was symbolized in the return to the land.

The land, then, stood like a fulcrum in the relationship between God and Israel (notice, for example, its pivotal position in Lev 26:40-45). The land was a monumental, tangible witness both to YHWH's control of history within

which the relationship had been established, and also to the moral demands on Israel which that relationship entailed.

For the Israelite, living with his family on his allotted share of YHWH's land, the land itself was the proof of his membership of God's people and the focus of his practical response to God's grace. Nothing that concerned the land was free from theological and ethical dimensions—as every harvest reminded him (Deut 26).

### b) God's people.

'You are guests and residents (RSV), aliens and tenants (NIV) with me' (23). These terms, (*gerim w'tosabim*), normally in Old Testament texts describe a class of people who resided among the Israelites in Canaan, but were not ethnic Israelites. They may have been descendants of the dispossessed Canaanites, or immigrants. They had no stake in the tenure of the land, but survived by hiring out their services as residential employees (labourers, craftsmen, etc.) for Israelite land-owning households.

Provided an Israelite household itself remained economically viable, then its resident alien employees enjoyed both protection and security. But otherwise, their position could be perilous. Hence these resident aliens are frequently mentioned in Israel's law as the objects of particular concern for justice because of their vulnerability.

The point of Leviticus 25:23 is to say that the Israelites were to regard their own status before God as analogous to that of these residential dependents to themselves. Just as they had resident guests living on with them in the land they (the Israelites) owned, so they

(the Israelites) were resident guests living on the land that YHWH actually owned.

Thus, they (the Israelites) had no ultimate title to the land—it was owned by God. YHWH was the supreme landlord. Israel was his collective tenant. Nevertheless, the Israelites could enjoy secure benefits of the land under YHWH's protection and in dependence on him. So the terms are not (as they might sound in English) a denial of *rights*, but rather an affirmation of a *relationship* of protected dependency.

The practical effect of this model for Israel's relationship with God is seen in verses 35, 40 and 53. If all Israelites share this same status before God, then the impoverished or indebted brother is to be regarded and treated in the same way as God regards and treats all Israel, i.e. with compassion, justice and generosity. So the theology of Israel's land and of Israel's status before God combine to affect this very practical area of social economics.

## II Practical Provisions

### 1. Fundamental concepts

In Leviticus 25, the jubilee provisions are interwoven with other provisions for the practice of redemption of land and slaves. As we have already seen, the economic mechanism of redemption is a vital piece of background for understanding the full meaning of God's redemption, as the exodus is called. So it is thus doubly interesting to see how the jubilee was supposed to work alongside redemption in Israel's system.

The chapter is complex and we

cannot do a thorough exegesis here.<sup>2</sup> It opens with the law of the sabbatical year on the land (1-7). This is an expansion of the fallow year law of Exodus 23:10f., which was also further developed in Deuteronomy 15:1-2 into a year in which debts (or more probably the pledges given for loans) were to be released.

The jubilee is then introduced in verses 8-12 as the fiftieth year to follow the seventh sabbatical year. Verse 10 presents the twin concepts that are fundamental to the whole jubilee institution, namely liberty and return.

- *Liberty*—from the burden of debt and the bondage it may have entailed;
- *Return*—both to the ancestral property if it had been mortgaged to a creditor, and to the family which may have been split up through debt-servitude.

It was these two components of the jubilee, (freedom and restoration, release and return), that entered into the metaphorical and eschatological use of the jubilee in prophetic and later NT thought.

### 2. Stages of implementation

The practical details of redemption and jubilee are outlined from verse 25 to the end of the chapter. In these verses three descending stages of poverty are presented, each with a required response. The stages are marked off by the introductory phrase, 'If your broth-

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed study see Christopher J. H. Wright, 'Jubilee, Year Of,' in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D.N. Freedman, III, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1025-1030; and Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, ch. 6.

er becomes poor' (25, 35, 39 and 47). The sequence is interrupted by parenthetical sections dealing with houses in cities and Levite properties (29-34) and non-Israelite slaves (44-46), which we need not consider, but the overall legal framework is clear.

- *Stage 1—selling land (25-28)* Initially, having fallen on hard times (for any reason: none is specified), the Israelite land-owner sells, or offers to sell, some of his land. To keep it within the family, in line with the inalienability principle, it was first of all the duty of the nearest kinsman (the *go'el*) either to pre-empt it (if it was still on offer), or to redeem it (if it had been sold). Secondly, the seller himself retains the right to redeem it for himself, if he later recovers the means to do so. *Thirdly and in any case, the property, whether sold or redeemed by a kinsman, reverts to the original family in the year of jubilee.*
- *Stage 2—loans (35-38)* If the poorer brother's plight worsens and he still cannot stay solvent, presumably even after several such sales, it then becomes the duty of the kinsman to maintain him as a dependent labourer, by means of interest-free loans.
- *Stage 3a—bonded service (39-43)* In the event of a total economic collapse, such that the poorer kinsman has no more land left to sell or pledge for loans, he and his whole family sell themselves to, i.e. enter the bonded service of, the wealthier kinsman. The latter, however, is commanded in strong and repeated terms, not to treat the debtor Israelite like a slave, but rather as a resident employee. *This undesirable*

*state of affairs is to continue only until the next jubilee—i.e., not more than one more generation.* Then the debtor and/or his children (the original debtor may have died, but the next generation were to benefit from the jubilee, 41, 54), were to recover their original patrimony of land and be enabled to make a fresh start.

- *Stage 3b—redemption (47-55)* If a man had entered this debt-bondage *outside* the clan, then an obligation lay on the whole clan to prevent this loss of a whole family by exercising their duty to redeem him. The whole clan had the duty of preserving its constituent families and their inherited land. It also had the duty to see that a non-Israelite creditor behaved as an Israelite should towards an Israelite debtor, *and that the jubilee provision was adhered to eventually.*

## 2. Jubilee and redemption

From this analysis, it can be seen that there were two main differences between the redemption and jubilee provisions: First, *timing*. Redemption (of and or persons) was a duty that could be exercised at any time, locally, as circumstances required, whereas jubilee was intended to be twice a century as a national event. Second, *Purpose*. The main aim of redemption was the preservation of the land and persons of the *clan*, whereas the main beneficiary of the jubilee was the *household*, or 'father's house'.

The jubilee therefore functioned as a necessary over-ride to the practice of redemption. The regular operation of redemption over a period could result in the whole territory of a clan coming

into the hands of a few wealthier families, with the rest of the families in the clan in a kind of debt-servitude, living as dependent tenants of the wealthy—i.e. precisely the kind of land-tenure system that Israel had overturned.

The jubilee was thus a mechanism to prevent this. *The primary purpose of the jubilee was to preserve the socio-economic fabric of multiple household land tenure with the comparative equality and independent viability of the smallest family-plus-land units. In other words, the jubilee was intended for the survival and welfare of the families in Israel.*

### 3. Historicity

The inevitable question arises, of course, did it ever historically happen? The fact is that there is no historical narrative recording a jubilee happening. But then, there is no historical record of the Day of Atonement, either. Silence in the narratives proves almost nothing.

More divisive is the question whether the jubilee was an early law that fell into disuse, or a late piece of utopian idealism from the time of the exile. Many critical scholars affirm the latter, but others, especially those with in-depth knowledge of the ancient Near East, point out that such periodical amnesties for debt and restoration of land were known in Mesopotamia for centuries before the establishment of Israel, though nothing on such a regular fifty year cycle has been found.

My own preference is that it makes sense to see the jubilee as a very ancient law, which fell into neglect during Israel's history in the land. This neglect happened, not so much because the jubilee was economically impos-

sible, as because it became irrelevant to the scale of social disruption. The jubilee presupposes a situation where a man, though in severe debt, still technically holds the title to his family's land and could be restored to full ownership of it.

But from the time of Solomon on this must have become meaningless for growing numbers of families as they fell victim to the acids of debt, slavery, royal intrusion and confiscation, and total dispossession. Many were uprooted and pushed off their ancestral land altogether. After a few generations they had nothing to be restored to in any practicable sense (cf. Mic. 2:2,9, Isa. 5:8). This would explain why the jubilee is never appealed to by any of the prophets as an economic proposal (though its ideals are reflected metaphorically).<sup>3</sup>

## III Ethical and Missiological Relevance

Elsewhere I have argued for a paradig-

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<sup>3</sup> For bibliography of earlier works, see Wright, *God's Land*, pp. 119-127, and Wright, 'Jubilee, Year Of,' . More recent works include Fager, Jeffrey A., *Land Tenure and the Biblical Jubilee*, JSOT Supplements, Vol. 155, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Hans Ucko, ed. *The Jubilee Challenge: Utopia or Possibility: Jewish and Christian Insights* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997); and Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem, Minneapolis: Magnes Press, Fortress Press, 1995). A good, recent and balanced survey is provided by P. A. Barker, 'Sabbath, Sabbatical Year, Jubilee,' in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. Baker David W. Alexander T. Desmond (Downers Grove and Leicester: Intervarsity Press and IVP, 2003), 695-706.

matic approach to handling the laws of the Old Testament as Christians, in order to discern their ethical implications in the contemporary world.<sup>4</sup> This means identifying the coherent body of principles on which an Old Testament law or institution is based and which it embodies or instantiates. To do this, it is helpful once more to move around our three angles and consider how Israel's paradigm, in the particular case of the jubilee institution, speaks to Christian ethics and mission.

### 1. Economic: access to resources.

The jubilee existed to protect a form of land tenure that was based on an equitable and widespread distribution of the land, and to prevent the accumulation of ownership in the hands of a wealthy few. This echoes the wider creation principle that the whole earth is given by God to all humanity, who act as co-stewards of its resources. There is a parallel between, on the one hand, the affirmation of Leviticus 25:23, in respect of *Israel*, that '*the land is mine*', and on the other hand, the affirmation of Psalm 24:1, in respect of *all humanity*, that '*the earth is the Lord's* and everything in it, the world and all who live in it'.

The moral principles of the jubilee are therefore universalizable on the basis of the moral consistency of God. What God required of Israel in its land reflects what in principle he desires for humanity on the earth—namely broadly equitable distribution of the resources of the earth, especially land, and a curb on the tendency to accumu-

lation with its inevitable oppression and alienation.

The jubilee thus stands as a critique not only of massive private accumulation of land and related wealth, but also of large scale forms of collectivism or nationalization which destroy any meaningful sense of personal or family ownership. It still has a point to make in modern Christian approaches to economics.

The jubilee did not, of course, entail a *re-distribution* of land, as some popular writing mistakenly suppose. It was not a re-distribution but a restoration. It was not a free handout of bread or 'charity', but a restoration to family units of *the opportunity and the resources to provide for themselves* again. In modern application, that calls for some creative thinking as to what forms of opportunity and resources would enable people to do that, and to enjoy the dignity and social involvement that such self-provision entails.<sup>5</sup>

The jubilee, then, is about restoring to people the capacity to participate in the economic life of the community, for their own viability and society's benefit.

### 2. Social: family viability

The jubilee embodied practical concern for the family unit. In Israel's case, this meant the extended family, the 'father's house', which was a size-

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<sup>5</sup> Interesting and creative applications of the jubilee and other aspects of Old Testament economics are found in John Mason, 'Biblical Teaching and Assisting the Poor', *Transformation* 4.2 (1987), 1-14, and Stephen Charles Mott, 'The Contribution of the Bible to Economic Thought', *Transformation* 4.3-4 (1987), 25-34.

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<sup>4</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, ch. 9.

able group of related nuclear families descended in the male line from a living progenitor, including up to three or four generations. As we have seen, this was the smallest unit in Israel's kinship structure, and it was the focus of identity, status, responsibility and security for the individual Israelite. It was this social unit, the extended family, that the jubilee aimed to protect and periodically to restore if necessary.

Notably it pursued this objective, not by merely '*moral*' means—i.e. appealing for greater family cohesion or admonishing parents and children to greater exercise of discipline and obedience respectively. Rather, the jubilee approach was immensely practical and fundamentally *socio-economic*. It established specific structural mechanisms to regulate the economic effects of debt. Family morality was meaningless if families were being split up and dispossessed by economic forces that rendered them powerless (cf Neh 5:1-5).

The jubilee aimed to restore social dignity and participation to families through maintaining or restoring their economic viability.<sup>6</sup> Debt is a huge cause of social disruption and decay, and tends to breed many other social ills, including crime, poverty, squalor and violence. Debt happens, and the Old Testament recognizes that fact.

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<sup>6</sup> A thorough attempt to apply the relevance of the Old Testaments patterns regarding the extended family to modern western society is made by Michael Schluter, and Roy Clements, *Reactivating the Extended Family: From Biblical Norms to Public Policy in Britain*, (Cambridge: Jubilee Centre, 1986). See further, Michael Schluter, and John Ashcroft, ed. *Jubilee Manifesto: A Framework, Agenda & Strategy for Christian Social Reform* (Leicester: IVP, 2005), ch. 9.

But the jubilee was an attempt to limit its otherwise relentless and endless social consequences by limiting its possible duration.

The economic collapse of a family in one generation was not to condemn all future generations to the bondage of perpetual indebtedness. Such principles and objectives are certainly not irrelevant to welfare legislation or indeed any legislation with socio-economic implications.

And indeed, taken to a wider level still, the jubilee speaks volumes to the massive issue of international debt. Not for nothing was the worldwide campaign to see an ending of the intolerable and interminable debts of impoverished nations called *Jubilee 2000*. And many Christians have instinctively felt a moral imperative to support the campaign, not only out of compassion for the poor, but out of a biblically rooted sense of justice and what God requires of us.

Another interesting, and in my view convincing, paradigmatic handling of the jubilee institution is suggested by Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz. He comments on the powerful theology of time that is implied in the sabbatical cycles of Israel, and its contrast with the commercialising of time in modern debt and interest based economies. Time is a quality that belongs to God, for no created being can make time.

We enjoy time, we are carried along in the flow of time, everything is embedded in its time, so the very idea of exploiting the flow of time to take interest on money lent seemed preposterous. It does so no more because the sacredness of time has disappeared, even before the sacredness of the land vanished from

the memories of our modern societies. Instead capitalist market economies have been elevated to global importance; they are enshrined with the qualities of omnipotence that border on idolatry.

So the question arises: does it make sense to attribute to money qualities that no created thing can ever have, namely eternal growth? Every tree must die, every house must one day crumble, every human being must perish. Why should immaterial goods such as capital—and its counterpart, debts—not also have their time? The capital knows no natural barriers to its growth. There is no jubilee to put an end to its accumulative power. And so there is no jubilee to put an end to debts and slavery. Money that feeds on money, with no productive or social obligation, represents a vast flood that threatens even large national economies and drowns small countries... But at the heart of this deregulation is the undisputed concept of the eternal life of money.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Theological: a theology for evangelism?

The jubilee was based upon several central affirmations of Israel's faith, and the importance of these should not be overlooked when assessing its relevance to Christian ethics and mission. As we observed with the exodus, it would be quite wrong to limit the

challenge of the jubilee to the socio-economic realm and ignore its inner spiritual and theological motivation. From a holistic missiological point of view, each is as important as the other, for all are fully biblical and all fully reflect the character and will of God. The following points stand out in the text.

- Like the rest of the sabbatical provisions, the jubilee proclaimed the *sovereignty of God* over time and nature, and obedience to it would require submission to that sovereignty. That is, you were to keep the jubilee as an act of obedience to God. This Godward dimension of the matter is why the year is deemed holy, 'a sabbath to YHWH, and why it was to be observed out of the 'fear of YHWH.
- Furthermore, observing the fallow year dimension of the jubilee would also require faith in *God's providence* as the one who could command blessing in the natural order and thereby provide for your basic needs (18-22).
- Additional motivation for the law is provided by repeated appeals to the knowledge of *God's historical act of redemption*, the exodus and all it had meant for Israel. The jubilee was a way of outworking the implications within the community of the fact that all Israelites were simply the former slaves of Pharaoh, now the redeemed slaves of YHWH (38, 42-43, 55).
- And to this historical dimension was added the cultic and 'present' *experience of forgiveness* in the fact that the jubilee was to be proclaimed on the Day of Atonement (9). To know *yourself* forgiven by God was to issue immediately in practical remis-

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<sup>7</sup> Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz, 'The Jubilee: Time Ceilings for the Growth of Money', in Ucko, ed. *Jubilee Challenge*., 109. There are some other creative interpretations of the jubilee in the same book.



sion of the debt and bondage of *others*. Some of the parables of Jesus spring to mind.

- And the inbuilt future hope of the literal jubilee, blended with an *eschatological hope* of God's final restoration of humanity and nature to his original purpose. There is a strong theological pulse beating in this chapter of Leviticus.
- To apply the jubilee model, then, requires that people obey the *sovereignty* of God, trust the *providence* of God, know the story of the *redeeming action* of God, experience personally the sacrificial *atonement* provided by God, practise God's *justice* and put their hope in God's *promise* for the future. Now if we summon people to do these things, what are we engaging in? Surely these are the very fundamentals of evangelism.

Now of course I am not suggesting that the jubilee was 'evangelistic' in any contemporary sense. What I do mean is that the fundamental theology behind it also lies behind our practice of evangelism. The assumptions are the same. The theological underpinning of the socio-economic legislation of the jubilee is identical to that which undergirds the proclamation of the kingdom of God. It is no wonder, as we shall see in a moment, that the jubilee itself became a picture of the new age of salvation that the New Testament announces. It is an institution that models in a small corner of ancient Israelite economics the essential contours of God's wider mission for the restoration of humanity and creation.

When appropriately set in the light of the rest of the biblical witness, *the wholeness of the jubilee model embraces the church's evangelistic mission, its*

*personal and social ethics and its future hope.*

## IV Future Hope and Jesus.

The future orientation of the jubilee serves additionally as a bridge to seeing how it influenced Jesus, and helps us answer questions as to whether our insistence on a holistic understanding of mission is sustained in the New Testament.

### 1. Looking to the future

Even at a purely economic level in ancient Israel, the jubilee was intended to have a built-in future dimension. Anticipation of the jubilee was supposed to affect all present economic values (including the provisional price of land). It also set a temporal limit on unjust social relations—they would not last forever. The jubilee brought hope for change. It was proclaimed with a blast on the trumpet (the *yobel*, from which its name derives), an instrument associated with decisive acts of God (*cf.* Is. 27:13; 1 Cor. 15:52). However, as time went by, and even when the jubilee probably fell into disuse in practice, its symbolism remained potent.

We have seen that the jubilee had two major thrusts: *release/liberty*, and *return/restoration* (from Lev. 25:10). Both of these were easily transferred from the strictly economic provision of the jubilee itself to a wider metaphorical application. That is, these economic terms became terms of hope and longing for the future, and thus entered into prophetic eschatology.

There are allusive echoes of the jubilee particularly in the later chapters of Isaiah. The mission of the Servant

of YHWH has strong elements of the restorative plan of God for his people, aimed specifically at the weak and oppressed (Is 42:1-7). Isaiah 58 is an attack on cultic observance without social justice, and calls for liberation of the oppressed (6), specifically focussing on ones own kinship obligations (7).

Most clearly of all, Isaiah 61 uses jubilee images to portray the one anointed as the herald of YHWH to 'evangelize' the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives (using the word *deror* which is the explicitly jubilary word for release), and to announce the year of YHWH's favour (almost certainly an allusion to a jubilee year). The hope of *redemption and return* for God's people are combined in the future vision of Isaiah 35, and set alongside the equally dramatic hope of a transformation of nature.

Thus, within the Old Testament itself, the jubilee had already attracted an eschatological imagery, alongside its ethical application in the present. That is to say, the jubilee could be used to portray *God's* final intervention for messianic redemption and restoration; but it could still function to justify ethical challenge for *human* justice to the oppressed in the present.

When we see how the jubilee vision and hope inspired prophetic passages such as Isaiah 35 and 61, with their beautiful integration of personal, social, physical, economic, political, international and spiritual realms, our own missional and ethical use of the jubilee must preserve a similar balance and integration, preventing us from putting asunder what God will ultimately join together.

## 2. Looking to Jesus

How, then, was the institution of jubilee taken up by Jesus and applied in the New Testament to the age of fulfilment that he inaugurated. How, in other words, did jubilee relate to the wider sense of Old Testament *promise* that Jesus fulfilled? Jesus announced the imminent arrival of the eschatological reign of God. He claimed that his people's hopes for restoration and for messianic reversal were being fulfilled in his own ministry. To explain what he meant, he used imagery from the jubilee circle of ideas (among others, of course).

The 'Nazareth manifesto' (Lk 4:16-30) is the clearest programmatic statement of this. It is the closest Jesus comes to a personal mission statement, and it quotes directly from Isaiah 61, which as we have seen was strongly influenced by jubilee concepts. Most commentators observe this jubilee background to the prophetic text and Jesus' use of it. It certainly builds a holistic dimension into the mission that Jesus sets out for himself by reading this scripture and claiming to be its embodiment.

Luke will not allow us to interpret this jubilee language as flowery metaphors or spiritual allegories. ... Jesus fulfilled the Jubilee that he proclaimed. His radical mission was the very mission of God found in the Old Testament proclamation of Jubilee. It is presented in Luke's Gospel as holistic in four aspects:

1. It is both proclaimed and enacted.
2. It is both spiritual and physical.
3. It is both for Israel and the nations
4. It is both present and eschatologi-

cal.<sup>8</sup>

Other examples of the influence of the jubilee on Jesus' thinking are suggested by Robert Sloan and Sharon Ringe. Sloan observed that Jesus' use of the word for 'release', *aphesis*, carries both the sense of *spiritual* forgiveness of sin and also literal and *financial* remission of actual debts. Thus, the original jubilee background of economic release has been preserved in Jesus' challenge concerning ethical response to the kingdom of God. If we are to pray the Lord's prayer, 'release for us our debts', we must be willing to release others from theirs. It is not a matter of deciding between a spiritual and a material meaning, for both can be included as appropriate.<sup>9</sup>

Ringe traces the interweaving of major jubilee images into various parts of the Gospel narratives and the teaching of Jesus. There are echoes of jubilee in the beatitudes (Mt 5:2-12), in Jesus' response to John the Baptist (Mt 11:2-6), in the parable of the banquet (Lk 14:12-24), in various episodes of forgiveness and especially teaching on debts (Mt 18:21-35 etc.).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Paul Hertig, 'The Jubilee Mission of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke: Reversals of Fortunes', *Missiology* 26 (1998), 167-179, 176-177.

<sup>9</sup> R. B. Sloan Jr, *The Favorable Year of the Lord: A Study of Jubiliary Theology in the Gospel of Luke* (Austin: Schola, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> S. H. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). For a concise survey of various interpretations of the way Luke uses Isaiah 61 here, see also, Robert Willoughby, 'The Concept of Jubilee and Luke 4:18-30,' in *Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell*, ed. Anthony Billington, Tony Lane, and Max Turner (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 41-55.

The evidence is broad, and conforms to the pattern already observed in the Old Testament. The jubilee serves both as a *symbol of future hope* and also as an *ethical demand in the present*.

## 2. Looking to the Spirit

The book of Acts shows that the early church had a similar combination of future expectation and present ethical response. The jubilee concept of eschatological restoration is found in the otherwise unique idea of 'complete restoration'. The unusual word for this, *apokatastasis* occurs in Acts 1:6 and 3:21, where it speaks of God's final restoration of Israel and all things. It seems Peter has taken the core of the jubilee hope (restoration) and applied it, not just to the restoration of land to farmers, but to the restoration of the whole creation through the coming Messiah.

Significantly, however, the early church responded to this future hope not merely by sitting waiting for it to happen. Rather, they put into practice some of the jubilee ideals at the level of mutual economic help. Luke almost certainly intends us to understand that in doing so they were fulfilling the sabbatical hopes of Deuteronomy 15. Acts 4:34, with its simple statement that 'there were no needy persons among them', is virtually a quotation of the Greek Septuagint translation of Deuteronomy 15:4, 'there will be no needy person among you'.

The new community of Christ, now living in the eschatological era of the Spirit, is making the future hope a present reality in economic terms. Or to put it another way, the church by its internal practice was erecting a sign-

post to the reality of the future. The new age of life in the Messiah and in the Spirit is described in terms that echo the jubilee and its related sabbatical institutions.<sup>11</sup> And the effect was a

community in mission, marked by a holistic combination of verbal proclamation (the evangelistic preaching of the apostles), and visible attraction (the social and economic equality of the believers). Not surprisingly, the church grew in numbers, strength, maturity and mission.

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**11** In addition to my own work, already referred to, a full and helpful account of the way Jesus and the rest of the New Testament related to the rich scriptural traditions of the land is David E. Holwerda, *Jesus and Israel: One Cov-*

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*enant or Two?* (Grand Rapids and Leicester: Eerdmans and Apollos, 1995), 85-112.

## PATERNOSTER BIBLICAL MONOGRAPHS

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# Paul the Economist?

## Economic Principles in Pauline Literature with the Jerusalem Collection as a Test Case

Kar Yong Lim

### I Introduction

In an essay published in the *Evangelical Review of Theology* in 2013, I lamented that in the studies on Pauline theology, ethics, and mission, it was often assumed that the apostle did not address issues regarding wealth and poverty comprehensively in his letters. As a result, one could not expect to find the treatment of economic issues or caring for the poor featured or discussed by the interpreters of Paul. In trying to correct this assumption, I examined Paul's understanding of generosity in alleviating the economic hardship of the poor as a concrete expression of his gospel.<sup>1</sup>

However, since the publication of that essay, there has been a surge in the interest in exploring ancient economic dimensions in engagement with the apostle Paul and early Christianity. This resulted in a number of studies that focus on Paul's view of money, inequality, and charity in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See my 'Generosity from Pauline Perspective: Insight from Paul's Letters to the Corinthians', *ERT* 37 (2013): 20–33.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Gary A. Anderson, *Charity: The*

Armed with a better understanding of ancient economy, I aim to extend the discussion I first mooted in my 2013 essay by exploring Paul's view of economic principles gleaned from his writing by paying close attention to the major collection project for the Jerusalem saints.

### II Ancient Economy at a Glance

Recent studies in ancient economy shed interesting insights on our understanding of inequality and income distribution in the Roman Empire. In an illuminating study, Walter Scheidel and Steven Friesen attempt to reconstruct the size of Roman economy and income distribution based on available

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*Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); David J. Downs, *Alms: Charity, Reward, and Atonement in Early Christianity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016); Steven J. Friesen, Sarah A. James, and Daniel N. Schowalter, eds., *Corinth in Contrast: Studies in Inequality* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); and Verlyn D. Verbrugge and Keith R. Krell, *Paul & Money: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Apostle's Teachings and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

ancient data and models constructed by others.<sup>3</sup>

They estimate that the 'Roman Empire generated a total income approaching the equivalent of 50 million tons of wheat or close to 20 billion sesterces per year.'<sup>4</sup> This estimate represented the performance of the Roman economy that 'approached the ceiling of what was feasible for ancient and medieval economies', and peaked in the mid-second century CE.<sup>5</sup> Based on the Geary-Khamis dollars (a hypothetical currency value that had the same purchasing power based on the USD in 1990), Scheidel and Friesen calculate the per capita GDP of the Roman Empire and estimate it to be approximately \$700.<sup>6</sup>

Scheidel and Friesen then proceed to measure income distribution in the Roman Empire by dividing up the population into two separate categories of elite and non-elite groupings.<sup>7</sup> The elite

group, which included the senatorial cohort, equestrian order, civic notables, and other wealthy people, comprised only about 1.2-1.7% of the population of 70 million at the peak of the Roman Empire. This minority group of population controlled an estimated 15 to 30% of the total income.

The non-elite group (comprising at least 97% of the population) were categorised according to two other sub-groups comprising those with surplus income above the subsistence level and those living at or below subsistence level.

The upper level group, also labelled as the economically 'middling' non-elite groups, enjoyed surplus income between 1.7 to 10 times above the subsistence level. This group of the non-elites comprised only about 7 to 13% of the population and enjoyed 15 to 25% of the total income. The lower level group who were living at or below subsistence level were the large majority of the population, comprising about 84 to 90%. This group earned about 50% of the total income, with at least 10-22% of them living at starvation level.

Apart from the population, Scheidel and Friesen also assess that the state and local governments contributed a small share of the overall income of not much more than 5%.

In short, it is likely that the top 10% of the population controlled approximately 50% of the income, leaving not much more than half of the income for the remaining population.

Based on this computation, Scheidel and Friesen are able to calculate the Gini coefficient of income inequality on the Roman Empire. The Gini coefficient is a measure of inequality ranging from 0 to 1, where 0 denotes perfect equal-

3 Walter Scheidel and Steven Friesen, 'The Size of the Economy and the Distribution of Income in the Roman Empire,' *Journal of Roman Studies* 31 (2009): 61-91.

4 Scheidel and Friesen, 'The Size of the Economy,' 62.

5 Scheidel and Friesen, 'The Size of the Economy,' 74.

6 Scheidel and Friesen, 'The Size of the Economy,' 74.

7 The method employed in Scheidel and Friesen's work is a marked improvement from Steven J. Friesen's earlier proposal using a seven-level poverty scale to measure income distribution in Pauline communities. See his 'Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus,' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (2004): 323-361, and the critique offered by Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 44-53.

ity and 1 denotes maximum inequality.

Scheidel and Friesen compute the Gini coefficient of the Roman Empire to be in the region of 0.42-0.44, 'falling right in the middle of a broad historical range'.<sup>8</sup> This suggests that some measures of inequality existed in the Roman Empire with at least 10-22% of the population living at starvation level who required some form of assistance for basic survival.<sup>9</sup>

This group of extreme poor had often been ignored by the Greco-Roman society.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the general attitude to the helpless poor was almost hostile, as argued by Roman Garrison.<sup>11</sup> This probably explained why charity and caring for the poor were largely non-existent. The elites and those belonging to the 'middling' group of non-elites never saw helping the poor as their obligation. Even if charitable acts existed, they were often extended to those of equal status or those belonging in the same voluntary associations of guilds within the same locality.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Scheidel and Friesen, 'The Size of the Economy', 84-86.

<sup>9</sup> For further discussion, see Justin J. Meggit, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998) and Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 43-53.

<sup>10</sup> See Deborah E. Watson, 'Paul's Collection in the Light of Motivation and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor in the First-Century World', PhD dissertation, University of Durham, 2006, 14-55.

<sup>11</sup> Roman Garrison, *Redemptive Almsgiving in Early Christianity*, JSNTSup 77 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 38-45.

<sup>12</sup> For further discussion, see Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 60-107, and Lim, 'Generosity from Pauline Perspective', 25-26.

### III Paul the Economist

#### 1. 'Remember the poor' everywhere: Galatians 2:10 once more

Paul was most likely aware of the economic inequality and the neglect of the poor in the Greco-Roman world. As argued by Verbrugge and Krell, Paul's concern for the poor was deeply rooted in his understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures and their subsequent traditions.<sup>13</sup> His Pharisaic background certainly influenced how he viewed the poor, and how he was obligated by the Law of Moses to care for them.

This probably explained why he carried out acts of mercy towards the poor, as evident in Acts and his letters. According to Acts 11:27-30, the prophet Agabus arrived in Antioch and prophesied that there would be a severe famine 'over all the world' (Acts 11:28) during the reign of Claudius (most likely 45-47CE). As a result, presumably under the leadership of Paul and Barnabas, the Christ-followers in Antioch made a monetary contribution according to their means. This collection was delivered by Paul and Barnabas to the believers in Judea.

That the collection was made suggests that there was a certain amount of wealth among some of the Christ-followers in Antioch. Moreover, Antioch was Paul's base for the most part of his apostolic career and it was from this city that he launched all three of his Gentile missionary journeys. It is not inconceivable that the Antioch church also provided financial support for Paul's mission activities. This ex-

<sup>13</sup> Verbrugge and Krell, *Paul & Money*, 119.

ample gives us a glimpse of the income inequality in the Roman Empire.

Elsewhere in Acts 20:35, in his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders, Paul sets himself as an example for them to emulate: 'In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."<sup>14</sup> Since Acts 20:33-35 deals with economic issues, the exhortation to 'support the weak' must be read within the framework of Paul's deep concern for those who were financially 'weak'. Here, we see Paul grounds the basis for supporting the needs of the poor on the command he received from Christ himself.

In Galatians 6:10, Paul exhorts the Galatians to 'work for the good of all', an expression that Longenecker believes would have included 'charitable works for the needy and poor'.<sup>15</sup> Paul also gives instructions to the Thessalonians believers to 'help the weak (*asthenēs*)' (1 Thess 5:14), which most likely referred to those who were economically weak.<sup>16</sup> Turning to Romans 12:13, we see Paul's appeal to the Roman believers: 'Contribute to the needs of the saints.' This would have included those at the bottom of the social-economic hierarchy.

The most important evidence that we have concerning Paul's deep concern for the poor is from Galatians 2:8-10:

For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. All they asked was that we should continue to *remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along* (emphasis mine).

In Galatians 2:1-10, Paul summarises the main issues covered by what is commonly known as the Jerusalem Council (see also Acts 15:1-36). From the account in Acts, we see that a letter was sent to the Gentiles at the end of the Council to exhort them 'to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality' (Acts 15:29).

Interestingly, nothing was said about remembering the poor according to the account in Acts. Because of this, it is not surprising that Paul's mention of remembering the poor in Galatians 2:10 is often treated as a peripheral issue compared to the main issues concerning the inclusion of the Gentiles and the rite of circumcision debated in the Council. In light of this, Hans Dieter Betz describes the instruction to remember the poor as an 'additional request' and 'unrelated to the main points of the debate' in Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Larry Hurtado also states that this phrase, 'remember the poor',

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<sup>14</sup> All Scriptures citations are taken from the NRSV.

<sup>15</sup> Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 142.

<sup>16</sup> BDAG, s.v., defines one of the usages of *asthenēs* as those who are 'economically weak, poor'.

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<sup>17</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 101.



is often thought to be 'of no real significance, and only serves to give an unimportant detail of the agreement with Jerusalem'.<sup>18</sup>

This line of argument fails to do justice to Paul's concern for the poor, as we have seen thus far from Acts and his letters. If remembering the poor is indeed an 'additional request' or 'unrelated' or 'of no real significance', it is very curious that in Galatians, Paul makes no mention of the major advice or instructions given by the 'Pillars of Jerusalem' to the Gentiles, such as abstaining from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality (see Acts 15:29). It seems strange that in recounting the events of the Jerusalem council, Paul chose to include this particular request to remember the poor, and further emphasised that this is something that he was eager to do all along.

It has generally been accepted in New Testament scholarship that 'the poor' mentioned in Galatians 2:10 referred to the poor in Jerusalem. This is partly due to reading Romans 15:25-32 into Galatians 2:10. Romans 15:26 refers to Paul's contribution 'for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem'. As such, it is assumed that the phrase, 'remember the poor', in Galatians 2:10 naturally refers to the poor in Jerusalem.

J. Loius Martyn specifically indicates that by referring to the 'poor', 'the Jerusalem leaders refer to their own church, or to a circle of persons

within that church'.<sup>19</sup> Richard Horsley also makes the similar point that the poor

meant those in the Jerusalem community who were literally poor, probably because they had no means of self-support. The limited resources they had pooled were hardly sufficient to sustain them long-range. Thus other nascent assemblies of Christ were to send economic assistance to the poor in Jerusalem.<sup>20</sup>

This line of argument receives overwhelming support from a number of commentators, including Ben Witherington,<sup>21</sup> Richard Longenecker<sup>22</sup> and James Dunn.<sup>23</sup>

There is no doubt that 'the poor' in Galatians 2:10 would have included the poor in Jerusalem. But should the phrase, 'remember the poor', be so narrowly defined in terms of geographical restrictions? If it is true that 'the poor' specifically and narrowly referred to those in the Jerusalem church, then it is understandable that Paul's collection project is a direct result from the command received from the Pillars of Jerusalem.

However, this consensus has been recently and rightfully challenged by Bruce Longenecker. According to

<sup>18</sup> Larry Hurtado, 'The Jerusalem Collection and the Book of Galatians', *JSNT* 5 (1979): 46-62, quotation from 51.

<sup>19</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 207.

<sup>20</sup> Richard A. Horsely, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 144.

<sup>21</sup> Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 144.

<sup>22</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1990), 60.

<sup>23</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, BNTC (London: A&C Black, 1993), 112.

Longenecker, the understanding of ‘the poor’ as a reference to the believers in Jerusalem finds no support from the interpretation of Galatians 2:10 prior to the fourth century CE.<sup>24</sup> By assessing data from various patristic writers such as Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius and Aphrahat, Longenecker concludes that, at least until the middle of the fourth century, ‘the poor’ in Galatians 2:10 has no geographical restriction to believers in Jerusalem only.

It included the poor within local congregations scattered throughout Judea and the Greco-Roman world. It is only by the middle of the fourth century that this interpretation changed, as testified to by Ephrem, Jerome, and John Chrysostom where ‘the poor’ takes on a technical term and has been since then referred to narrowly as ‘the poor in Jerusalem’.<sup>25</sup>

If Longenecker is correct in his interpretation that the phrase, ‘remember the poor’, does not have geographical restriction, it opens up fresh perspectives in reading Paul’s concern for the poor—that caring for the poor is without geographical restriction, and that the Jerusalem collection constitutes one of the examples in which Paul establishes his care for the poor. In other words, Paul was eager to remember the poor not only in Jerusalem but also in the local congregations that he established throughout the Mediterranean basin. This means also that Paul desired to help not only his fellow Jews, but also the Gentiles. This is significant, as helping the poor tran-

sends not only geographical but also ethnic boundaries.

It is also interesting to note that a century after the time of Paul, there is a legend that depicts the apostle as someone who had deep concern for the poor. According to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, a rich lady by the name of Tryphaena left ‘much apparel and gold’ for Paul ‘for the ministry of the poor’ (*Acts of Paul and Thecla* II.47). This narrative is notable in that it highlights that Paul, even a century after his death, is remembered as someone through whom the resources of the rich could be used to channel help to the poor.

## 2. The Jerusalem collection

Organising a major relief fund for the poor in Jerusalem was no easy task for Paul.<sup>26</sup> This massive project took at least a number of years and covered churches from the regions of Macedonia and Achaia (Rom 15:25-28), and possibly Asia Minor and Galatia as well. We do not have any information on how the collection was carried out in all these regions except from the church in Corinth (see 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9).

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, Paul lays down his instructions to the Corinthians for the collection. They were to set aside a sum of money on a weekly basis so that on his next visit, the con-

<sup>24</sup> Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 159.

<sup>25</sup> For further discussion, see Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 159-76.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed historical treatment of Paul’s collection, see Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992); David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts*, WUNT 2:248 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008); and Verbrugge and Krell, *Paul & Money*, 107–201.

tribution would be ready for dispatch to Jerusalem. However, these instructions were either ignored by the Corinthians, or were not properly followed through. The collection stalled.

There are a number of reasons why this happened. One of them could be the deteriorating relationship between the Corinthians and Paul after the writing of 1 Corinthians. Another reason could be the presence of the 'super apostles' mentioned by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 who sought to undermine his apostolic authority among the Corinthians.

In order to exhort the Corinthians to complete what they had earlier set up to do in helping the poor (2 Cor 8:11), Paul addressed the issues surrounding the collection at some length in 2 Corinthians 8–9. There are a number of economic principles at work according to Paul's instructions in these two chapters.

#### a) The principle of grace and generosity

Paul's primary motivation in urging the Corinthians to complete the collection is rooted in the example of Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 8:9, Paul appealed to the paradigmatic grace of the Lord Jesus Christ: 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.'

The standard reading of 2 Corinthians 8:9, as reflected in the NRSV, is to take the juxtaposition of opposites: the Christological movement from wealth to poverty ('though he was rich he became poor'), and the anthropological movement from poverty to wealth through Christ ('you through his poverty might become rich').

The Christological movement from wealth to poverty has often been interpreted by a large majority of commentators in an allegorical or spiritual sense—the wealth of Jesus is generally read as the quality of his heavenly, pre-existent status as God, and his becoming poor referred to his incarnation or taking on the human form.<sup>27</sup> The paradoxical anthropological movement from poverty to richness is often interpreted as believers' benefits of salvation or spiritual enrichment.<sup>28</sup>

These Christological and soteriological readings are by no means impossible. However, we should note that 2 Corinthians 8:9 is directly related to the context in which Paul is urgently appealing to the Corinthians to complete the contribution to the Jerusalem collection. As Barclay notes, since 'wealth' is read as spiritual benefits, possessed, renounced, and gained, the application to the appeal for financial contribution requires a shift from the metaphorical to the literal domain: what Christ has done in giving up his wealth for others, so the Corinthians must now do in giving up their material possessions for the Jerusalem saints.<sup>29</sup>

However, this direct and parallel application has its problems, as highlighted by Furnish, where the call is to

<sup>27</sup> For example, see Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 579; and Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 2nd ed, WBC 40 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014). 40–41.

<sup>28</sup> For example, see Harris, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 578–79 and Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 417.

<sup>29</sup> Barclay, 'Because he was Rich he became Poor', 337.

ensure that Jerusalem believers have sufficiency (2 Cor 8:15) and not riches, and that the Corinthians are not called to do what Christ did in giving up everything until they become poor. Furnish acknowledges the awkwardness in this reading:

Paul is not presenting Christ's act of grace as an example for the Corinthians to emulate. If that were the case he ought to urge them to become 'poor' for the sake of others as Christ did, but this he specifically does not ask them to do ... The admonition implicit in this statement is not 'Do what Christ did,' or even 'Do for others what Christ has done for you.' It is, rather, 'Do what is appropriate to your status as those who have been enriched by the grace of Christ.'<sup>30</sup>

In light of this, Barclay questions if a closer parallel between a Christological statement in an economic metaphor which matches its financial context that governs the behaviour of believers could be possible.<sup>31</sup> He proposes reading the participial phrase, *plousios on*, in 2 Corinthians 8:9 as causal, rendering a nuanced reading as 'because he was rich he became poor'.<sup>32</sup> This reading carries the meaning that 'it was precisely because of his wealth, and as an expression of it, that Christ made himself poor. Here, then, "wealth" means not what Christ possessed, but, with a different and paradoxical sense,

*the "wealth" of his generosity'.<sup>33</sup>*

Barclay further justifies his reading by tracing Paul's flow of thought in 2 Corinthians 8 where the notion of generosity is clearly highlighted. Paul described the Macedonians' giving as the result of overflowing of the wealth of their generosity in 2 Corinthians 8:2 ('overflowed in a wealth of generosity'). This same language of abundance is seen also in Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to give generously in 2 Corinthians 8:7 ('we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking'), 2 Corinthians 9:8 ('so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work') and 2 Corinthians 9:11 ('You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity').

Based on this observation, Barclay concludes that 2 Corinthians 8–9 is saturated with the language of abundance and wealth, and 'people abound not in what they have but in what they give, and "wealth" consists not in possession but in generosity'.<sup>34</sup> As such, Barclay proposes the reading of 2 Corinthians 8:9 as follows:

You know the *charis* of the Lord Jesus Christ, that in his wealth (that is, generosity) he became poor (a single term covering his incarnation, life and death), so that by his poverty (by all that is effected by 'the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me', Gal 2.20) you might become rich, in the same mo-

<sup>30</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 418.

<sup>31</sup> Barclay, 'Because he was Rich he became Poor', 338.

<sup>32</sup> Barclay, 'Because he was Rich he became Poor', 339.

<sup>33</sup> Barclay, 'Because he was Rich he became Poor', 340, emphasis his.

<sup>34</sup> Barclay, 'Because he was Rich he became Poor', 340.

mentum of generous love.<sup>35</sup>

This reading, according to Barclay, provides a tight fit between the Christological and soteriological statements of 2 Corinthians 8:9, and the exhortation to the Corinthians to give generously. Christ has made the Corinthians rich in generosity and thus, they are to give generously to the Jerusalem collection.<sup>36</sup>

If Barclay is right in his reading, we see Paul using the metaphor of generosity to effect a change of behaviour in the Corinthians. The Corinthians were exhorted to see beyond themselves by having the poor in mind—the poor in Jerusalem who were beyond both their geographical and ethnic boundaries.

Drawing on the narrative of Jesus, Paul challenged the Corinthians to finish the collection for the poor in Jerusalem by drawing on the principle of generosity—the abundance that the Corinthians currently enjoyed would supply the needs of the poor in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:11–15). To challenge the Corinthians further, Paul reiterated that both he and the Corinthians would be shamed if the Macedonians found out that the collection was left unfinished by the Corinthians (2 Cor 9:1–5).

Then Paul evoked an agrarian metaphor, suggesting that all giving to the Jerusalem collection was like sowing seed that would reap a harvest. Finally, Paul underscored that true generosity was also a direct result of the confession of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This generosity would also bring about

thanksgiving and praise to God from the recipients of the collection (2 Cor 9:6–15).

### b) The principle of equality

Paul continues to ground his appeal for the collection on the notion of equality, or *isotēs*, in 2 Corinthians 8:13–15:

I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance (*isotētos*) between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance (*isotētos*). As it is written, ‘The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.’

According to Garland, the notion of equality is the ‘principle undergirding the whole project’ where it relates to justice and fairness.<sup>37</sup> Garland also further comments that in 2 Corinthians 8:13, Paul literally writes, ‘but out of equality’ (*all’ ex isotētos*) the Corinthians should give generously. In other words, Paul was not talking about the purpose of giving so that it might create equality, but that the giving should be from equality.<sup>38</sup> The question of equality goes beyond giving according to one’s means or one’s possessions (2 Cor 8:11–12). Equality is rooted in the grace of the Macedonians who gave generously and Christ who gave himself completely for humanity.

L. L. Welborn has carried out a study on the notion of equality based

<sup>35</sup> Barclay, ‘Because he was Rich he became Poor’, 343.

<sup>36</sup> Barclay, ‘Because he was Rich he became Poor’, 343.

<sup>37</sup> David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC 29 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 382. See also, Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*, 87.

<sup>38</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 382.

on the Greek concepts of friendship, politics, and the *cosmos*.<sup>39</sup> Space does not permit me to review all the three contexts, and I will focus only on the context of friendship, which is most relevant for our purpose in this essay.

Within the context of friendship, Aristotle has much to say about equality. According to him, 'friendship is equality' and the true friend is 'equal and alike'.<sup>40</sup> However, Aristotle also recognised that not all friendships were between equals. There existed two sorts of equality: friendship between equals and friendship between unequals. For the former, Aristotle insisted that equality was measured in numerical sense according to the same standard. For the latter, such as friendship between a benefactor and a client, or a superior and an inferior, equality must be proportional, and this often benefitted the benefactor or the superior party.<sup>41</sup> The inferior friend was often required to give honour and respect to the superior friend in accordance with the friendship of unequals.

Let us now consider how equality works in Paul's community. Paul's instructions to the Corinthians were clear—that all, whether rich or poor, should give to the Jerusalem poor. However, for the collection to be successful, he would have expected the rich believers and those who at least enjoyed some form of surplus beyond the subsistence level to contribute more to the collection, while those

poorer believers would contribute less. Believers of means like Crispus (Acts 19:8; 1 Cor 1:14), Gaius (Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14), and Erastus (Rom 16:23) in the Corinthian community were expected to contribute a large portion to the collection compared to the large majority who lived at or below subsistence level.

As I have suggested earlier in this essay, the notion of those who were rich contributing to those who were poor beyond their social circles was alien in the Greco-Roman world. However, this notion had been set aside, and Paul now imposed on these richer Christ-followers the obligation to help the poor.

In addition, Paul also explicitly used the example of the Macedonians, described as those in 'extreme poverty' (2 Cor 8:2), as those who gave generously, and even 'beyond their means' (2 Cor 8:3) to the Jerusalem collection. They even begged Paul for this privilege of sharing their generosity (2 Cor 8:3). Paul also referred to the Macedonians in Romans 15:26-27, where they

have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do this, and indeed *they owe it to them*; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things.

This rhetoric would have sounded shocking to the richer Christ-followers in Corinth in a number of ways. Firstly, how could those who lived in extreme poverty, presumably living at or below the level of subsistence who might need assistance for survival themselves, be extremely generous in giv-

<sup>39</sup> L. L. Welborn, "'That There May be Equality': The Contexts and Consequences of a Pauline Ideal", *New Testament Studies* 59 (2013): 73-90.

<sup>40</sup> Aristotle *Eth. Nic.* 8.5.5; Pol. 3.16.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle *Eth. Nic.* 7.9.5.

ing? If anything, this should move the Corinthians, who were better off materially, to greater generosity.

Secondly, Paul's language in Romans 15:26-27, claiming that the Gentiles owed their generosity to the Jerusalem poor reflects a language of reciprocity. Within the context of the Greco-Roman world, Welborn suggests that this language clearly placed the Corinthians as beneficiaries.<sup>42</sup> By the logic of inverse proportion, they were obliged to make a gift to the Jerusalem Christians based on the notion of equality.

Furthermore, Paul also designated the collection as a 'gift' or *charis* in 2 Corinthians 8:4 and 6, and this evoked the notion of reciprocity. He appealed also to the unequal status of the Corinthians who enjoyed abundance and compared it to the Jerusalem believers who suffered need. This inequality must be addressed (2 Cor 8:13-15).

This sort of argument would have been offensive to the Greco-Roman culture deeply rooted in the obligations between benefactors and clients and the superior and the inferior. Furthermore, Furnish argues that this giving by the Corinthians to the Jerusalem church did not place the obligation for the Jerusalem church to reciprocate in monetary contribution in the future.<sup>43</sup> The Jerusalem poor were placed in positions of superiority because they first gave the Corinthians spiritual blessings. Spiritual wealth now stood 'in proxy for material wealth so that Paul's congregations become the ones who

owe the Jerusalem saints'.<sup>44</sup>

According to Welborn, this expectation of Paul based on equality would have appeared to be 'a dangerous attempt to reverse the established social relations of power within Greco-Roman friendship'.<sup>45</sup> The table had now been turned. The rich, always viewed as the benefactor, were now called to be the beneficiaries. The wealthy, out of equality, were now obliged to the poor. The Gentiles were now called upon to give to the Jews. Not only would this be completely unheard of in the Greco-Roman world, it also stood in sharp contrast to the economy of the Roman Empire where tribute was always given to the elites and superiors.

In light of this, Welborn suggests that 'Paul contributes to the tentative emergence of a new category of thought—economic'.<sup>46</sup> The goal of this new economic structure was to achieve an equality of possessions between persons of different classes—rich and poor, and ethnic groups—Jews and Gentiles, through voluntary redistribution of wealth.

### c) The principle of sharing resources as a family

One interesting feature in 2 Corinthians 8-9 is the frequent use of sibling language. Out of the 12 times where *adelphos* (brother and sister) or *adelphoi* (brothers and sisters) appears in 2 Corinthians, seven are directly related

<sup>42</sup> Welborn, 'That There May be Equality', 81.

<sup>43</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 419-420.

<sup>44</sup> B. J. Oropeza, *Exploring Second Corinthians: Death and Life, Hardship and Rivalry* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 518.

<sup>45</sup> Welborn, 'That There May be Equality', 80.

<sup>46</sup> Welborn, 'That There May be Equality', 88.

to the sharing of financial resources: six are found in 2 Corinthians 8–9 (see 2 Cor 8:1, 18, 22 [twice]; 9:3 and 5) and once in 2 Corinthians 11:9.

In 2 Corinthians 8:1, Paul appealed to the sibling imagery in emphasising the example of the Macedonians who had generously contributed to the fund: ‘We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia.’

Paul also used sibling imagery to highlight the importance of the charge given to those who had been entrusted with the administration of the collection. Five times the word *adelphos* or *adelphoi* is used to describe Titus, along with other men, who were entrusted with carrying the collection with Paul to Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:18, 22 (2x); 9:3, 5). Paul also gave the credentials of these brothers. They were enthusiastic about the project, trustworthy, praised by others, proven in their service, and were representatives of the churches and an honour to Christ (2 Cor 8:16–9:5). Such superlative praise by Paul was to further reinforce the fact that these brothers were siblings full of integrity who could be trusted with the administration of finances. Any fear of fraud or doubt was completely removed with the use of sibling imagery.

To emphasise that siblings share resources with one another, Paul further recounted that it was the *adelphoi* from Macedonia who supplied monetary assistance to alleviate his financial needs so that he need not depend on the Corinthians for support (2 Cor 11:9).

Within the Greco-Roman setting, the image of siblings evoked physical and emotional security, care and belonging, and mutuality and respect

that existed only within the familial and household kinship.<sup>47</sup> Family members must not be in conflict with one another, and wealthy members may not invoke privileges that society granted them over others who were of lower status.<sup>48</sup> In light of this, Paul’s frequent use of sibling language clearly speaks of his vision that the Christ-followers should be a very close-knit group.

This fictive kinship language promoted egalitarian structures compared to other groups that were organizationally a reflection of the structured hierarchical first-century society. It also eliminated all social, economic, and ethnic boundaries established by Greco-Roman society among different groups of people that divided the Christian community, stunted its growth, and hindered its witness as an alternative assembly.

Paul was keenly aware of the need to provoke the Corinthian Christ-followers to think, and to move them to act in ways that reflected the values of the Mediterranean family in the context of reciprocity and sharing of resources among siblings. By calling the Macedonians *adelphoi*, Paul was challenging the Corinthians to reconsider their reluctance in completing the collection project for the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. He was also attempting to set an example before the Corinthians so that they could emulate the Macedonian *adelphoi* in their giving and sharing of resources with those who were in need in the family.

By doing so, Paul was creating a social identity for the Christ-followers

<sup>47</sup> Plutarch, *Frat. amor.* 479A-D.

<sup>48</sup> Plutarch, *Frat. amor.* 485C; 486F–487B.



that was radically different from the community that surrounded them. By using sibling metaphor, a new expectation was now imposed on the Corinthians Christ-followers. They could no longer view their Jerusalem poor brothers and sisters through the lenses of socio-economic status and ethnicity. On the contrary, they were to honour, encourage, and build up one another as brothers and sisters. Therefore, 'sibling' was a fitting metaphor to shape, guide, and rebuke the community towards honour, respect, and sharing of resources so that no one had need. It ultimately drove home the point that the Corinthians belonged together as one and within this family of Christ, blood was indeed thicker than water.

#### IV Conclusion

The economic principles undergirding Paul's concern with inequality of income distribution in the Roman Empire propelled him to remember the poor and carry out fundraising activities to alleviate their hardship. By examining Paul's major collection for the Jerusalem poor, we see three principles at work: the principle of grace and generosity, the principle of equality, and

the principle of sharing resources as a family.

Collectively, these principles were revolutionary in nature as they went against the prevailing social and economic conventions of the Greco-Roman world. Paul used these principles to construct a new economic structure to achieve an equality of possessions between persons of different social classes—rich and poor; geographical locations—Judea and the Mediterranean world; and ethnic groups—Jews and Gentiles, through voluntary redistribution of wealth.

Paul's vision of the new economic structure has far-reaching implications today where we see the continuous rise of income inequality. The gap between the rich and poor is getting wider. As Christ-followers today, we are called to a lifestyle of generosity and good stewardship. Those of us who are wealthier should be challenged to give more in terms of higher percentage to the poor, compared to those who are poorer, so that everyone in the family has a fair share of resources. In this family, all barriers that serve to divide us—the social-economic, geographical and ethnic boundaries—are removed through Paul's economic principles.

# TGIF! A Theology of Workers and their Work

Myk Habets and Peter K. McGhee

*'Nothing ruins a Friday more than an understanding that today is Tuesday.'*

– Anonymous

## I Where is God in Work?

An old Chinese proverb states, 'May you live in interesting times.' Our times surely meet this criterion. We live in a western society dominated by a paradigm that emphasises increasing economic growth as the panacea for all that ails us and by global multinationals that influence, some might say control, various areas of our lives.<sup>1</sup> While combined, these factors have improved the living standard of many (in the West at least), at the same time they have contributed to significant societal, environmental, and economic harms.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of the organisations within western democratic, capitalist societies reflect this underlying paradigm. They have been set up in such way as to maximise return on investment whether they be for-profit organisations or not (for example, a hospital is required to use government money as efficiently and effectively as possible). As a result of this, conditions within these organisations are likely to reinforce conduct that enhances these economic goals and constrain behaviours that do not.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, we are forever reading about some organisation being involved in unethical practice, as individuals within it are acculturated into decision-making and behaviours that prioritise the bottom line often at the expense of 'being a good person' or

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1 C. Hamilton, *Growth Fetish* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003); and J. Bakan, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

2 D. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2001).

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3 M. Lips-Wiersma, and V. Nilakant, 'Practical Compassion: Toward a Critical Spiritual Foundation for Corporate Responsibility', in J. Biberman and L. Tischler, eds., *Spirituality in Business: Theory, Practice, and Future Directions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 51–72.

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‘doing the right thing’.<sup>4</sup>

Economic capitalism is not the only pressure one feels in the workforce today, however. In an increasingly industrialized world, many simply feel their work is disconnected from anything important, it has little value to them, and so it is compartmentalized and tolerated. Monday is a curse and Friday evening is the goal; everything in-between is simply to be endured.

We speak of *Mondayitis*, Wednesday has become known as ‘hump day’, and after-work drinks on a Friday represent the entrance to the promised land of the weekend; hence the common abbreviation, ‘TGIF’ (Thank G\*d it’s Friday)! Not insignificantly, this attitude is shared by many Christians as well. Such views as these need to be challenged and radically reoriented. What is required is a theology of work with practical relevance from Monday to Friday (and Saturday and Sunday for many who work these days as well).

Labour is an inherent part of what we do and so, by derivation, of who we are; it affects our lives both at work and at home. Unfortunately, much of how we understand work ‘is a modern invention, a product of industrialisation and governed by the laws of economic rationality’.<sup>5</sup> These ‘laws’ ensure that labour is reorganised in the interests of efficiency and profits. Workplaces, and the individuals within them, have come to be seen as machines—tools created

to achieve instrumental ends.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps, it is not surprising therefore, that interest in spirituality in the workplace (hereafter SWP) has developed not only as a bulwark against such thinking<sup>7</sup> but also to meet existential needs for greater connectedness and meaning through work.<sup>8</sup> As Mitroff has noted, ‘whether we like it or not, work is inextricably intertwined with our perpetual search for meaning. Work is an integral part of our spirituality, our search for ultimate meaning.’<sup>9</sup>

Much has been written about SWP in the last two decades. Organizational scholars have found beneficial relationships between SWP and employee well-being,<sup>10</sup> motivation,<sup>11</sup> and sense of

6 G. Morgan, *Images of Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997).

7 M. Benefiel, L. W. Fry, and D. Geigle, ‘Spirituality and Religion in the Workplace: History, Theory, and Research’, *Psychology of Religion & Spirituality* 6 no. 3 (2014): 175–87.

8 H. Ashar, and M. Lane-Mahar, ‘Success and Spirituality in the New Business Paradigm’, *Journal of Management Inquiry* 13 no. 3 (2004): 249–60.

9 I. I. Mitroff, ‘Do Not Promote Religion Under the Guise of Spirituality’, *Organization* 10 no. 2 (2003): 375.

10 W. J. Harrington, R. C., and D. J. Gooden, ‘Perceptions of Workplace Spirituality Among Professionals and Executives’, *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 13 no. 3 (2001): 155–63; F. Karakas, ‘Spirituality and Performance in Organizations: A Literature Review’, *Journal of Business Ethics* 94 no. 1 (2010): 89–106; and D. C. Trott, ‘Spiritual Well-being of Workers: An Exploratory Study of Spirituality in the Workplace’ (PhD, The University of Texas, Austin, TX, 1996).

11 L. W. Fry, S. T. Hannah, M. Noel, and F. O. Walumbwa, ‘Impact of Spiritual Leadership on Unit Performance’, *The Leadership Quarterly* 22 no. 2 (2011): 259–70; Y.A. Nur, and D. W. Organ, ‘Selected Organizational Outcome Cor-

4 V. Anand, B. E. Ashforth, and M. Joshi, ‘Business as Usual: The Acceptance and Perpetuation of Corruption in Organizations’, *Academy of Management Executive* 18 no. 2 (2004): 39–53.

5 C. Casey, *Work, Self and Society* (London: Routledge, 1995), 28.

community.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, spirituality has become an applause word—it is the kind of word that generates applause whenever it is used.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, the modern understanding of the term depends on whoever is using it.

Locating SWP within a wider religious system such as Christianity, with its long history and analysis of work,<sup>14</sup> may produce better insights.<sup>15</sup> What might a distinctly theological approach to SWP look like and what would it consist of?

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relates of Spirituality in the Workplace', *Psychological Reports* 98 no. 1 (2006): 111–20; A. Rego, and M. P. Cunha, 'Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Commitment', *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 21 no. 1 (2008): 53–75.

12 A. Crawford, S. S. Hubbard, S. R. Lonis-Shumate, and M. O'Neill, 'Workplace Spirituality and Employee Attitudes Within the Lodging Environment', *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism* 8 no. 1 (2009): 64–81; R. W. Kolodinsky, R. A. Giacalone, and C. L. Jurkiewicz, 'Workplace Values and Outcomes: Exploring Personal, Organisational and Interactive Workplace Spirituality', *Journal of Business Ethics* 81 no. 2 (2008): 465–80; and J. F. Milliman, A. J. Czaplewski, and J. Ferguson, 'Workplace Spirituality and Employee Work Attitudes: An Exploratory Empirical Assessment', *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 16 no. 4 (2003): 426–47.

13 D. A. Carson, 'When is Spirituality Spiritual? Reflections on Some Problems of Definitions', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 no. 3 (1994): 381–94.

14 M. Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (London: Oxford University Press, 1991).

15 P. K. McGhee, 'Taking the Spirit to Work', in M. Habets, ed., *The Spirit of Truth: Reading Scripture and Constructing Theology with the Holy Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 179–205.

This essay builds on the notion that people want to integrate their spirituality into their work. It uses two suggestive themes: human beings are created to be 'priests of creation' and 'mediators of order'. The essay begins with an overview of what such roles entail, what relevance they have to our labours, and how we might enact these callings in and through our work. These ideas then form the basis for conclusions drawn from a deductive analysis of Christians enacting their spirituality in several large New Zealand service organisations.<sup>16</sup>

## II A Theology of Workers

According to Scottish theologian, Thomas F. Torrance, human beings require others to fulfil their end or *telos*. Thus, he contends we are 'defined by, and sustained within our relations to God, the created order and fellow human beings'.<sup>17</sup> Several pertinent ideas arise from this claim.

First, human beings are created by and contingent upon God and as such have both physical and spiritual aspects that are 'essentially complementary and ontologically integrated'.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, differentiating between

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16 P. K. McGhee, 'The Role of Spirituality in Ethical Decision Making and Behaviour' (PhD, Auckland University, New Zealand, 2015).

17 E. G. Flett, 'Priests of Creation, Mediators of Order: The Human Person as a Cultural Being in Thomas F. Torrance's Theological Anthropology', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 no. 2 (2005): 163.

18 T. F. Torrance, *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge: Explorations in the Interrelations of Scientific and Theological Enterprise* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 105.

the physical (e.g. labour) and the spiritual (e.g. worship) is a *non sequitur*; rather these are two basic aspects of the Christian life, albeit different in form but irreducible to one another; together they are an inseparable unity.<sup>19</sup>

Second, because we are addressed and constituted by God, all that we are, and indeed can become, is dependent upon 'a continuing relation and proper orientation towards that same God'.<sup>20</sup> However, such a relationship is possible only through the person and work of Jesus Christ whom Torrance labels, the 'Personalising Person'<sup>21</sup> and 'Humanizing Man',<sup>22</sup> and upon the Holy Spirit who continually sustains 'communion between man and God'.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the work of Christ and the Spirit does not override humanity but recreates, reaffirms, and enables one to stand before God as his beloved child. Accordingly, in accepting the truth of Jesus Christ, we become more human not less; our lives, and therefore our labour, take on new meaning and importance as we participate in God's divine love and plan for creation. Here we might say we require not only a theology of work but a theology of *workers*.

Finally, this ontological change from self-will and self-understanding to lov-

ing God for his own sake liberates us from ourselves such that we can love our neighbour objectively.<sup>24</sup> Restored vertical relations with God ensure comparable horizontal relations with others. According to Torrance, this network of redeemed relationships (e.g. family, church, and society) enables humanity (and the created order of which we are part) to image or mirror God back to God through Christ by the Holy Spirit—this is the true *telos* of being human. Flett labels this a dynamic image; it is 'not only a creaturely reflection, or a spiritual reflection, but also a social reflection'.<sup>25</sup>

Without social contexts, such as workplaces, it is not possible 'for humanity in the image God to fulfil its calling and vocation as such a being'.<sup>26</sup> Solitary confinement is, in other words, the opposite of what a life well-lived looks like. Rather, a human person involved in a rich nexus of rightly ordered social relationships at church, at home, at work, and at play, provides the context for life to flourish.

These onto-personal relations (being constituting relations between persons and objects that are necessary for the healthy development of the self)<sup>27</sup> ensure that the image of God in humanity is both a description and an action, it is both one's nature and one's calling. Interestingly, work has often been viewed from a vocational perspective

19 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*.

20 Flett, 'Priests of Creation', 169.

21 T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 67.

22 Torrance, *Mediation*, 69.

23 T. F. Torrance, 'The Soul and Person in Theological Perspective', in *Religion, Reason, and the Self: Essays in Honour of Hywel D. Lewis*, S.R. Sutherland and T.A. Roberts, eds. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1989), 112.

24 T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965).

25 Flett, 'Priests of Creation', 170.

26 Flett, 'Priests of Creation', 171.

27 T. F. Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982).

in Christian thought.<sup>28</sup> However, as Volf has noted, this understanding often allows any type of work, no matter how dehumanizing, to be a calling.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, there can be ambiguity between one's spiritual and one's external call when the two conflict. This can lead to a compromising synthesis whereby one's external vocation becomes one's spiritual one.

Finally, Jensen has argued that such thinking has furthered the elevation of work to the status of a religion.<sup>30</sup> So what notion might conceptualise the image of God in a work context if the concept of vocation as historically understood has limitations? The concept of humanity as *priests of creation* and *mediators of order* recommends itself.

### 1. Priests of creation

Reflecting a unified view of creation and humanity under the triune creator God, Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann writes:

In the Bible the food that man eats, the world of which he must partake in order to live, is given to him by God, and it is given as *communion with God*. The world as man's food is not something 'material' and limited to material functions, thus different from, and opposed to, the specifically 'spiritual' functions by which man is related to God. All

that exists is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to eating—clearly a metaphorical use of the term—humanity is given the task of naming the animals, something which Schmemmann further comments on:

To name a thing is to manifest the meaning and value God gave it, to know it as coming from God and to know its place and function within the cosmos created by God. To name a thing, in other words, is to bless God for it and in it. And in the Bible to bless God is not a 'religious' or a 'cultic' act, but the very *way of life*. God blessed the world...and this means that He filled all that exists with His love and goodness...So the only *natural* (and not 'supernatural') reaction of man, to whom God gave this blessed and sanctified world, is to bless God in return, to thank Him, *to see the world as God sees it* and—in this act of gratitude and adoration—to know, name and possess the world.<sup>32</sup>

*To see the world as God sees it*. That is the vision for everyday life we require today. In order to see the world as God sees it, we must be Godlike; and that means not only giving but also receiving. Such a gift is possible only as we are in communion with God. The Gift cannot be abstracted from the Giver. All of this, the Orthodox, and

28 D. Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation*. Paternoster Theological Monographs (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005).

29 Volf, *Work in the Spirit*.

30 D. H. Jensen, *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

31 Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd edition (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 14–15.

32 Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 15.

many western thinkers, subsume under the grand idea that humans are the God-ordained 'priests of creation'. The Spirit of God woos and entices us into this priestly vocation. Again, Schmemmann writes:

The first, the basic definition of man is that he is *the priest*. He stands in the centre of the world and unifies it in acts of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God—and by filling the world with his Eucharist, he transforms his life, the one that he receives from the world, into life in God, into communion with Him.<sup>33</sup>

Romanian Orthodox theologian, Dumitru Staniloae, prefers to describe men and women as creation's 'master' (*archon*), its created 'co-creator', 'co-worker' or 'continuator'.<sup>34</sup> Staniloae considers the world as God's gift to humanity in order that humanity may gift it back to God. In this way, argues Staniloae, the sacrifice offered to God by men and women is a Eucharist, making every person a priest of God for the world.<sup>35</sup> The language of Eucharist reminds us of priestly duty, specifically the priestly duty of humanity to represent the world to God.

Such is a vision for a rightly ordered concept of work; it is priestly labour, freely offered to God. In the hands of Thomas Torrance, the concept of priest

of creation captures what he means by the image of God being a calling.<sup>36</sup> As its priest, humanity's vocation is to 'assist the creation as a whole to realise and evidence its rational order and beauty and thus to express God'.<sup>37</sup>

'Nature itself is mute', writes Torrance, 'but human being is the one constituent of the created universe through whom its rational structure and astonishing beauty may be brought to word in praise of the Creator.'<sup>38</sup> As such, humanity is the *mediator of order* and the *priest of creation*, a creation 'freely brought into being by the will of God and graciously entrusted to a creature crafted after the image of God'.<sup>39</sup>

Torrance views redeemed humanity as co-creators with God. Our work brings forth 'forms of order and beauty of which it would not be capable otherwise'.<sup>40</sup> This is our priestly call to co-create and act as stewards of creation. For Torrance, the primary way this occurs is through the natural sciences.<sup>41</sup> However, as both Habets and Flett note, this seems too narrow an approach. If we take this idea into the workplace (a social context), then our daily labours also enact our priesthood.<sup>42</sup>

We see this in the original creation

<sup>33</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: Vol 2: The World: Creation and Deification*, trans. and ed. I. Ionita and R. Barringer (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000), 21–112.

<sup>35</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, 'The World as Gift and Sacrament of God's Love', *Sobornost* 9 (1969): 662–73.

<sup>36</sup> T. F. Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001).

<sup>37</sup> M. Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 45.

<sup>38</sup> T. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 213.

<sup>39</sup> Flett, 'Priests of Creation', 182.

<sup>40</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, 45.

<sup>41</sup> Torrance, *Reality and Evangelical Theology*.

<sup>42</sup> Habets, *Theosis*, and Flett, 'Priests of Creation'.

story of the Garden of Eden. We must ask ourselves, is Eden merely a Mesopotamian farm and Adam and Eve its first gardeners? If so, does Genesis 1–2 then provide human creatures with a work ethic—to till the ground, multiply, and steward? Quite simply, No. Adam’s responsibility is not so much farming as priestly. The Garden of Eden functions as the earthly archetypal temple and Adam and Eve are its first priests.<sup>43</sup> The combined evidence suggests that the Genesis narrative identifies the Garden as the holy of holies, in which human creatures had access to the presence of God.

And so we return to ask what the ‘work’ was that Adam and Eve, and all their sons and daughters, were created for. God placed humans ‘in the garden to work it and keep it’ (Gen 2.15). Many simply read this as ‘cultivation’—thus ‘farming’. God meant us all to be farmers! But that is not what the text is saying at all.

The exact same vocabulary—‘work’ and ‘keep’ is used to describe the priestly responsibilities in the tabernacle: ‘They shall keep guard over him...before the tent of meeting as they minister/work at the tabernacle’ (Num 3.7-8; 8.26; 18.5-6 cf. 4.23-24, 26). This is the only other time in the Pentateuch when these words are used together—something the Rabbis noticed in their Midrash.

Thus we are on safe ground to assert that Adam and Eve’s responsibilities in the garden are primarily priestly rather than agricultural! As John Fesko has stated:

Adam was an archetypal priest, not a farmer. Scanning the horizon of redemptive history, we find further confirmation of the garden-temple thesis. At the end of redemptive history it is not a massive city-farm that descends out of the heavens, but a city-temple. If the end of redemptive history represents God’s intentions from the beginning, then he planted a temple in Eden, not a farm.<sup>44</sup>

It is from this relationship of Creator to creature that the human beings derive their significance and responsibility in the formation of the world towards its final consummation. As Flett notes, ‘*this* creature is peculiarly constituted and uniquely called to improvise with God as “scientist”, “midwife”, “priest”, and “instrument”, in order to draw the created order toward its liberating *telos*’.<sup>45</sup>

## 2. Mediators of order

Telling the story of God’s work in the world involves the embodiment and expression of God’s purposes for it. This story cannot be told apart from the formation of specific communities and their concrete action *in the world*. When human persons act in the world they function, implicitly or explicitly, as ‘mediators of order’. They cannot escape the fact that their actions have a purpose and that purposeful action is rooted in an overarching and comprehensive conception of order.

Consequently, the way in which human communities order their social

<sup>43</sup> J. V. Fesko, *Last Things First: Unlocking Genesis 1–3 with the Christ of Eschatology* (Fern: Mentor, 2007), especially 57–75.

<sup>44</sup> Fesko, *Last Things First*, 75.

<sup>45</sup> Flett, ‘Priests of Creation’, 182.



and physical environments becomes a form of embodied worship, a living and concrete witness to their most comprehensive ideas of order, value, and purpose formed in conversation with a real and objective world. Our relationships with others, the created order, and God, form the fundamental basis upon which this activity takes place.

The quality of these relationships will determine also whether the result of that activity will sustain or subvert the very relations upon which it is built. Those relations, and the cultural environments they produce and sustain, can be morally legitimated only as they enable the embodiment of God's purposes for the created order and by so doing sustain the personhood and integrity of human agents created in God's image. And this can be done only when life is lived in relation to Jesus the Son of God incarnate.

In other words—when men and women function in their God-given roles as *priests of creation* and *mediators of order*, they initiate the great *shalom* of God, they embody worship (Rom 12.1), and they represent the world to God in their representation of God to the world. As such we work towards creating the 'order that ought to be'—the nudging of creation towards its intended *telos*. Eric Flett correctly argues that:

If that relation is construed properly, that identity and mission will thrust [the church] into the world as a royal priesthood, whose activity in the world of culture will not only bear witness to the God she worships, but will advance God's mis-

sion in the world through cultural transformation.<sup>46</sup>

As uniquely created beings in the image of God, humanity occupies an exclusive place on the boundary between the natural and the super natural.<sup>47</sup> As priest of creation, humanity has the function and privilege to assist the creation to realise and evidence its rational order and beauty and thus to express God's beauty and being back to God.

According to Torrance, 'through human cultivation and development nature should bring forth forms of order and beauty of which it would not be capable otherwise'.<sup>48</sup> True priestly functions of humanity include caring for the poor and the oppressed, developing sustainable farming practices, implementing ethical labour practices, and generally working in ways which respect God, creation, and humanity.

Through their work, Christians participate in God's new creation. This involves our labour reflecting God back to himself. Through their work, Christians also cooperate with God in the redemption of the world. Our mundane labours empowered by the Holy Spirit contribute to God's eschatological

<sup>46</sup> E. G. Flett, *Persons, Powers, and Pluralities: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Culture* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 222.

<sup>47</sup> T. F. Torrance, *The Christian Frame of Mind: Order and Openness in Theology and Natural Science* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1985), 41, 62; and 'The Goodness and Dignity of Man in the Christian Tradition', *Modern Theology* 4 no. 4 (1988): 311.

<sup>48</sup> T. F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 130.

transformation of the present.<sup>49</sup> These expectations ensure that legitimate forms of work have intrinsic value and invest it with ultimate meaning via its relation, indirectly through sanctification and directly through what humans create, to the new creation.

Not all work, however, qualifies. Criteria in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 suggest that under judgement, work that has ultimate significance, work that reflects and cooperates with the triune nature of God, is purified (is good). Insignificant work, on the other hand, work done counter to God's nature or in cooperation with powers that wish to ruin God's plan for creation, is illegitimate.

### III A Study of Christian Spirituality at Work

Using the preceding theology as the basis for deductive analysis, and as part of a larger study, 21 Christians from several New Zealand service organisations were interviewed about their spirituality and its relationship to their work.<sup>50</sup> After discussing 2 to 3 critical incidents, their answers were analysed, using the two key themes: first, Christians are co-creators and co-redeemers with God in and through their work, and, second, that such work has ultimate meaning and value in and of itself separate from other external goods.

#### 1. Co-creators in the workplace

As a result of this analysis, we found

participants frequently acted as 'embodied witnesses to the glory and eternal purposes of God' and in doing so brought another dimension to their organisations.<sup>51</sup> This dimension encouraged serving humanity's real needs, developed a corporate distinctiveness that focused on character and virtues, and made decisions that transcended individual and organizational selfishness.

This resonates with the Spirit's work in creation and contributes to the long-term flourishing of all.<sup>52</sup> Such behaviour was worship made flesh; an incarnate and tangible sign of God in the world through their work.

A good example of these ideas in action comes from Spencer, a privacy manager in a Government organisation. In response to questions about his influence in the workplace, Spencer provided a clear indication that his Christian spirituality played a significant role. When asked how, he stated it helped set the ethical tone at work and contributed momentum for sustainable ethical change:

Well I believe it [Christianity] enhances it [the organisation] significantly...I believe I help set the tone. I believe that being a spiritual person, and having that as a value means that I do my job different, better; more efficiently, more thoroughly than I would if I didn't have that. And that that does effect the organisation. And I think that having people who get that, who do value spirituality, it does create momentum towards making the organi-

<sup>49</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*.

<sup>50</sup> McGhee, 'The Role of Spirituality in Ethical Decision Making and Behaviour'.

<sup>51</sup> Flett, 'Priests of creation', 176.

<sup>52</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*.

sation a better place.

Spencer referenced improved working outcomes including caring about his team, looking out for broader interests besides his own, and working with integrity.

Unfortunately, organisational misbehaviour continues to make headlines around the world. From the collapse of Enron and WorldCom in 2001 through to Volkswagen's recent admission that 11 million of its vehicles were equipped with software to cheat emissions tests in 2016, there have been many well-known cases.<sup>53</sup> Why are such transgressions a prevalent and continuing blight in organisations? The simple answer is that we are, as Paul writes in Rom 3:9–10, 'all under sin...there is no one righteous, not even one'.

This response, appropriate as it is, does not explain such incidents' frequent occurrence. Many modern organisations operate within a pervasive economic system that is individualistic, self-interested, focused on pecuniary ends while rationalising such behaviour as conducive to greater well-being.<sup>54</sup> This ensures that organisations image this dominant paradigm and strive to realise its ends.<sup>55</sup> Sadly,

this often fosters policies, procedures, and practices that bolster unethical conduct.<sup>56</sup>

The potency of self-interest in many organisations suppresses moral choices, ensures means are more important than ends, and regularly ignores externalities as part of operational processes.<sup>57</sup> This incentivises individuals to view their organisation as a separate entity from society; an entity that prioritises economic goals over other concerns.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Schwartz, writing in his book, *Narcissistic Process and Corporate Decay*, argues that organisations

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are Destroying Good Management Practices', *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 4 no. 1 (2005): 75–91; R. A. Giacalone, 'A Transcendent Business Education for the 21st Century', *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 3 no. 4 (2004): 415–20.

<sup>56</sup> Anand, Ashforth, and Joshi, 'Business as Usual', 39–53; Bakan, *The Corporation*; A. Buchanan, 'Toward a Theory of the Ethics of Bureaucratic Organizations', *Business Ethics Quarterly* 6 no. 4 (1996): 419–40; J. M. Darley, 'How Organisations Socialize Individuals into Evil Doing', in *Codes of Conduct: Behavioral Research into Business Ethics*, eds. D. Messick, and A. E. Tenbrunsel (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996), 13–42; R. Jackall, *Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); R. McKenna, and E. Tsahuridu, 'Must Managers Leave Ethics at Home? Economics and Moral Anomie in Business Organisations', *Reason in Practice* 1 no. 3 (2001): 67–76; and L. K. Trevino, and S. A. Youngblood, 'Bad Apples in Bad Barrels: A Causal Analysis of Ethical Decision-making Behavior', *Journal of Applied Psychology* 75 no. 4 (1990): 378–85.

<sup>57</sup> G. Moore, 'Re-imagining the Morality of Management: A Modern Virtue Ethics Approach', *Business Ethics Quarterly* 18 no. 4 (2008): 483–511.

<sup>58</sup> Lips-Wiersma, and Nilakant, 'Practical Compassion', 51–72.

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<sup>53</sup> G. Gates, J. Ewing, K. Russell, and D. Watkins, 'Explaining Volkswagen's Emissions Scandal', *New York Times*. (June 1, 2016). Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/business/international/vw-diesel-emissions-scandal-explained.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/business/international/vw-diesel-emissions-scandal-explained.html?_r=0)

<sup>54</sup> P. Berry, *Fostering Spirituality in the Workplace: A Leader's Guide to Sustainability* (New York: Business Expert Press, 2013); Hamilton, *Growth Fetish*; T. Kasser, *The High Price of Materialism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Lips-Wiersma, and Nilakant, 'Practical Compassion', 51–72.

<sup>55</sup> S. Ghoshal, 'Bad Management Theories

could not be the 'bastions of benign community oriented ethical reasoning we wished them to be because of the demands and requirements of the market'.<sup>59</sup>

Accordingly, organisations, and the people within them, create for themselves a 'self-contained, self-serving worldview, which rationalizes anything done on their behalf and does not require justification on any grounds outside of themselves'.<sup>60</sup> This worldview, Schwartz suggests, imposes a survival of the fittest requirement on all participants in organisational life that in turn ensures that to get ahead all must conform.

As embodied created beings living in community, human action has bearing not only on others, but on creation itself. As Paul writes in Romans 8:19-22, creation is frustrated by our sin. It bears the scars of humanity's disobedience. Unfortunately, business and industry often play a conspicuous role in such wounding.<sup>61</sup>

The church's mission, states Flett, is 'not spiritual in any narrow sense, but cultural, since it is her function to stand as an embodied witness of the

glory and eternal purpose of God'.<sup>62</sup> Christians in the workplace are to image God, not the dominant economic ideology. Our purpose and labours help liberate creation from its 'bondage to decay'; this is the true calling of Christ since it brings our work-life into 'conformity with the way it has been ordered by the Father and redeemed by the Son'.<sup>63</sup>

For Spencer, work was more than just a job—it was also about making a difference. His spirituality acts as a compass pointing him back to Christ. This ensures his work reflects God's nature and desires for creation:

I like to think what I do, it's not about getting information to parties, it's ultimately about the best interests of the parties that are involved...I know sometimes in meetings and things you hear other employees talking about, 'Well it's just about this request or whatever' and I always say, 'Well no it's not just about that request; it's about what is the best long-term decision for these parties.' Many times, we can lose that perspective.

But I think spirituality and understanding, for me, what God means and what Jesus has done in my life means that I do always get reminded: well look it's about more than just this...I think, well, when you're not tired and you are fresh you get reminded that no, this counts, this actually is making a difference for God's world. It might not be huge and it might not hit the media in a

<sup>59</sup> H. S. Schwartz, *Narcissistic Process and Corporate Decay: The Theory of the Organizational Ideal*, cited in A. Gini, 'A Short Primer on Moral Courage', in *Moral Courage in Organizations: Doing the Right Thing at Work*, eds. D. R. Comer & G. Vega (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), 59.

<sup>60</sup> Schwartz, *Narcissistic Process and Corporate Decay*, 59.

<sup>61</sup> R. Ehrenfeld, and A. J. Hoffman, *Flourishing: A Frank Conversation about Sustainability* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Business Books, 2013); and N. Klein, *This Changes Everything* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014).

<sup>62</sup> Flett, 'Priests of Creation', 176.

<sup>63</sup> Flett, 'Priests of Creation', 178.

positive way but it's important and it counts.

As stated earlier, interpreting work from a traditional calling stance may be problematic. Several authors, writing in the theology of work literature, provide varied limitations of this approach.<sup>64</sup> While their criticisms differ, they share a belief that underpinning much of this perspective is the notion of individualism. Perhaps this is not surprising, given its ascetic roots, Protestant emphasis on freedom and close links to capitalism.<sup>65</sup>

Unfortunately, such a focus shifts our attention from the object of our faith, which is the Triune redeemer and recreator, to the subjective requirements of persons (or organisations). Our faith becomes primarily a transaction between an individual and God often at the expense of the wider community. Within the work context, this typically involves co-opting notions of faith, spirituality, and calling to serve instrumental ends.<sup>66</sup>

As *redeemer*, God frees us from sin. His spiritual presence enables us to reject evil and to choose his desires (2 Cor 3:17) and 'not to be instigators or active practioners of degrading or

debasement work either for ourselves or others'.<sup>67</sup> As *recreator*, God makes all things new. In adopting us through Christ by the Holy Spirit, God humanises our labours fully such that they participate in the completion of his new creation. Work that fails in these aspects, that fails to cooperate with God in his eschatological *transformation mundi*, has no place in this new creation.<sup>68</sup>

The participants in this study rejected any such co-optation and enacted their spirituality often in the face of counter-forces which encouraged dehumanising work practices.<sup>69</sup> They reframed their circumstances from a transcendent perspective and acted accordingly. This involved considering the impact of their decisions on a range of stakeholders as well as God's desire for his creation.

Again, we turn to Spencer for an example of such praxis in his refusing a superior's request to withhold documentation from its rightful owner because she feared compromising the organisation's reputation and/or having a potential claim against the organisation from the client:

Well I think to me the question becomes, if we remove documents for this reason, then what stops us from removing other documents for other reasons? I mean where does it end? And then you know even do we go further? Do we go through all the files, and start sort of rummaging

<sup>64</sup> See for example, Cosden, *Theology of Work*; Jensen, *Responsive Labor*; and Volf, *Work in the Spirit*.

<sup>65</sup> N. H. Nadesan, 'The Discourses of Corporate Spiritualism and Evangelical Capitalism', *Management Communication* 13 no. 1 (1999): 3–42.

<sup>66</sup> J. Carrette, and R. King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005); M. Lips-Wiersma, K. L. Dean, and C. J. Fornaciari, 'Theorizing the Dark Side of the Workplace Spirituality Movement', *Journal of Management Inquiry* 18 no. 4 (2009): 288–300.

<sup>67</sup> McGhee, 'Taking the Spirit to Work', 190.

<sup>68</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*.

<sup>69</sup> Ghoshal, 'Bad Management Theories', 75–91; and Giacalone, 'A Transcendent Business Education', 415–20.

through files and say ‘Anything that doesn’t make us look good?’ I simply can’t do that!

She [his manager] wasn’t happy but we ended up getting someone else involved—another executive manager— and they decided not to remove the document from the file... As Christian I would have to say that they [his choices here] would have something to do at least with the teachings and the life and the death of Jesus of Nazareth.

And that would certainly include—but not be limited to—things like caring about others, loving our neighbour as ourselves, being in touch with God, through things like prayer and reading the bible. So yeah, those kind of principles upon which we build our lives—I think—that help us to make decisions to live how God wants us to.

Many times, participants told the story of God’s work in the world via their concrete embodied actions. And these actions helped shape their world in ways that effect God’s intended telos for creation. Interestingly, these benefits were not limited to our participants alone. Through their conduct, they initiated the great *shalom* of God as they helped others (often unbeknownst to them) represent themselves to God and back again. Spencer, for example, influenced his fellow privacy officers to act in similar redemptive ways.

## 2. Enacting meaningful work

Participants found such priestly work brought significant meaning and value to their lives. Indeed, many reported a deep-seated sense of fulfilment and

wholeness. Recall that for Torrance, human beings are constituted by their relations with God, creation, and others. As instruments in the hand of God, human beings are in tune when these onto-relations are transcendently determined. When we choose freely to image God in our labours by, for example, treating others as ends not means (e.g. opposing sweatshop labour), and stewarding God’s creation as opposed to diminishing it (e.g. reducing pollution), then we ‘are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit’ (2 Cor 3:18).

This progression, through Christ and by the Spirit, ensures we are no longer alienated from God, from each other, or from creation. Instead of being less, we are becoming more complete, more in-tune, indeed we are becoming more human. It is no surprise perhaps that participants felt and articulated enhanced well-being, ‘a sense of peace that transcends all understanding’ (Phil 4:7), when they laboured objectively for God as opposed to subjectively for themselves.

We see a good example of this from Daniel, an insurance agent in a large multinational company. Daniel chose to circumvent rules and policies to pay out clients who had suffered during a devastating earthquake in New Zealand and who had been unjustly rejected by his Insurance Company, even at the risk of his own job position and financial security. He transcended his role and the organisational culture to help these people:

So quite often I batted for the client, I looked for opportunities wherever I could to pay claims for the client, even though that actually went

away from the rules and regulations of the company...

There was some wheeling and dealing and maybe, as I say, when I was younger there's no way I would do that because I was probably more black and white. Now I would, I've changed in the fact of wanting to help people so how can I pay something, get under the radar and yet it [the claim] still lines up.

When asked why he did this, Daniel's answer reflected his desire to live an authentic Christian life, a life not compromised by inauthentic action. Daniel interpreted this authentic life using a phrase, 'living for God, living for the kingdom', which essentially means being true to your priestly calling daily. Interestingly, for Daniel, this was primarily about loving God and his neighbour objectively:

It's [Christianity] everything, so every day you want to be living for God, living for the kingdom. If it's not of the kingdom then you don't want to be doing it, so that's part of who I am, so every day is, yeah, it is a part of everyday life. So to me, [it is about] helping others, in this case we're to help other people, you know, their lives are decimated, so common sense tells us to pay what we can to get their house repaired, to put them in temporary accommodation, to get them some help. So what is living for Kingdom? [It is] loving God and others.

For Daniel, the consequence of these types of transcendent actions and this authentic living was an enhanced sense of well-being and the ongoing likelihood of such behaviours happening in other contexts:

This differs significantly from contemporary views of spirituality which are primarily about satisfying individual existential desires and organisations' instrumental needs. Such a view simply 'reinforces the idea of work providing a path to enlightenment through the notion of self-actualisation'<sup>70</sup> instead of through Christ, the personalising person and the humanizing human,<sup>71</sup> and the Holy Spirit. As Herrick puts it, such a limited perspective

calls for a self-adoration and exaltation of our own rational self-awareness—the divinity operating within us [and...] arrives at no more interesting destination than spiritual narcissism.<sup>72</sup>

Interestingly, those that failed in their 'priestly duties' often conveyed feelings of discontent, anxiety, and meaninglessness dependent on the extent of their inauthenticity in action. Communication of this was often in terms of damage to the self. If imaging God is the central aspect of a Christian's identity, then not acting thus may cause significant conative conflict and affective distress.<sup>73</sup> Several extracts are provided as evidence of this:

I feel guilty but—yeah but I feel, linking back to my faith, I feel like it's perhaps a hurt on my spiritual-

<sup>70</sup> E. Bell, and S. Taylor, 'The Elevation of Work: Pastoral Power and the New Age Work Ethic', *Organization* 10 no. 2 (2003): 336.

<sup>71</sup> Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*.

<sup>72</sup> J. A. Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 259.

<sup>73</sup> C. Rozuel, and N. Kakabadse, 'Ethics, Spirituality and Self: Managerial Perspectives and Leadership Implications', *Business Ethics: A European Review* 19 no. 4 (2010): 423–36.

ity....It just feels like something to be avoided. I feel really conflicted, I stress a lot about those kinds of things and the net result is that I found it a lot more stress here than ever before and so then there's the physical, feeling tired and so on. You can't pinpoint it to whether it's just that issue but it sure doesn't help—*Zeta, Project Manager*

You're going to feel discomfort because you're dealing with people and their futures and all the rest of it. If you take that stuff [Christianity] seriously, if you have a sense of care for people and their wellbeing then some situations inevitably are uncomfortable because the outcomes have quite strong effects—*Michael, Director*

Oh, I felt awful; it was really difficult, I felt disconnected from my spiritual self like someone else was doing it—*Lucy, Communications Consultant*

Moreover, such individuals 'yield more easily to the pressure of social conformity, relinquishing their personal responsibility by claiming to be just an agent within a system'.<sup>74</sup> Being inauthentic ensures the ego takes precedence so 'moral decisions may no longer be genuine and in accordance with our values; instead, they may respond to our personal interests or to collective expectations'.<sup>75</sup> Such individuals can become compartmentalised, ignore they are created in the *imago Dei*, and risk developing psychopathologies.

## IV Conclusion

Writing in the *Journal of Management Inquiry*, Gull and Doh argued that organisations need transmutation towards more spiritual workplaces.<sup>76</sup> They contend that rationalism, power, self-will, and greed are rampant and as such, limit our capacity for connectedness with and compassion for others. This encourages a 'me' over the 'we' mentality which eventually corrupts behaviour. The solution to this problem, they argue, is to change the organisation's dominant schema.

This, however, cannot occur by simply espousing spirituality or by including a few spiritual mantras as part of the company's values statement. Training and incentives programmes will also be ineffective. Such a transmutation, according to Gull and Doh, will happen only if employees are permitted and encouraged to enact their spirituality fully in the life of the organisation.

Despite these lofty goals, Gull and Doh offer a very humanistic/existentialist solution that cannot achieve what they desire. The proposal presented in this paper, on the other hand, provides a short overview of the work of Thomas Torrance and its application to Christian faith in the workplace. It briefly discusses the findings of a deductive qualitative study that applied this framework to Christians in New Zealand Organisations. It finds that humans created in the *imago Dei* flourish when they fully live out their roles as mediators of order and priests of crea-

<sup>74</sup> Rozuel and Kakabadse, 'Ethics, Spirituality and Self', 426.

<sup>75</sup> Rozuel and Kakbadse, 'Ethics, Spirituality and Self', 426.

<sup>76</sup> G. A. Gull, and J. Doh, 'The "Transmutation" of the Organization: Towards a More Spiritual Workplace', *Journal of Management Inquiry* 13 no. 2 (2004): 128–39.



tion, ordering creation and presenting it back to God in worship.

Labour, which has so often instrumentalized humans and has been co-opted for power relations and economic control, must be seen, rather, as a key aspect of humanity's priestly duty to-

wards God. Once this shift occurs, as the qualitative study described above highlights, human beings can become the human persons God intended them to be, in harmony with God, with each other, and with all of creation.

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# The Church as a Civil Society: An African Ecclesiology

Emiola Nihinlola

## I Introduction

The doctrine of the church is an important study for at least two reasons. *First*, in Systematic Theology, which is the particular area of theological preoccupation of the writer, ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) is the bridge between soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) and missiology (the doctrine of Christian missions). According to Millard Erickson, biblically speaking, 'conversion leads the individual into fellowship of a group of believers. That collective dimension of the Christian life we call the church.'<sup>1</sup> Church experience is thus indissolubly bound to salvation experience. And a very important part of church life is church work or mission.

*Second*, ecclesiology is of particular interest to evangelical theological institutions and instructions. Research topics at post-graduate levels in Systematic Theology in the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary from middle 1990s have focused particularly on the

theology of the church. The doctrine of the church is actually one of special interest to Baptists. This is because, historically and practically, Baptists are a group of protestant, evangelical Christians with particular ecclesiological conviction and sacramental persuasion. Some of the fundamental pillars of the Baptist faith have to do with the doctrine of the life and work of the church. Examples are regenerate church membership, ordinances of baptism and Lord's Supper, church polity that is both local (congregational) and connectional (advisory bodies—association, conference, convention/union and alliance).

## II The Use of a Theological Model

This paper is an attempt to explore the topic, 'The Church as a Civil Society', by the use of a theological model. In systematic theology, a model (image, figure) is a valid methodology for a theological discourse. Down through the ages, the church has been studied with the aid of models. The models of the church are of diverse categories: bibli-

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<sup>1</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 1036.

cal, religious, philosophical, cultural, social and political. A few examples may be cited:

- The people of God, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the building of God, the kingdom of God, the family of God, the flock of God and the vineyard of God.<sup>2</sup>
- The temple of the Holy Spirit<sup>3</sup>
- Political society, communion of saints, servant, theocentric community, mother, ancestral mediation, clan.<sup>4</sup>

From the viewpoint of linguistic analysis, 'the church as a civil society', is a simile. The church is not really a civil society, but it can be studied as a civil society. Philosophically, however, a model is an approximate symbolic language to describe a reality. Useful as it is, a model has certain limitations as it cannot usually completely or adequately represent its object. It will be understood, then, that this model will reflect that deficiency.

The church as a civil society is a socio-political model to examine some civic responsibilities of the body of Christ in contemporary Africa. This paper is thus an attempt to develop an ecclesiology that is contextually, 'contemporarily' African. It can be said to be an exercise in political theology (theology of public and corporate life), as well as liberation theology (ecclesio-

logical interpretation from the perspective of injustice, disintegration, disconnectedness, hostility and alienation).

Some scholars like Matthew Lamb think that liberation theologies are meant for the Third World countries while political theologies are for western cultures.<sup>5</sup> Contrary to that opinion this paper, as an African socio-political theology, borrows some elements from both liberation and political theologies. A clarification may be made at this juncture, namely, that the paper does not endorse the use of Marxist categories and methods like the use of violence to press for societal development.

The paper will begin with a discussion of the nature of the church as a civil society. This will be followed by an examination of the task of the church as a civil society in Africa today. Particular attention will be given to Nigerian socio-political context.

### III The Nature of the Church as a Civil Society

What does it mean to talk about the church as a civil society? The starting point is to consider the meaning of the world 'church'. Among several other possibilities, I think of the church as the assembly of Christian believers called by God the Father from the world, saved by the Lord Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Every local church is a representative and expression (rightly, poorly or oth-

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 260-265.

<sup>3</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1049-1051.

<sup>4</sup> John O. Enyinnaya, 'Ecclesiology through the Centuries: A Critical Assessment of Historical Paradigms of the Church', *Contemporary Issues in Systematic Theology: An African Christian Perspective* (Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Ltd, 2011), 65-97.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew L. Lamb, 'Political Theology', in David F. Wright, Sinclair B. Ferguson, and James I. Packer (eds), *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 1988), 772-779.

erwise) of the universal church.

Theologians and practitioners approach the life, functions or purposes of the church in different ways. For Erickson, the functions of the church are evangelism, edification, worship and social concern.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand Wayne Grudem considers the purposes of the church to be ministry to God, ministry to believers and ministry to the world.<sup>7</sup> The threefold ministry of the church is sometimes described as 'up reach', 'in reach', and 'outreach'. For this author, the essential, major functions of the church are worship, fellowship, discipleship, stewardship, ministry and mission.

Usually, the mission/task of the church is an integral aspect of the nature of the church. In socio-political terms the mission of the church includes social ministry and action (to the poor, prisoners, the blind and oppressed—economically and politically as seen in the manifesto of Jesus Christ, Luke 4:18, 19). We observe that the traditional statements of models and mission tasks of the church are mostly socially cautious, economically hesitant and politically evasive. The task of the church in society is usually discussed from the perspectives of evangelism and social ministry with particular emphasis on preaching, teaching and learning. In this paper an attempt is made to highlight the role of the church to citizens in the face of unjust economic and enslaving political structures.

What is the meaning and task of a

civil society? As an important element of social development and the democratization process, civil society (along with government and business) is an important sector of every modern state or community. One public policy inter-governmental organisation has defined civil society as: 'an arena, a forum in which citizens associate to achieve a wide range of different purposes, some positive and peaceful, some perceived as negative and violent'.<sup>8</sup> Most civil society institutions and organizations in different parts of the world promote democracy, good governance, rule of law, equity, transparency and accountability. Examples of civil societies in Africa are:

- African Women's Economic Policy Network, Uganda
- Cameroon Aid Action for the underprivileged Areas, Cameroon
- Campaign for Democracy, Nigeria
- Foundation for Eco Diversity, Kenya
- International Centre for Conflict and Human Rights Analysis, Ghana
- Development in Africa Inc, Nigeria
- Youth Partnership for Peace and Development, Sierra Leone.<sup>9</sup>

As Reuben Abati, a well-known Nigerian commentator, put it, an important task of civil society is 'to hold government down to the first principles of the social contract'.<sup>10</sup> The 21st cen-

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<sup>8</sup> Civil Society, Policy Paper by The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Retrieved from [http://www.idea.int/publications/country/upload/8\\_civil\\_society.pdf](http://www.idea.int/publications/country/upload/8_civil_society.pdf) on 3 October 2014.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development proceedings, [www.unctad.xii.org/Documents/UNCTADXII/uxiidom\\_cso001\\_en.pdf](http://www.unctad.xii.org/Documents/UNCTADXII/uxiidom_cso001_en.pdf), accessed on 3 October 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Reuben Abati, 'More Than a Strike', in

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<sup>6</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1061-1069.

<sup>7</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan: 1994), 867-869.

ture African nations are struggling to democratize.

The mission of the church cannot be restricted to traditional roles of Christian mission—soul winning, church planting, discipleship training, and revivalism. The church must become more politically sensitive and involved. Thomas Starks thus once asserted significantly, ‘The day is coming and now is when social liberation is absolutely essential to evangelism. Unless believers are promoting the rights of the oppressed humans, the church’s witness in the 21st century will be made inauthentic.’<sup>11</sup> The African church must function as a civil society to contribute to the contemporary democratization process on the continent.

#### IV The Task of the Church as a Civil Society in the Contemporary Africa

The issues that will be considered in this section are defence and preservation of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, social/economic injustice and the connection between social justice and communal peace.

##### 1. Defence and preservation of human rights

From the biblical perspective, human dignity is the basis of human rights. Christian theologians have always maintained that ‘Human beings have dignity because God created human

beings in his own image.’<sup>12</sup> Moreover, that dignity confers certain rights on every human being as explained by Bujo, ‘At the core is the concept of the dignity of the individual: being human justifies the claim to certain rights.’<sup>13</sup>

Human rights in a society have been classified into various groups. The first ‘generation’ of rights, usually called ‘classical rights’, are civil and political. The second generation of rights are social and economic rights. The third generation of rights in developing nations have to do with ‘the basic needs for living—water, food, shelter—without which human beings can claim no other rights’.<sup>14</sup> Some of these rights are taken for granted in developed nations.

However, from the African perspective as stated by Bujo, ‘property is never private. In the final analysis, the individual administers property in the name of the community.’<sup>15</sup> This means that, unlike in the western World, in Africa, human and personal rights are actual community rights. The point of interest is that in a socio-political life, denial of the rights enumerated above as a result of mismanagement, oppression and exploitation of the poor amount to great injustice. This becomes truer when the poverty is due to

*The Guardian*, 18 January 2004, 18.

<sup>11</sup> M. Thomas Starks, *Toward a Theology of Missions* (Aurora: Ont. AMG, 1984), 54.

<sup>12</sup> Alan D. Falconer, (1999) ‘Rights, Human’, in David F. Wright, Sinclair B. Ferguson, and James I. Packer (eds), *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 1988), 901-902.

<sup>13</sup> Benezet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community* (Nairobi: Pauline’s Publications Africa, 1997), 144.

<sup>14</sup> Benezet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, 144.

<sup>15</sup> Benezet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, 149.

enslaving structures of a society.

God's concern for the poor, weak, oppressed, marginalized people is seen in biblical and church history. The deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh and their exodus from Egypt is an example. In the Magnificat, Mary's song of social, economic and political liberation, 'God's "no" resounding from Mary's life is a "no" to the social evil of injustice in its "various forms"'.<sup>16</sup> Luke 1:51-53 is one of the most radical and revolutionary documents of all times. This is liberation theology *par excellence*.

In the New Testament we also see God showing 'solidarity with an intrinsically poor humanity' in and through Jesus Christ. It has been argued that, since love of God and love of neighbour as oneself is the greatest commandment, 'human rights need to be grounded in love of God who gives human their rights'.<sup>17</sup> Africa is being impoverished morally, socially, economically and politically. God is concerned about the suffering of his people.

The human rights record of Nigeria and some other African countries is very poor.

The catalogue of violations include politically motivated assassinations, extra-judicial killings and excessive use of force by security agencies, arrest and detention of people for political reasons, elec-

toral malpractices, restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, all of which the government justifies with the omnibus phrase 'security concerns'.<sup>18</sup>

Should the church keep quiet? No, the church should team up with appropriate civil societies to condemn actions of government that have to do with abuses of human rights. The church should seek legal assistance for hundreds of prison inmates who have not been tried for offences. The church should organize public protests when any inhuman policy is about to be passed by legislature. The church should condemn acts of corruption at every level of government.

Conversely, the church should commend right steps of government to promote communal, human rights. An example is the promulgation against gay, lesbianism and same-sex marriage in Nigeria and Uganda in 2014. The body of Christ needs to be culturally sensitive. The African worldview is a celebration of heterosexuality. The church in Africa cannot take a stand that will amount to cultural perversion. However the stand, position and expression of the African church on this and other issues must not be judgmental.

## 2. Democracy and rule of law

One key preoccupation of most civil societies is the promotion of democracy and the rule of law. Democracy is a particularly appealing and widely accepted contemporary political system. However, it also shares some of the demerits of other ideologies and politi-

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<sup>16</sup> Ivone Gebaru and Maria Clara Binger, *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*, trans. by Philip Beryman. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 1170.

<sup>17</sup> Glen H. Stassen, 'Human Rights', in William A. Dryness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (eds.), *Global Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 405-141.

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<sup>18</sup> *The Guardian*, 2005, 14.

cal systems. Democracy is humanistic both by definition and tendency. It is a government of people, by people, for people. Where is the place of God in this ordinary but popular definition?

One major problem of modern political systems (including democracy) which have been imported into Africa is that they have no place for religion and fear of God. John Mbiti thus lamented that they 'despise, reject or even oppose religion'.<sup>19</sup> This is a serious deficiency that makes them irrelevant to Africans who have a religious worldview.

Western democracy has many limitations and problems as analyzed critically by Y. A. Obaje.<sup>20</sup> Communal democracy has some claims if 'it pays attention to the traditional African model and properly considers it'.<sup>21</sup> In traditional African leadership style every king or chief was supported by a council of elders. No king was an absolute ruler. The ruler that was becoming tyrannical would be removed or killed. In a similar manner, as asserted by Bujo, even 'a multi-party system not understood and not rooted in tradition, can lead to chaos'.<sup>22</sup>

It is imperative then to incorporate traditional African values into any socio-political ideology that will be of benefit to Africa. Mbiti has suggested that in such a system elements of so-

cialism, capitalism and others should be 'harmoniously joined together into a religious whole',<sup>23</sup> as it obtained in the African Traditional Life.

While democracy has practical challenges is there a better alternative in contemporary life? Africa is struggling to imbibe the spirit of multi-party democracy. Many political leaders are not true democrats, but instead, they are despotic rulers in civilian dress; they try to monopolize power, to force themselves on citizens through bribery, manipulation, violence and all kinds of undemocratic and unjust actions. There are many pretenders in governance who are in politics not for the common good of society but for personal enrichment.

The church needs to be politically awake and participate more actively in the democratic process. The church (both at denominational level like the Nigerian Baptist Convention) and interdenominational level (like Christian Association of Nigeria) needs to sponsor election-monitoring teams along with local and international groups doing so. The church should condemn maladministration and misgovernment.

Is it not a shame that churches in Nigeria and Kenya with 50% and 80% Christian populations respectively have kept quiet in the face of disproportionately, outrageous salaries of elected political officers! Democracy is threatened when the financial cost of governance impoverishes the poor. Some Nigerian politicians are extremely wealthy, almost rich enough to buy

<sup>19</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1969), 285.

<sup>20</sup> Obaje, Yusufu Ameh, *Theocracy and Not Democracy for Nigeria* (Ogbomosho: Ogunniyi Printing Works, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> Benezet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, 179.

<sup>22</sup> Benezet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, 144-149.

<sup>23</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 266.

human beings, whereas the poor cannot afford three square meals daily. When a political party in governance fails to abide by the judgement of a court of law, it is also a crime for the church to keep quiet.

### 3. Social and economic injustice

Justice is an issue in social relationships. According to Nicholas Wolterstorff, people are treated justly when they receive what is due to them.<sup>24</sup> As stated earlier, in Christian understanding, the requirement to be just to people is rooted in the image of God. Thus, says Wolterstorff, we are to do justice both 'as a manifestation of our respect for the image of God in persons' and also 'as constituting (part of) our imaging of God'.<sup>25</sup>

In this respect an important emphasis of justice in the Bible is the care of the weak, impoverished and marginalized members of the community, particularly the poor, widows, orphans and aliens. Several Old Testament prophets called for social justice. For instance, 'Amos spoke at a time when financial affluence and religious formalism combined to produce a high-tide of social decadence and permissiveness.'<sup>26</sup> He protested vehemently against social vices like injustice, corruption, oppression, and exploitation and called for justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24).

<sup>24</sup> N. P. Wolterstorff, 'Justice and Peace', in David J. Atkinson, David F. Field, Arthur F. Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan (eds.), *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 1995), 16.

<sup>25</sup> N. P. Wolterstorff, 'Justice and Peace', 18.

<sup>26</sup> David and Pat Alexander, *The Lion Handbook to the Bible* (Oxford: Lion, 1983), 372.

Africa is poor but the economic poverty is largely due to tyranny, maladministration and mismanagement of God-given natural and human resources. This poverty of godly, responsible, responsive governance and leadership is one of the reasons for the underdevelopment of the land. The church must wake up, speak up and advocate against the widening economic gap between the leaders and followers, between the rich and the poor. The contemporary church in Africa seems to have lost a sense of justice, the pursuit of moral righteousness in public life.

This is a matter of enlightened self-interest. Economic inequality is a recipe for social disharmony and political chaos. Where there is economic injustice there cannot be social peace and the church cannot preach the gospel effectively. Meanwhile, the starting point is to achieve internal justice and peace in the church. The church must conduct its life in justice and righteousness to be able to help society.

### 4. Social justice and communal peace

Interestingly and justifiably, justice and peace are closely related. There are two significant and fundamental facts about that relationship. The first fact is that in the context of this study both justice and peace are relational concepts based on human relationships and so human rights, human worth, human dignity, on the basis of their creation in the image of God. The second fact is that in social relationships justice is the prerequisite for peace. Human beings cannot live in peace unless and until there is righteousness in the lives of people and justice in society.



Wolterstorff has pointed out that both justice and righteousness come from the same Greek word *dikaio-syne*. In the Bible justice is equivalent to righteousness (Mt 5:6, 10) and it is closely connected with holiness, wholeness, integrity and peace (*shalom*) and so flourishing.<sup>27</sup> Two passages of the Old Testament will be cited to show the direct interconnectedness of justice (righteousness) and peace:

Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever (Isaiah 32:16-17, NIV).

Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven (Psalm 85:10-11, NIV).

One major factor responsible for conflicts and wars today is the lack of harmonious relationships. Many people are alienated from God and so lack inner, individual peace (James 4:1, 2a). In different parts of the world labour unions go on strike to ask for social and economic justice. There is no peace in many families and organizations because of lack of justice. At national level, many political and ethnic communal clashes have unjust economic undertones leading to hostilities and warfare.

For instance, in my opinion, there are at least two factors for Boko Haram in Nigeria. One is religious, the other is political, but both are related

to economic injustice. The people are very poor. Life is very cheap and they are frustrated because they have not benefited from civilization (which they equate with western education). So they wrongly reason, conclude and decide to go back to primitive lifestyle! This is really a self-contradiction because they use modern scientific and technological inventions such as automobiles and the internet.

Of course global terrorism in many respects and places wears a religious garb but its objectives include a reaction (and perhaps overreaction) against unjust international economic systems and structures. The truth is that one of the reasons for contemporary global restiveness and restlessness is the fact that the activities of many multinational corporations, along with banks and governments, have enriched a few people who swim in stupendous riches while the majority dwell in abject poverty.<sup>28</sup> The free market economy promoted by capitalism is a bubble that will soon burst. Some international organizations and multi-national corporations dictate local economy. If the church wants peace in the world, let the church strive for social justice. Peace without justice is a mirage, an illusion.

## V Conclusion

I would like to conclude this paper by proposing an agenda for the church in Africa to pursue social justice and communal peace.

First, theological institutions need

<sup>27</sup> N. P. Wolterstorff, 'Justice and Peace', 15-21.

<sup>28</sup> John Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (London: Plume, 2004).

to develop ecclesiological models that are more socially responsible and encourage churches to embrace practices that are more politically relevant.

Second, the scope of the mission/task of the church in the world needs to be enlarged, to include social ministry and action in support of the oppressed, marginalized and impoverished people in the world.

Third, like a civil society, the church must participate in human rights watch. Abuses of human rights are offensive to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church must continually call on the government to maintain and uphold human rights.

Fourth, since credible elections and rule of law is the pivot of participatory democracy, the church must seek means to educate the populace on responsible citizenship. Discipleship training should include equipping for

civil roles, public life and political office.

Fifth, economic inequality in the world today is social injustice and it is one of the reasons for lack of peace in the world. The church in Africa must show an example by working for internal justice and righteousness and by caring more for the economically disadvantaged citizens as called for in the biblical revelation.

Sixth, since it has been established that peace will come into society through justice, the church in Africa should actively collaborate with and support advocacy for different types of social justice: creation care and environmental justice, human rights abuses and violations, gender rights and issues, youth orientation and empowerment, as well as electoral education and election monitoring.

# Economic Growth Vs. The Environment?

## The Need for New Paradigms in Economics, Business Ethics, and Evangelical Theology

John Jefferson Davis

‘Animosity has traditionally existed between environmental advocates and those whom they perceive as the enemy—business,’ noted Gregory Adamin, president of Bentley College, on the occasion of a conference hosted by his institution on the theme of ‘The Corporation, Ethics, and the Environment.’<sup>1</sup> This tension between environmentalists and the business community can be observed in global, regional and local settings—as, for example, in the controversies surrounding the deforestation of the Amazon rainforests, and battles between the logging interests in the Pacific Northwest and animal rights activists seeking to protect

the habitats of the spotted owl.<sup>2</sup>

It is not the purpose of this paper<sup>3</sup> to address the issue of ‘economic growth vs. the environment’ in general, but rather to argue more specifically that the current paradigms in economics, business ethics, and evangelical theology are inadequate and in need of substantial revision.<sup>4</sup> After a brief review

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Robert Bonnie, et al, ‘Counting the Cost of Deforestation’, *Science* 288 (9 June 2000), 1763–4; Lisa Newton and Catherine Dillingham, ‘Forests of the North Coast: the Owls, the Trees, and the Conflicts’, in Laura Pincus Hartman, *Perspectives in Business Ethics* (Chicago: Irwin/McGraw-Hill, 1998), 704–11.

<sup>3</sup> The author wishes to thank Rev. William Messenger of the Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Workplace for the generous support provided for this research project.

<sup>4</sup> The standpoint assumed by the author in this paper is that known as ‘sustainable development’, as defined in note 7 below.

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<sup>1</sup> In W. Michael Hoffman, Robert Frederick, and Edward S. Petry, Jr., eds., *The Corporation, Ethics, and the Environment* (New York: Quorum, 1990), xii.

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of the historical development of the current discussion, it will be argued that neo-classical economists, business ethicists, and evangelical theologians have not generally in the past taken *creation* or the *environment* seriously enough as a crucial element in the frameworks and paradigms of their disciplines. The paper will conclude with a proposal that these disciplines need a new paradigm of 'theocentric, creation-connectedness' to deal more adequately with the environmental challenges of our time.

## I Historical Context of the Debate

Since the 1970s two powerful trends around the globe have been in conflict: the movement toward free market economies, and the growth of the environmental movement.<sup>5</sup> Environmental concern and activism has accelerated since the first Earth Day in 1970, and the movement toward free market economies has accelerated since 1989 with the fall of communism in the former Soviet Union. The influential 1972 publication by D.H. Meadows and others, *The Limits to Growth*, argued that present trends in economic growth begun with the Industrial Revolution could not be sustained indefinitely without producing environmental catastrophe.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of 'sustainable devel-

opment' was popularized by the 1987 report of the Brundtland Commission, a panel of experts assembled under the leadership of the then prime minister of Norway.<sup>7</sup> This report evoked various responses defending continuing economic growth and questioning the seriousness of environmental problems, notably works by Julian Simon and Herman Kahn.<sup>8</sup> This debate between the so-called 'cornucopian', pro-growth and 'sustainable development,' limits-to-growth points of view has been reflected in evangelical circles as well.<sup>9</sup> The standpoint assumed by this author is that of 'sustainable development,'

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<sup>7</sup> The report of the Brundtland Commission was published under the title *Our Common Future* (London: Oxford UP, 1987). 'Sustainable development' has been defined as 'development that does not destroy or undermine the ecological, economic or social basis on which continued development depends'. In Rudi M. Verburg and Vincent Wiegel, 'On the Compatibility of Sustainability and Economic Growth', *Environmental Ethics* 19 (1997), 247–65 at 250.

<sup>8</sup> Julian L. Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1981), arguing for the long-term economic benefits of population growth, and Julian L. Simon and Herman Kahn, eds., *The Resourceful Earth* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), questioning the environmental pessimism of the *Global 2000 Report to the President* of 1980.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Richard T. Wright, 'Tearing Down the Green: Environmental Backlash in the Evangelical Sub-Culture', *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 47:2 (June 1995), 80–91, responding to the 'cornucopian' point of view in Larry Burkett, *Whatever Happened to the American Dream* (Chicago: Moody, 1993); E. Calvin Beisner, *Prospects for Growth* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1990), and *Where the Garden Meets the Wilderness: Evangelical Entry into the Environmental Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

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<sup>5</sup> Denis Collings and John Barkdull, 'Capitalism, Environmentalism, and Mediating Structures: From Adam Smith to Stakeholder Panels', *Environmental Ethics* 17 (1995), 227–44 at 227.

<sup>6</sup> D.H. Meadows, et al, *The Limits to Growth* (New York: Universe, 1972).

and from this perspective the paper will proceed with an examination of existing paradigms in neo-classical economics, business ethics, and evangelical theology.

## II Neo-Classical Economics

Since the 1970s a growing number of environmentalists and ethicists have argued that the traditional categories of neo-classical economics that have prevailed in the discipline since 1870 are conceptually inadequate to deal with current ecological problems. Traditional categories of cost-accounting such as Gross Domestic Product and depreciation have not reflected the true environmental and social costs of industrial activity. The cost of cleaning up the oil spillage of the *Exxon Valdez* disaster, for example, is counted as a gain to the Gross Domestic Product rather than as an environmental loss. Keynesian economics counts the cost of depreciation of a factory, but tends to ignore the depreciation of natural resources such as soil fertility and clean water, treating the environment as a 'free' good.<sup>10</sup>

Neo-classical economics' model of the modern economy as an 'auction' where prices are determined by consumer preferences tends to undervalue and under-represent the interests of future generations who have no direct voice in the 'auction.' The assumption that those in the auction have 'perfect information' to inform their preferenc-

es overlooks the fact that in the real world consumers may lack scientific knowledge about the possible damage that certain chemicals and technologies, e.g. mercury and DDT, can inflict on human health and the ecosystem.<sup>11</sup> The damage may already be done before the information is available, and the damages may be irreversible, at least within the limits of a human lifetime.

The economic category of commodity price is inadequate to deal with the full range of aesthetic, historical, religious, and scientific values that are important to humane societies.<sup>12</sup> Would it make any sense to place the Statue of Liberty on the auction block and sell it to Walmart on the basis of market forces alone? Should the market alone determine the allocation of monies for fundamental scientific research in areas such as high-energy physics, that may have no immediate payoff in economic terms? Critics of neo-classical economics think that the answers to such questions are an obvious 'no'.

Academic economists are not unaware, of course, of these problems. The term 'externalities' is used to describe cases of market failure where economic transactions impose costs on non-consenting secondary parties.<sup>13</sup> A chemical plant that dumps mercury wastes into a river imposes external costs on the surrounding residents

<sup>10</sup> A.J. McMichael, *Planetary Overload: Global Environmental Change and the Health of the Human Species* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 298–301; see also Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 183–91.

<sup>11</sup> John M. Gowdy and Peg R. Olsen, 'Further Problems with Neo-classical Economics', *Environmental Ethics* 16 (1994), 161–171 at 169–70.

<sup>12</sup> Holmes Rolston, III, 'Valuing Wildlands', *Environmental Ethics* 7 (1985), 23–48.

<sup>13</sup> James D. Gwartney and Richard Stroup, *Economics: Private and Public Choices*, 3rd ed. (New York: Academic Press, 1982), 610.

who prefer clean water. The market price of the chemical does not in such a case reflect the true social cost, since the manufacturer is not assuming the full responsibility for his actions.

One attempt to remedy these limitations of traditional economic theory is known as 'contingent evaluation' or 'shadow pricing'.<sup>14</sup> Consumers are polled and asked how much they might be willing to pay to preserve an old-growth forest, for example, from logging or real estate development. The problem with such a methodology, however, is that it assumes that consumer preferences are well informed as to the scientific and other intangible values of the property in question. Consumers who are polled as to their preferences regarding the preservation of the Amazonian rainforest may not be aware of the role that such ecosystems play in the stabilization of regional and global climates.<sup>15</sup>

The sub-discipline known as 'free market environmentalism' has also tried to address these problems.<sup>16</sup> Pro-

ponents of this point of view believe that many environmental problems can be handled more efficiently by the private sector rather than government through a more thorough assignment of property rights. Tradeable pollution permits, for example, rather than top-down emission controls are said to be more effective in controlling water and air pollution. The property-rights approach is not adequate, however, in such cases as migratory animals or preserving the integrity of the ozone layer. Government must still establish acceptable levels of air or water pollution in a given region based on scientific—not merely market—considerations of acceptable health risks.

'Shadow pricing' and 'free market environmentalism' represent 'tinkering' with the existing paradigm in tradition neo-classical economics. More radical critics such as Herman Daly have argued that the paradigm itself is inadequate and are calling for a new 'ecological economics'.<sup>17</sup> According to Daly, traditional economic theory

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**14** See, for example, Steven Edwards, 'In Defense of Environmental Economics', *Environmental Ethics* 9 (1987), 73–..., and Bernard J. Nebel and Richard T. Wright, *Environmental Science: The Way the World Works*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 387–88.

**15** Mohammed H. I. Dore, 'The Problem of Valuation in Neo-classical Environmental Economics', *Environmental Ethics* 18 (1996), 65–70 at 69. On the crucial role and valuation of 'ecosystem services,' see Gretchen C. Daly, ed., *Nature's Services: Societal Dependence on Natural Ecosystems* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1997).

**16** Terry L. Anderson and Donald R. Leal, *Free Market Environmentalism* (San Francisco: Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, 1991); Peter J. Hill, 'Can Markets or

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Government Do More for the Environment?' in Michael Cromartie, ed., *Creation at Risk? Religion, Science, and Environmentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 121–136; PERC Reports and various publications of the Political Economy Research Center, Bozeman, MT, {www.perc.org}.

**17** Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon, 1989); Herman E. Daly, *Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development* (Boston: Beacon, 1996); Rajaram Krishnan, Jonathan M. Harris, and Neva R. Goodwin, eds., *A Survey of Ecological Economics* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1995); Juan Martinez-Alier, *Ecological Economics: Energy, Environment and Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

is based on a 'pre-analytic vision'<sup>18</sup> of the world in which creation or nature is largely absent or simply assumed as a 'given'. In the traditional model the economy is an isolated system in which firms produce goods and services and households supply factors of production in a never-ending circular flow. A new paradigm is needed in which the global economy is seen as a *subset* of the global ecosystem, and dependent upon it. The new paradigm recognizes that in this period of history it is *natural* capital, not man-made capital, that is emerging as a fundamental constraint on economic growth.<sup>19</sup>

Traditional neo-classical economics, emerging in the 1870s, tended to assume the environment as a given 'background' to human economic activity, an unlimited set of 'sources' of raw materials and 'sinks' for waste products. Economic growth was assumed as a self-evident good.<sup>20</sup> Since the 1870s, world population has more than quadrupled. Humans in the twentieth century used *ten times* more en-

ergy than humanity used in the entire thousand year period before 1900.<sup>21</sup>

Traditional neo-classical economics with its categories of markets and prices is a very efficient means of resolving the issues of *allocation* ('What goods and services shall we produce?') and *distribution* ('Who shall enjoy the goods and services that are produced?'), but has ignored the issue of the *absolute scale* of the global economy relative to the global ecosystem that supports it.<sup>22</sup> 'If there was ever a time', observe Gowdy and Olsen, 'when economic theory could ignore the natural world, that time has past.'<sup>23</sup> If one billion Indians and 1.2 billion Chinese were to demand the number of automobiles, refrigerators, and washing machines consistent with western patterns of consumption, and were to burn fossil fuels at western rates, it could not be assumed that the impacts on global warming and on the ozone layer would be benign. It is high time for economists to recognize the global ecosystem and to make it a fundamental part of the governing paradigm of their discipline.

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**18** On the concept of 'pre-analytic vision', cf. the discussion of 'vision' in Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: William Morrow, 1987), 14: 'A vision has been described as a 'pre-analytic cognitive act.' It is what we sense or feel *before* we have constructed any systematic reasoning that could be called a theory ... A vision is our sense of how the world works.'

**19** See figures 2 and 3 in Daly, *Beyond Growth*, 47, 49.

**20** According to McMichael, *Planetary Overload*, 302, neo-classical economics '... has not only discounted impacts upon the environment; it has explicitly encouraged excessive extraction, harvesting, consumption and waste—all in the exalted cause of expanding the GNP'.

### III Emerging Trends in Business Ethics

In recent years there has been an emerging awareness in the business community that perspectives in business ethics must be more comprehensive than considerations of the 'bottom line'. As W. Michael Hofman has

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**21** J.R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: Norton, 2000), xvi.

**22** Daly, *Beyond Growth*, 56.

**23** Gowdy and Olsen, 'Further Problems with Neo-classical Economics', 171.

observed, the new 'business ethics' movement rejects the mistaken belief that '... business only has responsibilities to a narrow set of its stakeholders, namely its stockholders'.<sup>24</sup> At least since the 1980s there has been a growing recognition that business has ethical obligations that include the environment as well as the local human communities that provide the infrastructures within which business activity takes place.<sup>25</sup> Ethics in business is not a matter of 'mere compliance', operating within the letter of the law, but should involve a more active posture of 'doing no harm' to human communities and the environment, and 'doing good' wherever possible.<sup>26</sup>

Mainstream publications in business ethics and management have tended to ignore faith perspectives. As Laura Nash has noted, these discussions have marginalized religious concerns as they may relate to decision making, and have focused instead on 'proper values' for business as theorized by economists such as Mil-

ton Friedman or sociologists such as Amitai Etzioni, on issues of corporate ethics codes and training programmes, and on ethical dilemmas presented as case studies in the business schools.<sup>27</sup> This paper would call for a conception of business ethics that incorporates both environmental concerns and faith perspectives.

Evangelicals writing in the area of business ethics have brought biblical perspectives to the issues, but by and large have not integrated environmental concerns into their discussions. Richard Chewning, professor of Christian Ethics in Business at Baylor University, has edited a series of books on biblical principles in business and economics. In the first volume on 'Foundations,' one contributor, Kenneth Kantzer, notes that the biblical doctrine of creation implies that humans are to exercise dominion over nature in such a way as '... to guard those resources ... seeing to it that they make their greatest possible contribution for the good of all humanity'.<sup>28</sup> This environmental concern is largely lacking, however, in the volume where biblical principles are applied to specific areas of business such as planning, marketing, advertising, accounting, and investing.<sup>29</sup>

In a text intended primarily for students at Christian colleges, *Business Through the Eyes of Faith*, Chewning, Eby, and Roels devote three pages to

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24 Hofman, 'Business and Environmental Ethics', 697–703 at 703, in Hartman, *Perspectives in Business Ethics*; also reprinted in Tom L. Beauchamp and Norman E. Bowie, eds., *Ethical Theory and Business*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993), 217–23; originally published in *Journal of Business Ethics* 9 (1990), 579–89.

25 The volume *The Corporation, Ethics, and the Environment*, Hofman, ed, cited above, is an example of the attempt to integrate business ethics and environmental concerns.

26 Kirk Davidson comments on the willingness of corporations such as Chevron to 'accept ... [environmental] responsibilities and go beyond mere compliance [to environmental regulations] in his article 'Straws in the Wind: The Nature of Corporate Commitment to Environmental Issues', 57–66 at 61, in Hofman, *The Corporation, Ethics, and the Environment*.

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27 Laura L. Nash, *Believers in Business* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994), ix, x.

28 In Richard C. Chewning, ed., *Biblical Principles and Business: The Foundations* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1989), 25.

29 Richard Chewning, ed., *Biblical Principles and Business: The Practice* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1990).



a section titled 'Responsibility for the Environment'. They note that Christians '... should be concerned for the environment as a matter of good stewardship', and in a study question challenge the student to think of ways that such stewardship could be exercised so as to benefit future generations and those living in other parts of the world.<sup>30</sup>

William Diehl's *The Monday Connection* is one of the more helpful contributions to the growing literature relating Christian faith to the workplace. Diehl discusses specific ways that Christians can be effective witnesses on the job, through competency, caring presence, lifestyle choices, and ethical integrity, but environmental issues in business are not addressed in any substantial way. 'Stewardship' is developed in terms of personal giving, use of time, and lifestyle choices, but not in relation to larger environmental concerns.<sup>31</sup>

The *Complete Book of Everyday Christianity* is presented as 'An A-to-Z Guide to Following Christ in Every Aspect of Life'. Strangely, however, the index of 'Ethical Issues' contains no entry on 'Ecology' or 'Environment', and the article on 'Business Ethics' is silent on these topics as well.<sup>32</sup> Alexander Hill's *Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace* is notable for its

environmental awareness, devoting a complete chapter to such concerns. Hill argues that a biblical understanding of stewardship '... leads us to care for nature as one aspect of our vocational calling to love God and neighbor'.<sup>33</sup>

#### IV Evangelical Ethics and Theology

If evangelical authors working in the area of business ethics have had a mixed record concerning the incorporation of environmental issues into their fields of vision, this may only be a reflection of the state of evangelical ethics generally. This writer's own *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, now in its second edition (4th edition was published 2015—ed.) , deals with issues of human relationships and sexuality such as marriage, divorce, abortion, homosexuality, and euthanasia, but does not address global environmental problems.<sup>34</sup>

Carl F.H. Henry, the editor of *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, did include an article on 'Environmental Pollution' in this reference work. V. Elving Anderson, the author of the article, observed that the concept of 'dominion' in the first chapter of Genesis does not mean exploitation. The command to subdue and to exercise dominion is balanced in Genesis 2 by the instruction to dress and to keep the land. 'Stewardship' should not be limited to money and personal talents; environmental

<sup>30</sup> Richard C. Chewning, John W. Eby, and Shirley J. Roels, *Business Through the Eyes of Faith* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), 219, 220.

<sup>31</sup> William E. Diehl, *The Monday Connection: On Being an Authentic Christian in a Weekday World* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 145–161.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Banks and R. Paul Stevens, eds., *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 1158; 90–96.

<sup>33</sup> Alexander Hill, *Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1997), 196.

<sup>34</sup> John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1993).

concerns should be included in stewardship programmes in churches.<sup>35</sup>

John and Paul Feinberg's text, *Ethics For a Brave New World*, like Davis's, tends to focus issues of sexual and medical ethics. There are chapters on abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, birth control, homosexuality, divorce, remarriage, genetic engineering, and war, but the index contains no entries for 'ecology' or 'environment' or 'environmentalism'.<sup>36</sup>

Robertson McQuilkin's *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics* does include the environment in his field of concern. In a brief (3 pages out of 535) but insightful section, he notes that at the root of much of the current environmental problem is a '... consumer economy aimed at material affluence, which deliberately sacrifices long-range benefit for short-range economic profit'. Love for the 'neighbour' includes love for and care of creation, and love for God requires the stewardship of creation for the glory of God and the welfare of humanity.

The uneven record of evangelical ethicists in matters of environmental concern reflects the state of evangelical theology generally. A recent examination of the content of twenty representative evangelical systematic theology textbooks published since 1970 found that in the chapters on the doctrine of creation, the median figure for the amount of space devoted to matters of environmental stewardship

was about 1%. The median figure for the amount of space devoted to matters such as evolution, the age of the earth, and the days of Genesis one was about 31%. It was apparent that evangelical theologians have tended to devote disproportionate amounts of attention to matters of *origins* and too little to matters of humanity's proper *relationship* to creation.<sup>37</sup>

As Paul Santmire has pointed out, the history of Christian theology in general has shown a very mixed record in its sensitivity to and concern for nature. Some theologians such as Irenaeus, Augustine, and St. Francis have been very affirming of nature, while Origen and others have been very 'otherworldly' in their spirituality and have not fostered appreciation of the material order.<sup>38</sup> Luther and Calvin are very appreciative of the wonders of nature and look forward to a new creation, but the centre of their theological interest is soteriological, focused on grace and the God-human relationship. In the twentieth-century neo-orthodox theology of Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann, this soteriological concentration is accentuated, 'redemptive *history*' is brought to the forefront, and nature be-

<sup>35</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 209–12.

<sup>36</sup> John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics For a Brave New World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> John Jefferson Davis, 'Ecological 'Blind Spots' in 'The Structure and Content of Recent Evangelical Systematic Theologies', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:2 (June 2000), 273–286. On this point see also Jonathan R. Wilson, 'Evangelicals and the Environment: A Theological Concern', *Christian Scholar's Review* 28/2 (1998), 298–307, and R.J. Berry, 'Creation and the Environment', *Science and Christian Belief* 7/1 (1995), 21–43.

<sup>38</sup> H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985).

comes a marginal concern.<sup>39</sup>

The formulation of the church's doctrine of creation has always been influenced by the conditions of the time. The early church asserted the goodness of the material world (Gen 1) against the Gnostics, and developed the understanding of creation *ex nihilo* in the face of Greek notions of the eternity of matter.<sup>40</sup> Today, the Christian doctrine of creation needs to address the challenges of the global environmental crisis. The need is not merely to repeat earlier affirmations of the metaphysical goodness of creation, but to emphasize the intrinsic value of the created order and humanity's moral obligation to preserve and care for it.

## V A New Paradigm

The need for new conceptual frameworks that connect the concerns of environment, economy, business ethics, and theology has been recognized by various writers.<sup>41</sup> This paper concludes

with an appeal for Christians working in economics, business ethics, and evangelical theology to consider the merits of a new paradigm that could be termed 'theocentric, creation-connect- edness'.

In the proposed paradigm, the natural world is not just a 'background' for human activity, but has *intrinsic value* as the creation of God (Gen 1:31), and is recognized as itself being included in the redemptive purposes of God (Rom 8:31, 32; Col 1:15–20). Human beings are understood theologically not only terms of the God-human and human-human relationships, but also as being integrally related to the natural environment that makes human life possible<sup>42</sup> and for which humans bear ethical responsibility. Because creation has intrinsic value, and because economic activity is integrally connected to the ecosystems which sustain such activity, business leaders have a moral responsibility not merely to *appear* to be environmentally responsible, but to be actually so.

Theologically, taking such a new

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**39** Harold Oliver, 'The Neglect and Recovery of Nature in Twentieth-Century Protestant Thought', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60:3 (1992), 379–404 at 381–3.

**40** On the history of the development of the Christian doctrine of creation, see Denis Carroll, 'Creation', *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 249–258; Emil Brunner, 'On the History of the Doctrine of Creation', in Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (London: Lutterworth, 1964), 36–39.

**41** In addition to the work of Herman Daly noted above, see also Frederick Ferre, 'Persons in Nature: Toward an Applicable and Unified Environmental Ethics,' *Zygon* 28:4 (1993), 441–53 at 442, calling for a revised worldview of 'personalistic organicism' in

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which persons are in '... continuity with—but not on all fours with—the rest of the natural order'; Sandra Rosenthal and Rogene A. Buchholz, 'Bridging Environmental and Business Ethics: A Pragmatic Approach', *Environmental Ethics* 20 (1998), 393–408 at 408, proposing a neo-pragmatic conceptual framework in which there is a recognition that '... the corporation has its being through its relation to a wider environment and this environment extends to the natural world'.

**42** In this paradigm humans are understood both in terms of 'dust' (Gen 2:3) and 'dominion' (Gen 1:26); i.e., as both dependent on the natural order and integrally related to it, and at the same time having responsibility to exercise wise stewardship over the natural order.

paradigm seriously would involve re-thinking basic Christian doctrines from the perspective of 'creation-connect-edness'. Discussions of the doctrine of creation would not be preoccupied with questions of origins and evolution, but would articulate humanity's obligation to be rightly related to creation and to care for it. Christian *anthropology* would take seriously the biblical insight that man is 'dust', connected with the earth and with the larger terrestrial and cosmic processes that sustain human life and make it possible. The doctrine of *original sin* would be seen as a reminder that man's fall affected not only humanity but creation itself (Gen 3:17). *Personal sin* involves not only sins against God, the neighbour, and the self, but sinful abuses of the earth as well.

In the area of Christology, the *Incarnation* would be seen as God's own affirmation of the intrinsic value of creation, and the manifestation of God's enduring intent to enter into a redemptive relationship with it. The *atonement* provided the basis not only for humanity's reconciliation with God, but also for the ultimate reconciliation of creation as well (Col 1:19, 20). In the area of *ecclesiology*, the mission of the church would be seen to incorporate not only the Great Commission (Mt 28:19–20), but the cultural mandate (Gen 1:26–28) as well, including all those activities that bring redemptive influences to bear on culture and creation.

The *sacraments* of baptism and the

Lord's Supper remind the church that the grace of God is mediated through the structures of creation and the elements of the material world, and not apart from them. A Christian and biblical eschatology would not be limited to an individualistic hope for a 'heaven' disconnected from the world, but to a New Heaven and a *new earth* (Rev 21:1), in which a redeemed humanity enjoys communion with God in the context of a *new creation*.

Christians should welcome the efforts of those working in the area of 'ecological economics,' and encourage efforts to enlarge the categories of traditional economic theory so as to recognize that *natural* capital, not just buildings and machines, need to be depreciated and reckoned in schemes of cost accounting. Business ethicists need to be encouraged to enlarge their paradigms beyond shareholder and letter-of-the-law interests to incorporate the real connections with the human communities and physical environments that provide the infrastructures that ultimately make the creation of wealth possible.

The interconnected nature of the environment, the global economy, and human activity is becoming increasingly evident in the contemporary world. It is time for Christians working in the areas of economics, business ethics, environmentalism, and theology to explicitly recognize the new realities in the basic conceptual frameworks of their respective disciplines.

# Work, Spirit, and New Creation

Miroslav Volf

## I A Pneumatological Theology of Work?

One cannot talk about the new creation without referring to the Spirit of God. For the Spirit, as Paul says, is the 'first fruits' or the 'down payment' of the future salvation (see Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22) and the present power of eschatological transformation in them. In the Gospels, too, Spirit is the agent through which the future new creation is anticipated in the present (see Mt 12:28). Without the Spirit there is no experience of the new creation! A theology of work that seeks to understand work as active anticipation of the *transformatio mundi* must, therefore, be a *pneumatological* theology of work.

### 1. Work and the Spirit

But what does the Spirit of God have to do with the mundane work of human beings? According to most of Protestant theology, very little. It has been 'inclined to restrict the activity of the Spirit to the spiritual, psychological, moral or religious life of the

individual.'<sup>1</sup> One can account for this restriction by two consequential theological decisions. To use traditional formulations: first, the activity of the Spirit was limited to the sphere of salvation, and second, the *locus* of the present realization of salvation was limited to the human spirit.

[Elsewhere, I have tried] to show that the Spirit of God is not only *spiritus redemptor* but also *spiritus creator*.<sup>2</sup> Thus when the Spirit comes into the world as Redeemer he does not come to a foreign territory, but 'to his own home' (Jn 1:12)<sup>3</sup>—the world's lying in the power of evil notwithstanding. Here, however, I want to discuss briefly the limitation of the Spirit's salvific operation on the human spirit. For my purposes, this is the crucial issue. The question of whether one can reflect on

1 A. I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible, the History of Christian Thought, and Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 154.

2 See Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 143f.

3 See H. Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Richmond: John Knox, 1964), 96.

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human work within the framework of the concept of the new creation and develop a pneumatological theology of work depends on the question of whether the Spirit's salvific work is limited to the human spirit or extends to the whole of reality.

The exclusion of the human body and materiality in general from the sphere of salvation in Protestant thought<sup>4</sup> is well illustrated by Luther's *The Freedom of a Christian*, a 'small book' that in Luther's own opinion, nevertheless contained his view of 'the whole of Christian life in a brief form.'<sup>5</sup> Later Protestant theologians have followed Luther rather closely in regard to the materiality of salvation.<sup>6</sup>

In *The Freedom of a Christian* Luther makes the well known distinction between the 'inner man' and the 'outward man.' For the discussion of the materiality of salvation it is crucial to determine what, exactly, Luther means

by these expressions. The matter is not as simple as it looks, because he equivocates and makes a *twofold* distinction in his use of those terms.<sup>7</sup>

First, and most obviously, Luther makes an *anthropological* distinction. The exact nature of this anthropological distinction is not easy to establish. In particular, it is not clear what he means by the 'inner man.' Fortunately, Luther is very clear on what he means by the 'outward man': it is the aspect of the human being that is sick or well, free or imprisoned, that eats or hungers, drinks or thirsts, experiences pleasure or suffers some external misfortune.<sup>8</sup> The outward man is a person with respect to his bodily existence in the world.

That leaves the inner man stripped of all corporeality as 'the naked self which exists concealed in his [human being's] heart.'<sup>9</sup> Whatever 'the naked self,' or as Luther says, the 'soul,' is, one thing is certain: for Luther it does not denote a human being's bodily existence.

Superimposed on the anthropological distinction between inner and outward man is the second, *soteriological* distinction between 'new man' and 'old man.' Significant for the study of the materiality of salvation is the fact that Luther applies the soteriological distinction between new and old only to the inner man. '*Outward man*' is

4 On this issue, see Miroslav Volf, "Materiality of Salvation. An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (1989): 447-67.

5 Luther, *WA*, 1, 11, 8-9. Together with *De servo arbitrio* this treatise can most easily be described as a 'systematic presentation of his [Luther's] theology' (G. Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970], 212).

6 There is no need to document this statement extensively, I will give only one example. Taking up Luther's distinction between 'inward' and 'outward man,' Bultmann writes: when a person becomes a new creation, 'outwardly everything remains as before, but inwardly his relation to the world has been radically changed' (R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology." In H. W. Bartsch (ed.), *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* [New York: Harper & Row, 1961] 20).

7 For a discussion of the differences and similarities between Luther's, Plato's, and Aristotle's talk about inner and outward man, see E. Jüngel, *Zur Freiheit eines Christenmenschen. Eine Erinnerung an Luthers Schrift* (München, Kaiser, 1981), 69ff., 116ff.

8 Luther, *WA*, 7, 21f.

9 Ebeling, *Luther*, 202.

and (until the day of the resurrection of the dead) *will remain 'old man'*—in the case of both the Christian and the non-Christian. Only the inner man can become a new man. The anthropological *locus* of salvation is the inner man.<sup>10</sup> The outward man and the whole material reality remain outside the sphere of the salvific activity of God.<sup>11</sup>

We need to look no further than the Gospels to see that the exclusion of materiality from the sphere of the present salvific activity of the Spirit is exegetically and theologically unacceptable. The Gospels widely use soteriological terminology (e.g., the term *sōzein*) to designate deliverance from the troubles and dangers of bodily life.<sup>12</sup> More significantly, they portray Jesus' healing miracles as signs of the inbreaking kingdom.<sup>13</sup>

As deeds done in the power of the

Spirit, healings are not merely symbols of God's future rule, but are anticipatory realizations of God's present rule. They provide tangible testimony to the materiality of salvation; they demonstrate God's desire to bring integrity to the whole human being, including the body, and to the whole of injured reality.<sup>14</sup> In a broken way—for healed people are not delivered from the power of death—healings done here and now through the power of the Spirit illustrate what will happen at the end of the age when God will transform the present world into the promised new creation.

When the ascended Christ gave the Spirit, he 'released the power of God into history, power which will not abate until God has made all things new.'<sup>15</sup> The Spirit of the new creation cannot be tied to the 'inner man.' Because the whole creation is the Spirit's sphere of operation, the Spirit is not only the Spirit of religious experience but also the Spirit of worldly engagement. For this reason it is not at all strange to connect the Spirit of God with mundane work. In fact, an adequate understanding of human work will be hardly

<sup>10</sup> See Jüngel, *Freiheit*, 72–73. Calvin seemed to have thought somewhat differently than Luther on the issue: 'We should note that the spiritual union which we have with Christ is not a matter of the soul alone, but of the body also, so that we are flesh of his flesh, etc. (Eph 5:30). The hope of resurrection would be faint, if our union with him were not complete and total like that' (Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960], ad 1 Cor 6, 15).

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that classical Protestantism did not deny that the full experience of salvation directly affects bodily existence, for it did expect the future resurrection of the body. The point is that the salvation experience does not directly affect human bodily existence in the present, i.e., before the consummation.

<sup>12</sup> See W. Schrage, 'Heil und Heilung in Neue Testament,' *EvTh* 46 (1986), 200.

<sup>13</sup> See G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 76f.

<sup>14</sup> See Jürgen Moltmann, *Der Weg Jesu Christi: Christologie in messianischen Dimensionen* (München: Kaiser, 1989), 127. Without knowing the results of modern New Testament studies, Pentecostals have rightly maintained that by experiencing healing of the body, people became 'partakers of the *bodily nature of the kingdom of God*' (E. P. Paulk, *Your Pentecostal Neighbor* [Cleveland: Pathway, 1958], 110—italics mine).

<sup>15</sup> C. H. Pinnock, "Introduction," in G. Vandervelde (ed.), *The Holy Spirit: Renewing and Empowering Presence* (Winfield: Wood Lake, 1989), 7.

possible without recourse to pneumatology.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Work and charisms

In a sense, a pneumatological understanding of work is not new. There are traces of it even in Luther. He discussed the *vocatio externa* not only in the context of the Pauline concept of the Body of Christ (which is closely related to Paul's understanding of charisms) but also—and sometimes explicitly—in the context of the gifts of grace: 'Behold, here St. Peter says that the *graces and gifts* of God are not of one but of varied kind. Each one should understand what his gift is, and practice it and so be of use to others.'<sup>17</sup>

In recent years authors from various Christian traditions have suggested interpreting human work as an aspect of charismatic life.<sup>18</sup> The docu-

ment of the Vatican II *Gaudium et spes* contains probably the most notable example of a charismatic interpretation of Christians' service to their fellow human beings through work: 'Now, the gifts of the Spirit are diverse... He summons... [people] to dedicate themselves to the earthly service of men and to make ready the material of the celestial realm by this ministry of theirs.'<sup>19</sup> To my knowledge, however, no one has taken up these suggestions and developed them into a consistent theology of work.

The pneumatological understanding of work I am proposing is an heir to the vocational understanding of work, predominant in the Protestant social ethic of all traditions.<sup>20</sup> Before develop-

**16** Similarly W. Kasper, "Die Kirche als Sakrament der Geistes," in W. Kasper and G. Stauter (eds.), *Kirche—Ort des Geistes* (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), 35, with reference to a theology of the world, culture, and politics.

**17** Luther, *WA*, 10, I, 311—italics mine. For an early Protestant (and conservative) application of the gifts theme from Romans 12 to the secular and not only the ecclesiastical activities of Christians, see Laurence Chaderton's famous sermon on Romans 12, called 'A fruitful sermon, upon the 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 verse of the 12 chapter of the epistle of St. Paul to the Romanes' (Lake, Puritans, 28ff.).

**18** See, for instance, H. Mühlén, "Charisma und Gesellschaft," in H. Mühlén (ed.), *Gestgaben heute* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1982) 168; G. Lampe, *God as Spirit* (London: SCM, 1983), 202; J. V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM, 1972), 26f. For examples from non-Christian tradition, see Plato, who says: 'Again, in artificial manufacture, we do not know that a man who has this god for a

teacher turns out a brilliant success, whereas he on whom Love has laid no hold is obscure? If Apollo invented archery and medicine and divination, it was under the guidance of Desire and Love; so that he too may be deemed a disciple of Love, as likewise may the Muses in music, Hephestus in metal-work, Athene in weaving...'*(Symposium, 197Af.)*. A. K. Coomaraswamy, following Plato's lead, has suggested a kind of 'pneumatological' understanding of work: 'So the maker of anything, if he is to be called creator, is at his best the servant of an immanent Genius... he is not working of or for himself, but by and for another energy, that of the Immanent Eros, Sanctus Spiritus, the source of all "gifts"' (A. K. Coomaraswamy, "A Figure of Speech or a Figure of Thought?" in R. Lipsey (ed.), *Selected Papers: Traditional Art and Symbolism* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977], 33).

**19** W. M. Abbott, S.J. (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes* (New York: Guild, 1966), n. 38.

**20** See, for instance, two contemporary Protestant writers from different segments of Protestantism, D. Field and E. Stephenson, *Just the Job: Christians Talk about Work and Vocation* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1978), 18ff; and J. C.



ing a pneumatological understanding of work, it is therefore helpful to investigate both the strengths and weaknesses of the vocational understanding of work. Similarly to any other theory, a particular theology of work will be persuasive to the extent that one can show its theological and historical superiority over its rivals.

## II Work as Vocation

Both Luther and Calvin, each in his own way, held the vocational view of work. Since Luther not only originated the idea but also wrote on it much more extensively than Calvin, I will develop my theology of work in critical dialogue with Luther's notion of vocation (which differs in some important respects from Calvin's,<sup>21</sup> and even more from that of the later Calvinists).

The basis of Luther's understanding of vocation is his doctrine of justification by faith, and the occasion for its development, his controversy with medieval monasticism. One of Luther's most culturally influential accomplishments was to overcome the monastic reduction of *vocatio* to a calling to a particular kind of religious life. He came to hold two interrelated beliefs about Christian vocation: (1) all Christians (not only monks) have a vocation, and (2) *every type of work* performed by Christians (not only religious activity) can be a vocation.

Instead of interpreting *vocatio* as a call of a select group within the larger Christian fellowship to a special kind

of life, Luther spoke of the double vocation of every Christian: spiritual vocation (*vocatio spiritualis*) and external vocation (*vocatio externa*). Spiritual vocation is God's call to enter the kingdom of God, and it comes to a person through the proclamation of the Gospel. This call is common to all Christians and is for all Christians the same ('*communis et similis*').<sup>22</sup>

External vocation is God's call to serve God and one's fellow human beings in the world. It comes to a person through her station in life or profession (*Stand*).<sup>23</sup> This call, too, is addressed to all Christians, but to each one in a different way, depending on his particular station or profession ('*macht ein unterscheid*').<sup>24</sup>

In *Kirchenpostille* 1522—a work in which Luther uses 'vocation' for the first time as a *terminus technicus* 'for a purely secular activity'<sup>25</sup>—Luther gives an explanation of external vocation while answering the question of someone who feels without a vocation:

What if I am not called? What should I do? Answer: How can it be that you are not called? You are certainly in a station (*Stand*), you are either a husband or a wife, son or daughter, male or female servant.<sup>26</sup>

To be a husband, wife, child, or serv-

<sup>22</sup> Luther, *WA*, 34, II, 300.

<sup>23</sup> I take it that Luther's use of vocation is not limited to one's standing within the three orders but often equals the person's occupation (contra Bockmühl, "Ethics," 108).

<sup>24</sup> Luther, *WA*, 34, II, 306.

<sup>25</sup> G. Wingren, "Beruf II: Historische und ethische Aspekte," in G. Krause and G. Müller (eds.), *TRE* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 661.

<sup>26</sup> Luther, *WA*, 10, I, 308.

Raines and D. C. Day-Lower, *Modern Work and Human Meaning* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 94ff.

<sup>21</sup> See Calvin, *Institutes*, 724f.

ant means to be called by God to a particular kind of activity, it means to have a vocation. When God's spiritual call through the proclamation of the gospel reaches a person in her station or profession, it transforms these into a vocation. The duties of the station become commandments of God to her. In this way, Luther links the daily work of every Christian inseparably with the centre of Christian faith: for a Christian, work in every profession, and not only in ecclesiastical professions, rests on a divine calling.

Two important and related consequences follow from Luther's notion of vocation. These insights make up the *novum* of Luther's approach to human work. First Luther's notion of vocation ascribed much greater value to work than was previously the case. As Weber rightly observed, Luther valued

the fulfillment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume... The only way of living acceptably to God was not to surpass worldly morality in monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfillment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world.<sup>27</sup>

Second, Luther's notion of vocation *overcame the medieval hierarchy between *ovae activa and vita contemplativa**.<sup>28</sup> Since every vocation rests on God's commission, every vocation is fundamentally of the same value before God.

### III Limits of the Vocational Understanding of Work

A responsible theology of work should seek to preserve Luther's insight into God's call to everyday work with its two consequences. The way Luther (and especially later Lutheranism) developed and applied this basic insight is, however, problematic. Luther's notion of vocation has serious limitations, both in terms of its applicability to modern work, and in its theological persuasiveness.

#### 1. Critique of Vocation

(1) Luther's understanding of work as vocation is *indifferent toward alienation* in work. In his view, two indispensable features sufficiently qualify a particular work theologically as vocation. The two features are the call of God and one's service to fellow human beings. The origin and purpose of work, not the inherent quality of work, define vocation.

Hence it seems that virtually *every* type of work can be a vocation, no matter how dehumanizing it might be (provided that in doing the work one does not transgress the commandments of God).<sup>29</sup> Although it could never be one's vocation to be a prostitute because it entails breaking God's commandment, the vocational understanding of work does not in any way prevent mindless work on the assembly line at a galloping pace from being considered as a vocation.

Such broad applicability might seem a desirable feature for an understanding of work, especially since (as

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<sup>27</sup> M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 80.

<sup>28</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 70.

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<sup>29</sup> See Weber, *Ethic*, 282.

Calvin pointed out) it can give ‘singular consolation’ to people whose work is ‘sordid and base.’<sup>30</sup> But one can have broad applicability and the benefits of consolation only at the expense of the transforming potential for overcoming alienation in situations when transformation is both necessary and possible. If even the ‘lifting of a single straw’ is a ‘completely divine’<sup>31</sup> work, there is no reason why the same description could not apply to the most degrading types of work in industrial and information societies.

(2) There is a *dangerous ambiguity* in Luther’s notion of vocation. In his view, spiritual calling comes through the proclamation of the gospel, while external calling comes through one’s station (*Stand*). It has proven difficult for Lutheran theology to reconcile the two callings in the life of an individual Christian when a conflict arises between them.

The history of Lutheranism as well as Lutheran ethics shows that Luther’s bold identification of vocation [i.e., *vocatio externa*] with the call [i.e., *vocatio spiritualis*] led again and again to the integration of the call into vocation and vocation into occupation, and thus to the consecration of the *vocational-occupational* structure. ‘Vocation began to gain the upper hand over the call; the Word of God on the right (gospel) was absorbed by the word of God on the left (law).’<sup>32</sup>

(3) The understanding of work as vocation is easily misused ideologically. As already indicated, Luther elevated work in every profession to the level of divine service.<sup>33</sup> The problem arises when one combines such a high valuation of work with both indifference to alienation and the identification of calling with occupation. Since the notion of vocation suggests that every employment is a place of service to God—even when human activity in work is reduced to ‘soulless movement’—this notion functions simply to ennoble dehumanizing work in a situation where the quality of work should be improved through structural or other kinds of change. The vocational understanding of work provides no resources to foster such change.

(4) The notion of vocation is not applicable to the increasingly mobile industrial and information society. Most people in these societies do not keep a single job or employment for a lifetime, but often switch from one job to another in the course of their active life. The half-life of most job skills is dropping all the time, so they have to change jobs. And even if they could keep their jobs, they often feel that being tied down to a job is a denial of their freedom and of the opportunity for development.

Industrial and information societies are characterized by a *diachronic plurality of employments or jobs* for their members. Luther’s understanding of external vocation corresponds necessarily to the singleness and permanence of

30 Calvin, *Institutes*, 725.

31 Luther, *WA*, 10, I, 317.

32 J. Moltmann, ‘The Right to Work,’ in *On Human Dignity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 47.

33 On Luther’s understanding of work as divine service, see H. Gatzert, ‘Beruf bei Martin Luther und in der industriellen Gesellschaft’ (Th. D. diss., University of Münster, 1964), 79.

spiritual calling. As there is one irrevocable spiritual calling, so there must be one irrevocable external calling.

Given Luther's affirmation of the singleness and static nature of external vocation, it is easy to understand why he regularly relates his comments about external vocation to a conservative interpretation of the body of Christ and adds the injunction: 'Let each one remain in his vocation, and live content with his gift.'<sup>34</sup> The injunction to 'remain' and 'be satisfied' is a logical consequence of the notion of vocation.<sup>35</sup> To change one's employment is to fail to remain faithful to God's initial commandment.

The only way to interpret change of employment positively and at the same time hold to the notion of vocation is to assume a diachronic plurality of external vocations. The soteriological meaning of vocation, which serves as a paradigm for the socioethical understanding of vocation, however, makes such an assumption anomalous. For singularity and permanence are constitutive characteristics of the soteriological understanding of vocation.

(5) In industrial and information societies people increasingly take on more than one job or employment at the same time. *Synchronic plurality of employments or jobs* is an important feature of these societies. In Luther-

an theology, *vocatio externa* as a rule refers to a single employment or job, which people hold throughout their lives. This corresponds, of course, to the singularity of *vocatio spiritualis*. Unlike much of Lutheran theology, Luther himself maintained that, since a person mostly belonged to more than one *Stand* (she might have been daughter, mistress, and wife, all at the same time), a person had more than one external vocation.<sup>36</sup>

His sense of reality led him to break loose from the exegetical and dogmatic framework set up with the concept of vocation. He is more consistent with this concept when he exhorts a person not to 'meddle' in another's vocation.<sup>37</sup> Strictly speaking, one may take work to be *vocatio* only if one assumes that a Christian should have just one employment or job.<sup>38</sup>

(6) As the nature of human work changed in the course of industrialization, vocation was reduced to gainful employment. Lutheran social ethic followed this sociological development and, departing from Luther but in analogy to the singularity of the *vocatio spiritualis*, reduced its notion of vocation to gainful employment.<sup>39</sup>

The reduction of vocation to employment, coupled with the belief that vocation is the primary service ordinary people render to God, contributed to the modern fateful elevation of work to the status of religion. The religious pursuit of work plays havoc with the

34 Luther, *WA*, 42, 640.

35 Calvin claims that God gave human beings vocations because he knew 'with what great restlessness human nature flames' (Calvin, *Institutes*, 724). Having a calling from God, a person 'of obscure station will lead a private life ungrudgingly so as not to leave the rank in which he has been placed by God' (Calvin, *Institutes*, 725).

36 See Wingren, *Beruf*, 17.

37 Luther, *WA*, 34, II, 307.

38 G. Wunsch, *Evangelische Wirtschaftsethik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1927), 579.

39 See W. Trilhaas, *Ethik* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970, 3rd ed.), 396.

working individual, his fellow human beings, and nature.

### 1. Reinterpretation of vocation?

In responding to these criticisms, one might be tempted to reinterpret the understanding of work as vocation in order to free it from theological inadequacies and make it more applicable to industrial and information societies. There are, however, both exegetical and theological arguments against doing so.

(1) Exegetes agree that Luther misinterpreted 1 Corinthians 7:20, the main proof text for his understanding of work. 'Calling in this verse is not calling *with* which, to which, or by which a man is called, but refers to the state in which he is *when* he is called to become a Christian.'<sup>40</sup> Except in 1 Corinthians 7:20 (and possibly 1 Cor 1:26), Paul and others who share his tradition use the term *klēsis* as a *terminus technicus* for 'becoming a Christian.'

As 1 Peter 2:9 shows, *klēsis* encompasses both the call of God out of 'darkness into his wonderful light' that constitutes Christians as Christians, and the call to conduct corresponding to this 'light' (see 1 Pet 1:15), which should characterize life of Christians.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, BNTC (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 169-70; cf. H. Brockhaus, *Charisma und Amt: Die paulinische Charismenlehre auf dem Hintergrund der frühchristlichen Gemeindefunktionen* (Suppental: Brockhaus, 1972), 224; J. Eckert, "Kaleō, ktl.," in Horst Balz und Gerhard Schneider (eds.), *EWNT* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1981) 2:599.

<sup>41</sup> See Preston, "Vocation," in J. Macquarrie (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (London: SCM), 355: The New Testament term *vocatio*

Thus, when *klēsis* refers not to becoming a Christian but to living as a Christian, it does not designate a calling peculiar to every Christian and distinguishing one Christian from another, as Luther claimed of *vocatio externa*. Instead, it refers to the quality of life that should characterize *all Christians as Christians*.

(2) Theologically it makes sense to understand work as *vocatio externa* only if one can conceive of this *vocatio* in analogy to *vocatio spiritualis*. One has to start with the singularity and permanence of *vocatio spiritualis*, which individualizes and concretizes itself in the process of human response in the form of a *singular and permanent vocatio externa*. Even Luther himself, in a social ethic designed for a comparatively static society, could not maintain this correspondence consistently. One could weaken the correspondence between *vocatio spiritualis* and *vocatio externa* and maintain that when the one call of God, addressing all people to become Christians, reaches each individual, it branches out into a plurality of callings for particular tasks.<sup>42</sup>

I do not find it helpful, however, to deviate in this way from the New Testament and from a dogmatic soteriological use of *vocatio*, especially since the New Testament has a carefully chosen term—actually a *terminus technicus*—to denote the multiple callings of every Christian to particular tasks both in-

'refer[s] to the call of God in Christ to membership in the community of his people, the "saints," and to the qualities of Christian life which this implies.'

<sup>42</sup> See F. Wagner, "Berufung III: Dogmatisch," in G. Krause and G. Müller (eds.), *TRE* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 711.

side and outside the Christian church. I refer to the term *charisma*.

I propose that a theology of charisms supplies a stable foundation on which we can erect a theology of work that is both faithful to the divine revelation and relevant to the modern world of work. In the following pages I will first give a theological reflection on the Pauline notion of charisma, and second apply it to a Christian understanding of work, while developing further the theology of charisms as the application demands.

#### IV A Theological Reflection on Charisms

In recent decades the subject of charisms has been the focus of lively discussion, both exegetical and theological. As I argue here briefly for a particular understanding of charisms, my purpose is not merely to analyze Paul's statements but to develop theologically some crucial aspects of his understanding of charisms, and in this way set up a backdrop for a theology of work.

(1) One should not define charisma so broadly as to make the term encompass the whole sphere of Christian ethical activity. E. Käsemann has argued that the whole ethical existence of the Christian, the *nova obaeditia*, is charismatic.<sup>43</sup> No doubt, the whole new life of a Christian must be viewed pneumatologically, but the question is whether it is legitimate to describe it

more specifically as *charismatic*.

I cannot argue for this point within the confines of a book on work,<sup>44</sup> but must simply assert that it seems to me more adequate to differentiate, with Paul, between the *gifts and the fruit* of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit designates the general character of Christian existence, 'the lifestyle of those who are indwelt and energized by the Spirit.'<sup>45</sup> The gifts of the Spirit are related to the specific tasks or functions to which God calls and fits each Christian.

(2) One should not define *charisma* so narrowly as to include in the term only ecclesiastical activities. One interpretation limits the sphere of operation of charisms to the Christian fellowship, insisting that one cannot understand 'charismatically the various activities of Christians in relation to their non-Christian neighbors.'<sup>46</sup> But, using individual charisms as examples, it would not be difficult to show the impossibility of consistently limiting the operation of charisms to the Christian church.

The whole purpose of the gift of an evangelist (see Eph 4:11), for instance, is to relate the gospel to non-Christians. To take another example, it would be artificial to understand contributing to the needs of the destitute (see Rom 12:8) as *charisma* when exercised in relation to Christians but as simple benevolence when exercised in relation to non-Christians. As the first fruits of salvation, the Spirit of Christ

<sup>43</sup> See E. Käsemann, "Amt und Gemeinde im Neuen Testament," in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 1:109–134; E. Käsemann, "Gottesdienst," in *Exegetische*, 1:204.

<sup>44</sup> On that issue, see Brockhaus, *Charisma*, 220ff.

<sup>45</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 251.

<sup>46</sup> Brockhaus, *Charisma*, 239.

is not only active in the Christian fellowship but also desires to make an impact *on the world through* the fellowship.<sup>47</sup>

All functions of the fellowship—whether directed inward to the Christian community or outward to the world—are the result of the operation of the Spirit of God and are thus charismatic. The place of operation does not define charisms, but the manifestation of the Spirit for the divinely ordained purpose.

(3) Charisms are not the possession of an elite group within the Christian fellowship. New Testament passages that deal with charisms consistently emphasize that charisms ‘are found throughout the Church rather than being restricted to a particular group of people.’<sup>48</sup> In the Christian fellowship as the Body of Christ there are no members without a function and hence also no members without a charisma. The Spirit, who is poured out upon all flesh (Acts 2:17ff.), imparts also charisms to all flesh: they are gifts given to the Christian community irrespective of the existing distinctions or conditions within it.<sup>49</sup>

(4) The tendency to restrict charisms to an elite group within the Christian fellowship goes hand in hand with the tendency to ascribe an elite character to charisms. In widespread pneumatologies in which the Spirit’s function is to negate, even destroy the worldly

nature,<sup>50</sup> ‘charismatic’ is very frequently taken to mean ‘extraordinary.’ Ecclesiologically we come across this restricted understanding of charisms in some Pentecostal (or ‘charismatic’) churches that identify charismatic with the spectacularly miraculous.<sup>51</sup>

A secular version of this ‘supernaturalistic reduction’ confronts us in the commonly accepted Weberian understanding of *charisma* as an extraordinary quality of leadership that appeals to nonrational motives.<sup>52</sup> One of the main points of the Pauline theology of charisms is the overcoming of such a restrictive concentration on the miraculous and extraordinary. For this reason it is of great importance to keep the term *charisma* as a generic term for both the spectacular and the ordinary.<sup>53</sup>

(5) Traditional view of the impartation of charisms can be described as the addition model: ‘the Spirit joins himself, as it were, to the person, giving “something” new, a new power,

<sup>50</sup> See W. Joest, *Dogmatik I: Die Wirklichkeit Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 302.

<sup>51</sup> For a similar understanding of charisms in the New Testament, see also K. Berger, “Charisma, ktl.,” in *EWNT* 3:1105.

<sup>52</sup> For an important (but only partial) criticism of Weber’s understanding of charismatic personality and its popular use in Western culture, see A. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 208ff.

<sup>53</sup> Schulz, “Charismenlehre des Paulus: Bilanz der Probleme und Ergebnisse,” in J. Friedrich et al. (eds.), *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann zum 70 Geburtstag* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Tübingen: Mohr, Siebeck, 1975), 444.

<sup>47</sup> For a similar understanding of charisma, see M. Harper, *Let My People Grow: Ministry and Leadership in the Church* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1977), 100; Mühlen, “Charisma,” 161.

<sup>48</sup> Küng, *Church*, 246.

<sup>49</sup> See *Brockhaus*, Charisma, 170.

new qualities.<sup>54</sup> It might, however, be better to understand the impartation of charisms according to the interaction model:<sup>55</sup> a person who is shaped by her genetic heritage and social interaction faces the challenge of a new situation as she lives in the presence of God and learns to respond to it in a new way. This is what it means to acquire a new spiritual gift. No substance or quality has been added to her, but a more or less permanent skill has been learned.

We can determine the relationship between calling and charisma in the following way: the general calling to enter the kingdom of God and to live in accordance with this kingdom that comes to a person through the preaching of the gospel becomes for the believer a call to bear the fruit of the Spirit, which should characterize all Christians, and, as they are placed in various situations, the calling to live in accordance with the kingdom branches out in the multiple gifts of the Spirit to each individual.

## V Work in the Spirit

But is there a connection between charismata and the mundane work? If there is, can a theology of work be based on a theology of charismata? And if it could, would such a theology of work have any advantages over the vocational understanding of work so that we could with good conscience leave the second in favour of the first? Can it be applied to work of non-Christians or is it a

theology of work only for a Christian subculture? Does not a pneumatological understanding of work amount to theological ideology of human achievement? To these questions I now turn.

### 1. Theological basis

If we must understand every specific function and task of a Christian in the church and in the world charismatically, then everyday work cannot be an exception. The Spirit of God calls, endows, and empowers Christians to work in their various vocations. The charismatic nature of all Christian activity is the *theological* basis for a pneumatological understanding of work.

There are also some *biblical* references that can be taken to suggest a pneumatological understanding of work. We read in the Old Testament that the Spirit of God inspired craftsmen and artists who designed, constructed, and adorned the tabernacle and the temple.

See, the Lord has chosen Bezalel... and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts... and... the ability to teach others (Exod 35:2-3)

Then David gave his son Solomon... the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the Lord (1 Chron 28:11-12).

Furthermore, judges and kings in Israel are often said to do their tasks under the anointing of the Spirit of God (see Judg 3:10; 1 Sam 16:13; 23:2; Prov 16:10).<sup>56</sup>

54 T. Veenhof, "Charismata—Supernatural or Natural?" in G. Vandervelde (ed.), *The Holy Spirit: Renewing and Empowering Presence* (Winfield: Wood Lake, 1989), 90.

55 See Veenhof, "Charismata," 91.

56 The point I am making is not invalidated



As they stand, these biblical affirmations of the charismatic nature of human activity cannot serve as the basis for a pneumatological understanding of *all* work, for they set apart people gifted by the Spirit for various extraordinary tasks from others who do ordinary work. But we can read these passages from the perspective of the new covenant in which *all* God's people are gifted and called to various tasks by the Spirit.

In this case they provide biblical illustrations for a charismatic understanding of the basic types of human work: intellectual (e.g. teaching) or manual (e.g. crafts) work, *poiesis* (e.g. arts and crafts) or praxis (e.g. ruling). All human work, however complicated or simple, is made possible by the operation of the Spirit of God in the working person; and all work whose nature and results reflect the values of the new creation is accomplished under the instruction and inspiration of the Spirit of God (see Isa 28:24-29).

## 2. Work as cooperation with God

If Christian mundane work is work in the Spirit, then it must be understood as *cooperation with God*. *Charisma* is not just a call by which God bids us to perform a particular task, but is also an inspiration and a gifting to accomplish the task. Even when charisma is exer-

cised by using the so-called natural capabilities, it would be incorrect to say that a person is 'enabled' irrespective of God's relation to him. Rather, the enabling depends on the presence and activity of the Spirit. It is impossible to separate the gift of the Spirit from the enabling power of the Spirit.<sup>57</sup> When people work exhibiting the values of the new creation (as expressed in what Paul calls the 'fruit of the Spirit') then the Spirit works in them and through them.

The understanding of work as cooperation with God is implied in the New Testament view of Christian life in general. Putting forward his own Christian experience as a paradigm of Christian life, Paul said: 'it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God' (Gal 2:20). That Paul can in the same breath make such seemingly contradictory statements about the acting agent of Christian life ('I no longer live, *Christ lives* in me' and '*I live* my life in the flesh') testifies unmistakably that the whole Christian life is a life of cooperation with God through the presence of the Spirit. A Christian's mundane work is no exception. Here, too, one must say: I work, and the Spirit of the resurrected Christ works through me.

Since the Spirit who imparts gifts and acts through them is 'a guarantee' (2 Cor 1:22; cf. Rom 8:23) of the realization of the eschatological new creation, cooperation with God in work is proleptic cooperation with God in God's eschatological *transformatio mundi*. As the glorified Lord, Jesus Christ is

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by the observation that the claim to Spirit's inspiration might have served Israel's kings only as a sacral legitimation of a fundamentally secular power (see G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments I: Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels* [München: Kaiser, 1969], 109).

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<sup>57</sup> See Käsemann, "Amt," 110.

'present in his gifts and in the services that both manifest these gifts and are made possible by them.'<sup>58</sup> Although his reign is still contested by the power of evil, he is realizing through those gifts his rule of love in the world. As Christians do their mundane work, the Spirit enables them to cooperate with God in the kingdom of God that "completes creation and renews heaven and earth."<sup>59</sup>

### 3. A pneumatological approach to work: does it solve anything?

In the last two chapters [of my book] I develop some of the most important aspects of a pneumatological understanding of work. Here I want to show that this understanding of work is not weighed down by the serious deficiencies of the vocational understanding of work.

(1) The pneumatological understanding of work is free from the portentous ambiguity in Luther's concept of vocation, which consists in the undefined relation between spiritual calling through the gospel and external calling through one's station. The resurrected Lord alone through the Spirit calls and equips a worker for a particular task in the world.

Of course, neither the Spirit's calling nor equipping occur in a social and natural vacuum; they do not come, so to speak, directly from Christ's immaterial Spirit to the isolated human soul. They are mediated through each person's social interrelations and psychosomatic constitution. These mediations themselves result from the inter-

action of human beings with the Spirit of God.

Yet charisms remain different from their mediations and should not be reduced to or confused with them.<sup>60</sup> For the Spirit who gives gifts 'as he wills' (1 Cor 12:11) by social and natural mediation is not the Spirit of human social structures or of a persons' psychosomatic makeup, but the Spirit of the crucified and resurrected Christ, the first fruits of the new creation.

(2) The pneumatological understanding of work is not as open to ideological misuse as the vocational understanding of work.<sup>61</sup> It does not proclaim work meaningful without simultaneously attempting to humanize it. Elevating work to cooperation with God in the pneumatological understanding of work implies an obligation to overcome alienation because the individual gifts of the person need to be taken seriously. The point is not simply to interpret work religiously as cooperation with God and thereby glorify it ideologically, but to transform work into a charismatic cooperation with God on the 'project' of the new creation.

(3) The pneumatological understanding of work is easily applicable to the increasing diachronic plurality of employments or jobs that characterize industrial and information societies. Unlike Christian calling, charisma in the technical sense is not 'irrevocable'

<sup>60</sup> For a similar differentiation between calling and mediations within the vocational understanding of work, see O. Bayer, "Berufung," in T. Schober et al. (eds.), *Evangelisches Soziallexikon* (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1980, 7th ed.), 142.

<sup>61</sup> See Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 163–68.

<sup>58</sup> Käsemann, "Amt," 118.

<sup>59</sup> Moltmann, "Work," 45.

(see Rom 11:29). True, a person cannot simply pick and choose her charisma, for the sovereign Spirit of God imparts charisms 'as he wills' (1 Cor 12:11). But the sovereignty of the Spirit does not prohibit a person from 'earnestly desiring' spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:3 1; 14: 1, 12) and receiving various gifts at different times.<sup>62</sup> Paul presupposes both a diachronic and a synchronic plurality of charisms.

The diachronic plurality of charisms fits the diachronic plurality of employment or jobs in modern societies. Unlike in the vocational understanding of work, in the pneumatological understanding of work one need not insist that the occupational choice be a single event and that there be a single right job for everyone<sup>63</sup> (either because God has called a person to one job or because every person possesses a relatively stable pattern of occupational traits). People are freed for several consecutive careers in rapidly changing work environments; their occupational decisions need not be irrevocable commitments but can be repeatedly made in a continuous dialogue between their preferences and talents on the one hand, and the existing job opportunities on the other.<sup>64</sup>

In any case, one can change jobs without coming under suspicion of unfaithfulness. If the change is in harmony with the *charisma* given, then changing can actually be an expression of faithfulness to God, who gave the *charisma* and readiness to serve fellow human beings in a new way. There is no need to worry that in the absence of a permanent calling, human life will be 'turned topsy-turvy'<sup>65</sup> (as Calvin thought) or that human beings will 'spend more time in idleness than at work'<sup>66</sup> (as the Puritans feared). Rather, freedom from the rigidity of a single, permanent vocation might season with creativity and interrupt with rest the monotonous lives of modern workaholics.

(4) It is also easy to apply the pneumatological understanding of work to the synchronic plurality of jobs or employments. In Paul's view every Christian can have more than one charisma at any given time. His aim is that Christians 'excel in gifts' (1 Cor 14: 12), provided they exercise them in interdependence within the community and out of concern for the common good. The pneumatological understanding of work frees us from the limitation of being able to theologically interpret only

<sup>62</sup> Paul explicates his views on charisms in the context of the understanding of the church as the Body of Christ. He does not derive his views on charisms from this metaphor of the church, but uses the metaphor to illustrate certain aspects of his teaching on charisms.

<sup>63</sup> So industrial psychology until recently: see W. S. Neff, *Work and Human Behavior* (Chicago: Aldine, 1977, 2nd ed.), 125.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Aquinas speaks of natural inclinations (caused by divine Providence) to particular employments: 'Haec autem diversificatio hominum in diversis officiis contingit

primo ex divina providentia, quae ita hominum status distribuit... secundo etiam ex causis naturalibus, ex quibus contingit, quod in diversis hominibus sunt diversae inclinationes ad diversa officia' (*Quaest. quodlibet*, VII, Art. 17c; cf. E. Welty, *Vom Sinn und Wert der menschlichen Arbeit* [Heidelberg: Kerle, 1949], 41). As portrayed by Thomas Aquinas, the natural inclinations of different people are as static as Luther's calling and are hence equally ill-suited to modern, dynamic societies.

<sup>65</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 724.

<sup>66</sup> Baxter, as quoted by Weber, *Ethic*, 161.

a single employment of a Christian (or from the limitation of having to resort to a different theological interpretation for jobs that are not primary).

In accordance with the plurality of charisms, there can be a plurality of employments or jobs without any one of them being regarded theologically as inferior, a more 'job on the side.' The pneumatological understanding of work is thus also open to a redefinition of work, which today's industrial and information societies need.<sup>67</sup>

## VI Spirit and Work in *Regnum Naturae*

As I have sketched it, the pneumatological understanding of work is clearly a theology of *Christian* work. The significance and meaning of Christians' work lie in their cooperation with God in the anticipation of the eschatological *transformatio mundi*. The power enabling their work and determining its nature is the Holy Spirit given when they responded in faith to the call of God in Christ.

But what about the work of non-Christians? Traditionally theologians simply bypassed the issue as uninteresting. Although Luther, for instance, did not apply the concept of vocation to the work of non-Christians,<sup>68</sup> he reflected little in his writings on the theological significance of their work. This is understandable, given the identity of

church and society in the *Corpus Christianum* that Luther and other seminal theologians of the past presupposed.

In much of the world throughout history, however, church and society were never identified, and the cradle of the *Corpus Christianorum* is becoming its grave: in the Western world a clear and irretrievable separation between church and society is taking place. Since Christians today live in religiously pluralistic societies, their theologies of work must incorporate reflection on the work of non-Christians. Hence my next step is to indicate the implications of a pneumatological theology of work for understanding non-Christians' work.

What is the relation of the work of non-Christians to the new creation? The answer to this question is implicit in the way I have determined the relation between the present and the future orders. If the world will be transformed, then the work of non-Christians has in principle the same ultimate significance as the work of Christians: insofar as the results of non-Christians' work pass through the purifying judgment of God, they, too, will contribute to the future new creation.

In Revelation one reads that the kings of the earth and the nations will bring their splendour, glory, and honour into the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:24, 26). It makes perhaps the best sense to take this enigmatic statement to mean that all pure and noble achievements of non-Christians will be incorporated in the new creation.

But is it possible to understand the work of non-Christians pneumatologically? Charisms are specifically ecclesiastical phenomena. They are

<sup>67</sup> See above, 7–14; Miroslav Volf, *Zukunft der Arbeit—Arbeit der Zukunft: Der Arbeitsbegriff bei Karl Marx und seine theologische Wertung* (München: Kaiser; Mainz: Grünewald, 1988), 100ff.

<sup>68</sup> See Wingren, *Beruf*, 15; Gatzert, *Beruf*, 39ff.

gifts given to those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord. How, then, can anything we learned about the nature of work from the theology of *charisms* apply to the work of non-Christians? The answer depends on how we conceive of the relationship between the Spirit of God and the non-Christians. I can only sketch an approach to this extremely complex and not sufficiently investigated subject here.

First, if we affirm that Christ is the Lord of all humanity—indeed of the whole universe—and not only of those who profess him as their Lord, and that he rules through the power of the Spirit, then we must also assume that the Spirit of God is active in some way in all people, not only in those who consciously live in the Spirit's life-giving power. As Basil of Caesarea observes in his *De Spiritu Sancto*, creation possesses nothing—no power, no motivation, or ingenuity needed for work—that it did not receive from the Spirit of God.<sup>69</sup> There is hence an important sense in which all human work is done 'in the power of the Spirit.'

Second, one and the same Spirit of God is active both in the Church and in the world of culture. As the first fruits of the new creation, the Spirit is active in the Church, redeeming and sanctifying the people of God. In the world of culture the Spirit is active sustaining and developing humanity. The difference in the activity of the Spirit in these two realms lies not so much in the different purposes of the Spirit

with the two groups of human beings, as in the nature of the receptivity of human beings.

Third, the goal of the Holy Spirit in the church and in the world is the same: the Spirit strives to lead both the realm of nature (*regnum naturae*) and the realm of grace (*regnum gratiae*) toward their final glorification in the new creation (*regnum gloriae*).<sup>70</sup>

Since in the realm of grace the Spirit is active as the first fruits of the coming glory, which is the goal of the realm of nature, we must think of the Spirit's activity in the realm of nature as analogous to its activity in the realm of grace. What can be said of the work of Christians on the basis of the biblical understanding of *charisms* can also be said by analogy of the work of non-Christians.

Revelation of the future glory in the realm of grace is the measure by which events in the realm of nature must be judged. To the extent that non-Christians are open to the prompting of the Spirit, their work, too, is the cooperation with God in anticipation of the eschatological transformation of the world, even though they may not be aware of it.

## VII A Christian Ideology of Work?

Work as cooperation with God in the

<sup>69</sup> Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, as quoted by W. Kern and Y. Congar, "Geist and Heiliger Geist," in F. Böckle et al. (eds.), *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft* (Freiburg: Herder, 1982), 22:87.

<sup>70</sup> For the relation between *natura*, *gratia*, and *gloria*, see J. Moltmann, "Christsein, Menschsein und das Reich Gottes: Ein Gespräch mit Karl Rahner," in *Stimmen der Zeit* 203 (1985), 626 (though I am not always able to follow Moltmann in the way he determines the relation between *gratia* and *gloria*, and hence also between *natura* and *gratia*).

eschatological transformation of the world! Work in the Spirit! These are lofty words about human work. But is it not true that work reflects not only the glory of human cooperation with God but also the misery of human rebellion against God? This is, indeed, a testimony of Genesis 2 through 3, which explains how pleasant work in a garden (2:15) became futile toil outside of it (3:17ff.). The experience of most working people confirms it. The statement Wolterstorff makes about art is *a fortiori* true of work: it 'reeks of murder, and oppression, and enslavement, and nationalism, and idolatry, and racism, and sexism.'<sup>71</sup>

Given the drudgery of much of modern work, the exploitation of workers, and the destruction of nature through human work, does not the talk about working in the Spirit and about the eschatological significance of work sound suspect? Does it not amount to a glorification of work that conceals the debasement of workers? Is a theology of work only an ideology of work in disguise?

### 1. God's judgment of human work

The understanding of work as cooperation with God in the *transformatio mundi* is not a general theory of all human work. It is not applicable to every type of work and to every way of working, for the simple reason that the new creation will not incorporate everything found in the present creation. When God creates a new world he will

not indiscriminately affirm the present world. Such promiscuous affirmation would be the cheapest of all graces, and hence no grace at all. The realization of the new creation cannot bypass the Judgment Day, a day of negation of all that is negative in the present creation.<sup>72</sup>

Paul's reflection on the ultimate significance of missionary work in the face of God's judgment (1 Cor 3:12-15) might give us a clue to understanding God's judgment in relation to human work in general. Like the test of fire, God's judgment will bring to light the work that has ultimate significance since it was done in cooperation with God. Like gold, silver, and precious stones (see 1 Cor 3:12), such work will survive the fire purified.

But the Judgment Day will also plainly reveal the work that was ultimately insignificant because it was done in cooperation, not with God, but with the demonic powers that scheme to ruin God's good creation. Like wood, hay, and straw, such work will burn up, for 'nothing that is impure will ever enter' the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:27). Every understanding of work as coop-

<sup>71</sup> N. Wolterstorff, "Evangelicalism and the Arts," in *Christian Scholar's Review* 17 (1988), 467.

<sup>72</sup> The claim that "all human activity, including that of work, is captured, permeated and transfigured by the event of salvation" and that "secular reality gains a new-divine-dimension" (L. Roos, "On a Theology and Ethics of Work," in *Communio* 11 [1984], 103, reporting on French theologies of work) amounts to a dangerous ideology of work if it is understood as an indiscriminate statement about all human activity and about the whole of secular reality. For some of human activity is beyond salvation and requires abolition (i.e., prostitution), and some of secular reality has demonic dimensions and requires destruction (i.e., chemical weapons).

eration with God that does not include the theme of judgment is inadequate. As we have to pattern our work according to the values of the new creation, so we also have to criticize it in the light of the eschatological judgment.

In relation to God's judgment on human work, it is important to distinguish between what might be called the moral and the ontological value of human work. I have already argued against ascribing eschatological significance merely to the attitude of love exhibited in work.<sup>73</sup> It would also be insufficient to attach eschatological significance only to the results of work done in love.<sup>74</sup> 'Man's envy of his neighbour' (Eccles 4:4), as the realistic ecclesiast puts it, spurs him on to many of the best human achievements.

Do they lose their inherent value because they were done out of ethically impure motives? Every noble result of human work is ultimately significant. It is possible that the fire of judgment will not only burn up the results of work, the worker herself escaping 'the flames' (1 Cor 3:15),<sup>75</sup> but that the flames of 'the absolutely searching and penetrating love of God'<sup>76</sup> will envelop the evil worker while her work is purified and preserved.

The reality of judgment makes it clear that relating human work positively to God's new creation does not amount to an ideological glorification of work. It lies in the affirmation that

the work has meaning in spite of the transitoriness of the world. If human work is in fact 'chasing after wind' (Eccles 4:4)-whether or not one experiences it subjectively as meaningful-it is not so because of the transitoriness of the world, but because of the evilness of the work. All work that contradicts the new creation is meaningless; all work that corresponds to the new creation is ultimately meaningful.

This should serve as an encouragement to all those 'good workers' who see themselves in the tragic figure of Sisyphus. In spite of all appearances, their work is not just rolling a heavy rock up a hill in this earthly Hades; they are preparing building blocks for the glorified new creation. Furthermore, all those weighed down by the toil that accompanies most of human work can rest assured that their sufferings "are not worth comparing with the glory" of God's new creation they are contributing to (Rom 8:18).

## 2. Work against the Spirit

What is the relationship between the Spirit of God and the work that deserves God's judgment? There is a sense in which all human work is done in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit is the giver of all life, and hence all work, as an expression of human life, draws its energy out of the fullness of divine Spirit's energy. When human beings work, they work only because God's Spirit has given them power and talents to work. To express the same thought in more traditional terminology, without God's constant preserving and sustaining grace, no work would be possible.

But a person can misuse his gifts

<sup>73</sup> See Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 96-98.

<sup>74</sup> See *Documents*, Gaudium et Spes, n. 39: 'manete caritate eiusque opere.'

<sup>75</sup> For this interpretation of 1 Cor. 3:15, see Fee, *First Corinthians*, 144.

<sup>76</sup> B. Hebblethwaite, *The Christian Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 215.

and exercise them against God's will. Through his work he can destroy either human or natural life and hence contradict the reality of the new creation, which preserves the old creation in transfigured form. The circumstance that the gifts and energies that the Spirit gives can be used against the will of the Spirit results from the Spirit's condescension in history: by giving life to the creation, the Spirit imparts to the creation the power for independ-

ence from the Spirit's prompting.

Because the Spirit creates human beings as free agents, work in the power of the Spirit can be done not only in accordance with but also in contradiction to the will of the Spirit; it can be performed not only in cooperation with the Holy Spirit who transforms the creation in anticipation of the glorious new creation, but also in collaboration with that Unholy Spirit who strives to ravage it.



# For Further Reading

We want to encourage our readers to make use of the resources that are now easily accessible around the world. The most important of these is the Theology of Work Project (<http://www.theologyofwork.org>) which has a vast array of high-quality articles and information, including a commentary on the whole Bible with application to the workplace. Their key contribution is careful engagement with the Bible on issues relating to work, including its intrinsic worth.

An organisation which merits particular mention is the Lausanne Movement, which fosters three issue networks around topics mentioned here (Business as Mission, Marketplace Ministry, and Tentmaking), as well as other related issue networks (Cities, Creation Care, etc.). Lausanne have published an important Occasional Pa-

per (number 59) on Business as Mission (BAM), arising from the 2004 Forum on BAM held in Thailand in 2004.

For theological reflection on economic issues, a key resource is the Journal of Markets and Morality, published in a free open access form by the Acton Foundation (<http://www.market-sandmorality.com/index.php/mandm>). This journal features careful and nuanced interaction between theology and economics from specialists in both fields, and is a first resource for ethical questions around markets.

There are many other organisations and groups focused on faith and work issues, often making high-quality resources freely available, and we encourage you to look at the website of the Council for Business and Theology for links to these.

## Recommended books for perspectives on work:

Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock

Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004)

R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000)

Ben Witherington, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2011)

## Recommended books for perspectives on markets and economics:

Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013)

Samuel Gregg, *Economic Thinking for the Theologically Minded* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2001)

Brian Griffiths, Robert A. Sirico, Norman Barry, and Frank Field, *Capitalism,*

- Morality and Markets* (London: The Institute of Economic Affairs, 2001)
- Richard A. Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2009)
- Paul Mills and Michael Schluter, *After Capitalism: Rethinking Economic Relationships* (Cambridge: Jubilee Centre, 2012)
- Stephen Green, *Good Value: Reflections on Money, Morality and an Uncertain World* (London: Allen Lane, 2009)
- Clive Beed and Cara Beed, *Alternatives to Economics: Christian Socio-Economic Perspectives* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2006)

### Recommended books for the field of Business as Mission:

- Neal Johnson, *Business as Mission: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010)
- Michael Baer, *Business as Mission: The Power of Business in the Kingdom of God* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2006)
- Steven Rundle and Tom A. Steffen, *The Emerging Role of Business in Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011)
- Web sites: [www.bamglobal.org](http://www.bamglobal.org) and [www.businessasmission.com](http://www.businessasmission.com)

## Books Reviewed

Reviewed by Michael R Bae  
Albert M. Erisman  
*The Accidental Executive: Lessons on Business, Faith and Calling from the Life of Joseph*

Reviewed by Norman Rentrop  
Thomas Schirrmacher  
*Leadership and Ethical Responsibility: The Three Aspects of Every Decision*

Reviewed by Rod St Hill  
David Brooks  
*The Road to Character*

Reviewed by Lyndon Drake  
Kenman L. Wong and Scott B. Rae  
*Business for the Common Good: A Christian Vision for the Marketplace*

### Short Reviews

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Samuel Gregg  
*Economic Thinking for the Theologically Minded*

Brian Griffiths, Robert A. Sirico, Norman Barry, and Frank Field  
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Richard A. Horsley,  
*Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All*

Paul Mills and Michael Schluter  
*After Capitalism: Rethinking Economic Relationships*

## Book Reviews

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### The Accidental Executive: Lessons on Business, Faith and Calling from the Life of Joseph

Albert M. Erisman

Peabody: Hendrickson, 2015

ISBN 978-61970-719-1 (ebook)

*Reviewed by Michael R Baer, CEO, Third Path Initiative*

There is no shortage of books written on market place ministry or living out our faith in the domestic workplace. In that sense, *Accidental Executive* is not unique. However, what is different about Albert Erisman's book is that it is not written by a Bible college professor or the director of some non-profit organization trying to operate in the business world. Erisman is a practitioner, a successful

executive in his own right at Boeing, and an obvious student of Scripture.

*Accidental Executive* would not be classified as scholarly nor would I describe it as exegetical. It does not draw its truth from the text. On the contrary, Erisman takes the common experiences and challenges of believers in business and reads them back into the text, into the story of Joseph and uses this story as a powerful illustration of how a man of God can operate in the work place while remaining faithful. This is a devotional work aimed at encouraging the Christian in his or her job.

Each chapter is an explanation and illustration of some principle or experience that most of us who actually live in the world of work can quickly identify with. Erisman deals with the preparation of a leader, the specific temptations a leader

will face, perseverance and focus on the task, how to bring bad news to your boss and more than 20 other real life topics. The development of each topic is not limited to what we can glean from Joseph's life; Erisman also draws upon a rich and diverse database of interviews with current workplace leaders such as Allen Mullaly of Ford Motor Company, Gloria Nelund of TriLinc Global, and Bill Pollard of ServiceMaster. These modern stories blend with the ancient story of Joseph to provide a well-rounded and thoughtful guide to difficult situations.

Of particular interest to many readers will be the chapter on 'Talking About God in the Workplace'. Many passionate Christians wrestle with how to be vocal and yet sensitive to the setting. The chapter is summarized in Erisman's words, 'There is a place for a strong and clear statement about God in the midst of a situation, but there are often times when simply turning away from the situation is what is necessary.' The chapter then expands on how to know when to do what.

Another helpful chapter is 'The Big Promotion', in which Erisman unpacks the humility needed by Joseph when he is elevated from prison to Prime Minister. The emphasis on servant leadership and understanding the true nature of position is healthy and needed.

Some of the analogies raised in *Accidental Executive* are hard to see. The comparison of the hungry masses of Egypt during the time of plenty that preceded the great famine and American's greed and avarice prior to the 2008 meltdown is a stretch. So also, the suggestion of Joseph's failure to engage his subordinates drawn from the argument from silence misses the mark. This is the practical problem with all devotional writing and the tendency to press details

of the story too far or force points that simply don't fit the narrative.

If the reader is looking for guidance in how to launch a business for God or how to use business to penetrate into the unreached and hard-to-reach places on earth he will be disappointed. This is not a book on business as mission. However, for those wanting to see the correlation between sound business practices, solid Christian virtues and successful navigation in the world of work then *Accidental Executive* will prove encouraging, instructive and challenging.

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### Leadership and Ethical Responsibility: The Three Aspects of Every Decision

Thomas Schirrmacher

Bonn: Culture and Science Pub., 2013  
WEA Global Issues Series Vol 13  
ISBN 978-3-86269-072-5  
Pb, pp 139 also e-version

*Reviewed by Norman Rentrop, Germany*

Our economic system is based upon trust. When a distributor delivers goods on account, he trusts that at a later time he will be paid for his services. If a customer did not pay, the system of trust would be disturbed. Mistrust makes economic life difficult and complicated. A distributor would rather deliver to customers he trusts and whom he knows from experience to be reliable. Companies which are managed in a scrupulous and ethically responsible manner are preferred in our economic system.

Ethical responsibility not only strengthens relationships with customers and business partners, but it also creates a productive work atmosphere for employees. On the one hand, it heightens

existing employees' motivation and, on the other hand, makes the company attractive for new top talent.

Human ideals and practical constraints appear to contradict each other in the interpersonal realm. On this point, this book explains how the Bible makes clear guidelines available so that optimal solutions can be found in the case of conflicts between economic, personal, and impersonal interests. These spiritual principles not only give the decision-maker himself a form of support. They also result in a situation where his leadership decisions inspire confidence, are reliable, and are transparent.

Christian leadership is often equated with a type of 'starry-eyed idealism' that cannot be squared with the economic interests of a company. This book demonstrates the opposite by showing how Christian-ethical responsibility not only exists in relation to the individual employee but also in relation to the entire company and the goals the company has.

At those points where companies are becoming increasingly similar to each other, the quality of the employees and leadership are becoming increasingly important. Ethically responsible leadership has become a critical success factor. The Bible is first-rate management literature. What one finds with Thomas Schirrmacher is that he lays down a comprehensive and generally valid foundation from the Bible in order to reach correct leadership decisions. In the process, as far as ethical responsibility is concerned, he not only deals with economic leadership, he also creates a sound basis for all areas of decision-making, regardless of whether it is a matter of decisions in one's profession, at a personal level, in one's family, or in the church.

Futurologists have seen the value of ethics rise in society even more. In a world

full of material offerings and promises, interpersonal ethical values will become increasingly important for people who appear to have everything. Responsible Christian ethics is such a value. And for that reason, this book is so important. It provides a sound footing by providing the best guide, the biblical point of view thought through and desired by the Creator with respect to decision-making and behaviour.

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### The Road to Character David Brooks

London: Allen Lane, 2015  
ISBN 978-0-241-18672-5  
Hb., pp 273, notes, index

*Reviewed by Rod St Hill, Christian Heritage  
College, Brisbane, Australia*

I caught a snippet of an interview with David Brooks about *The Road to Character* on Australia's public radio, Radio National, in July 2014. I was intrigued by his approach, based on 'philosophical humility', and ordered a copy of his book. He defines character as 'a set of dispositions, desires, and habits that are slowly engraved during the struggle against your own weakness' (263). Philosophical humility is an acknowledgment of our inherent tendencies towards selfishness, pride, greed and self-deception, and a recognition that our struggle against the weaknesses in ourselves is never solitary. 'Everybody needs redemptive assistance from the outside—from family, friends, ancestors, rules, traditions, institutions, exemplars, and, for believers, God.'

Brooks draws Adam I and Adam II from Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's *Lonely Man of Faith* as his thematic metaphors.

The Adams are developed from the two accounts of creation in Genesis and represent opposing sides of our nature. In contemporary times, Adam I is recognizable as the external Adam who wants to conquer the world. This is 'the big me'. Adam II is internal, with a desire for a serene, inner character, keen not only to do good, but to be good. This is 'the little me'. Brooks asserts that today's culture nurtures Adam I and neglects Adam II. The book focusses on Adam II. 'I wrote it, to be honest, to save my own soul' (xi).

Brooks' method is to review the lives of a sample of historical figures. None was saintly. Indeed, some (Dwight Eisenhower, Bayard Rustin, George Eliot and Augustine) veered well away from the path of decency at times. One, George Marshall, was so self-effacing that a weak President appointed Eisenhower to oversee Operation Overlord when Marshall was clearly the better logistician and leader. Nevertheless, all dealt heroically with human weakness of one kind or another.

Brooks aligns each figure with elements of Adam II—the summoned self (Frances Perkins, one of the architects of Roosevelt's New Deal), self-conquest (Dwight Eisenhower), struggle (Dorothy Day, the Catholic Worker movement), self-mastery (George Marshall, architect of the Marshall Plan), dignity (Phillip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, leaders of the civil rights movement), love (George Eliot), ordered love (Augustine), and self-examination (Samuel Johnson and Michel de Montaigne). I found myself reflecting on my own struggle between Adam I and Adam II as I read Brooks' vignettes.

I confess that I was not always sure where the book was heading. It became clear in the concluding chapter, 'The Big

Me'. He suggests that the 1960s saw a significant cultural change, but one built on a long history. 'Starting in biblical times there was a tradition of moral realism, the "crooked-timber" school of humanity. This ... put tremendous emphasis on sin and human weakness... captured in the figure of Moses... and by biblical figures like David, who were great heroes, but deeply flawed... later expressed by Christian thinkers such as Augustine... (then)... humanists like Samuel Johnson, Michel de Montaigne, and George Eliot, who emphasized how little we can know, how hard it is to know ourselves, and how hard we have to work along the road to virtue' (pp. 243-4). According to Brooks moral realism found a rival in moral romanticism, which replaced emphasis on inner weakness with emphasis on inner goodness, around the eighteenth century. The two traditions existed together until the Great Depression and the Second World War, when people wanted to escape from self-restraint.

Brooks nominates four books that elevated moral romanticism: Rabbi Joshua L. Liebman's *Peace of Mind* (1946), Benjamin Spock's, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946), Harry Overstreet's *The Mature Mind* (1949) and Rev Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) as the watershed literature, together with the humanistic psychology of Carl Rogers 'and others'. Brooks argues that this shift produced some positive outcomes, including rising aspirations of women, minorities and the poor, but simultaneously diminished the role of external objective good as the basis for moral authority.

It puzzles me why Brooks overlooked the critical importance of Albert Maslow's 'A theory of human motivation' published in 1943 in *Psychological*

*Review.* His hierarchy of needs, culminating in 'self-actualization', is arguably the most influential thinking ever in moral romanticism. His hierarchy is utterly inconsistent with Paul's notion of 'contentment' in Philippians 4:11-13 and with the idea of 'realization of self' and the 'subordinate goals of economic life' published in 1954 by Howard R Bowen in *Christian Values and Economic Life*. Maslow's hierarchy is ubiquitous in social science text books to this day despite its weak theoretical basis (observations of animals) and lack of empirical support.

Towards the end of the book, Brooks defines what he calls 'The Humility Code', a set of fourteen principles drawn from the lives of his historical figures. They include acknowledgement that we are 'flawed creatures', 'humility is the greatest virtue', 'pride is the central vice', 'character is built in the course of your inner confrontation', 'we are all ultimately saved by grace', and, my favourite, 'wisdom starts with epistemological modesty'. With respect to leadership, an academic and practical interest of mine, he says, 'The best leader ... realizes that he, like the people who he leads, is likely to be sometimes selfish, narrow-minded and self-deceiving. Therefore, he prefers arrangements that are low and steady to those that are lofty and heroic' (266).

Overall this book is engaging and provocative. I was frustrated, however, that Brooks never argues for the centrality of Christian faith in the development of character. He never alludes to the meta-narrative of the Bible and the fact that even the humility code cannot deal with the fallenness of humankind. Perhaps for this reason, he neglects to discuss the effect of 'the big me' on the Christian church, the two most important of which, in my opinion, are

the development of simplistic prosperity theology and the uncritical acceptance of Maslow's hierarchy in Christian thinking on counselling.

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**Business for the Common Good: A Christian Vision for the Marketplace**

**Kenman L. Wong and Scott B. Rae**

Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011

ISBN 978-0-8308-2816-6

Pb., pp 287, bibliog., index.

*Reviewed by Lyndon Drake, Chair of the WEA Council for Business and Theology*

Wong and Rae open this book, aimed at an informed but not technical audience, with a brief resumé of well-known instances of harm done to society by businesses: financial scandals, WorldCom, Enron, and the economic effects that were starting to be felt as the financial crisis took root in 2009 and 2010.

In response, the authors seek to provide a genuinely Christian response, targeted towards the transformation of the world through involvement in business. A strength is their acknowledgement of the reality of living in a broken world, even when Christian norms are clear. In particular, they point out that wisdom is needed to identify which steps towards a Christian ideal are in practice possible. 'Sometimes the best we can do is make a bad situation better or pursue the wisest (versus perfect or optimal) course of action.'

Methodologically, Wong and Rae acknowledge the hermeneutical difficulty of speaking about business when a modern business environment is not directly envisaged in Scripture. They propose

using a 'framework' approach, which they do not define in detail.

The first substantive chapter of the book focuses not on business specifically, but on the intrinsic value of work more generally. Wong and Rae provide a helpful survey of current theological reflection on work, with a strong affirmation of its intrinsic value derived from the creation mandate, as well as helpful points on the contingent positive effects of work. They touch on the idea of business as mission (BAM), although they engage more thoroughly with the BAM literature in the final chapter. Their primary metaphor for work is that of an 'altar', representing the offering of service to God through involvement in daily work.

They then move from this starting point in successive chapters to examine business as a place of personal spiritual formation (and conversely temptation); the issues of wealth, success, and ambition; business within the global economy; ethics in the workplace; leadership and management; marketing; stewardship and sustainability; and emerging directions in business.

These chapters have a mix of focus, but primarily engage with involvement in business at the individual level. The focus lifts to a systemic level primarily in Chapter 5, 'Business within the global economy'. Here, the main discussion is around globalisation and the liberalisation of trade. Wong and Rae present a balanced discussion, identifying key Christian values that can contribute to policy discussions. The other chapters follow a similar pattern, identifying Christian principles with reference to Scripture, and applying those to modern business situations individuals might encounter.

I have two minor criticisms. The first is that Wong and Rae lack precision in

their theological methodology, particularly when it comes to identifying the reason why a particular principle should be chosen. This is particularly evident in Chapter 5, where the prescription for engaging with the issues around globalisation and liberal trade policies look remarkably similar to the prescriptions one might find in a 'secular' economic text. As an example, they suggest that 'Christian love of neighbour would seem to imply support for fair representation of rule-making organizations', which is easy to agree with whether or not one shares the premise of 'Christian love of neighbour'. Perhaps, however, this just shows that Christian values are deeply embedded in western thought.

My second criticism is that most of the book is concerned with the place of the individual in business, and less on the systemic issues. There is only limited discussion of systemic issues around business in developed societies (compared with the discussion of globalisation), such as disintermediation, the agency problem, and modern ownership and liability structures. That is simply a choice of content, though, and highlights the need for more work on systemic issues rather than detracting from the overall excellence of what the authors have provided.

Wong and Rae have produced a warm, balanced book, engagingly illustrated with examples from the business lives of individuals and companies. They engage widely with both theological and business literature. It deserves a wide reading, especially among those Christians whose instincts or experience might lead them to doubt the place of business in Christian life at all—and many Christians in business can testify that the church often leaves them alienated. This book provides a necessary and helpful corrective to that widespread problem.



If Wong and Rae's message is heard by the global church, they will contribute to a real increase in participation in God's mission in the world through business activity.

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*Short reviews by Guest Editor, Lyndon Drake*

**Samuel Gregg, *Economic Thinking for the Theologically Minded* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2001) ISBN 0-7618-2096-5; Hb, pp 155.**

The basic premise of Samuel Gregg's book is that Christians receiving theological training often have a right concern for the alleviation of poverty in society. Seminaries do an excellent job of raising issues of justice and righteousness with their students. Where theologians often struggle, though, is in a basic understanding of the discipline of economics. This concise and readable book is intended to provide at least some remedy for that lack.

The book is organised in two parts. The first addresses general issues of ethics, economics, and institutions. The second part moves on to particular topics such as property, trade, value and price theory, and so on. A particularly helpful feature of this second part is the introduction to significant scholars and schools, including brief historical context and summary of subsequent influence. The whole book is written with simplicity, warmth, and a concern for Christian ethics that makes it commendable. If read widely, it would act as an excellent safeguard against the economic embarrassments occasionally uttered by well-meaning Christian public figures.

**Brian Griffiths, Robert A. Sirico, Norman Barry, and Frank Field, *Capitalism, Morality and Markets* (London: The Institute of Economic Affairs, 2001) ISBN 0-255-36496-2; Pb, pp 92**

This fascinating book represents an engaging discussion of moral and ethical issues from four eminent authors, engaging with their respective topics from a range of political viewpoints. The authors make two main contributions. The first is to make it evident that in contrast to popular caricature, Christians in corporate and public life have often given careful thought to the application of biblical principles to their work. Readers will not always agree with the authors' conclusions, but may well find their prior assumptions about the motives of those in business or public life challenged.

The second contribution is to provide a level of detail in ethical engagement with the capitalist system that is sometimes lacking in more scholarly theological work. Sweeping statements about the evils of capitalism are easy to make, and possibly rather enjoyable to write. But perhaps what is needed is more of what this book reflects: thoughtful, critical engagement with the very details of capitalism that provide both benefits and risks. When Brian Griffiths examines the corporation as a moral community, or Frank Field urges state intervention in retirement savings, they are doing public theology from a position of subject expertise that is rarely found in the theological guild.

Richard A. Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2009) ISBN 978-0-66423395-2; Pb, pp 194

Richard Horsley gives readers a vivid and passionate survey of the whole Bible in relation to economic rights. For Horsley, covenant is an important framework for understanding economic justice, which can be seen not only in the explicitly covenantal framework of the Hebrew Bible, but in the renewal of the covenant by Jesus.

Horsley is at his best when he shows us the ancient economic context for the Bible's testimony, and in highlighting the economic dimensions of the teachings of Jesus and Paul. The book does have two weaknesses which detract from the excellence of its historical-critical exegesis. The first is that Horsley writes with his eye mainly on the USA, and so his examples might not always travel well. This issue is compounded by the consistency with which Horsley sees corporations as the modern equivalent of the Israelite monarchy and the Roman imperium, when perhaps there might be room for also seeing modern political institutions as bearing some parallels. The second, in common with other works by Horsley, is that his valuable contribution in highlighting the economic dimensions of Jesus' teaching is sometimes marred by an overemphasis on economics to the exclusion of recognising non-economic elements. The book is iconoclastic in tone, and it is not always clear how the political conclusions drawn derive from the exegesis presented. Nevertheless, the biblical survey is so excellent and concise that the book should be read widely.

Paul Mills and Michael Schluter, *After Capitalism: Rethinking Economic Relationships* (Cambridge: Jubilee Centre, 2012) ISBN 9780948476211; Pb, pp 191

This book is a compilation of a number of essays published over several years. The essays cover a range of economic topics, united by a consistently Christian engagement with economic issues, and an emphasis on relationships as the key framework for Christian economic ethics. Mills and Schluter reach some of the same conclusions as some other writers, (such as Richard A. Horsley, *Covenant Economics: A Biblical Vision of Justice for All* [Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2009]), but they use a quite different methodology (this lack of methodological consensus is one of the challenges in Christian economic reflection) and provide a fresh and interesting approach to the market economy.

And where Horsley's economic and political conclusions arguably owe too much to socialist thinkers, Mills and Schluter are at pains to directly tie their social prescriptions to the explicit commands of the Bible. They are rightly cautious about excessive debt, and can show thoughtful readers of the Bible why this caution is a Christian concern.

The book suffers from lack of methodological rigour, though. It is hard to understand why the ban on charging interest on debt is so straightforwardly applied to a modern context when other commands with equal clarity in the legal codes are apparently not applicable. And the argument for relationship as the uniting theme of the Bible needs a more persuasive argument. Engagement with the scholarly literature in these areas would significantly improve the book.