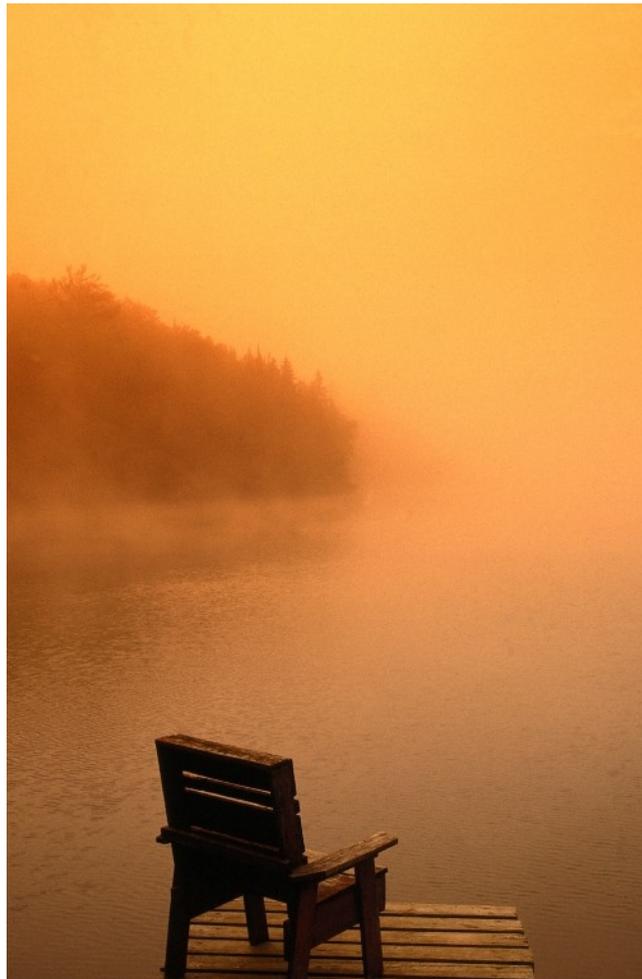


# THE MARKET, THE KINGDOM AND THE TERRORISTS

THE SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS OF OUR CURRENT GLOBAL DISORDER

BY JOHN EDMISTON



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## Introduction

The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in the USA shattered the peace of mind of the developed world. Finally things are striking back and we are vulnerable. Terrorists have proved that they can invade the West, get under our guard and strike at some of our most powerful institutions.

Christians in particular are asking a few good questions such as:

- Why are the terrorists doing this?
- Why is God allowing this?
- What is this leading to?
- What are some of the causes?
- How should Christians respond?

As an Australian missionary working in the Philippines I think I have tried to put the perspectives of the developed world, the developing world and the Scriptures together in one book to try and answer the above five questions and in particular to inform the Church's response to the crisis.

This is a book for Christians, while it contains some economics in its discussion of globalization and the causes of poverty it is not primarily an economic treatise. It is a pastoral treatise that is meant to guide the Church in her actions toward the world. As such it takes up the classical Christian themes of compassion for the poor, separation from worldliness, proclamation of the gospel, the doing of good, the coming of the Lord, and the prophetic calling of Christians in announcing the righteousness of God to the social structure to which he or she belongs.

To this extent it is quite a standard treatise yet in many other aspects it is quite provocative. The book develops its themes in four sections and also contains half a dozen short prophetic essays that illustrate the principles developed in the more discursive and analytical sections of the book. It is thus a rather strange mixture of the apocalyptic and the pedestrian. It tackles the reasons behind the current major spiritual disorders that afflict us and poison our world – Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism, selfish materialism, pride, injustice and violence.

One of its main themes is that of a dynamic tension between the Market and the Kingdom and how international trade is now, in essence, anti-Christian. I need to make it clear from the outset that "trade" and "business" are generally different. Trade is pure market activity – that is buying, selling, charging interest etc. Business tends to involve production of some sort. Businesses produce the product, which is then taken to the marketplace for sale, and it is the Market that can either make or break them. This Market has become dominant and in doing so, has become unjust.

I will argue that God's design for prosperity does not involve unjust speculation or the charging of high rates of interest or the manipulation of currencies. We will look at what Scripture calls "the power to make wealth" – the ability of the saint to create a righteous engine for wealth generation through the diligent application of specific and focused wisdom and knowledge to a productive economic end – in the context of community and just and fair relationships.

We will also look at the process of radicalization and see how people are being made increasingly angry by the unjust economic practices that come from globalization. Then we will analyze how

fundamentalist Islam proves a framework for a deadly reaction to economic injustice and helps turn anger into terrorism.

The Christian response to the economic challenge is twofold. Firstly it is to develop a proper Christian view of prosperity and to show how it can be achieved with justice and dignity so that we have an alternative to offer to the crass commercialism of globalization. Secondly the challenge is to develop how the Church can be a prophetic voice on economic issues and globalization. The the Christian response to radical Islam is dealt with and the dynamics of dealing with inter-religious peace-making with integrity. Muslims and Christians can never agree or unite but they can at least stop killing each other.

Throughout the book is a stern note of warning and in that sense the book may justly be called "prophetic". However I do not set times and dates for the Lord's return or engage in conspiracy theories. This book is a clear call to economic justice and to peace-making and to the development of a prosperous and effective Church that can engage the world in powerful and practical ways.

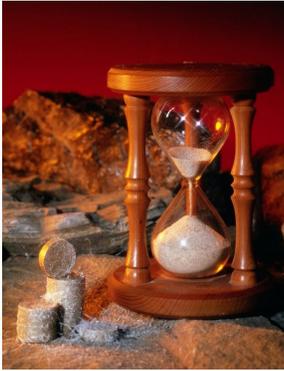
# Part One

## The Prophetic Perspective



In this section we will look at the interactions between globalization, unjust trade, terrorism and the kingdom of God from a prophetic perspective – that is in the light of God’s revelation concerning, justice, truth and His program of redemption. I will not be predicting the future in the sense of times, dates and events though I will say a little about where things are headed in the light of Scripture

## The Final Division



What will be the final division in history? Will it be Communist and capitalist? Will communism resurge and challenge democracy once more? Will it be Jew and Gentile? Will the Jews be all on one side and rest of the world on the other? Or will it be a North-South division with the Two-Thirds World on one side and the industrialized nations on the other?

I don't think it will be any of these divisions. The Jew and Gentile division was broken down in Christ, Communism is rapidly just becoming another political party and political philosophy, the North-South division is blurring more and more each year as China industrializes and country after country is admitted to the WTO. Rather I believe the final division of humanity will be between the Christians on one hand and the participants in vast corrupt global Market for souls and goods on the other.

This book of Revelation states that at the end there will be two groups of people, those that can "buy and sell" and who have the mark of the Beast and worship his idolatrous image, and Christians who refuse to worship the Beast or bear the mark and are thus excluded from the Market.

[Revelation 13:15-18 MKJV](#) (15) And there was given to it to give a spirit to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might both speak, and might cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. (16) And it causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark on their right hand, or in their foreheads, (17) *even that not any might buy or sell except those having the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of its name.* (18) Here is the wisdom. Let him having reason count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. And its number *is* six hundred *and* sixty-six.

Thus the whole of humanity will be divided into two neat groups, those who can "buy and sell" and participate in the Market, and those who cannot buy and sell because of their Christian faith.

Revelation then continues for six more chapters to outline the tensions between the Market and the Kingdom. It seems that at the end of history there will be on one hand an immense, corrupt, lawless global Market ruled by the Anti-Christ and centered on a wicked trading city that Scripture calls Babylon after the ancient city of that name; and on the other hand a lawful holy and righteous Kingdom of God.

Can we see any signs of this final great division in humanity emerging? If, at the end of history there are going to be two, and only two, main camps then each of these should be increasing in "space" while the others are slowly decreasing. Market forces should be gaining on one hand and Christian forces gaining on the other until they are the only two major forces left on the planet and are in open conflict.

If a global market is some day going to be the dominant socio-political reality then, even now, market forces should be getting stronger and stronger, materialism should be increasing, a global economy should be expanding in dominance and in power. Small nations should be terrified of strong market forces and multinationals, then larger and larger nations until governments hardly count. Economic gurus like Allan Greenspan should hold the power of a head of state of a middle

sized nation. There should be an irreversible triumph of the power of world trade. Is this happening? I think it is.

If on the other hand biblical Christianity is going to be the only alternative to aggressive global capitalism then it too should be increasing in global reach and in both spiritual and political power. There are certainly signs that this is happening – from new areas of missionary activity to Christian social and political activism.

If the Market is to increase on one hand and the Kingdom to increase on the other until they are the only two major forces on planet Earth then all other allegiances need to be decreasing in “market share” with some religions and belief systems disappearing almost entirely – and this is occurring also. For instance many tribal belief systems are either becoming secularized or becoming converted to Christ. At the end of history there will have to be only two Grand Allegiances – Money or Jesus, God or Mammon, the temporal or the eternal.

According to the Bible this final Babylonian market will not just be dominant, it will be idolatrous and lawless. It will be manifestly wicked. It will be so bad that to participate in it will be to lose one’s salvation.

Now world trade is not that bad yet. So if this is really going to happen then a change must be taking place. There must be an ongoing loss of ethics and of conscience in the market. Greed must gradually become the ultimate good. There should be a not so subtle contempt for the rule of law and a conscious ongoing attempt to evade the reach of law and governments. From tax evasion to income protection schemes to keeping two sets of books, there should be widespread evasion of all forms of regulation both divine and human.

Also this lawless environment will be ruled by the strong to the disadvantage of the weak. So the emerging World Market must make protecting the weak seem bad and anti-competitive or a restrictive trade practice. Profit must increasingly come before people and ethics. There should be a steady increase in the lawless and darker areas of trade – such as the drugs trade, illegal arms trade, sex trade, slave trade and illegal wildlife trade. These areas of criminality should prove strangely untouchable. This is already happening.

So on one side of the great divide will be a dominant, ruthless and lawless global economy. On the other side, wearing the white hats, will be a bunch of born-again Christians. They will be poor, persecuted, martyred but very loyal to Jesus.

At this time there will only be two main religions in the world, the idolatrous Beast religion and the Jesus religion. So if Revelation is right then fundamentalist Islam has to collapse at some point in the future. Muslims would never bow down to an idol and there is no indication of a third main faith in the Scriptures.

At the same time biblical Christianity should be growing, possibly numerically as well as in depth and strength and purity. All other systems should be weakening their hold on people. They will be swept before materialism or they will be converted to Christianity or weakened to the point of irrelevance. Tribal religions, shamanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and any other belief that makes itself “absolute” will all go one way or the other - to materialistic idolatry or to the Lord. One by one they will crumble, or they will become hardened and militant, and fight and fall. We have yet to see this but I believe the early signs are there.

If Christianity is to be left standing in the field while all other faith systems collapse or are severely weakened to the point of irrelevance then Christianity must find a resurgence in strength and distinctiveness. It must somehow be able to stand uncompromised by the world system. As other faiths are conquered by the dollar on one hand or the gospel on the other we should see a "century of mission", the gospel should be spreading and new groups should be claiming allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Allegiance to Jesus will take precedence to all other allegiances and Christians will discover what it means to be distinct from the world. Strength, power and authority will be rediscovered along with a love of the cross and the development of strong communities that can support believers in tough times.

Thus for this final division to occur two forces must sweep all before them – the Christian missionary with the gospel and the ruthless trader with money and guns. This has been happening for centuries and the East India Company with its opposition to missionaries probably understood this better than most. Since the earliest of colonial days the missionary and the trader have been the symbols of Empire but spiritually they have always been rivals. Where I was in Papua New Guinea the mission compound would be at one end of the village and there people would behave, at the other end would be the trade area with its bar and it would be considered the domain of darkness. For an interesting literary exploration of the darkness of colonial trade read Joseph Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness".

How bad will this be? Scripture says it will be very bad for a relatively brief period of time between three and a half and seven years depending on interpretations (probably three and a half years). During this time the Global Market will become openly and totally idolatrous and worship the Anti-Christ. The market will then give up any attempt to be just and fair and will be dominated by ruthless forces that will exclude Christians from being able to buy or sell.

The Beast, whoever he is, engages in enforced worship of an idol in his image. Worship of such an idol is of course forbidden to Christians. Those who refuse to do so are killed - so many Christians will become martyrs. Also people are to be marked with the name or number of the Beast as a sign of allegiance. Obviously Christians cannot wear a sign of the allegiance to the Anti-Christ. Elsewhere in Revelation it is made clear that this mark is totally forbidden to Christians and those who receive the mark forfeit any hope of eternal life while those who refuse it and suffer receive a great reward. (Revelation 14:9-11, 15:2, 16:2, 19:20, 20:4)

However only those who receive the mark can participate in the Market. The mark of the Beast puts you in the World Market but out of the Kingdom. On the other hand refusing the mark is part of being in the Kingdom but means you are unable to participate in the Market. At that point the Global Market and the Kingdom of God will be totally separate entities with the Global Market ruled by the Anti-Christ, and the Kingdom of God by Jesus Christ. If you are part of the Market, you will be excluded from the Kingdom. If you are part of the Kingdom, you will be unable to buy and sell and therefore not part of the Global Market. This separation will be both temporal and eternal. If you choose the idolatrous Global Market you will not have eternal life. If you want eternal life then you will be unable to be part of the Global Market. At that point Christians will be warned to flee the world economic system:

(Revelation 14:9-11 NKJV) Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, {10} he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the

cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. {11} "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

(Revelation 18:4-5 NKJV) And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. {5} "For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

Thus the final division in history will not be between Jew and Gentile or between Communist and Capitalist. The final division in history will be between Christians and Materialists, between God and Mammon, between those who are in Christ and those who are in Babylon.

### **The Present Situation**

The present situation is a prelude during which both the Market and the Kingdom are trying to rush toward their final destinies. The pieces are being positioned on the board and there are quite a few moves left to go. The antagonism between the Market and the Kingdom is not open yet, no Anti-Christ has emerged and the gospel has global reach but still has some way to go. The two great global systems of capital and religion are still overlapping. Churches invest in the market and people buy shares in Christian publishing companies. Billionaires go to church and denominational officials get MBA's. We are not yet at the end of history – but it is approaching.

The lawlessness of trade is increasing. The vigor of Christianity is also increasing. Christian denominations are among the main critics of globalization and the Market wants Sunday trading and disdains religious claims to holy times and places. The divorce is not yet final but the Market and the Kingdom are not talking to one another very much. What do stockbrokers have to say to theologians or theologians to stockbrokers?

This increasingly unjust world market is creating increasingly angry people who are the victims of that injustice. And those people are hijacking planes and blowing up buildings. The terrorists are the messengers, the "dark prophets" of a world that is being crushed by the excesses of globalization and which is sickened by the secular. They are trying to say to the Market, particularly that section of the market known as global trade, that it is unjust.

This book will examine how and why global trade is going wrong and how and why Muslims are being radicalized and becoming terrorists. Then it will look at how we as Christians can enter into the battle both for fair and just trade and for the creation of a peaceful world that is worth living in.

### **A Few Terms Defined**

To avoid confusion lets define a few terms to start with:

**The Market** is a *place of exchange* where things are bought, sold, and traded, where there is lending, money-changing, banking, investment and risk management and asset protection amongst other activities. In the Market the goods are *bought and sold*, not produced or consumed. The Market is not itself a producer or a consumer, the Market exists solely as a place of exchange between producers and consumers. The market is the shop, not the factory or the dinner table. The Market is supposed to be a righteous place of fair exchange. God's law for the Market is that it should be just and fair, that people should not exploit one another (Lev 19:13,

Ezekiel 22:13,27) and that the scales, balances and measures used should be honest (Deut 25:13-16). God wants people to get a fair and honest deal in the Market. When the Market operates according to His principles He is delighted when it is dishonest and predatory it is considered an abomination. (Proverbs 11:1 NKJV) Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, But a just weight is His delight.

There is some confusion over the difference between the Market and the business world. Honestly earning your living through hard work and diligence and selling a good product at a reasonable price is commended throughout the Scriptures. Business is good. However businesses have to sell their goods in the Market, which can make or break them. When the market becomes dishonest it exploits both producer and consumer alike. In a fallen world the Market is often exploitative and this book will maintain that that exploitation has become pervasive, sophisticated and international in scope. The targets of this book are the traders and merchants rather than the producers.

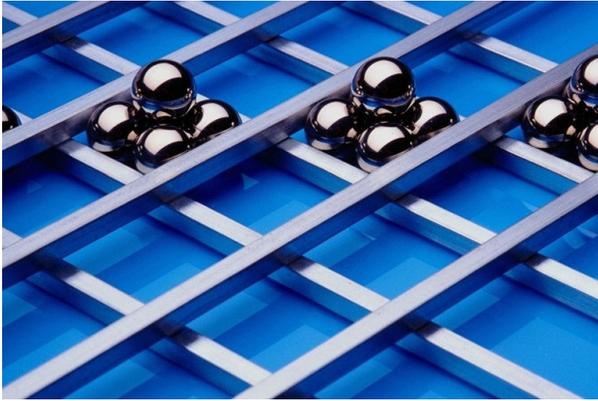
**The Kingdom Of God /Of Heaven:** Is the place where God rules, this may be in the heart of a Christian, in a local church that is obedient to God, in a bible study group or even in a neighborhood or city that experiences revival. The Kingdom as a whole is the sum total of all the born-again believers in the world; including those outside the established church and is inter-denominational and international in scope. It is primarily a spiritual Kingdom and Jesus said it was "not of this world". (John 18:36)

**The Terrorists:** According to Webster's Dictionary a terrorist is "an advocate or practitioner of terror as a means of coercion". In the context of this book I will be mainly referring to terrorist attacks on Western nations by Islamic extremists and the events following on from the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in the USA.

**Radicalization:** Is the rather long process a "normal" person takes in order to become extreme in their beliefs and perhaps to the point of becoming a terrorist. It can be briefly summarized in the "Four R's – Resolve, Resent, Reject, Revenge". That is - if an issue is not resolved it becomes a resentment which can then turn into rejection and eventually lead to the taking of revenge. I will argue that unjust economics has a lot to do with why people gradually become radicalized and angry towards the West.

**Injustice:** Occurs when something unfair is done, especially when a more powerful person does it to a less powerful person. Injustice is the absence of justice and a removal of legitimate rights by force. I will argue that this often happens unintentionally as well as intentionally. For instance poor communication can cause a bad decision to be made that causes an injustice to occur. Whether it is intentional or unintentional does not matter much to the person who is unjustly imprisoned, fired or executed or whose firm is sent into bankruptcy. To say that injustice is occurring is not the same as saying that the perpetrators of the injustice are very wicked people. They may just be careless, busy or ignorant of the consequences. I will argue that world trade is, often unintentionally and ignorantly, causing a lot of injustice.

## In The Beginning



### Cash And Creation

Money is a man-made artifact. It was not part of the original Creation and the whole natural order operates very well without it. The planets move and the birds sing without needing a credit card or a bank account and the horses run free without an investment strategy. The mouse eats without having to pay a bill and the monkeys groom each other for free. In Creation there is such a thing as a free lunch. Creation operates by symbiosis, ecology and the law of "giving and receiving". The eagle gives food to her young and the cow freely

gives milk to the calves and the hippo lets the tickbird have a meal on its back without asking for any rent. Fish get to swim in the ocean for free and birds fly without paying for air-tickets. Thus life in nature does not depend on money or on any system of trade. The thought of living without money is totally terrifying to most people yet tribal societies have operated without cash economies for thousands of years. So we see that the cash economy is not part of God's original design for humanity.

Furthermore everything eternal is both free and priceless. Salvation is free and priceless (Isaiah 55:1, Romans 6:23), the gift of the promised Holy Spirit cannot be bought with money (Acts 8:20), healing does not involve silver or gold (Acts 3:6), and neither do silver or gold purchase our priceless redemption (1Peter 1:18-19). Nothing of any spiritual worth can be bought for cash, and money is useless to save a person's soul (Psalm 49:7,8), in fact it is possible to gain the whole world and still lose one's soul. (Matthew 16:26)

Jesus calls money "an abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15) and maintains that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13) but must rather join Him in despising unrighteous Mammon (Luke 16:1-15). Hebrews 13:5 tells us to be free from the love of money, and Paul calls this sin (2 Timothy 3:2) "the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). A young Christian called Dolores once put it very simply "People become bad because they are always wanting more out of life. They are not content with what they have." The opposite of this is contentment, which puts a lid on our avarice. (Hebrews 13:2)

So we see that both nature and Heaven are cashless societies that do not engage in trade but rather operate on the principle of "giving and receiving" in love and trust and mutual symbiosis and synergy. In a perfect and loving world such as Heaven everyone holds everything in common and there is no need for money or a price mechanism or for trade.

However in the world we live in now there is private ownership and fallen motives and a limit must be set on our grasping things for ourselves and one of those limits is "having to pay for things" at a fair and appropriate price. Can you imagine what would happen if everything in Los Angeles was suddenly declared to be free? The long lines outside the BMW showroom and the fights to be first in the door to grab a car, the top fashion stores under siege, the quickly emptied supermarket shelves as people wheeled out trolley after trolley of groceries. The strong and those with handguns would seize everything and the weak would get little. It would quickly degenerate into the rule of might. Thus it is very important that everything have a price and that this price be

respected by law. This places a wise social constraint on the movement of property between persons. It ensures producers get fair value for their labour and in a just world, that consumers do not pay too much for their products.

This leads to the concept of a righteous Market.

### **A Righteous Market**

The cash economy allows large-scale exchange of goods and services and is behind much of modern life including such things as medical research and the supply of electricity and water. It would be a very difficult situation if there was no cash and we suddenly had to pay a chicken for every ten thousand gallons of water! God does not forbid the use of money, but rather warns sternly against the love of it. Therefore a righteous market system should be possible and would contain at least the following elements:

- Fair weights and measures, just balances, righteous exchange rates, what you pay for is what you get.
- Fair contracts – where inequalities of power are not abused in the making of the contract.
- Honesty at all levels - no covetousness, greed, corruption, bribery or deceit.
- Appropriate valuing of items according to their true quality and worth in the sight of God.
- Protection of the poor, access to justice and affordable means of redress.
- Limits on what could be bought and sold – e.g. no slave trade, sex trade, narcotics trade or trade in endangered species.

In a righteous market there would be no worrying about whether the used car really was owned by a little old lady who only drove it to church. In a righteous market narcotics would be given their true value in the eyes of God and would not sell at all. In a righteous market teachers and nurses would be paid higher than strippers and gamblers. The right price would be on the right items and the Word of God would be esteemed as precious and valuable.

Such a righteous market would enable the specialization of labor and be a great blessing to society. Generally the internal economies of the developed nations are highly regulated and while imperfect they do function as “more or less” righteous markets that generally enable social development and respect the rule of law and order. However there is a dark spiritual force that seeks to disrupt the righteous regulation of the market and which seeks deregulated (law-less) markets and it has largely succeeded in the arena of international trade.

### **The Devil**

The Devil is an entirely calculating, cunning and commercial being. The Bible calls him a merchant king, a prince of trade like the Prince of the biblical trading nation of Tyre (as we shall see in the following passage). Satan’s activities are rapacious and include stealing, killing and destroying (John 10:10) and unjust wheeling and dealing is part of the stock in trade of this Merchant King of darkness. In this role the Devil puts everything (power, sex, justice, truth) on sale that should not be for sale. He also grossly distorts the value of things so that which is base is made most costly and that which is noble is despised.

The Devil also appears to be very legalistic and deceives humanity into making binding compacts with him, which later turn out to be cruel sources of bondage. In classic literature the Devil is noted for “doing deals” and even buying people’s souls. Most temptations are deals - “if you commit sin X you will receive Y in return”. He even tried this with Jesus - when in exchange for worshipping the Devil Jesus would be given all the Kingdoms of the world and their glory (Matthew

4:1-11). Satan's marketing of the fruit of the Tree of The Knowledge of Good And Evil to Adam and Eve was classic salesmanship!

While in Heaven everything is free and in common, in Satan's kingdom absolutely everything must be paid for. And when you deal with the Devil you never stop paying – as any drug addict can tell you. There is no grace and there is no forgiveness of debt - you must pay the last cent and until then you are left in the clutches of the torturers. And Satan plays cold tough commercial hardball, he always takes and he always denies.

This demonic concept of "everything must be paid for" pervades pagan religions with their penances and sacrifices. Every increment of dark spiritual power requires some "price" in direct contrast to the Holy Spirit, which is given freely and abundantly. Salvation by works is just an extension of the "everything must be paid for" idea - as is the medieval Catholic concept of paying for "indulgences". But in Christ everything has been paid, the blood of Christ is sufficient and we now owe nothing, in a spiritual sense, at all. We are free, we are forgiven, our debt to God and to the Universe is cancelled and remitted.

Satan's other piece of logic is "everything can be bought" - men, women, governments, kings, justice, power, sex, knowledge, truth, love and so on. Satan places no limit on what he will buy and sell. At the fall of Babylon in chapter 18 of Revelation we see how far trade will have gone:

**Revelation 18:11-13 MKJV (11)** And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their cargo any more; **(12)** the cargo of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and every ivory vessel, and every vessel of very precious wood, and of bronze, and of iron, and of marble, **(13)** and cinnamon, and incenses, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

The Devil loves a cunning deal with a hidden catch and is the Prince of Trade – which he has thoroughly corrupted. This wheeling and dealing appears to have happened even in heaven and led to the fall of Satan. We will look at the following Prince of Tyre passage in some detail in this chapter so I will quote it in full:

(Ezekiel 28:1-19 NKJV) The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, {2} "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your heart is lifted up, And you say, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, In the midst of the seas,' Yet you are a man, and not a god, Though you set your heart as the heart of a god {3} (Behold, you are wiser than Daniel! There is no secret that can be hidden from you! {4} With your wisdom and your understanding You have gained riches for yourself, And gathered gold and silver into your treasuries; {5} By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your riches, And your heart is lifted up because of your riches)," {6} 'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god, {7} Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you, The most terrible of the nations; And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, And defile your splendor. {8} They shall throw you down into the Pit, And you shall die the death of the slain In the midst of the seas. {9} "Will you still say before him who slays you, 'I am a god'? But you shall be a man, and not a god, In the hand of him who slays you. {10} You shall die the death of the uncircumcised By the hand of aliens; For I have spoken," says the Lord GOD.'" {11} Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, {12} "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. {13} You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created. {14} "You were the anointed cherub

who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. {15} You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. {16} "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. {17} "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you. {18} "You defiled your sanctuaries By the multitude of your iniquities, By the iniquity of your trading; Therefore I brought fire from your midst; It devoured you, And I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you. {19} All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; You have become a horror, And shall be no more forever." "

Bible scholars tell us that this "prince of Tyre / king of Tyre" lament is a dual prophecy describing both the doom of an earthly king and the fall of Satan. The prince of Tyre is the human king who has become so proud that he has declared himself to be a god. (Ezek 28:1-10) Greater than this prince is a fallen spiritual being who was in Eden and who was even an anointed cherub in heaven. This being is called "the king of Tyre" and is Satan. (Ezek 28:11-19) The indications that more than just a human king is meant by the "king of Tyre" include references to being "in Eden the garden of God" to being "an anointed cherub" and to being a created spiritual being of perfection that dwelt "among the fiery stones" which are the same as the stones in the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:17) and the same as the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:20). The prince of Tyre is just a man but is empowered by the spiritual and fallen "king of Tyre" and has a proud, darkened and fallen spirituality. The trading nation and its prince are actually pawns of a deeper and more ominous being. A being that is doomed to become a horror but that will take many with it along the way.

What caused this being of perfection and beauty to become the horror and monstrosity that Satan is and to plunge to its doom of eternal perdition? Lets look at what the "king of Tyre" passage says:

1. **Trading led to a predatory inner nature:** "By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within."
2. **Which led to outward sin:** And you sinned.
3. **And a loss of holiness and a becoming secular and even profane:** Therefore I cast you out as a profane thing
4. **Pride and elitism:** Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty
5. **Corrupted wisdom:** You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor
6. **And a defiling of sacred places for the sake of trade:** You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading.
7. **Destruction arising from his own evil nature:** Therefore I brought fire from your midst; It devoured you, And I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you. {19} All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; You have become a horror, And shall be no more forever."

I will discuss each of this seven aspects in greater detail below:

**Trading led Satan to develop a predatory inner nature - "filled with violence within":**  
 The Hebrew word for violence is the Hebrew word "chamac" and here is how Strong's dictionary renders the word: *violence; by implication - wrong; by metonymy. - unjust gain:--cruel (-ty), damage, false, injustice, X oppressor, unrighteous, violence (against, done), violent (dealing), wrong..*

Thus the violence of trade that Satan was filled with within was unjust, cruel, damaging and oppressive and unrighteous. *Chamac* is the strong desire to wrong others for commercial gain. It is the nature of the cold, calculating and complete predator. *Chamac* is reflected in the nature of many of the metaphors that picture Satan as "the dragon", "the serpent" or "the wolf".

Satan is described as being created as the very seal of perfection, full of wisdom and beauty, and covered in precious stones. In the end he becomes a "horror". Something has changed. Trade has made him violent. This violence that got Satan thrown from heaven may well have been murder, for Jesus describes Satan as "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).

How does the simple act of buying and selling create violence? Why do traders talk about "making a killing?" Why is the environment ravaged in the name of profit? Because buying and selling is divorced from the real world and from compassion. To the trader the agonies of the child in the sweatshop do not matter – only the price and quality of the shoes. The shoes arrive in a 40ft container at a certain price and are shipped out to storeowners at another price. All the trader cares about is the difference between those two numbers. The child in the sweatshop is an abstract and "irrelevant" part of the equation. We will explore this at some depth in a later chapter.

### **Which led to outward sin:**

Whatever the nature of the violence was, we know that it caused Satan (probably then called Lucifer, Isaiah 14:12) to fall from heaven. The sinful heart resulted in sinful action and a rebellion so vast that many other angels fell with him (Revelation 12, 2 Peter 2:4).

(Isaiah 14:12-15 NKJV) "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! {13} For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; {14} I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' {15} Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

Trading success seems to have inspired Satan to stage an attempted coup against the "political power" of Heaven, Him who sits upon the Throne, that is God. Satan and his angels were variously imprisoned and demoted in the process. The details are obscure which is probably not a bad thing. What is clear though is that trading led to cruelty and violence and this violence then led to lawlessness and rebellion, which then led to judgment and inevitable destruction.

### **And a loss of holiness and a becoming secular and even profane:**

"Therefore I cast you out as a profane thing..." (Ezekiel 28:16) The holy guardian cherub had become unholy and unfit for heaven. Trade tends to profane things and Paul called money "filthy lucre" ( 1 Timothy 3:3,8 Titus 1:7) while Jesus calls it "unrighteous Mammon" (Luke 16:9-13). Holy things cannot be bought and God cannot be bribed. The holy and the commercial do not intersect at any point. This was part of Luther's tirade against indulgences and the concept that payment of money to the church could ensure future forgiveness of sins and even bring souls out of Purgatory. The Beatles got something right when they sang "Money Can't Buy Me Love". Love, peace, salvation, and joy cannot be bought and any attempt to commercialize spirituality is profanity. Satan decided to trade with the things of Heaven – and was hurled out for his profane ways. Trade profaned the temple in Jesus' day and is profaning sectors of the church today. When we look at the New Testament and those who "fell" from high positions of grace such as Judas, Ananias and Sapphira and Demas we find they all fell because money. Paul picks up this theme in his letter to Timothy:

(1 Timothy 6:9-10 NASB) But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. {10} For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.

### **Pride and elitism:**

*Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty* The word for beauty "*yapeh*" denotes a fitness of form and function and a outworking of the original created intention so that cows that are unblemished sleek and fat are "*yapeh*" along with beautiful women and handsome young men. It is "perfect beauty" or "flawless beauty" and the kind that easily leads to vanity as in Satan and later with Absalom, who in some respects could be said to be a "type" of Satan. Satan was covered in precious gems and perfect in beauty and wisdom and this seems to have seduced the other angels to follow him, even today Satan appears to be "an angel of light" ( 2 Corinthians 11:14). The corollary for the commercial world is that the riches of trade make people wealthy and "beautiful" and vain and this deep vanity is seductive to others but destructive in the end.

### **Corrupted wisdom:**

*You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor* (Ezekiel 28:17) This corrupted Satanic wisdom is described in the book of James:

(James 3:14-16 NASB) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. {15} This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. {16} For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

The wisdom of Satan consists of "looking after number one". It is described as bitterly jealous, selfishly ambitious, arrogant, lying against the truth, earthly, demonic and results in disorder and every evil thing. It is the wisdom of the wolf.

This is the wisdom of the person who pursues success at any price; of selfish ambition and "career above all", of office politics and ruthless international trade. This corrupted wisdom is a sort of "reverse enlightenment", a sense of "well this is how the world works" attitude. A prominent Australian politician noted for his ruthless pragmatism wrote a biography called "Anything It Takes" – and that just about sums it up.

Satan chose to be worldly wise rather than heavenly minded because he was chiefly concerned with his own glory and splendor. "*You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.*" (Ezek28:17). When the desire for human glory, corporate glory or national glory becomes paramount then ethics go out the window and cunning pragmatism enters in.

The psychology of world trade is about achieving splendor, beauty and a feeling of being amongst the very elite. While money is important, feeling that all doors open for you, that you are wanted, powerful, invited to the top gatherings and able to call the shots is a deep driving force among the wealthy. The desire for glory and splendor for one's self are a large part of what drives world trade. This deep and subtle distortion twists the nature of world trade and injects it with a dark and pragmatic wisdom that eventually results in "disorder and every evil thing" .

When people decide to frantically pursue their own greed, ambition and self-interest regardless of the welfare of others then disorder quickly sets into that community. World trade, based on earthly wisdom is thus demonic in its inner reasoning and assumptions.

**And a defiling of sacred places for the sake of trade:** *You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading. (Ezek 28:18)* The word for sanctuaries here is "*miqdash*" and is defined as "a consecrated thing or place, espec. a palace, sanctuary (whether of Jehovah or of idols) or asylum:--chapel, hallowed part, holy place, sanctuary." Satan seems to have had some holy places in heaven that he administered. Anyway he is accused of defiling them.

This besmirching and defiling of the holy is very much part of Satanic activity. Nothing is sacred to the purely commercial world of trade and this defiling through trade is seen in areas as diverse as the traders in the temple, churches becoming bingo halls, traders trying to enter Jerusalem on the Sabbath in Nehemiah's day, the push for Sunday trading, the prosperity gospel, the selling on indulgences, the trade in so called religious relics and the intrusion of crass commercialism into the gospel preaching of certain televangelists.

In Scripture there are a number of ways a sanctuary or temple can be "defiled". These include the presence of idols (Ezekiel 5:11), physical destruction (Psalms 74:7, 79:1), human sacrifice of children to the pagan god Molech (Leviticus 20:3, Ezekiel 23:37-40), profaning the Sabbath (Ezekiel 23:38), trade (Ezekiel 28:18), having priests who were foreigners, that is not of the covenant people (Ezekiel 44:7) [This would be the equivalent having a non-Christian pastor today.] Antiochus Epiphanes, the type of the Anti-Christ defiled the sanctuary by removing the daily sacrifices and setting up an image of Zeus (Daniel 11:31). Finally the church is defiled by false doctrine not founded on Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-17).

This defiling of sanctuaries is a common consequence of commercial activity. I once regularly preached at a lovely old church that was physically removed miles out of town because McDonalds wanted the prime corner block and the denominational hierarchy wanted the money. I was also a member of a Baptist church that appointed a pastor who was clearly unconverted simply because he was recommended by people of money and influence. Shameful idols are even erected by some businesses to placate local religious minorities and false doctrine based on selfish materialism is rampant in the pulpits of some churches.

During Catholic wedding services here in the Philippines the bride and groom are given coins called "arrastre" and told to use the coins "to purchase eternal life". In addition to this the wealthy can purchase masses that will assist their souls to move from Purgatory to Heaven while the poor have no such hope. This is a commercialization of salvation and a defiling of the sanctuary.

One of the great tasks of the Church is to preserve a true sense of that which is sacred and holy in the midst of a highly commercialized world. We need to have some things that are so precious that they are simply not for sale. Truth, justice, integrity, love, salvation and sex should never be sold.

This "defiling of the sanctuary" by commercial activity offends Christians, Jews and Muslims. The Sabbath is kept very strictly in some parts of Israel and buses traveling through orthodox Jewish neighborhoods on the Sabbath are stoned and in Islamic countries there is a strong feeling that Western influence is idolatrous and defiling to the extent that the USA, which is the source of so much of this defilement is seen as "The Great Satan".

But how does God feel? God is furious. Ezekiel says that this defilement of holy places by Satan was viewed as a "multitude of iniquities" and resulted Satan's judgment and fiery doom. If God judged an angel like this how much more will He judge us if we do the same?

**Which led to self-destruction that flowed from Lucifer's evil nature:**

(Ezekiel 28:18 NKJV) "You defiled your sanctuaries By the multitude of your iniquities, By the iniquity of your trading; Therefore I brought **fire from your midst**, It devoured you, And I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you.

"Iniquity" is a powerful word and is much more than mere "sin" or transgression. The word for iniquity is "*awon*" which is defined as perversity, i.e. (moral) evil:--fault, iniquity, mischief, punishment (of iniquity), sin.

Iniquity is a peculiarly perverse and twisted kind of sin that accumulates to the point where judgment is inevitable and doom is sure. It is like a bulge in a wall that steadily grows until the whole situation becomes unstable and those under the bulge are crushed to death. It is sin that crashes down like a landslide upon the sinners.

In this case iniquity results in a self-destructive fire (Ezekiel 28:18 NKJV... *Therefore I brought fire from your midst; It devoured you, And I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you.* The fire that will devour Satan will somehow be brought "from your midst". In a broader context world trade tends to reach a point where it self-destructs. Irresponsible tech stock booms go bust, junk bonds end up bankrupting those who buy them, and dishonest trade "burns" people. At various points, such as the Great Depression, the burning can become a wildfire. If world trade continues to be unjust it will "go up in smoke" and this indeed will be final fate of the unjust system of world trade that is centered in a city that the Bible calls Babylon. (Revelation 18:8-18)

Satan's control of world trade will only lead to a system that crashes and burns. If we let an unjust system prevail God will tear it down and we will lose our investment in it. In fact God tells us to flee the system of unjust trade: (Revelation 18:4 NKJV) And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

When Lot was heavily invested in Sodom he lost everything. His fortune, from the abundance of Sodom referred to earlier, literally 'went up in flames". He lost his goods, his wife, his sons-in-law and ended up committing incest with his daughters. Yet Scripture calls Lot a "righteous" man ( 2 Peter 2:7). Lot was what we would call a good Christian, with bad investments.

So we see that trade, though originally meant to teach people justice, responsibility and right values, has become a me-first scramble for wealth and privilege among the selfishly ambitious. We see that this perversion of the original purpose of trade was due to the trading activity of Satan and has passed to mankind through Satan being the "ruler of this world" and the "power that is at work in the sons of disobedience"(Ephesians 2:1-4).

International trading has now a deep warp in its nature so that it tends to be violent, predatory and cruel without any mercy on the poor or powerless. Trade now results in disorder and every evil thing and leads to the defilement of all that is holy and consequently is destined for a fiery doom.

## **A Brief Biblical History of Trade**

The biblical history of trade commences with Abraham being sold the cave of Macpelah at an inflated price to bury Sarah (Genesis 23:16) and wends its way through Ishmaelite slave traders (Genesis 37:28) and the centralization of Egypt as Joseph acquired all the lands of Egypt for Pharaoh by exploiting the poor during a severe drought (Genesis 47:20,21). There is the glory of Solomon's trading and the ships arriving every three years bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes and monkeys (1 Kings 10:22). Interestingly Solomon's trading income was 666 talents of gold! (Kings 10:14). Jehoshaphat tried to emulate this and lost his entire fleet of ships (1 Kings 22:48). Such impatient and wicked trade characterized the final corrupt days of the Northern Kingdom that Amos prophesied against it in absolute terms:

(Amos 8:4-7 NKJV) Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, And make the poor of the land fail, {5} Saying: "When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, Falsifying the scales by deceit, {6} That we may buy the poor for silver, And the needy for a pair of sandals; Even sell the bad wheat?" {7} The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: "Surely I will never forget any of their works.

By the time of Isaiah the merchants of Tyre were "princes" and "among the honourable of the earth. Wealth from trading was achieving social prominence for its possessors (Isaiah 23). By Nehemiah's day merchants were part of society and making repairs to the walls of Jerusalem. This reflects the fact that merchants and traders do achieve a lot of social good through philanthropic efforts. (Nehemiah 3:31,32) but by the end of the book they are back to trying to trade on the Sabbath and Nehemiah is threatening to lay hands on them! (Nehemiah 13:20).

Ezekiel calls Babylon "a land of merchants" with obvious derision (Ezek 16:29, 17:4) and prophesies against the trading activities of Tyre in chapters 27 & 28. The long list of traded wares in chapter 27 shows a worldwide trading nation with a wide assortment of goods from luxury items such as gold, silver and spices to more common items such as saddles and the Greeks traded "human lives and bronze" with Tyre. (Ezek 27:13) The final days of Nineveh were also characterized by numerous merchants, predatory practices and unjust trade as Nahum prophesies the gain would be temporary and all would be lost as the Babylonians would swarm on Nineveh like locusts:

(Nahum 3:16 NKJV) You have multiplied your merchants more than the stars of heaven. The locust plunders and flies away.

The post-exilic prophet Zephaniah predicts that the doom of the merchants will come about shortly before the "great and terrible day of the Lord"

(Zephaniah 1:8-18 NKJV) "...That I will punish the princes and the king's children, And all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. ...Who fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. ... For all the merchant people are cut down; All those who handle money are cut off. ...And punish the men Who are settled in complacency, Who say in their heart, 'The LORD will not do good, Nor will He do evil.' {13} Therefore their goods shall become booty, And their houses a desolation; ...The great day of the LORD is near; It is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out. {18} Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the Lord's wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.

In the New Testament Jesus says that the temple has become a "house of merchandise" (John 2:16) and drives out the traders from the sacred place. Yet He is not entirely contemptuous of merchants using their trading ability as a parallel to the building up of spiritual riches and seeking after truth (Matthew 13:45, 25:16). Trade and idolatry are linked especially via the work of the

goldsmiths, silversmiths and coppersmiths who made the idols. They were responsible for the riot in Ephesus and for doing Paul and his co-workers "much harm" (Acts 19:24-27, 2 Timothy 4:14). Finally in Revelation 18 the final vast trading empire meets its doom as the trading world staggers to its drunken, riotous and bloody end. So we see that Nineveh, Tyre, Sidon, Babylon, and both the Northern and Southern kingdoms were steeped in unjust trade just prior to being finally judged by God and that prior to the final judgment of God unjust trade will fill the entire earth.

This should give us pause.

## What I Am Saying And What I Am Not Saying



Its easy for some people to get the wrong idea when I talk about world trade being run by Satan. I am not an advocate of conspiracy theories and I do not believe that all traders are Satanists or anything even close to that. However I do believe that unregulated (law-less) international trade is becoming increasingly Satanic in nature even if the participants are unaware of this.

We are talking about the lives of millions of children being sacrificed by heartless decisions for corporate profits, of an 8 year child making your running shoes in a sweatshop in Asia or the women who are kidnapped, raped and forced into prostitution. Think of the people dying from mercury poisoning or asbestos poisoning years after the companies involved knew their products were unsafe and yet they still refused to stop dumping mercury or producing asbestos sheeting. Think of all the people burned to death in exploding cars or killed because their tires were faulty and the manufacturer knew all along that this was going to be the case. Think of the grinding poverty and utter desperation in Asian nations affected by the currency crisis or of sweat-stained gold miners in South Africa who livelihoods go up and down as gold is speculated on by brokers thousands of miles away. This isn't accidental, its evil and its Satanic.

By Satanic I mean a lot more than merely demonic and I mean a lot more than just "bad" or "in error". By Satanic I mean that Satan himself is deeply concerned with and runs world trade even though many of the participants are completely and utterly oblivious to this. Trade is where the will of Satan is done on earth. Trade is where his lust and greed and his voracious appetite for adulation are best satisfied. Through trade he "deceives the kings of the earth".

When Satan wants to deceive kings and presidents and prime ministers he doesn't go personally to them with his hoofs and horns and a pitchfork; neither does he write a book full of heretical doctrine which they probably don't have the time or interest to read; instead the Devil uses money and he traps them into binding trade agreements. He dazzles them with profits, and visions of happy voters, and the illusions of material prosperity; after all -"It's the economy, stupid."

Probably the clearest illustration of this is "gold rush fever" as in Edgar Allen Poe's tale "The Gold Bug". You have probably read about the murders, lawlessness and crime that accompany a gold rush and how people leave good jobs and families to go and pan for gold. You will have learned how miners kill each other over a nugget or a claim. Outside observers are puzzled at this "gold madness" that seems to turn otherwise decent people into desperate criminals and the church always bemoans the lawlessness. Few people understand that this is not just rational or emotional but spiritual. Gold rush fever is a pure spirit of Satanic materialism. This spirit of materialism reorients the value system of people caught up under its influence. There is a noticeable abandonment of ethics and morality. Drunkenness, prostitution, gambling and murder become normal and theft is seen as the greatest wrong of all. All that matters is matter – in this case gold. Gold has become an idol, which is worshipped by that mining community, and this total focus on material prosperity drives out all spiritual values. This moral vacuum results in a general lack of restraint, which manifests as crime and havoc. Satan is attempting to create this wild and lawless, materialistic and idolatrous "gold rush" mentality on a global scale. He wants the world fixated on

fast money, desperate for a profit and abandoning all ethics and morality to do so. He wants a world that has complete disregard for God and total regard for Mammon.

### **Productive Business Vs Exploitative Trade**

I am not opposed to normal, good honest business activity. By secular profession I am a careers consultant and a strong advocate of business and entrepreneurship. I train executives in EQ skills, leadership skills and take career options seminars. I believe in business, I have owned a business and I enjoy business. However my primary motive for being a careers consultant is because I enjoy seeing lives transformed at the end of the day. I am not in it "just for the money".

Surveys show that 80% of people in business are like me – they work because they believe in what they are doing and the money is of secondary importance. Somewhere in a long forgotten business book I read a quote that went something like this: "To a business money is like oxygen, you die pretty quickly without it, but no-one lives just to breathe."

For most people running a local garage or corner store, or managing a private school or farming potatoes in Idaho, "money is like oxygen" is a pretty good summary of how they feel. They are good ordinary honest folk that like fixing cars, selling groceries, delivering first class education or growing potatoes but they also have kids to feed and educate and bills to pay so they aren't going to do it for free. They need to run their businesses well and turn over a decent profit but if you said to them "You are just in this for the money" they would be grievously insulted.

However if you said to a currency trader "You are just in this for the money" he would probably reply: "What else is there?" or "That's the bottom line in this business". It's a different world, a totally and utterly materialistic world. A world where what you do does not teach kids or grow potatoes or fix cars or help families buy their groceries; a world in which you do not deliver a product of any sort. Where people just invest. Where traders buy and sell on the basis of facts and figures without any thought of even the most fundamental moral consequences.

The key difference between business and trade is production. There are many human activities in a good business – planning, design, research and development, construction, quality control, marketing, human resources and so forth. These activities call forth our intelligence and ingenuity and compassion – whether the business is education, health care, or even oil. There are seismologists finding out about rock strata, biologists looking down microscopes and chemists refining products. In a good productive business we grow as human beings and the business provides jobs, stretches our abilities and invents new methods and products for the development of culture and society. ***Thus productive business involves the systematic use of our human wisdom and intelligence for good, useful and productive ends that enhance the community as a whole.***

On the other hand the market really has only one activity – valuing, which is then subdivided into buying and selling. It has no beneficial by-products (as the space program has) no-one says The New York Stock Exchange invented silicone or the NASDAQ developed a better cancer cure. Trade just exchanges value. Trade asks one simple question over and over "What can I get for this?" It starts with baseball cards and ends up with options, stocks and shares. Trade should exchange value fairly and righteously. But trade as we have it now, in current practice, has become predatory and dominant. Trade now often undermines production and often results in the destruction of businesses and the loss of jobs.

***Thus trade has become the use of human wisdom solely for personal gain and independently of all other considerations – including in many cases even the rule of law.***

Thus the difference between productive business and exploitative trade is how we use our God-given wisdom and intelligence. And this is a critical spiritual factor. Do I use my intelligence for productive constructive ends, for God and for others, or do I use it solely for my own selfish and materialistic ends? The gold rush mentality is the pursuit of wealth above all other good things. Our intelligence and wisdom is the core of our soul and the basis of our personhood. If this most precious part of us is devoted to covetousness we have become idolaters.

### **Morals and Mammon**

Morality is not just a bunch of rules cooked up by a bitter spinsters intent on making sure no-one has any fun! Basic morality is about justice and justice is not intended as a restriction on free trade - it is intended as a restriction on crime. If justice gets in your way – it is because you are a criminal.

So as I talk about world trade being Satanic please remember I am not talking about normal business. I am talking about the frenzied, amoral, gold-rush, speculative mentality of pure market activity divorced from actual production - the “of course we are just in it for the money” mentality.

### **Uneasy Consciences**

There is a deep unease about where the markets are taking the world and this unease is being felt even by those who are most a part of the market system. Even George Soros has expressed strong reservations about the system he is part of and become a trenchant critic of the excesses of globalization. Impressed by the work of Karl Popper he critiques the markets as being excessively individualistic and laissez-faire and having given way to social Darwinism and predatory practices. In his 1998 article “Towards The Global Society” he starts off by saying that the current economic practices and theories have led to unequal distribution of wealth, to market instability, and has created conditions for the unregulated rise of monopolies and oligopolies, as well as undermining the viability and social and economic roles of government.

He then goes on to say:

*This brings me to the most nebulous problem area, the question of values and social cohesion. Every society needs some shared values to hold it together. Market values on their own cannot serve that purpose, because they reflect only what one market participant is willing to pay another in a free exchange. Markets reduce everything, including human beings (labor) and nature (land), to commodities. **We can have a market economy but we cannot have a market society.** In addition to markets, society needs institutions to serve such social goals as political freedom and social justice. There are such institutions in individual countries, but not in the global society. The development of a global society has lagged behind the growth of a global economy. Unless the gap is closed, the global capitalist system will not survive. When I speak of a global society, I do not mean a global state. States are notoriously imperfect even at the national level. We need to find new solutions for a novel situation, although this is not the first time that a global capitalist system has come into being. Similar conditions prevailed at the turn of the century. Then the global capitalist system was held together by the imperial powers. Eventually, it was destroyed by a conflict between those powers. But the days of the empires are gone. For the current global capitalist system to survive, it must satisfy the needs and aspirations of its participants.*

This gap between the market economy and the market society is what this book is trying to address, but from a spiritual and biblical perspective. We are looking at a wider set of forces than economists do. Later we will spend a whole section looking at why decent people in good

companies make terrible decisions and why philosophers and deeply philanthropic people like George Soros are still enmeshed in a system that causes untold suffering. The system itself is distorted from below. There is a serious and deep twist put into it by Satan, and while God has not yet given up on the market, and the silver and gold are still His, the market is difficult and rebellious.

Is it really that bad? Lets look at some statistics from the website [www.globalissues.org](http://www.globalissues.org) the references backing up these statistics are also given there:

Half the world -- nearly three billion people -- live on less than two dollars a day. <sup>1</sup>

The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the poorest 48 nations (i.e. a quarter of the world's countries) is less than the wealth of the world's three richest people combined. <sup>2</sup>

Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names. <sup>3</sup>

Less than one per cent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000 and yet it didn't happen. <sup>4</sup>

51 percent of the world's 100 hundred wealthiest bodies are owned by corporations. <sup>5</sup>

The wealthiest nation on Earth has the widest gap between rich and poor of any industrialized nation. <sup>6</sup>

The poorer the country, the more likely it is that debt repayments are being extracted directly from people who neither contracted the loans nor received any of the money. <sup>7</sup>

20% of the population in the developed nations, consume 86% of the worlds goods. <sup>8</sup>

The top fifth of the world's people in the richest countries enjoy 82% of the expanding export trade and 68% of foreign direct investment -- the bottom fifth, barely more than 1%. <sup>9</sup>

In 1960, the 20% of the world's people in the richest countries had 30 times the income of the poorest 20% -- in 1997, 74 times as much. <sup>10</sup>

An analysis of long-term trends shows the distance between the richest and poorest countries was about :

3 to 1	in 1820
11 to 1	in 1913
35 to 1	in 1950
44 to 1	in 1973
72 to 1	in 1992

"The lives of 1.7 million children will be needlessly lost this year [2000] because world governments have failed to reduce poverty levels" <sup>12</sup>

The developing world now spends \$13 on debt repayment for every \$1 it receives in grants. <sup>13</sup>

A few hundred millionaires now own as much wealth as the world's poorest 2.5 billion people. <sup>14</sup>

"The 48 poorest countries account for less than 0.4 per cent of global exports." <sup>15</sup>

"The combined wealth of the world's 200 richest people hit \$1 trillion in 1999; the combined incomes of the 582 million people living in the 43 least developed countries is \$146 billion." <sup>16</sup>

"Of all human rights failures today, those in economic and social areas affect by far the larger number and are the most widespread across the world's nations and large numbers of people." <sup>17</sup>

"Approximately 790 million people in the developing world are still chronically undernourished, almost two-thirds of whom reside in Asia and the Pacific" <sup>18</sup>

"7 Million children die each year as a result of the debt crisis. 8525038 children have died since the start of the year 2000 [as of March 24, 2001]." <sup>19</sup>

For economic growth and almost all of the other indicators, the last 20 years [of the current form of globalization, from 1980 - 2000] have shown a very clear decline in progress as compared with the previous two decades [1960 - 1980]. For each indicator, countries were divided into five roughly equal groups, according to what level the countries had achieved by the start of the period (1960 or 1980). Among the findings:

- Growth: The fall in economic growth rates was most pronounced and across the board for all groups or countries.
- Life Expectancy: Progress in life expectancy was also reduced for 4 out of the 5 groups of countries, with the exception of the highest group (life expectancy 69-76 years).
- Infant and Child Mortality: Progress in reducing infant mortality was also considerably slower during the period of globalization (1980-1998) than over the previous two decades.
- Education and literacy: Progress in education also slowed during the period of globalization.

As I write this chapter, world events this week confirm the above statistics:

- A contract for \$200 billion USD was awarded to Lockheed for the manufacture of the Strike Fighter jet. Given that the combined GDP of the 43 poorest nations is \$146 billion this contract is a HUGE amount of money. Given that over a billion people live on less than \$1 a day this contract could have fed all those 1.3 billion people for 5 months. Instead it will go largely into the pockets of a few huge companies and generate just 8000 jobs over 30 years.
- Three hundred and seventy Middle-Eastern refugees (including Afghans) drown trying to reach Australia as a part of a people-smuggling racket.
- The Taliban government of Afghanistan is confirmed as playing an active part in the world drug trade and supplies 80% of the world's opium – from which heroin is made.
- Statistics came out here in the Philippines saying that forty percent of the population live in poverty and 27% live in the deepest form of poverty known as "absolute poverty".
- The International Labor Organization says that child prostitution constitutes between 14-16% of the GDP of Thailand.

Just this weeks events illustrate where the money is going, and where it is NOT going. They illustrate how desperate poverty connects with drug trafficking and people smuggling, which then connect with terrorism in Afghanistan. There is something deeply wrong, and it's deliberately wrong, but there is no one person who forces it to go wrong. It's a deep perverse warp in the way money flows in world trade. When this warp becomes too bad and the iniquities too deep God sends His prophets and gives a chance for repentance, if they are ignored – as we will see in the section on "The Messengers", judgment follows. Meanwhile we shall take a look at Trade and the Christian.

# Trade And The Christian



Most systematic theologies don't discuss money or markets but they are an urgent and pressing theological issue, and with over one hundred New Testament references to money and wealth it makes up a fair percentage of the teaching, especially in places like the Sermon On The Mount and 1 Timothy.

## For The Love Of Money

Being eager to be rich and loving money are both forbidden for Christians yet imagine someone trying to pursue trade who was not at all eager to be rich and was completely without any love for money. It would be difficult, if not impossible. Being a successful trader means being very eager to get rich, its almost part of the job description. But the Scriptures say:

(1 Tim 6:6-10 NRSV) Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

These verses tell us that a Christian is to be godly and content, they are not to "to be eager to be rich" or to "love money" and that these attitudes are spiritually destructive. The Psalmist King David, who was a king and rich and elite saw how riches affected those around him. David warns that riches create a feeling of "high estate" which is delusory and intoxicating.

(Psalm 62:9,10 NRSV) Those of low estate are but a breath, those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath. Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

For David riches did not make the person. No matter how rich they were "in the balances they go up" – when weighed by God they had little mass, little substance, in fact they were "lighter than a breath". Wealth and the love of money cannot make a person great but they can lead people far from God so they are, in Paul's words, "pierced with many a pang".

Covetousness is the sweaty scheming that goes on to acquire someone else's goods cheaply or for free. It is at the very heart of successful trading and underlies many of the "clever" take-over bids. It is forbidden in both Old and New Testaments (Exodus 20:17, Ephesians 5:3-5) and greatly erodes the spiritual sensitivity of the person so that they "cannot enter the Kingdom of God."

[Ephesians 5:5 MKJV](#) For you know this, that no fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous *one* (who is an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Furthermore Jesus expressly forbids the accumulation of wealth:

[Matthew 6:19-21 MKJV](#) Do not lay up treasures on earth for yourselves, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. (20) But lay up treasures in Heaven for yourselves, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

## **Trade and Our Personal Values**

The market places minimal value on the internal life of the person, or on the eternal, the sacred or the ethical aspects of life, instead trading conforms our minds to value only the material, the profitable and the measurable. It is as if only matter matters.

When only matter matters then God, who is Spirit, is automatically excluded. The knowledge of God is thus reduced to being an inconvenient ethical restraint on making a dollar. When the knowledge of God is minimized and marginalized, and material things are the source of personal meaning and value, then people "have exchanged the truth of God for the lie"; and God's judgment is upon them. (Romans 1:18-31)

Trade as it is practiced today will not stop to worship God and seeks to trade on Sundays and even in church. It seeks to be without any external restraint by religion and is therefore profane and without a proper respectful sense of the holy. This is hardly a modern problem. Nehemiah had trouble with traders trying to enter Jerusalem on the Sabbath and had to threaten to lay hands on them (Nehemiah 13:20,21) and Jesus had to clear them out of the temple with a whip (John 2:14-16).

By its nature trade makes money the guiding rule. The expression "the bottom line" indicates that when push comes to shove its money that counts, that the bottom line is making a profit and that requires "tough decisions". Now making "tough business decisions" is necessary, even pastors have to make tough calls. What is wrong is the basis on which those decisions are made.

If money is the final criterion or even in some cases the only criterion then it has become supreme. It has become a demi-god, and an arbiter of human behavior. In the more iniquitous areas of trade financial considerations outweigh respect for the laws of the land and the will of God. When trade places financial gain above the laws of the land, it is lawless. And when trade places financial gain above the will of God, it is rebellious. And when trade sees money as the one good thing to be desired, it has become idolatrous.

Over the last few decades profit has come to outweigh all other reasons for corporate promotion such as being loyal or godly. Trade operates in an atmosphere of competition and the perfect trader is "highly competitive" and frequently ruthless. To be called "a complete predator" is actually a compliment in some circles. To say that this is contrary to Christian faith and practice is an understatement!

Firms and even societies have been organized around "the doctrine of economic rationalism" which basically just says that the only reason for anything is economic prosperity. It has become a kind of razor slashing away at "excess fat" (such as faithful employees) and phrases such as "user pays", "lean and mean" and "downsizing", have become a dreaded part of common parlance.

The problems with economic rationalism are many. Firstly it is manifestly unethical and unmerciful with little regard for covenant relationships such as workplace agreements or election promises.

Secondly it reduces a society to its economy, an attitude that is increasingly coming under fire.

Thirdly it is actually basically an error in logic and judgment known as a Procrustean bed. Procrustes was a rather nasty legendary Greek tyrant who only had one bed, which all visitors had to use. The bits of the person that hung over the bed were chopped off, and the bits that were too

short were stretched to fit. Economic rationalism tries to make something as complex as a nation or a firm fit into a profit and loss balance sheet. It chops off some things that later turn out to have been rather essential and grossly distorts others into the perfect economic shape. Thus economic rationalism is an unethical, unmerciful and illogical form of tyranny.

Money has a spiritual quality about it and tries to assert that it is of ultimate importance and that financial considerations outweigh all others. To a modern materialist to lose your possessions is to "lose everything". I have worked professionally in the area of counseling, career guidance and human resources and seen first hand the commodification of labour, the temporary contracts, and the measuring of human beings in terms of their "value to the market".

Civilizations dominated by trade and commerce are universally condemned in Scripture. They include the Ishmaelite traders that bought Joseph, and Tyre and Babylon. All these are used as metaphors for the World. As part of the judgments on Tyre and Babylon they are called "the nation of trade" (Ezekiel 16:29, 27:14ff.) Sodom and Gomorrah were rich civilizations condemned to destruction for their neglect of the poor and their haughty attitude towards God.

(Ezekiel 16:48-50 NKJV) "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done. {49} "Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. {50} "And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.

Trade prospers those who are ruthless (Proverbs 11:16) and leads to a belief that "everything has a price tag" and can be bought including "the souls of men". (Revelation 18:11-13) This arrogant ruthlessness results in an attitude of boastfulness and independence from God (James 4:13-17) and produces a person whose security is in their riches rather than in God. (Isaiah 47:8-10, Ezek 28:5) This corrupted even "the guardian cherub" Satan and caused his fall from heaven because (Ezek 28:16 NKJV) "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned;..."

This ruthless aspect of trade can especially be seen in the misery caused by currency trading and the results of the Asian economic crisis. According to the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahatir, ninety-five percent of world trade is the trade in money - only 5% is in goods and services. I also confirmed this extraordinary statistic by visiting Cook's website (Cook's is a main player in the currency trade.) This huge trade can devalue a small nation's currency overnight and cause numerous bankruptcies and untold poverty and hardships yet the people who make these decisions are simply making a heartless speculative profit from currency fluctuations.

### **Trade, Prosperity and Contentment**

Trade - as in the pure buying and selling of goods, stocks and shares or money creates nothing. It does not even create wealth but simply redistributes into the hands of the rich and powerful. God's created order for mankind is productive labour that participates in His governing of Creation. Work that benefits neither the body nor the soul and only blesses the bank accounts of the already rich is not His plan for the saints. The Kingdom runs on the service motive not the profit motive that runs trading empires. A valid business serves people and meets needs for food, clothing and actual products. Pure trading such as money exchange and share trading is not aimed at genuinely serving anyone or meeting real human needs but is deeply selfish and avaricious. Neither is it spiritually desirable to generate avarice and covetousness yet trade could barely function if everyone was content with what they had.

Advertising aims to arouse the desire to purchase and produce a large number of people who are increasingly acquisitive in nature. To do this it attaches status and meaning in life to certain products investing them at times with almost religious significance. Contrary to this Christian discipleship involves renunciation of the world and the "boastful pride of life" and cannot co-exist with an acquisitive spirit or one that greatly values possessions. Jesus teaches that it is harder for a rich man to be saved than a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. (1 John 2:15-17, Matthew 19:19-24).

### **Trade and Spirituality**

Spiritual heroes in the Bible come from a wide range of occupations such as fishermen, warriors, shepherds and priests – even prostitutes! But despite the multitude of Jews who were merchants not a single trader became a prophet or took up any role of great spiritual significance. Jesus plainly taught that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Matthew 6:19-34) and the merchants are frequently the targets of prophets such as Isaiah and Ezekiel (Is 22:1-4, Ezekiel 27:13-36, Proverbs 11:1)

The conflict between the "market mentality" and the Kingdom is seen in Jesus' expulsion of the traders from the Temple precincts. He calls the traders a "den of robbers". (Matt 21:13, Mk 11:17, Lk 19:46) Trade has no sense of the sacred and wishes to trade on the Sabbath (invasion of sacred time) and in the Temple precincts (invasion of sacred space). It covets any time or space given over to God. (Nehemiah 13:15, Matt 21:13)

The market mentality causes discriminations in the body of Christ based on wealth. (James 2:1-17) The rich were the persecutors of the church. (Jms 2:6,7) When the Church has embraced trade and prosperity it has always gone into rapid decline - from Laodecia onwards. (Rev 3:15-20) This is because it says in its heart "I am become rich and need nothing". (Rev 3:17) James goes so far as to say that if you are a friend of the world you are an enemy of God. (James 4:4) .

Trade marginalises Christ, Christians and the gospel. As we have seen Christian virtues are ridiculed as "uncompetitive". In the modern temples of Mammon - shopping centers, banks, stock exchanges etc. the atmosphere is purged completely of the gospel and of all traces of God while accepting paganism and pornography. Thus the Market rejects the Kingdom. The final Babylon of Revelation is a vast trading empire. (Revelation 18:13-15) and as we saw in earlier chapters the ultimate decision in the end times will be a tough choice - to be "a part of the Market or a part of the Kingdom" (Rev. 13:16-18)

All this is to say as the "market" metaphor rapidly becomes the dominant metaphor in society and wealth, not character, the sole measure of social status, then faithfulness, justice and truth are disappearing from the workplace.

As they disappear from the workplace they also disappear from the home and from friendships and as Scripture says "the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12). Increasingly people are only being treated decently if it is profitable to do so and this is being viewed as "wisdom".

A great darkness is taking over our society and intruding into the Church. It is a darkness that views saintliness as folly, character as old-fashioned and mercy as a flaw.

## **The Heart of Darkness**

Joseph Conrad in his novel "The Heart of Darkness" examines the relationship between trade and darkness - the darkness of corporate London and the darkness of unregulated trading in "darkest Africa" - trade at its rawest and most corrupt, trade let go as far as it wanted to.

In the climax of the book the dying trader in Africa peers into his soul and cries "the horror, the horror". The thesis of the book is that trade is essentially "the heart of darkness". More recently the modern American philosopher Robert Pirsig (author of Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance) wrote a second book called "Lila - An Exploration Into Morals". Though not a Christian and certainly only vaguely aware of "principalities and powers" he describes "the spirit of trade" dominating New York in vivid detail. He calls it "the Giant"

*"That is what the Giant really does. It converts accumulated biological energy into forms that serve itself. ...Phaedrus had suddenly seen a tentacle of the Giant reaching out and he was the only one who could see it. ...So here was this Giant, this nameless, faceless system reaching out for him, ready to devour him and digest him. It would use his energy to grow stronger and stronger throughout his life while he grew older and weaker until, when he was no longer of much use, it would excrete him and find another younger person full of energy to take his place and do the same thing all over again."*

Pirsig sees New York and its culture as predatory on those who participate in it. The city grows but it uses up the people that live there. The Bulletin magazine (in Australia) ran an article called "the Golden Treadmill" which talked about how highly paid corporate executives were living a life of fear and insecurity, long hours and little family life if any, on a "golden treadmill" - well paid but being devoured and used up. "The Giant" of Robert Pirsig's New York is alive and well everywhere.

Trade does not readily accept moral restraint and when trade is let go without effective restraint - as it was during the colonial era and in many Third World countries today great abominations are committed - the quite recent systematic slaughter of tribes in the Amazon opposed to the development of their rainforests being just one example. The Chinese opium wars for British control of the drug trade, and the Americans using gunships to open up Japanese ports for trade in the 1800's is another.

It could be said that all human activities can go wrong and have their dark side and to some extent that is true. However even large areas of human endeavour such as sport, education, entertainment and science do not commit evil to anywhere near the same extent as trade - at least until money gets involved.

## **Christian Participation In Trade -Where does the balance lie?**

A Christian may only pursue trade if they can do so without loving money, being eager to be rich or becoming ensnared in the status, delusion and power games of the trading world and if they can say "if the Lord wills we will do this or that.." and remain dependent on Him and focused first and foremost on the Kingdom.

However the track record of Christians down the years show that this is rare indeed. Many who have tried it have "pierced their souls with many a pang ". (1 Tim 6:6-10) Jesus quite bluntly says that we cannot serve both God and Mammon and that if we are to serve God we must despise

Mammon (Matthew 6:24) – that is money must be a minor factor in our decisions and certainly not the “bottom line”.

Certain common areas of world trade are absolutely forbidden for the Christian - such as the currency trade, drugs trade, sex trade, slave trade, illegal wildlife trade and the arms trade. The devastation these areas wreak on smaller countries is absolutely profound. The Christian participating in trade must look at the ultimate logical consequences of their actions without denial or pretense. Currency trading, especially where it involves massive transactions in the currencies of smaller countries, is like deliberately driving a bulldozer over a child.

The Christian cannot say "well we just have to do that to make a profit" or "well that's just my job and those are my orders.." they are not excuses that will stand in the courts of Heaven – just as they were not an adequate defense at the Nuremberg trials.

There are generally much better and more constructive things to put your energy and your "life's time" into. The Christian must actively seek the ethical regulation of their area of trade and should campaign for the elimination of diabolical areas of trade such as John Newton did with his repentant efforts to eliminate slave-trading.

The Christian must not get caught up in "the game" and in leading an unbalanced and highly competitive life that does not build committed relationships or reflect gospel priorities. A Christian is primarily a servant and must not live life for dominion, ego or the boastfulness of life. Also the Christian must refuse to define their personal status in terms of wealth or possessions.

### **The Rich and The Poor In The New Testament**

There have been three classic views about Christians and wealth:

- (a) That material wealth is a sign of God's favor and blessing and that Christians should pray for it and pursue it. Christians should be prosperous and "the head and not the tail".
- (b) That holy poverty and simplicity of lifestyle is preferable for Christians and Christians should be world-renouncing, joyous and free.
- (c) That riches and poverty are internal spiritual conditions not material and that the materially rich can still be poor in spirit if they practice renunciation.

Lets see what the New Testament teaches about the topic of the rich and the poor:

#### **The poor - are the primary recipients of faith and the gospel:**

Jesus primarily came to preach the gospel to the poor (Matthew 11:15, Luke 4:18, 7:22, ) and declared that poor are blessed because they inherit the Kingdom of God (Matthew 5:3, Luke 6:20). James the brother of Jesus and the author of the epistle of that name writes that God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith (James 2:5) and the angel of the Lord representing Jesus in the early chapters of Revelation says to the church of Smyrna that even though they suffered tribulation and poverty they were rich in spiritual things (Revelation 2:9)

#### **On the other hand the rich have great difficulty entering the Kingdom:**

In direct contrast to His statements about preaching the gospel to the poor who inherit the Kingdom of god Jesus says that entering the Kingdom is almost impossible for people who define themselves in terms of their wealth like the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:23,24; Mark 10:23-25,

Luke 8:24). This is due to the fact that anxiety over money chokes their ability to pay attention to spiritual things and they become unfruitful (Mark 8:14, Luke 4:19) and because the desire to get rich leads people into many "foolish and harmful lusts" that end up plunging them into destruction and perdition (1 Timothy 6:9). Thus identifying yourself with wealth and elitism and seeking to get rich, is extremely spiritually hazardous. Unfortunately personal identification with the rich and elite and seeking to get rich is the normal culture of world trade. Therefore, world trade, as it is currently practiced is spiritually harmful for Christians.

**The poor are invited to God's Feast and should be invited to ours as well but the rich are not to be invited to our feasts:**

In the New Testament the Feast is the place of joy and intimacy with God (Rev 19:7-9) and who is going to be invited to the wedding feast (of the Lamb) is of a primary concern that runs through many of Jesus' sayings such as the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. In Luke 14 Jesus uses the occasion of a dinner at the house of a prominent Pharisee to teach about who will be invited into God's fellowship and who will not. In this parable the rich exclude themselves from intimacy with God by pursuing business interests ahead of personal piety and spiritual formation and so God invites the poor into His fellowship and they gladly accept (Luke 14:16-24). Before Jesus tells this story He talks about elitism and wealth and how scribes and others seek the best seats. He teaches that humility means taking the lowest social place and identifying with the poor and how the pride of the rich and elite will cause them to be humbled lowly (Luke 14:8-11). Jesus goes on to say that there is no spiritual reward for inviting the rich to our feasts but great spiritual reward for inviting the poor and the disabled and those unable to reap us. He goes so far as to say "do not invite,...the rich" (Luke 14:12-14). Thus intimacy and fellowship with God I denied to those who are rich, self-sufficient and preoccupied with this world and inviting them into our fellowship brings no reward for us. Rather we should identify with the poor and outcast who will gladly accept Christ and enter into fellowship with Him.

**The poor are filled with good things while the rich are "sent away empty" by God:**

In the Magnificat in Luke chapter one Mary exclaims (*Luke 1:53 NASB*) "*He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed.*" In his gospel Luke goes on to say that the rich are receiving their comfort in full in this life (Luke 6:24) and that the selfish rich later enter into torment (Luke 16:19-31) and in the parable of the Rich Fool, Jesus says that it is the height of spiritual folly to lay up treasure for one's self in this life and not be rich towards God. (Luke 12:16-21).

The rich cannot purchase spiritual things with money because these things are free in the economic sense; they are received through spiritual disciplines such as repentance, seeking God in faith and enduring in good works. Their money is useless in Heaven. Also the rich and elite often have a deceptive sense of entitlement that blocks them from the humility necessary to come before God to receive the things of the Kingdom. Those whose personal value is closely attached to their bank accounts cannot receive from God but the poor who seek their value from God through faith are "filled with good things" and these are Kingdom things, things that endure.

**Giving to the poor is a basic part of the Christian lifestyle.**

Jesus and His disciples had a moneybox out of which they gave to the poor and it was this moneybox that Judas pilfered from to his own eventual damnation. (John 12:5,6 13:29) The early church had organised distribution of food to widows (Acts 6:1-5) and Christians sold land and goods and laid the money at the apostles' feet for distribution among the poor. (Acts 4:34-37).

Paul took up a collection for the famine in Judea which was the early church's first attempt at overseas aid with the Gentile churches assisting the Jewish churches. (2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9) and numerous verses in the gospels talk about selling possession and giving to the poor (Matthew 19:21, Mark 10:21, Luke 18:22, 19:8). The only thing the apostles in Jerusalem laid on Paul was that he should "remember the poor" and Paul says that was "the very thing that I was eager to do" (Galatians 2:10). Jesus himself is seen as giving to the poor in 2 Corinthians 9:9. Thus giving to the poor and being concerned for their welfare is absolutely basic to Christian living. Christians who so identify with wealth and elitism that they show little or no concern for the poor and severely compromised in their faith.

### **In the after-life the poor receive heavenly blessings to compensate for their earthly misery while the selfish rich receive punishment as compensation for their luxurious living**

In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 the selfish rich man ends up in torment while the beggar Lazarus is comforted in Abraham's bosom. The clear teaching of this parable is that the selfish rich do not go on to enjoy the comfort they had on earth in the after-life. Rather their selfishness stores up judgment and torment for them while the suffering poor who have depended on God for their consolation receive that consolation in abundance.

(Luke 16:22,25 NASB) "Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.....25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.

The rich and prosperous in world trade who ignore the poor "Lazarus" communities who are suffering the effects of unjust trading relationships, and which long for even a "crumb from the rich man's table" will be judged, and I believe tormented for eternity. James puts this quite clearly when he says: (James 5:1-6 NKJV) Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! {2} Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. {3} Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. {4} Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. {5} You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. {6} You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

### **Christ became physically poor that we might become spiritually rich and true Christ-like and apostolic ministry follows that pattern:**

In his epistle to the rather worldly Corinthians Paul points out that Jesus sacrificed privilege, position, power and wealth in order to minister here on earth. (2 Corinthians 8:9 NASB) For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. Paul followed that pattern in his own personal ministry and says that though he was poor he made many rich ( 2 Corinthians 6:10). In the gospels the poor widow is commended for going even to the point of total destitution in order to give to God. (Mark 12:42-43). In classical spiritual literature this is called "renunciation" being able to renounce the world and its riches and even live in poverty for the cause of Christ. In Hebrews Moses is commended as an example of faith for sacrificing the riches of Egypt for the reproach of Christ (Hebrews 11:25,26) and the epistle closes with an exhortation to suffer in the same manner of Christ, going "outside the gate" to bear His reproach and to seek not a material and earthly city but one that is to come (Hebrews 13:12-14). Renunciation is very much part of taking up our cross and following Christ and frequently involves financial sacrifice as it did for Moses and Jesus and

Paul. True Christian ministry will involve embracing the cross and being prepared to be physically poor that other might be made spiritually rich.

### **True riches and treasures are spiritual and eternal**

When the New Testament talks about Christians becoming rich it is always in the context of becoming spiritually rich in the things of God. Our daily needs are supplied by God (Matthew 6:33,34) but our wealth is in Christ and our treasure is not to be on earth but in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). The riches that Jesus and Paul distribute are gospel riches known as the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8) and are else where defined as "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). They are not material riches for they themselves were poor as we saw above. These gospel riches flow from "the riches of His glory" and include things such as God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering (Romans 2;4) and His mercy (Romans 9:23). This mercy saves us and brings us heavenly riches (Ephesians 2:1-7) . The riches of His glory result in strengthening the inner man (Ephesians 3:17) so that Christian maturity results (Ephesians 3:17-20). The hardening of the hearts of the Jews resulted in the gospel riches going to the Gentiles instead. (Romans 11:12) These riches include the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Romans 11:30-32), a deep understating of the knowledge of Christ and the Father (Colossians 2:2,3) and the word of God (Colossians 3:16). Paul sees the treasure is Christ in Him, and this treasure is stored in earthen vessels ( 2 Corinthians 4:7). Jesus talks about the treasure of the heart as where people store that which is good within them (Matthew 12:35) including their teaching of the Scriptures (Matthew 13:52) and is where our true adornment lies (1 Peter 3:4). Clearly the treasures and riches that Christians are to put their energy into are spiritual and internal not outward and material.

**Rich Christians must never become self-sufficient or see themselves as superior or take more honored positions in the church or fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, rather they should pursue humility and repentance aiming to be rich in good works and generous in sharing.**

By the end of Paul's ministry, as he was writing to Timothy, the early church had increased in wealth and this had begun to cause a few problems. So he instructed Timothy to instruct the rich in how to hope in God in the midst of their wealth.

(1 Timothy 6:17-18 NASB) Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. {18} Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,

The church James wrote to seems to have had some unscrupulous rich people who pushed their way into prominence and the church seems to have given way to this and given rich people higher and pore prominent positions that poor people and this is roundly condemned (James 2:1-10). In Revelation the church in Laodecia was rich and self-sufficient and Jesus says this self-sufficiency was going to cause Him to spit them out of His mouth in utter rejection. The rich must see their riche sin God not in their own social status. It is clear that the rich man and his pursuits are "passing away" (James 1:10,11) and that only eternal things really count ( 1 Corinthians 7;31, 1 John 2:15-17). The final words about the way the fleeting riches of this world disappoint us are recorded in the book of Revelation as the merchants see their wealth go up in smoke:

(Revelation 18:14-19 NKJV) "The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. {15} "The merchants of

these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, {16} "and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! {17} 'For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance {18} "and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' {19} "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'

### **What Is The Difference Between "Greed" and "The Desire To Create Wealth"?**

Does all desire to be wealthy become wrong? Isn't there a difference between greed and the desire to create wealth? God clearly desires us to become prosperous and part of establishing His covenant with Israel was granting them "the power to make wealth".

(Deuteronomy 8:18 NKJV) "And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

We will examine this extensively in a later chapter on *Prosperity and Poverty* however God clearly thinks the power to make wealth is good and a blessing to be conferred upon Israel. This power to make wealth is productive power and agricultural ability and fertility, good craftsmanship and an understanding of a proper work ethic. It is the responsible and just production of wealth through the diligent application of specific and focussed wisdom and knowledge towards a just and productive economic end. It operates within the context of righteousness, properly ordered relationships and wisdom. It is extensively discussed in the book of Proverbs as we shall see later.

In direct contrast to this is greed or covetousness which is the expedient and hurried acquisition of wealth and Paul calls this lawless materialism idolatry. (Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:5). So it is quite legitimate to desire to create wealth through production however it is not legitimate to desire to create wealth through non-productive or dishonest means such as cheating, lying, gambling, avoiding tax, theft, murder, oppression and various get-rich-quick schemes. The production of wealth must operate within the laws of God including the law of love.

How can we know if we are "greedy and covetousness" or just "desiring to create wealth". Here are a few questions to help you determine this: Firstly – are you crossing any ethical boundaries such as cheating, lying or being ruthless? (Amos 8:5) Secondly – can you wait for the Lord or are you in a huge hurry to get rich? (Proverbs 28:20-22, 1 Timothy 6:9,10). Thirdly – are you allowing God to be sovereign over your life and do you acknowledge Him in your planning? (James 4:13-15) Fourthly, are you stingy and unable to give freely? (Proverbs 28:22) Fifthly – what do you worry about most and hope for most – spiritual things or material things? (Matthew 6:19-34) Sixthly do you desire to be productive, useful and professional "making a real contribution" or are you mainly about "making a buck any way I can"? Seventhly – are you proud of how you work and live? If you were to die today would you feel that you were satisfied with the work of your hands? Or would you be uneasy and guilty?

### **Who Are The Rich?**

The clear and unambiguous teaching of the New Testament is that the fervent pursuit of material wealth is not to be a Christian occupation. Our hope is to be in God and the riches we are to pursue are to be in Christ.

Now to answer the question who are the "rich"? Some Christians such as Joseph of Arimathea, Barnabas, Nicodemus, and Philemon were clearly quite wealthy. It is possible to be wealthy and be a fine Christian. However such wealthy people sought their riches in Christ and did not perceive themselves to be among the rich and elite and they were not filled with pride, self-sufficiency or contempt for the poor. Barnabas sold his lands and gave the money to the poor while Philemon

was noted for his hospitality. There was no pride or selfishness or independence in their use of wealth. The rich in the New Testament are those people whose great material wealth has become their identity so that they identify themselves as rich and their bank balance is their source of self-image, not God. The poor are generally the materially poor but also includes those who have wealth but have fixed their hope on God not on riches. Those who are "poor in spirit", for theirs is the Kingdom of God.

Thus the first proposal at the start of this section, that Christians should actively seek material prosperity and make it their main spiritual focus, is completely erroneous in the light of the NT evidence. The second proposal of holy poverty is half-right. The NT certainly commends simplicity of living and identification with the poor but it does allow some Christians to be wealthy. Certainly we are to not to be tangled up with the cares of riches and holy poverty and simplicity may be the only cure drastic enough for some. It seems to have been necessary for the rich young ruler and this was certainly the case with St. Francis who was a spoilt young rich man and needed drastic spiritual surgery on his materialistic way of life- holy poverty kept him focused on Christ.

However the third proposal is the most correct of the three. We are allowed to create wealth in responsible and just ways. Those who see their value of their person as being determined by the extent of their possessions are called "the rich" in the New Testament in contrast to "the poor" who see the things of this world as not meeting their needs – because their greatest need is God.

Even people from low socio-economic classes can be materialistic and grasping and corrupt. And some wealthy people can be simple and godly in their lifestyles. So it is not just a matter of how much you own but how much material things own you. Is your bedrock identity and desire one of being "in Christ" or being "in the money" ?

The "rich" are those whose identity is caught up in riches. The "poor" are those who sense their emptiness before God. Thus the "rich" cannot be saved, or only with very great difficulty. Their entire satisfaction is earthly and they simply do not desire treasure in heaven. Thus the "rich" must become "poor" if they are to find salvation and this may even involve forsaking the old and untruthful identity with wealth through holy renunciation.

The consequences of this survey of the NT for Christians involved in the culture of international trade are obvious. The pursuit of money, the seeking of one's self-image and status in material wealth, the laying up of earthly rather than heavenly treasure and the way trade ignores the plight of the poor make it completely contrary to the NT vision of the Christian life.

## Multi-Level Marketing And The Christian



I am adding this brief chapter on MLM (otherwise known as “network marketing” and “pyramid selling”) to this second edition because of the enormous harm that multi-level marketing is doing to the Church and to Christian ministry. For the sake of brevity I shall refer to MLM, network marketing, chain letters involving money, and pyramid scams simply as “MLM”. Though there are some significant differences between them they have quite a lot in common. They all exploit friendships to make money without engaging in any real productive activity.

In addition to all the previous chapter’s arguments about covetousness MLM commercializes the sacred relationships between brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. The MLM advocate sees church members are potentially part of the “down-line” to be recruited for the “business opportunity”. Fellowship becomes time for a sales pitch and I have had ministry committee meetings interrupted by someone selling the latest widget or promoting the latest fad that you can “get in on from the start”.

MLM has become a national addiction among the Christian middle-class in the Philippines. Everyone seems to be selling something – often two or three or more different lines, and they are often obviously inferior or fake products. This has even led many people to adopt a commercialized view of relationships “My friends are those that buy from me, and if you do not buy from me, or give me money in some way, you are not really my friend.”

In multi-level marketing:

1. There is no constructive activity such as research or production.
2. The products are often dubious, fake, or inferior.
3. The products are over-priced because of the numerous sales commissions that must be paid.
4. Many MLM’s give deceptive business figures to prospects coming into the business.
5. In Amway and its offshoots the bulk of people end up paying more for tapes and seminars than they receive in profits from the business.
6. The return is not worth the effort - when experts have it compared to the return from a “normal job”.

On top of this MLM is extremely destructive in a spiritual sense.

Family relationships and relationships within the body of Christ should be held as sacred and holy. Christian relationships are much more than mere marketing opportunities! When pastors use their position to sell soap or cell phones to their flock they are abusing their holy calling. When elders are eager to invite people to their home to share a “business opportunity” – but not so eager to visit them when they need help – then something has gone wrong.

Not only that but they are doing huge damage to Christian finances – one church alone is said to have lost over 100 million pesos in the Multi-Tel scam.

And I have found that people who are eager to make quick money cannot be warned about the dubiousness of the business opportunity. One scheme, selling "superior motor oil" called MP3 was obviously flawed from the start and boastfully claimed that it was going to "take on Shell and Caltex". This claim alone should have warned people that there was no sense of reality in the organization. After a few good batches of oil, the MP3 mastermind sent cheap junk oil instead hoping that no-one would notice. When customers came back complaining in droves, all the major players pulled out and the business folded.

Many MLMs follow this pattern of "suck 'em in with a good spiel, deliver for a short while to build trust and get as many customers as possible, then pull the swifts." Over and over again they are nothing but scams! Yet Christians line up to "believe" and be part of them in the hope of riches because they cannot see their ordinary jobs providing sufficient return.

If Christians want extra cash they should save ten percent of their income in a special savings fund and then leave it there for the power of compound interest to do its work. This is what most good financial managers advise. Diligent saving is far more effective in the long-term than involvement in MLM.

Above all Christians should be content with what they have and they should use the ingenuity they put into multi-level marketing in other ways – such as running a pre-school or day-care center or having a productive business of their own – or even involvement in Christian ministry.

MLM wastes time, energy and money and defiles the nature of relationships among believers. It focuses the Christian on the pursuit of money and often involves them in patterns of deceit and compromise. It is thus completely anti-Christian, and anti-Church in the truest sense of those words.

Churches should have anti-MLM clauses in their constitutions and rules of operation and MLM should be firmly denounced from the pulpit. To have Christians cheating each other for the sake of sordid gain is a major disruption to God's order for the Church. Furthermore Christians, and particularly the clergy should be trained in "all wisdom and discernment" to see scams coming and to guard the flock from unscrupulous operators in their midst.

Even sharing the gospel has become a sort of "network marketing" with friendships with unbelievers expected to be evangelistic in nature and the object of a sales pitch for Jesus. People are persons, not "targets", they are sacred, and friendships should just be friendships. Of course we can share Christ as part of a genuine and real friendship, but we should not pretend we are friends simply to "win a convert". That is selfish, it makes the person just an object in our personal spiritual quest (or conquest).

Using people and relationships for greedy and selfish purposes is against the Spirit of Christ and the gospel. Thus Christians should not engage in multi-level marketing.

## The Messengers



For quite some time, in small ways and great, people have been sensing the evil nature of the global economic system. From bizarre conspiracy theorists to people complaining about the callousness of banks, from anti-globalization protestors to the Slow Food Movement, from labor unions angry at heartless restructuring and downsizing to Christian pastors and bible teachers revolted by the excesses they see around them and who try to get their flocks to worship Jesus not cars and houses.

These messengers have at first been quite and reasonable. They brought out their statistics on global wealth distribution or their bible verses on serving God and Mammon, they reasoned with management, they lobbied for controls, they started consumer movements and took on Big Business. But largely they have not been heard.

So now they have resorted to being loud and unreasonable, now they hold anti-globalization rallies, attack McDonalds restaurants, and fly planes into buildings that house power and trade.

The terrorists are half-right. They have sensed that globalization is evil and unjust. They have sensed that the world is not listening. And they are doing something about it.

The terrorists live in the countries most affected by the evils of global commercial domination. They see their poverty being created by others and their people being exploited. They watch their cultures being ripped apart by the forceful intrusion of foreign values and commodities (now as much Chinese goods as Western goods, globalization is not just a Western game any more).

Their religion is not respected and their sacred spaces are invaded and defiled. Like Jesus clearing the traders from the temple, the terrorists want to be the scourge of materialism, and drive it from their countries, and especially from the cities and places they regard as holy.

The fact that God sometimes uses evil men to bring us a message is a theological problem for some people and is actually the central problem of the book of Habakkuk.

(Habakkuk 1:13 NKJV) You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?

Basically, when we fail to listen to the good and reasonable people God sends the bad and unreasonable people to rattle our cages and shake us out of our complacency. This can reach the point where He allows wicked people to invade and destroy and inflict great harm on the righteous until the righteous return and repent. The book of Judges teaches this lesson at length.

In the end, those who have afflicted the righteous, even though God has used them, will be destroyed. And when the wicked are destroyed they are destroyed completely. This complete

destruction was the fate of Assyria and Babylon, two of the empires that were used to punish Israel. Islamic terrorists may punish the materialistic "Christian" West but in the end they will be destroyed.

The terrorists are God's messengers preaching the wickedness of materialism and idolatry. They will scourge us until we repent. Then they will be destroyed completely for their wickedness. God will deal with the terrorists once we have listened to their "message".

They will be given power to afflict the world, and in particular the forces of the World Market, until people really start crying out to God.

We are being given a chance to "buy time" through repentance. Things do not have to quickly and inevitably proceed to an end-times scenario. The Market does not have to quickly become as lawless and idolatrous as Revelation portrays. That will happen one day, but we need not stand by helplessly and let it happen just now. There is still time to repent, regulate and restrain. There is still time to practice justice and truth.

The Anti-Christ has not yet been unleashed, there are still many more people groups to be reached with the gospel so that living and vital churches can be planted. We do not need to give the world to the Devil before the last possible moment. Until that day we must stand up to the idolatry around us and preach repentance so that some may hear and be saved.

The terrorists are making everyone and particularly Christians ask some very good questions:

- a) Why are the terrorists doing this?
- b) Why is God allowing this?
- c) What is this leading to?
- d) What are some of the causes?
- e) How should Christians respond?

The quick answers are respectively:

### **Why are they doing this?**

The terrorists are doing this for three main reasons:

- a) Because they sense that Western materialism is immoral, idolatrous, unjust and wicked.
- b) Because we are not "fully submitted to Allah" and are therefore in the "zone of war" or jihad. Secularized Muslim nations have also been declared as insufficiently submitted to Allah as well especially those that do not impose shariah law.
- c) There is a particular hatred of those that support the nation of Israel and the war in Iraq.

### **Why is God allowing this?**

God is allowing this for three main reasons:

- a) Because He wants us to correct the current arrogance of the wealthy and bring rampant secular selfish materialism under control and prevent the emergence of a lawless global World Market.
- b) He wants to expose Islam and its resurgence and prevent Islamic global domination and the re-emergence of the Caliphate. He also wants Muslims to turn to Christ and to open closed Muslim nations to the gospel.
- c) He wants the voice of the poor to be heard and for the developed nations to realize that their security lies in proving economic justice to the developing world.

### **What is this leading to?**

This is leading to a time of decision. Either we will make sure that economic justice is done and that the world is a less predatory place or we will be treated as we have allowed the poor to be treated. If we show mercy we will be blessed with mercy (Matthew 5:7) but if we are merciless then God will be merciless to us (James 2:13).

The end of the wars in Afghanistan or Iraq will not mean the end of terrorism or the end of Islamic hostility. There are millions of angry radicalized Muslims around the world and our systems are vulnerable. The prayers and repentance that briefly followed the World Trade Center attacks have bought us time in which to do justice and practice righteousness – not to continue oppression. If we continue in oppression the attacks will continue and increase.

I make no claims to be able to tell the future yet my feeling is that this is not going to lead to World War Three or Armageddon in the very immediate future. This may well be a part of the prelude to the end times.

My assessment is that the current conflict is a strategic battle prior to the formation of the Global Market, which wants to manifest itself now, but which God wants to keep restrained for a while yet. It involves setting the stage for the end times but is not yet the end times.

The gospel has to be preached to all the nations first and as a missionary I can say that is approaching completion but is not yet complete by the standards of having a functioning church in each ethnic and language group. I may be wrong but I think we need at least another twenty years to complete the Great Commission. This conflict may lead to the collapse of Islam or it's opening to the gospel. As usual God seems to be doing many different things at once.

### **What are some of the causes?**

The next section of this book, entitled "The Pressing Problem" deals with how the excesses of globalization are causing economic injustice, which then induces radicalization, which then leads to terrorism. The causes are multiple and are both intentional and unintentional, religious and economic, structural and personal, legal and illegal. There are also complex interplays among them so that certain economic practices such as charging interest have religious overtones in Islamic countries.

### **How should Christians respond?**

The last two sections of the book examine Christian responses to an unjust market (*Prosperity With Justice*) and to violence, terrorism and religious conflict (*Peace-Making In An Imperfect World*). These Christian responses involve the following steps:

1. Detachment from unjust trade and non-involvement in violent reactionary responses.
2. Creating prosperity based on production and "the power to make wealth". (The power to make wealth is defined as a God-given capacity based on the industrious application of specific and focused wisdom and knowledge towards constructive and useful ends.)
3. The forsaking of foolish and non-productive ways of attaining prosperity such as gambling, magic, idolatry, dishonesty and speculation.
4. The attainment of personal mastery, a Christian work ethic, and a balanced perspective so we do not operate reactively but proactively.

5. Solution-focused construction of wise and appropriate responses and advocating these practical solutions to those who have the power to implement them or make decisions based upon them. Such solutions include both evangelism and social justice.
6. Practical peace-making on both a personal and community level and between religious communities – even where no possibility of agreement on doctrine exists.

This next section examines how unjust international trade is both intentionally and unintentionally creating injustice and how this injustice is producing terrorism.

**Essay:** I wrote this brief essay while observing the blatant corruption and vote-buying in the Philippines during the 2004 Presidential elections. I insert it here as an illustration of what we have been saying in this first section.

## The Philippines – Have We Moved From Democracy To Plutocracy ?



Plutocracy is “rule by the rich” and I think that is what we have arrived at here in the Philippines. I will argue that politics has been commercialized in the Philippines so now power is bought and sold openly in a well understood, but not openly acknowledged marketplace. This marketplace is often referred to as “corruption” but is rather based on the premise that power **should** be treated as a commercial commodity and that the Filipino voter is entitled to financial recompense for their vote.

Two incidents illustrate this clearly:

Firstly a Christian friend of mine, involved in a micro-finance venture was campaigning for (the Christian Presidential candidate) Bro. Eddie Villaneuva among a group of indigent women. These ladies said “We like Bro. Eddie and his policies but how much is he going to pay us for our votes?” The fact that Bro. Eddie was not going to pay them caused some small consternation and it was concluded that they would not vote for him. There was a sense in that meeting that any politician who takes the poor seriously will pay for votes.

Secondly the way that multi-level marketing has become a national addiction. You are likely to be “sold something” at nearly any major event you attend and even committee meetings can be interrupted by someone raising their latest product. This commercialization of relationships and the implicit “you are not my friend if you do not buy this from me” is a reduction of all relationships to that of being financial trading partners.

The idea that “if you want my loyalty/vote you will have to pay for it” underlies the shift in power relationships in the Philippines – where power must be paid for and those ruled over demand financial recompense from those they put in power.

As the Asian Institute of Management teaches “Your customers are the people who pay you money, if they do not pay you money, they are not your customers.” So who is paying money here? The politicians. So the politicians are the customers – and what are they buying? Votes, positions and power. They are buying precious social status and all that attends to it. This commercialization of political processes leads to a subtle redefinition of terms which can be put somewhat cynically as follows:

***The Golden Rule:*** He who has the gold – rules.

***Politics:*** The marketing of power.

***Election:*** The process of purchasing power by paying for votes.

***COMELEC:*** An organization that ensures that only people with money can attain power and which dismisses those who do not have the financial resources to attain to power.

**Fair Election:** When the person who has paid the most for votes ends up getting the most votes.

**Transparent Election:** Where the purchasing of votes is obvious and everyone can see through it.

**Power:** The ability to extract money from others.

**Position:** A control point in the culture that enables one to dispense favors in return for money.

**Nuisance Candidate:** One that tries to attain power without purchasing votes.

**Folly:** Assuming that Filipinos will give their vote away for free.

**Idealism:** Voting on the basis of the candidate's virtues and policies alone without thought of financial remuneration.

**Election Promise:** Buying large blocks of votes on credit.

**Canvassing:** A complex piece of political theatre designed to placate idealists and give the impression that the election was not a commercial process.

**Voting Block:** A group such as the INC that can deliver many votes and whose leadership requires a large payment to deliver these votes to the candidate.

**Voter Registration:** a) The process of deregistering the voters who would support candidates who lack the funds to purchase votes and b) allowing room for candidates with sufficient funds to purchase the right to these deregistered votes and insert properly paid for (erroneously termed "fake") votes in the ballot boxes.

**Canvassing Period:** The time required to remove votes that have not been paid for from the ballot boxes and replace them with votes that have been properly paid for.

**Election Machinery:** Printing presses, which produce ballot papers and certificates of canvass that have been properly paid for by the candidate.

**Surveys:** Market research.

**Mainstream Press:** Those journalists that have agreed to join the political marketplace and accept money in return for favorable political opinion.

**Destabilizers:** Those who have opted out of the political marketplace and who strongly advocate that power should be attained by non-commercial means and thus refer to the current fair commercial system as "cheating".

Thus there is a strong internal logic to the current political process based on the premises that social status, power and privilege should be paid for and that the poor are entitled to receive some benefit from this process and that their vote should not be given away for free. The only problem

with this logic is that by commercializing that which our consciences know should not be commercialized it creates a very unstable and unjust form of government.

A government that buys its way into power is not seen as legitimate and a government cannot survive long without legitimacy. Thus the Philippines is faced with a stark choice – either properly legitimize plutocracy as a system of government and change the constitution to create a regulated commercial marketplace for power and position, or ruthlessly eradicate the market for power and thus become a true modern democracy. We cannot have a veneer of democracy over a plutocratic reality. Such invidious hypocrisy rankles deeply and results in utter contempt for those in power and a loss of faith in the major institutions that is deleterious to the national interest.

So we are at a cross-roads, will it be democracy or plutocracy? Shall we declare openly “we are a plutocracy and we like it that way!” ? Shall we invert the usual political paradigm and call good “evil” and call evil “good”? Shall we enshrine Mammon as our god? If we do then we shall have to give up the notion that the Philippines is a Christian nation.

But if we simply give up on the idea of Christian morality and ethics would that be such a bad thing? I mean the new prophets could speak like so:

*Woe unto the poor for they shall dwell in darkness and pain because they cannot purchase justice.*

*Woe unto those who mourn over the Philippines because they are wasting their breath.*

*Woe unto the meek for they shall be laughed to scorn by the arrogant rich.*

*Woe unto those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be frustrated because they are fools and idealists.*

*Woe unto the merciful for they have given away their money to fools and paupers and have not looked after themselves so as to prosper.*

*Woe unto the pure in heart for they do not know the power of greed and the joy of lust and they will be affronted day and night by the acts of the wicked and they shall behold Hell on earth.*

*Woe unto the peacemakers because demand justice and truth and equality in the land and they shall be jailed and called sons of the Devil because they stand against the rich.*

*For the dead shall rise, and they shall seem to vote for the wicked, for their souls have been purchased from Purgatory and again placed on the electoral roll.*

*And there shall be judgment and they shall be brought before the thrones of Jezebel and Ahab, and they shall be put in two groups on the right and on the left. To those on their left they shall say "Die in your righteousness because you did not understand the times and you came without gift or bribe or payment or powerful friends and sought justice on the basis of the truth alone and did not understand the order of things or the desire of those that sit upon the throne." But to those on the right they shall say "Blessed are you wise and understanding ones who came respectfully before our thrones with gifts and bribes and payments and sought the help of powerful friends. You are truly on of Us and understand the order of things and you shall sit upon the heights and eat the best of the land."*

*And the Devil will dance on that day and the demons will be exceedingly glad for they shall have come into their kingdom and they shall reign over the islands. And the wolf shall gulp down the lamb and the lion will tear apart the ox and they shall defile the innocent and sell the young into the sex trade for all shall be for consumption and devouring on the mountain of Mammon.*

Well, when you put it like that!

But how else can it be put?

We are on the brink of Hell and if this electoral process is calmly legitimized then it will place the Philippines firmly and forever into the camp of the plutocrats, the wicked and the unjust.

Hell is a totally commercialized society – where there are no sacred spaces, where the environment is chewed up for profit, where sex is sold, where marriages have money as a main motive, where the worth of a man is solely on how much he owns and the status of his possessions, where values like nobility and truth and honesty are seen as the stuff of fools and where power is bought and sold for cold hard cash.

But what is the alternative? How can we move back towards the Kingdom of God, and the truth, and peace and justice and human dignity and an environment that is cared for and not just exploited?

We must take the stance of those that cared for this world, the stance of Jesus and Mother Teresa and St. Francis of Assisi. There must be some absolutes, some things that are not merchandisable, a sense of the sacred and holy in the midst of life, a restoring of the Sabbaths, a blessing of small children and the dying and a love of beauty and of the intangible, non-commercial aspects of life.

We must start denying power to Mammon. We must start saying “No, this will not be commercialized.”

And we must refuse multi-level marketing and its consequent commercialization of friendships and family relationships.

We must believe in art for art’s sake, and the gospel for the gospel’s sake and knowledge for knowledge’s sake – and stop asking the question “Will it sell...”

We have to have faith in the Truth, that if we follow it we will be blessed, maybe not in this life but certainly in the life to come and that somehow the glory of a life well-lived in the Truth will outshine all the wealth of Bill Gates or Warren Buffet or the Ayalas.

We have to believe in One Creator God who made the heavens and the earth and that which is under the earth, and the seas and the rivers and the springs of waters and all that is in them. We have to believe that He did not make this world so it could end up on the stock market.

We have to believe that He made this world to function in love and peace and joy and that God wants a heaven and an earth in which righteousness dwells.

We have to believe that we are going to die, that worms will eat our body, and all that we own will rust and decay and bear testimony against us in our folly. We have to know with absolute

certainty and conviction that it is not a good thing to gain the whole world and lose our soul in the process.

We have to believe there is something worse than being poor - and that is moral destitution, and there is something worse than not having social status - and that is not having a soul at peace with God. Worse than poverty is powerlessness and when we sell all power to the rich we make the poor even poorer.

The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame leap for joy and the gospel is preached to the poor. The poor are given access to God Himself. Mammon cannot rule over them forever. One day they will be free of its tyranny, free from worrying about pesos and centavos, dollars and cents, free from a commercialized world. When money loses its power to buy all things, when the gospel is free, when eternal life is without cost then Mammon loses its power to terrify us. When money means nothing then the poor will be kings.

If the whole burden of life is the quest for Mammon then poverty is the equivalent of being lost and in Hell. But if life is the quest for God then poverty is a mere circumstance. If personal value is identical with financial value, then we are simply another marketable commodity with a "net worth". But if personal value is based on how we reflect the image of God, then we are eternal beings of infinite and enduring value. We have a choice, the Market or the Kingdom, the Dollar or the Truth.

Shall we take up the chains of Marley's ghost – the cashbooks and ledgers of Mammon, or shall we be free? Shall we stand by and allow the sale of all power to the rich and the devouring of this green and beautiful nation by the greedy and powerful? Shall we let this existential moment in the life of the Philippines pass with a shrug the shoulders? Or shall we say "No!" and say it loudly?

# Part Two

## The Pressing Problem



This section look at how economic injustice occurs (both intentionally and unintentionally) and the responses it provokes in those affected. We will first look at unintentionally created injustice such as when poor decisions are made because of lack of information or misunderstanding. Some of these poor corporate decisions are having a huge impact in developing nations. The second chapter in this section looks at the more sinister side of world trade – the black market, the underground economy, the unregulated economy and the various criminal aspects of trade. The staggering size of the areas of international trade that are beyond government control and the reach of law will amaze you.

The third chapter in this section will deal with the process of radicalization and how economic injustice causes people to go down the cycle we will call "the 4 R's" – Resolve, Resent, Reject, Revenge". Finally we will look at how this is producing an "equal and opposite reaction" and take a detailed look at how ordinary Muslims are becoming radicalized and turning to terrorism. This section will call on data from economics and current affairs and place it squarely in a biblical framework.

## Why Decent People In Good Companies Do Terrible Things



Since Nuremberg people have posed the questions “How could good decent ordinary Germans have done this?” and those sufficiently humble asked, “Might I have done the same?” Ordinary decent people placed in the wrong context can make terrible decisions. Perhaps not as gruesome or terrible or direct a decision as those made in Auschwitz, but decisions that are still terrible in their own way.

If you were to meet the board members of a major multi-national trading firm they would for the most part be kind, gracious, highly intelligent men and women who treat their friends and families well, dress nicely, speak clearly and work very hard. Many of them would give substantial amounts to charity on a regular basis. A few would be “complete predators” but most would not be anything of the kind. Most of the people who oppress the poor have no intention of doing so. (A few do, such as the people who seize the land of Indian tribes in South America). Mostly they just want to make a profit, cut costs, and have their firm survive in a tough global economy. And somehow this goes terribly, terribly wrong.

Over the last few years I have worked as a careers and management consultant and one of my most popular seminars has the title *“Why Leaders Don’t Do What They Know And Agree They Should Be Doing”*. I see this as one of the central problems of the business world. People go to seminars, make plans, listen and genuinely consult business ethicists, and do courses of servant-leadership and devolution of authority, and so many other good things. Their heart cry is for a better, kinder workplace. Magazines like Fast Company present an alternative future. People want an ecologically sustainable and socially appropriate investment strategy. Buzz words like “social sustainability” and “diversity management” abound. But things stay the same, the same terrible decisions with the same terrible results keep on being made. Why?

### **Why Its No Use Blaming “The Fall”**

The neat theological answer, “its human nature, people cannot always make right decisions, its all just due to the Fall” – is a useless piece of information that does nothing to improve a situation that is costing millions of lives each year. To blame the Fall is to say: “Adam stuffed up my decision-making ability, that’s why I oppress the poor”. That is an excuse that neither God nor man will find acceptable.

Sure, no-one makes right decisions all the time or implements ideal policy all the time. But it is quite possible to improve our batting average. Besides history shows us that fallen people often do make lots of good decisions otherwise there would be no progress. Bad decisions are not just due to the Fall, they are due to poor management information systems, overly hierarchical and controlling structures, tired and busy people, business myths, fear, panic and politics and a host of other things that can be corrected. The aim of this chapter is to start a dialogue about the problem of why good people make bad decisions and why these bad decisions end up hurting so many people. I will provide the answers I know and point out where a few other answers may lie. However this topic is a book on its own. I do not have all the answers on it yet, so this chapter is a formulation and proposing of the question “Why don’t leaders do what they know and agree they should be doing.”

## **Assumptions about “what leaders know and agree they should be doing”**

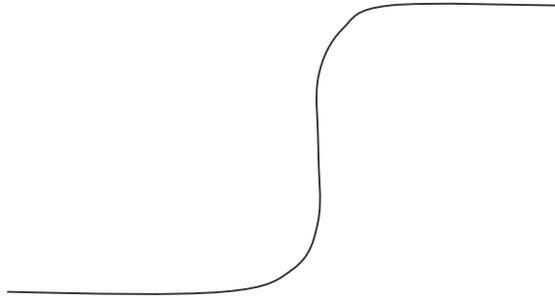
- Their work is congruent with their values and is important.
- It is work they are supposed to be doing.
- They are reasonably sane and not involved in too many self-destructive behaviors.

### **The State We Are In**

My original academic background was in chemistry so I see the “chemistry” of organizations as important. One of these chemical analogies is about “state” – such as solid, liquid, gas, plasma, frozen, acidic, alkaline. The analogy also involves times of state transition – boiling, solidifying, evaporating, reacting, being neutralized, or undergoing dissociation. Organizations have a “state” they are in – solid, liquid, meltdown etc. The state affects the reactions that are possible. Reactions occur in a liquid that cannot occur in a solid and different reactions are possible in an acidic solution than in a neutral solution. This applies to organizations in that an organization is “frozen solid” than little change in its policies can occur. The well-intentioned executive is trapped in an unyielding matrix. On the other hand during times of rapid transition in a “fluid” organization a single person can have a disproportionate influence.

A very powerful illustration of this is what chemists call an “acid-base titration”. You may have done one in high school science, where you add the acid in a burette to a beaker containing an alkaline and litmus solution indicator. As you add the acid nothing seems to happen for a while. If your school was rich and had a pH meter you would notice only a small decrease in pH from 14 to say 12 over many drops. Drop after drop would go in with little noticeable change. Then each drop would start doing a bit and from 12 to 10 the change with each drop speeds up but the solution is still in the same state, it is still alkaline and it still reacts the same way despite all the input and changes. Then suddenly with a single drop the pH goes from ten to four, the solution goes from alkaline to acid and the whole nature of the solution changes. An acidic solution reacts differently to an alkaline solution. It's all new, different, and a single drop “changed it all”. But note, that single drop came from the same burette, was the same concentration and the same size as all the other drops. In fact it was not special in any way at all. It just fell into the solution at exactly the right moment. “Sudden” social transitions such as the Reformation and the collapse of the Berlin Wall often follow this pattern of many drops, sudden change, then a new structure and limits.

Organizational change is like that. First you seem to get nowhere, your “drops” of wisdom seem lost in the beaker. But you are preparing the way, putting in the input that will gradually add up to change. Then some “drip” of a consultant comes along, says what you have been saying all along, and everyone takes notice and everything changes. If you graph such changes they look like the letter S and are called “sigmoidal curves” (which is the long way of saying “looks like the letter sigma” which has become the letter S). Sigmoids are flat along the bottom, rise up with a slow curve, then go very steep and vertical and then curve round and flatten out. The flat bit at the bottom and the horizontal bit at the top are the upper and lower limits of change in that system.



### ***A Sigmoidal Curve***

As you enter a point where the state of the system is undergoing change then you can expect the change to look something like the curve above. The trick is get your input in at the bottom just as the change is taking off but before it goes vertical. That is the point of greatest influence. After that you are just surfing the change as it takes off. The other critical point is where the curve bends over at the top. This is where a limit has been imposed on the change. In our experiment above that limit is imposed by the chemistry and structure of water. In organizations the chemistry and structure of organizations places a limit on change – even good, desired and necessary change. Thus bad decisions can be made by good people if the organization that is in the wrong “state”, that is if the “chemistry and structure” do not allow the adoption of optimal policies.

Obviously organizations need to look at their chemistry and structure to see what “reactions” are occurring. Are they “boiling” with creativity? Is this limiting responsibility? Are they ephemeral, gaseous and structure-less zooming everywhere like many of the high-tech start-ups that lasted a nanosecond on the stock exchange and were gone. Are they a once solid corporation in a financial meltdown? Whatever the state of the corporation is, that “state” will make certain things possible and certain others very difficult. For instance the rigid conservative power structures at the top of the Roman Catholic church place very real constraints on the radical elements among the priests below.

How do we overcome this? Most real organizational transformation starts from the top down with a change of attitude by the members of the board. There has to be a decision to examine the structure, ethos and “chemistry” of interactions within the company to see how bad and unjust decisions are being generated. For instance old-fashioned missionary societies used to genuinely believe that “the decision of the mission board is God’s will for your life”. It was only when reports came back from many directions over many years showing how these remotely made decisions were often wrong and hurtful that policy began to change. Now more decisions are being made by the people on the scene and by those who are directly affected by them. Team-based rather than office-based decision making is now normal. The board sets policy and major financial decisions. The system is now more just and less hurtful because people took a hard look at what they were doing and how they were using power.

### **It Doesn’t Pay To Be Good**

Another major reason that good people end up not doing what they know and agree they should do is that “it doesn’t pay to be good”. According to behavioral psychologists we are hard-wired to do more of what is reinforced and rewarded and less of what is ignored, punished or belittled. If being good, ethical and creative is punished or ignored within the organizational structure (as it often is) then this behavior will occur less often and the proponents of it may become demotivated or even leave the organization. If enough of such people leave an organization then it can lose all

the “good-hearted people” and just be left with the “sharks”. I read a penetrating analysis of this in a business book some years ago that pointed out that the rounds of ruthless restructuring and downsizing were causing the people who made offices human and pleasant to leave. When these people, who are actually the human glue of the organization, depart, the place tends to “fall apart”. Recent analyses have shown that, in the words of Tom Peters, “you cannot shrink your way to greatness.”

Common and not so common ways this occurs are through:

1. The dominance of a hard and ruthless elite in the organization.
2. Sensitive egos that react in arbitrary ways to new suggestions or which think of the new suggestions as implied criticisms.
3. Constant change that undermines the personal safety, security and foundational strength that is needed to be effectively just and ethical.
4. Deep inefficiencies in the system that mean that the system can only cope with the routine (and barely at that). In such places “the wheels fall off” any creative initiatives and soon people are discouraged and give up trying when their effort goes nowhere.
5. An over-focused organization that rewards only one kind of activity.

These dynamics are best changed by the leadership, and the CEO in particular, and require a commitment to being an organization that makes doing good things possible.

### **It Involves Difficulty, Urgency Or Complexity and We Are Overloaded**

One of the main reasons that good people make bad decisions is that they don’t have the time to make good decisions. Good, wise, just and fair decisions take time and may require extensive gathering of information beforehand. This is next to impossible if the person is “too busy”. Having too large a span of control, too many tasks, or too little delegation to teams and subordinates can result in the executive having to make many decisions that they know very little about. This is further complicated by the mind’s dynamics, which automatically withdraws the person from situations that are overloading them.

The reticular formation is that part of the brain that processes incoming signals for relevance and decides what we will pay attention to – the music, the computer screen or the color of the wallpaper or the strange sound behind me. The reticular formation sorts the flood of data that hits our senses much like a web search engine sorts millions of pages for relevance. It asks “Is there danger?” “Is this urgent?” “Is this important?” “Does this meet a biological need such as food or sex?” and “Is this really complex, does it require my full attention?” (like a game of chess). We can easily overload our reticular formation by having work that is too much, too complex, too important or too urgent.

When the executive is overloaded he or she will mysteriously “switch off” on very important issues with high emotional content and in issues of high complexity. Since ethical issues are frequently both complex and emotional they get put in the “too hard basket” and tuned out. They are “too much to cope with” and the executive does not “feel up to that just yet”. Underneath the person may wish to tackle such issues but they mysteriously cannot cope with them. This is the brains shutdown mechanism protecting them from “crashing” like an overloaded computer that runs out of memory.

Paradoxically the less urgent that you make tasks; the more likely they are to get done. This is because if everything is urgent simultaneously the reticular formation overloads, people get that "locked up/clogged up" feeling and everything just freezes.

Students who panic over all their exams at once just freeze, play the guitar, find themselves unable to study and fail. Students who study systematically and limit urgency to the next exam do much better. If everything is vital, important, urgent and totally necessary and must be done immediately then very little will happen at all. A calm, planned and unhurried workplace will actually accomplish far more of what really needs to be done than a frantic one.

The value of off-site seminars is that the environment is less complex, the phones are not ringing, and a pile of paperwork is not in front of them. In such seminars people often think clearly, creatively and ethically. However when they return to the world of complexity they overload once more and the good, creative, just but complex ideas simply fall off the plate. They do not get done because there is not the brain space to ensure they get done. If good ideas are to happen the office environment must be simplified.

Justice is served by simplicity and quietness and these can only be generated for the leadership by a very deliberate structuring of the organization away from clutter and muchness. This can in part be accomplished by:

1. Delegation - moving real decision-making on lesser matters to delegated teams. Free up your brain.
2. Eliminating bottlenecks, ensuring that no one person has too many complex decisions to make.
3. Accept mistakes. If mistakes are a matter of life and death then every small decision will be of cosmic importance thus making real thinking and progress impossible. Thus grace enables thinking which enables wisdom and justice.
4. Define power as the ability to accomplish good, worthy things on a large scale. Contrast this with defining power as doing many things or doing big things that are of little real value - "building haystacks out of straw" to use Paul's analogy from 1 Corinthians 3.
5. Reducing information overload and bombardment with trivia. Filter emails.
6. Getting rid of "hurry as a virtue" in the corporate culture. The hurried and harried are inevitably poor decision-makers. Honor calm, clear-thinking people. Promote wisdom, discernment and good judgment as cardinal virtues. Instead of the quick thinker promote the deep thinker. Save on mistakes. Do it right the first time.
7. Analyze with simplicity and complexity in mind. If a course of action is going to lead to a very tangled and complex time for the firm then question whether it is really necessary.
8. Develop tough priorities and well-guarded boundaries so that you do not permit trivia and nonsense to invade your thinking space.
9. Create clarity whenever you can. Think clarity, notice confusion, notice things that bombard and confuse people. Clear up organizational relationships. Clarify rules and policies. Have tidy and uncluttered offices. Make sure the physical environment is not bombarding the person with powerful sensory data. Eliminate trendy jargon and other unnecessary sources of confusion.
10. Creating empowered specialists to research certain issues and break down the complexity for the decision-makers, make sure the empowered specialists are clear communicators.
11. Work only six days a week and then completely unwind on Sundays. Have real holidays, mini-holidays and brain breaks.

12. If you are a Christian then don't over-complicate life with too many church committees as well as work. Give yourself the mental breathing space to really think about your responsibilities and to do justice on the earth.

If the good decent executives can think more clearly they will also think more compassionately and justly. Ethical issues can only be incorporated if brain space is made for them. If we simplify we will succeed at the big things – both professionally and ethically.

### **Its Against Our Inner Paradigm of Work Or Our Actual Inner Agenda**

Sometimes being ethical and just can disagree with deep ideas we hold about the nature of the way business should be run. This comes from being trained in two value systems.

Our Christian value system says one thing and the business environment seems to teach us another. Mentally we agree with the ethical course of action but we also feel "odd" about it and uneasy. It "doesn't seem to fit" with work and business. When this happens we need to identify the beliefs that are being contradicted and rework them a little. For instance some people are told "Business is for the strong and the tough, you cannot be sentimental in business". This may need to be modified to "Business is not a charity, but it does need to be fair, honest and just. Business is not there to give away money but to make a fair and ethical profit. Being socially and ecologically sustainable is about treating others and the environment justly and will actually help us survive in the long run." Thus the useful part of the old belief – the business is unsentimental, is kept, but it is modified so it sees the pragmatic values of justice and a clearer understanding is developed that will allow room for good, just and fair initiatives to be developed.

Inner resistance to ideas needs to be explored. Asking "Why am I feeling this way about this suggestion" can unlock valuable information and help you clarify your thinking about the issue. Sometimes our idea of our job stops us being comfortable with certain suggestions e.g. academics are often uncomfortable with marketing and artists tend to be uncomfortable with detailed administration. If a task or suggestion is too outside our self-concept we may have to delegate it to others. Delegating ethics and justice issues may be much better than dropping them entirely.

There are numerous other reasons why good people make bad decisions other than the above "big four" and they include:

### **Lack Of Advocacy By Justice Organizations And The Church**

There is very little real interaction and discussion between those involved in trade and the church. A few protest rallies and petitions do not constitute a productive and meaningful dialogue. By entering the business world as a consultant I can talk to decision-makers about their ethics and help government departments and corporations move towards more just and fair models of business. The church needs to aim at developing an intelligent ethical dialogue with the business world and in particular with the areas of speculative trade that are almost completely unaccessed at the moment. If people are not informed, exhorted and encouraged they cannot take the first steps towards fair trade.

### **The Business Decision**

Most people are trained into seeing business decisions as separate from other decisions and as governed by pragmatism and necessity rather than by ethics and justice. This is partly habit, partly expediency and partly just mental laziness. It is my experience from working in HR that 90% or

more of “tough business decisions” are unnecessary if some time is spent thinking of a creative alternative. Does division X have to be closed or can their market share be increased or a new product line developed? Can the staff be put on other projects? Can the employees of division X be consulted, the situation explained and can they come up with a proposal for saving their jobs? “Revenue is down, cut jobs” has become a business reflex. Yes, business must be realistic; but it need not be cruel.

### **The Power Of Habit**

Bad decisions can become a habit and a way of life. This is particularly so in bureaucracies where the power of bad habits can be stifling. Decent people have to struggle to think of new ways of operating with justice and integrity.

### **Social Sustainability Is Not Yet Grasped**

Some firms have not grasped that “what goes around comes around” and that being too tough and businesslike can backfire. After a difficult incident disposing of an old oil drilling platform in Europe Shell caught on to the idea that they did not only need to be good, they needed to be seen to be good and to develop policies that were manifestly just and fair to all. All businesses operate in a social context that can turn on them with lawsuits and bad publicity. Reputation is important and a reputation for ruthlessness is working to slow corporations like Microsoft and NewsCorp down. They are running out of friends and if this continues over time they may eventually run out of money as well.

### **An Over-Reliance On PR**

Good people are more prone to make bad decisions if they think that PR can sanitize things and that their spin-doctors and lawyers can get them out of it. PR can create illusions and one particularly tempting illusion, that snares even decent people, is “we are so cool we can get away with murder”.

### **Ignorance / Blind Spots**

Many executives are completely unaware of what working conditions are like in their international subsidiaries. Or they may be oblivious to the effects that trading a particular currency down will have on that nation. Without this information effective compassion, justice and fair-trading are impossible. With modern information systems and even with TV documentaries this plea of ignorance is getting less and less of a realistic excuse.

### **Cultural And Class Differences**

Does an executive understand what it is like for a blue-collar worker to have a 10% pay cut? Are other cultures valued at the same value as our own culture? Do Chinese people value Africans as equals? Do Americans value Filipinos as equals? Do our prejudices subtly affect our decisions? Why are 1500 people dying in Zimbabwe because we made them work in an asbestos mine more acceptable than five people dying in Boston HQ?

### **Lack Of Systems/Disorganization**

Do our systems include information on justice and HR issues or do they just include financial data? Does human information reach us with the same speed as financial information? Have we underfunded, overloaded or undermined HR so that it has a tough time raising the issues with us?

## **Organizational Politics**

Are we axing division X because we hate the manager of division X and this is payback time? Does organizational politics and revenge justify putting off all those people? Did we send our most annoying and incompetent manager to a third-world nation? Are the deaths in that factory partly our fault because we sent such an incompetent person to a complex cross-cultural situation?

## **National Politics**

"If we - then he - and his brother owns - and that might cause - so we'd better not". There is a common fear-based extrapolation that says doing the right thing might offend someone who knows someone who is very powerful. If real political consequences might flow from being just, fair and honest then perhaps just explaining the issue to the politicians involved may defuse any potential threat. If the politicians are so corrupt that this is not possible then perhaps you ought not be doing business in that jurisdiction yet. The same expedient dishonesty that might work "for you" one day could demolish your whole operation the next.

## **International Politics**

Sometimes trade agreements can stop the right thing being done such as when the WTO made the USA stop its ban on long-line fishing in California. Changing international agreements will take extensive advocacy at the highest level by participating nations and corporations.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have seen many reasons why good decent people end up making poor decisions; some of which end up also being unjust and unfair decisions. It is hard to continually make wise, good fair and just decisions on a day-to-day basis. Economic justice is not easy or automatic; it has to be deliberately planned for as a part of corporate life. It must be aimed at very deliberately. I hope this has whetted your appetite to explore this area. I hope that as you look at your areas of responsibility you will find out why decent people are not making good decisions and you can help fix the problem rather than being part of the problem.

However not all the misery that results from trade is unintentional. Some is highly intentional oppression carried out by cold and ruthless types. The next chapter will look at those who oppress the poor intentionally; the "heart of darkness traders". This is the area of deepest darkness, the arms trade, sex trade, illegal wildlife trade, drugs trade and slave trade. These people know they are bad, know their operations are illegal and know the suffering they cause. They are just in it for the money and that's all.

## The Heart of Darkness (Unregulated) Traders



As mentioned earlier I have taken the term "Heart of Darkness" from Joseph Conrad's book about exploitative trade and the human condition. Both imperial London and darkest Africa and the heart of a rogue trader were all portrayed as utterly lawless and as Kurtz the trader looks into his soul as he dies he cries "the horror, the horror".

The most lawless aspects of trade are still "the horror" and are in a sense "the throne of Satan". Stubbornly ineradicable they seem to ally with each other in strange and convoluted configurations. The drugs trade is closely tied in with the arms trade with drugs for arms swaps being commonplace. And drug traders and the sex trade have long been in symbiosis with prostitutes being paid with heroin or cocaine. The slave trade and the sex trade are linked in obvious ways and the illegal wildlife trade uses routes pioneered by drug traffickers.

To this we need to add illegal immigration, smuggling of refugees, piracy, the trade in stolen artwork, the trade in illegal cultural artifacts and the trade in illegal foods such as those from protected species or rhinoceros horn aphrodisiacs. Add to this the trade in counterfeit money and documents and the illegal copying of CD's and software and brand-name goods and the lawless areas of trade are vast. If currency trading is considered as a lawless area of trade, which I think it should be, then over 95% of international trade by volume is totally unregulated and outside government control. That is a very substantial "heart" for darkness to have. Perhaps only a few hundred thousand people or even less, are major players in these trades, but they dominate the world's finances.

Some may argue that it is unfair to label world trade by the activity of these sectors. If these sectors were only say 5% of international trade that would be a fair comment. However they are 95% of international trade by volume and that is quite a difference. Billions of dollars worth of drugs and firearms are traded each day. In Australia marijuana is said to be the third largest value cash crop after wheat and sugar. The sex trade accounts for up to 50% of all Internet traffic. The child sex industry is such a money-spinner in Asia that the International Labor Organization has estimated that in Thailand alone, it is worth between 14 and 16 percent of the country's GDP. The Council of Europe estimates the United States child pornography market alone is worth around \$3 billion a year. The value of counterfeit goods such as pirate CD's and software could be as high as \$200 billion dollars. But by far the largest area of unregulated trade is currency trading.

With currency trading we have reached a point where money is a commodity in its own right and no longer represents the value of goods or services. Currency trading is buying and selling money. As such it is exchanging money for money and produces nothing. No-one is taught a lesson in a school, no-one gets a single ballpoint pen or a matchstick from it. There is no product and there is no service. It is just buying one currency and selling another. Nothing is improved, serviced or gained. This massive market, without any substantial product, is the largest market of all. Some estimates have currency trading runs at 1.5 trillion dollars a day world-wide. That is seven times

the size of the Strike Fighter contract mentioned earlier and ten times the size of the annual GDP of the poorest 43 nations – and it is a DAILY figure and it is completely unregulated. Currency trading is no longer just taking your dollars at the airport and turning them into yen or deutschmarks. It is an investment activity where the future value of a currency is speculated on. A currency trader takes a “position” in market with a deposit that varies in size between 1% and 10% of the amount speculated on. This creates leverage so that a person with 1 million dollars in hand can bid for a contract worth between 10 million and 100 million dollars. This contract involves a future payment, perhaps that in six months time she will buy 20 million dollars worth of euro at a euro-dollar exchange rate of X cents USD. Her million dollar deposit secures this “contract” for 20 million. If she holds onto that contract then in six months time the 19 million dollar balance will be due and she will get her euros. However generally well before then the contract is then sold to someone else who thinks X is a good price for the euro. The balance is generally not paid by the original purchaser.

This buying and selling of contracts to buy money is very lucrative because profits are made on large sums of money that are traded in but not really paid for or owned. The one million deposit secures a 20 million contract which is then on-sold at say 0.5% margin on the 20 million, which translates to \$100,000 profit or 10% on the original one million which is all the money the trader really put at risk. Apparently profits of 1% per day are fairly normal for big players like the major hedge funds. That is over 400% per year return on investment. So many major institutions such as banks and finance companies are into currency trading, hence the huge volume of the “hedge funds” as they are called. (However this highly unregulated market is like a swimming pool full of sharks and some investors can “lose an arm and a leg” very quickly.)

Currency trading is not a benign activity - it is high risk. On top of this it has high social impact and nations as large as the United Kingdom have felt its impact. It was responsible for the Asian currency crisis of 1997-8 and has caused untold economic woes for smaller nations. Even nations with good stable economies such as Australia can have trouble getting fair value for their currency versus the US dollar. Currency trading is weighted in favor of the US because that is the currency that the main traders hold their own money in. They are hardly likely to devalue their own money.

The less than benign results of unregulated trade are not limited to massive hedge funds or multinationals. As I write CNBC this morning showed a segment on tin mining in Indonesia where one of the world’s major tin producers (Timah) had lost 90% of its profits to illegal tin miners panning in and around its leases. The illegal miners of course did not pay tax or royalties and thus could sell their tin at a discounted price. The mining company had been forced to close 164 of its mines and could shut down completely by the end of the year. The locals argued that it was their traditional land and that the company was predatory in its practices. The local government, benefiting from provincial autonomy, was turning a blind eye. At the time of writing Timah is considering merging with a major nickel producer.

This “revenge of the underdogs” is not confined to tin mining but also embraces the software and music piracy industry, and the imitation of brand name goods by counterfeiters. These illegal traders do not pay taxes or royalties or support programmers or design the products they counterfeit. They also do not have to develop marketing and promotional strategies for their goods, as this is done by the firms that they so slavishly copy!

Operating in secrecy and under harsh conditions they churn out cheap goods that sell in stalls all over Asia and seriously undermine the profits of major firms. Yet many who buy such goods do so out of deep dislike for what they perceive to be exploitative pricing and predatory practices of the

foreign multi-nationals. Thus, as in the case of the tin-mining company the perception of one kind of predatory trade results in an equally predatory counter-measure. Or as Isaac Newton found, "Every action results in an equal and opposite reaction".

The socially deleterious effects of the drug trade, sex trade and other areas of unregulated trade are so obvious as to hardly need any comment. These are violent, lawless but highly lucrative areas of human activity. They are so massive that they have caused changes in the banking sector with many smaller nations openly offering confidential bank accounts to launder the huge volumes of money from crime or to "protect assets" from creditors, angry wives and governments wanting some tax money.

High standards of encryption, electronic funds transfer between jurisdictions, numerous nations becoming tax havens, plus banks and trusts set up for "asset protection" make money laundering and tax evasion incredibly easy. Using the Internet, within half a day a reasonably wealthy person can set up a corporation in the Bahamas, and an anonymous bank account with an obliging bank such as St. George's Trust and then move all their money out of the reach of their national government – without leaving their office! If this bank has Cirrus or Visa access then the money in the Bahamas can be withdrawn from a local ATM in the country of residence in their local currency! Thus they have all the convenience of an ATM account plus the advantages of zero taxation.

Now if I know this, then the wealthy and the criminals and the rogue traders do as well. Very few people are going to keep their money in a local bank where it is accessible to the taxman when it is this childishly simple to completely evade tax. [PS: I do not recommend you do this!]

### **Unregulated Trade – Will It Ensure The Demise Of The Nation State?**

The implications of rogue trade for the tax base of nation-states is staggering. The vast bulk of tax is collected from those people that the government can coerce into paying it and this does not include drug traffickers or the very rich, who now use income protection schemes. Apparently around 85% of income tax in Australia is paid by individuals - on PAYE (pay-as-you earn) tax taken straight from wages. About another ten percent is paid by the self-employed small to medium sized businesses. Less than five percent of income tax collected comes from the wealthy, from large corporations or from multi-national corporations.

Australia's richest man, the billionaire Kerry Packer paid just \$30 in income tax one year and the Tax Office lost the case attempting to get more from him! This large-scale evasion of income tax is why many governments have introduced a "GST/VAT" on goods and services so that at least some revenue can be generated. Another frequently touted proposal is a transactions tax on each financial transaction.

A rather interesting but controversial book called the *Sovereign Individual* by the eccentric but often accurate Lord Rees-Moggs, a former editor of the Financial Times, predicts the total collapse of income tax and of national governments in the near future. According to Rees-Moggs wealthy individuals will be able to choose where to live and which state to pay taxes to so that countries will be in the market for the tax dollars of the very wealthy and be subject to their whims and their demands for security. These elite will be the "sovereign individuals" and will live like princes. When this happens there will be a substantial shift in power away from the nation states to trans-national

individuals and corporations. In effect the rule of law, which is held by nation states, will not apply to these people and they will be unaccountable and law-less.

The nation-state is becoming increasingly difficult to defend from predatory individuals and rogue traders. Nick Leeson, a single rogue trader operating from Singapore sunk Barings Bank and, with it I think, some of the funds of the Queen of England. Currency traders demolished the financial fortunes of Thailand, Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Nations cannot defend their currencies, their major financial institutions or even the fortunes of their monarchs. The big stick, that nations are supposed to be able to wield in their defense, is getting less and less effective and more and more expensive. A few terrorists armed with \$20 worth of box cutters have provoked a military response that the US congress has allocated at least \$40 billion to. This makes the cost of weapons of national defense two billion times the cost of the weapons of attacking the nation.

When the cost of responding to terror is a million or a billion times the cost of inflicting the damage then the nation state is vulnerable indeed. The USA is also contemplating a missile defense shield to counter missiles that in all probability will never be launched, at least not by North Korea. This is an incredibly expensive response to what I see is a quite unlikely threat. In my own country of Australia the "people smuggling" of Afghan refugees in seriously leaky boats is causing a protracted and very expensive crisis involving the defense of our borders. In the Philippines there are over 90 private armies and four main terrorist groups and innumerable kidnapping gangs. The state is quite simply unable to impose law and order.

Many nation states cannot tax their wealthy citizens or catch their most dangerous criminals or enforce their borders; also trade agreements are stopping national governments from being able to police their fisheries or stop plunder by multi-national firms. Even the most hallowed institutions of the most powerful nations can be easily destroyed and governments of smaller nations are toppled by the actions of foreign intelligence agencies that make a mockery of national sovereignty. If it becomes obvious that national governments cannot effectively protect their citizens, tax the wealthy, defend their currencies or impose law and order then they will be perceived as seriously weakened institutions.

I am not proclaiming the demise of the nation-state just yet. Many nations such as Israel, Japan, the UK and China have long national histories and traditions and deep psychic roots in their national identity and it is unlikely that they will vanish overnight or at all. The more likely scenario is a blurring of boundaries so that national borders are less like fences or castle walls keeping invaders out and more like membranes containing a living cell letting the "nutrients" in and deciding who or what to link to. To press the analogy a bit further these living national cells could be integrated into a larger regional grouping or "organ" that becomes part of the global "body" of humanity.

In Europe, since Maastricht, and since the independence of Scotland, the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the advent of the Euro we are seeing just that. Europe is becoming a jig-saw puzzle of nations with very permeable boundaries held together in a large regional grouping that has a common currency, which allows it to participate strongly in the global economy. This trend seems to also be apparent in the North American Free Trade Agreement and the recently announced and massive China & South-East Asia Free Trade Agreement and the freedom of travel and commerce between certain Muslim nations.

I am not a prophet and I have no idea what the world will look like in the long term. However it is quite obvious that the nation-state is a weakening idea and that nationalism has been partially replaced (or perhaps augmented) by the strengthening ideas of regionalism and globalism. As nations have weakened and become virtually indefensible both physically and intellectually, trade has increased and so interestingly, has the power of the major monotheistic religions. Christianity, Judaism and Islam have all been greatly strengthened globally over the last 50 years. If current trends continue I think we are headed for a stand-off between increasingly powerful and lawless traders and the dominant world religions.

Just how vulnerable governments can be to crooked businessmen can be seen from the Nigerian Letter Scam. The Australian Institute of Criminology media release of July 1999 warns of the risks of the Nigerian scam: <http://www.aic.gov.au/media/990709.html> and states that it has taken some billions of dollars and seventy-two lives of people seeking to recover their money. I first became aware of it when I received an email asking me if I would mind receiving \$45 million in fraudulently obtained Nigerian oil funds and laundering them through my bank account as a "trusted and confidential businessman". Of course I immediately sent the email to the Australian federal police and received a standardized reply. Apparently it is an extremely common scam. Businessmen who respond are asked to send \$50,000 to "release the oil funds" and of course they never see their \$50,000 again! Those who have gone to Nigeria to try and get back their money are killed. This scam has been going on for years, and is known by all governments, including that of Nigeria. So a multi-billion dollar scam that involves seventy-two murders can run for years with the by-now wealthy perpetrators not being brought to justice.

### **Illegal Gambling**

I did not realize how much of a problem illegal gambling could be until I came here to the Philippines and saw gambling on everything from cock-fighting to jueteng (a numbers game). Gambling takes the money of the poor and funnels it to the rich and as it does so it passes through a network of bribery and corruption that involves police, military, politicians and even some Catholic bishops. Only 15% of the money gambled goes as payout to winners, the rest of the billions of pesos goes up the line to the so-called Gambling lords, tainting every aspect of society as it does so. Jueteng alone is thought to involve at least P38 billion per annum. This comes out of the economy, bypasses the tax system and goes into the pockets of the powerful and the corrupt.

Illegal gambling in the Philippines is a national addiction with the poor often gambling "three times a day, every day of the year" in the hope of big wins. This money is taken from that needed for food, schoolbooks, and other necessities of life. It is taking advantage of the desperation of the poor to trick them out of their money with false hope. Thus illegal gambling has three main faults a) it deprives the poor of much needed income b) it corrupts government officials c) it creates powerful organized crime rackets. It also lies behind other criminal activities such as kidnapping or murder as organized crime, funded by gambling money, spreads its tentacles into other areas.

Illegal gambling is common right around the world and takes huge sums of money out of the legitimate economy and feeds it to evil men and women. Many of the rackets that are "winked at" by police such as prostitution, have a similar pattern to gambling - depriving and ruining ordinary folk, corrupting government and enriching and empowering vice lords and organized crime. Making vice legal does not work. Lotto was introduced as a legal form of jueteng, but jueteng only increased, so bingo was introduced, and jueteng just increased. Jueteng has reached the point

where money from jueteng is thought to have played a large part in the outcome of the 2004 Presidential elections in the Philippines.

### **Conclusion**

The unregulated areas of the Market are immense and they are evil and can affect the stability of nations and the survival of governments and even of the nation state. Money is taken out of the legitimate, regulated and productive economy and used to corrupt officials, bypass the tax base of nations, enrich the unjust and fund criminal activities and terrorism.

## Why Do The Wicked Prosper?



There is a theological problem raised by the fact that the world is almost completely powerless to touch the 95+% of international trade that lies outside the reach of the law. The huge costs of bringing the Mafia to justice in Italy or the drug lords to justice in Colombia or Osama Bin Laden to justice in Afghanistan/Pakistan seem to almost flaunt the power of Heaven. It is a problem as old as Psalm 73 –“Why do the wicked prosper?”

Why are these people so hard to capture if God is against them? Why do they prosper at all? When so many honest Christian people poor? Why are some Christians even starving - including many Christians in Africa and Asia? Why are the wicked are so rich? Why cannot God bless His own?

Here are some of the answers to this question I have come up with:

1. If every Christian became rich after conversion then people would soon all become Christians. However this would result in God being followed by the purely materialistic, by those who just wanted the gifts and not the giver. This is not his way. He tests our love with trials, sufferings and apparent contradictions to get us to truly trust and love Him. Many of the apparent contradictions involve the issue of prosperity. God does not resort to bribery in order to get us to follow Him.
2. The New Testament makes it quite clear that the whole world lies under the dominion of “powers and principalities in the heavenly realms” and the apostle John goes so far as to say “the whole world lies under the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:18,19). Jesus did not deny Satan’s power to give him the kingdoms of this world and all their glory; He just denied that Satan was worth worshipping in order to gain them (Matthew 4:8-10, Luke 4:5-8). The power of Satan means that certain areas are heavily protected by evil powers and are thus very difficult, unusually difficult, to dislodge. There are cases where the intercession of the church against crime has resulted in major breakthroughs, as the protection of Satan over these areas has been broken.
3. Prosperity gained outside of Christ, in all its forms, is often brief and illusory. There are various types of this “prosperity”. There is the very temporary prosperity of a bank robber who momentarily has a million dollars until murdered by associates or caught by the police. There is the fear-filled prosperity of the embezzler becoming rich but dreading capture. There is the prosperity of the selfish materialist who in middle-age feels empty and meaningless. There is the euphoric but often brief prosperity of the lottery winner. (Five years later most are worse off financially.) There is the prosperity of the wheeler and dealer who makes millions for a while then loses it as pride in his or her judgment leads to a series of foolish moves. And there is the prosperity of the very wealthy, surrounded by lawyers and trusts, guarded by security firms, quietly filled with fear and dread. In contrast the prosperity of Abraham or Solomon or Job was a prosperity of peace, integrity and blessedness.
4. Our perceptions of what is fair and unfair are frequently self-centered or impatient. Waiting 70 years for Babylon to be punished or four generations for the Amorites to be dealt with is not our style. We want God to grant instant and visible justice that prospers us mightily

and puts all the wicked in jail tomorrow. If this happened there would be little room for the development of faith. We need to trust God even when He is operating outside our time frame or not at our convenience.

5. Some Christians are poor because they do not act wisely with regard to their finances. God blesses them, and they do not build on the blessing, discipline their spending or acquire the ability to make wealth. Many others are poor because the countries they live in are corrupt and unjust or exploited by the unjust elements of world trade.
6. Others, in Christian service, consciously take a course of action they know will mean they will have less materially in order to gain a greater heavenly reward.
7. Many who prosper materially are like the parable of the rich fool who lost his soul. (Matthew 16:26 NKJV) "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"
8. Unjustly gained wealth will be a terrible burden and a fiery punishment on judgment day. So we should not envy the wicked but rather wait patiently for the coming of the Lord when they will be judged. (James 5:1-8 NKJV) Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! {2} Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. {3} Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. {4} Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. {5} You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. {6} You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. {7} Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. {8} You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.
9. A certain amount of judgment has been delegated to kings and governments (Romans 13) and some of them are not functioning properly so justice is not seen in the land. (Ecclesiastes 3:16-17 NASB) Furthermore, I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice there is wickedness, and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness. {17} I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.
10. Judgment is an action not a reaction. God does not react instantly or mechanically to wickedness because that would make wickedness able to control His responses and God will not be controlled by anyone. God sets appointed times and seasons for the judgment of wicked people, systems and nations. He is in control, He sets their boundaries and limitations and He brings them to account. This time until judgment is His patience toward them in the hope that they would repent (Romans 2:4) like Nineveh did at the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:1-10). Below we find some fascinating references to iniquity having to be completed or a set time having to pass before God brings judgment:

(Psalms 75:2 NASB) "When I select an appointed time, It is I who judge with equity.

(Genesis 15:16 NASB) "Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."

(Jeremiah 25:12 NASB) 'Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the LORD, 'for their iniquity, and ...make it an everlasting desolation.

(Daniel 7:22 NASB) until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.

(Revelation 11:18 NASB) "And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

Justice will be done. The heart of darkness traders will face God and He will deal with them and decide in favor of the saints. God will eventually "destroy those who destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18). Given this, and given the time frame that God works in it is a matter of faith for us to believe that all will be put right. At the moment it seems that God might be letting wickedness reach some sort of a climax before it will be finally and completely be judged.

Meanwhile we need to examine how economic injustice, which is much more palpable in the Two-Thirds World, is contributing to the process known as "radicalization" and the production of terrorists and other extremists.

# How Economic Injustice Is Producing Angry People



People get angry for a perceived reason of some sort. And people get angriest when this reason involves a threat to property, dignity, and cherished values or even to life itself.

These reasons we have for getting angry are also frequently culturally determined. The sight of someone eating a pork chop would not disturb most Christians but it would genuinely revolt an Orthodox Jew or a fundamentalist Muslim. People and cultures also have habitual ways of expressing anger. Some shout, some

cry and others just get even.

There are four main reasons that Muslims are angry at the USA and at Western civilization. Firstly they perceive us as unholy, immoral and idolatrous. This perception is not helped by what they may have seen at the movies or on TV. Secondly they are clearly being exploited economically by many of the multi-national firms that do business in developing countries such as Afghanistan. For instance the charging of interest is forbidden in both Judaism and Islam but practiced ruthlessly by "Christians" (we will explore this later). In their eyes they are poor but faithful to Allah while we are rich, wicked and idolatrous. A third reason is because the USA protects Israel. The fourth reason is that we are unsubmitted to Allah and the laws of Koran and in fundamentalist belief we must be brought into such submission by any means possible.

The first two reasons are of course linked through various aspects of unjust trade. The sex trade, drug trade and export of pornography make the West appear licentious and immoral. Unjust interest rates and currency trading and exploitative trade agreements make us appear as powerful economic oppressors of the poor. The unfettered acquisition of huge amounts of weaponry that clearly are not intended to be used against other developed Western democracies countries makes them fearful as to the possible real targets.

Deep resentment is built up when they realize that the wages they are being paid in Karachi or Kabul are as low as a fiftieth of what they would receive for doing exactly the same work in the USA.

What developing nations do not realize is that those Westerners that are powerful oppressors of the poor are a minority, and are largely operating outside of the control of Western governments and outside of the agreement of most of the population of Western countries.

I believe most decent people would be rightly appalled at the injustices inflicted by unjust trade in developing countries if they understood the issues. However such issues are too complex for 30-second sound bites, uncomfortable to hear about and have a steep learning curve for people unversed in basic economics so they rarely get much space in the media. So by the unjust trade of a small percentage of people, our own ignorance and our lack of control of rogue traders we have let the developing nations perceive the West as powerful, immoral and unjust. We have sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

## How Anger Develops

Conflict resolution counselors talk about "the 4 R's" in the development on anger. The 4 R's are – Resolve, Resent, Reject, and Revenge. If an issue is not *resolved* it turns into *resentment*, if the resentment is not dealt with it becomes *rejection* and the person starts to distance themselves in some way. If that fails then the rejection turns outward and becomes *revenge* and the person retaliates.

We often see this pattern in mass killers. First repeated failures and disappointment give rise to brooding resentment, this is then followed by rejection of society and withdrawal from society so that it is often said of them "he was such a quiet person and kept to himself", and finally revenge is enacted against the "cold cruel world" in the form of a burst of rage with a high-powered rifle. The same pattern occurs in troubled marriages as squabbles become resentments, followed by rejection and less sexual intimacy, a quiet patch of living separate lives, then the all out war of divorce. Everywhere you turn you can see the 4 R's of Resolve, Resent, Reject, Revenge in operation. It is certainly evident in the less developed Islamic societies where the predation of world trade and the powerlessness of their situation have become gone from resentment in the early part of this century, to rejection such as nationalization of oil assets, the overthrow of Westernized regimes such as the Shah of Iran and finally a retreat into isolation and rejection of Western values. This long period of rejection of the West has finally culminated in the "revenge" phase, which, if it turns out to be like the revenge phase of a mass murderer, will be spectacular and eventually suicidal.

I think it is constructive to further develop this analogy between the terrorists and the crazed gunmen that suddenly start shooting into a crowd. Both are violent and ultimately suicidal acts by people who perceive themselves as having little or nothing to lose and whose primary motive is one of self-aggrandizement. They want to feel significant before they die. Osama Bin Laden has told a Palestinian interviewer that he has lived too long, that he wished he had died in the campaign against Russia, and that he wishes to die a martyr. The Taliban are the war-hardened rulers of a country with nothing to lose. The 4R's indicate that at some point they will fight like holed up bandits who know this is their "last stand". For them this last battle will be their glory.

Thus the current conflict probably will slog on to its grim, terrible and inevitable conclusion and the annihilation of Afghanistan. So the questions for the future seem to be "Are there other similar situations which could develop in parallel ways?" and "Can we do anything to stop this?" The 1999 Human Development Report examined 177 nations ranking them in order of development (Canada came out number 1), of these 177 there were 35 nations listed as having "low human development". (Afghanistan was not listed, perhaps because of lack of data available in 1999 in the midst of the war at that time.) I cross-checked this list of least developed nations with religious data from the 1993 Operation World as a rough guide. It appears that Sudan, Yemen, and Mauritania, are Muslim republics under full or partial *sharia* law. Bangladesh, Senegal, Djibouti, Guinea, Gambia, Mali, and Niger are overwhelmingly Muslim but are "secular". Nigeria, Chad, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone are about half Muslim and among them Burkina Faso at least is highly radicalized. These 15 very poor nations with substantial Muslim sympathies are obvious possible seedbeds for terrorism. If we add Libya, Iran, Iraq, the Palestinian people and possibly Pakistan and some of the Central Asian Republics to the list we soon have over 20 potential trouble spots around the globe. This is not an exhaustive geo-political analysis in one paragraph! Rather it is just an indication that the combination of Islam and poverty is not confined to Afghanistan and that it may be worthwhile for the West to mend its ways with regard to trade before even greater waves of terror are unleashed from many of these smaller nations.

Even if the recruitment and development of terrorists were to stop today, angry radicalized people will still be out there for a long while. In these nations a youth is often highly radicalized with set radical opinions by the age of 15 and by 19 or 20 may be well and truly involved in terrorism. Few terrorists are over 55 though some like Osama Bin Laden are well into their forties. This time from ages 15 to 55 gives a 40 year possible operational lifespan for a terrorist. The radicalized 15 year olds of today could still be plotting destruction in 2041! Assuming 25 billion spent per year combating these threats (and that is probably a fairly minimal amount) over 40 years that would cost the West 1 trillion dollars! Add to that the costs of fear, destabilization and infrastructure damage and the cost would be enormous. Obviously the easiest way to stop

potentially enduring radicalism is to ensure the angry young men have good jobs and full stomachs. While abject poverty continues terrorism will seem glamorous and martyrdom a great way out of a miserable life.

How miserable is life in these countries? Is it really that bad? When your relatives die because they cannot afford basic medicines, when you live under sheets of rusty galvanized iron and broken packing cases are your walls, when your children cannot afford school fees or even the most basic books, when there is no clean, safe drinking water and very little food – then life is truly miserable and visibly and acutely miserable. The burdens borne by those in the less developed countries are immense, lifelong and painful.

Here are some statistics about what the 1997-8 Asian currency crisis did to the world’s largest Muslim nation – Indonesia:

Items	1996	1997	1998
<b>Inflation rate</b>	6.47%	11.09%	77.63%
<b>Economic Growth</b>	+7.8%	+4.7%	-13.01%
<b>GDP per capita (USD)</b>	729.31	466.24	230.98
<b>Foreign Investment (millions USD)</b>	29,931.4	33,832.5	15,563.3
<b>Domestic Investment</b>	100,715.2	119,872.9	60,749.3
<b>Exchange Rate Rupiah to USD</b>	2500	NA	10,000+
<b>Population Under The Poverty Line (millions)</b>	34.5	NA	49.5

*Source – Indonesian Central bureau of Statistics 1990 and cited in the paper "How Indonesia Is Coping With Ethnic and Cultural Diversity: A Politico-Economic Perspective" presented at the 2001 Hanoi Conference on Globalization.*

In 1998 an Indonesian Muslim saw their GDP drop by a factor of three, their currency devalue by a factor of 4, inflation hit nearly 80% and 15 million extra people thrown into poverty. Korea, Malaysia and Thailand had similar shocks and Korea described it as a “national shame” in the deep pain it inflicted. A few wealthy people in the West got even wealthier out of the currency manipulation behind it. Does any amount of profit justify doing this to a nation and to its poorest people?

Thus we see that there are millions of very poor Muslims with nothing to lose by becoming terrorists and everything to gain. They are rapidly going down the road of Resolve, Resent, Reject, Revenge and have very good reasons for doing so. Since charging interest is one of the major bones of contention, and is forbidden in Islam it will help us to take a biblical look at the charging of interest. Tackling one specific issue in depth can often give us a feel for how things operate better than a mass of statistics on many issues.

### **Interest As Iniquity**

The Bible clearly sees charging interest on loans, particularly on loans to the poor, as wrong and Jewish bankers in NT times **paid** interest (Matthew 25:27, Luke 19:23) but did not charge it. They used money deposited with them to trade with and the profits from the trade paid the interest to the depositor. From a Christian perspective it is not wrong to receive interest on money invested or deposited but it is wrong to charge interest, especially to the poor. There are nine clear injunctions on this in Scripture and because they are so little preached on and yet of so great a consequence for world trade I am reproducing them in full here.

(Exodus 22:25 NASB) "If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest.

(Leviticus 25:36-37 NKJV) 'Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you. {37} 'You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit.

(Deuteronomy 23:19-20 NASB) "You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest. {20} "You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countryman you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess.

(Psalms 15:5 NASB) He does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

(Proverbs 28:8 NASB) He who increases his wealth by interest and usury, Gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor.

(Ezekiel 18:5-9 NKJV) But if a man is just And does what is lawful and right; ....{8} If he has not exacted usury Nor taken any increase, But has withdrawn his hand from iniquity And executed true judgment between man and man; {9} If he has walked in My statutes And kept My judgments faithfully; He is just; He shall surely live!" Says the Lord GOD.

(Ezekiel 18:12-13 NKJV) If he has oppressed the poor and needy, Robbed by violence, Not restored the pledge, Lifted his eyes to the idols, Or committed abomination; {13} If he has exacted usury Or taken increase; Shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, He shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him.

(Ezekiel 18:17 NASB) he keeps his hand from the poor, does not take interest or increase, but executes My ordinances, and walks in My statutes; he will not die for his father's iniquity, he will surely live.

(Ezekiel 22:6-13 NKJV) "Look, the princes of Israel: each one has used his power to shed blood in you. {7} ...{12} "In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take usury and increase; you have made profit from your neighbors by extortion, and have forgotten Me," says the Lord GOD. {13} "Behold, therefore, I beat My fists at the dishonest profit which you have made, and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst.

You cannot get clearer than that! God regards charging interest, especially to the poor as wicked and dishonest profiteering. This is well illustrated during the time of Nehemiah:

(Nehemiah 5:1-13 NKJV) And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. {2} For there were those who said, "We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live." {3} There were also some who said, "We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine." {4} There were also those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. {5} "Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards." {6} And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. {7} After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, "Each of you is exacting usury from his brother." So I called a great assembly against them. {8} And I said to them, "According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?" Then they were silenced and found nothing to say. {9} Then I said, "What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?" {10} "I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury! {11} "Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them." {12} So they said, "We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say." Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. {13} Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be

shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!" and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

Here the interest charge by the rich was forcing people into slavery and destitution and to the loss of houses and lands. They were foreclosing on their brethren! Nehemiah's response was fierce and unequivocal and sealed with a curse that the house of those who did not comply with the order to restore all that was taken would be shaken out and emptied by God. Also Nehemiah and all who followed him graciously and freely lent food and money to the poor.

If you have ever struggled to pay off a car, a credit card or a mortgage you will know how devastating interest can be. Frequently you end up paying double the original cost of the goods by the time the interest period is over. Biblically speaking, the only justifiable interest is a small charge to match the inflation rate as that preserves the real value of the money lent. Above that the lender is starting to exploit the poverty and desperation of the lender.

Charging interest deepens poverty and robs people of their power to make wealth. Unfortunately I have seen microfinance schemes designed to 'help the poor' that charge as much as 2 to 3 per cent per month - that is up to 40% plus per annum. Even Christian microfinance schemes are run on the most impractical idea that the poor will borrow the money, start a small business and then repay the capital in one year plus interest rates of 2-3% per month (equivalent to 25%-40% annual interest rates). This requires the small business, in its first year of operation, to make 140% on capital invested - before the owner receives a single dollar in profit or wages from the enterprise. To ask this of the poor starting out in business is grossly unfair.

Lending to the poor can increase their power to make wealth if it is used to purchase a means of production of some sort. But the power to make wealth is in turn decreased by interest payments. The interest payments ensure that funds generated from the means of production simply return to the lender. At the end of 12 months the microfinance scheme has received their capital plus 40% back again but what has the poor person got "in hand" after a years work? Probably nothing, other than the means of production (such as a sewing machine), that they purchased. They are unlikely to have made a wage at all. The interest payments have entirely consumed their power to make wealth.

Some may ask "If the micro-finance schemes were stopped from charging interest to the poor how could the poor get access to capital?" In some senses that is a good question, in other ways it is a quite mistaken question. "Access to capital" implies that the poor are best off starting a small business, which needs capital.

Small business is not all its cracked up to be. Even in the West 85% of small businesses fail within five years and 95% of people who go into small business would have been better off financially if they had simply been in full-time employment. What I am saying is that the poor generally do not need funds to start small businesses - they need jobs that pay a fair wage. What the poor need is not access to capital but access to liquidity. They need to be able to borrow money to pay a medical bill when it is due and then repay that money without being charged interest. Basically they need an interest free overdraft facility and a decent job. Thus I believe that microfinance should rethink itself as an interest free overdraft facility for the poor.

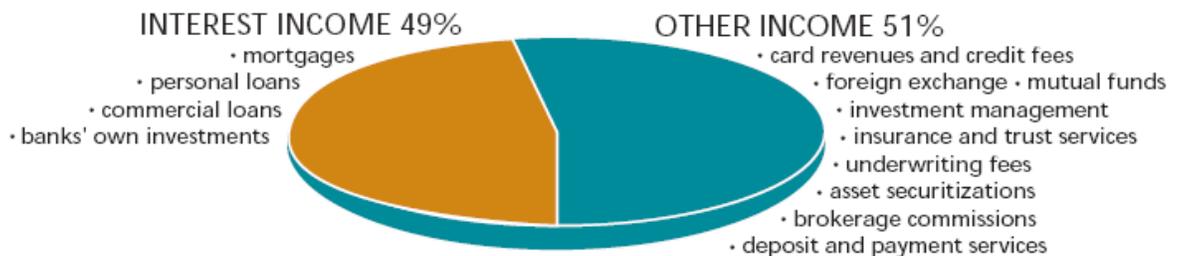
If Christian micro-finance chooses to stay with starting small businesses I think they should not lend money to any enterprise, no matter how small or how well intentioned, that does not have a workable and thought-through business plan. To my mind there is a certain amount of glorious hopefulness among those who help the poor with financial schemes. Ideas that a bank manager or accountant would say are quite impractical and commercially non-viable are funded in the "hope" that they will work - and out of a genuine desire to be kind and gracious and to give people a chance. But what actually happens? The vast majority of such hopeful enterprises fail, leaving the person with a debt. The person is worse off than before. If the person cannot pay their debt and defaults on the loan the microfinance scheme loses capital and has to seek more funding.

The "kindness" does not produce a winner, in fact it produces two losers. The hard reality of business life is that undercapitalized businesses frequently fail and microfinance is just that – micro. There is no spare capital and not much room for mistakes. Unless the venture is very well thought through from the start the likelihood of failure is high. Thus if microfinance is to succeed in increasing the wealth of the poor it must be interest free and it must insist on adequate level of capitalization and on sound business plans. [For an interesting read try Gina Neff's article "MicroThis, MicroThat Left Business Observer #74, October 1996 – just one quote: "For example, Grameen rules insist that its borrowers own their homes - not unlike the assumption that shoeless women have bootstraps. Evidently Bangladeshi homeless women don't count as the poorest of the poor. And unfortunately, Grameen borrowers are staying poor. After 8 years of borrowing, 55% of Grameen households still aren't able to meet their basic nutritional needs - so many women are using their loans to buy food rather than invest in business."]

Even worse are the pawnbrokers that charge what is known as "5 – 6". That is for every 5 dollars loaned you pay back 6 dollars, generally three to six months later. That amounts to 4 per cent per month or over 50% per annum. Since the poor have regular financial crises when it comes to medical bills or school fees; they have little choice but to borrow money at outrageous interest rates. The alternative is to watch their family members die or their children drop out of school. Thus loans are a necessary part of survival. The pawnbrokers and other lenders are thus preying on the very vulnerability of the poor. When the poor pay 40%-50% annual interest on borrowed money their power to make wealth is not being increased but rather is being halved. Pawnbrokers also are "secured" creditors able to sell what has been deposited as collateral on the loan. They also lend money for any purpose, not just starting a small business. Thus the funds are simply used on household expenditure, the interest rates consume any power to make wealth and in the event of a default their goods are sold.

Interest has national and international implications as well. This has become known as the "International Debt Crisis" and is being addressed by a group known as the Jubilee 2000 coalition, which seeks relief from debt for a range of poor countries and especially a group known as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries such as Mozambique. In such countries the interest repayments alone outstrip GDP by a factor of three or four times. Because the obligation to pay back these loans is primary and onerous the money cannot be used for public infrastructure such as health or even for food. Some calculations estimate that 7 million children die each year simply as a result of the debt crisis. The six million who died during the Jewish Holocaust are remembered because the Nazis killed them. The 7 million who die each and every year from the greed of the world banking system, however are simply forgotten.

If poverty is to be solved interest in all its forms must be abolished as the Muslims have done and as Scriptures prescribe; or at least reduced to the level of the annual CPI increase. Can this be done? There is increasing attention being paid to "non-interest income" in the banking sector as interest rates are at their lowest levels for many years. Below is a diagram from a report produced by the Canadian Banking Commission. It shows that 51% of bank income came from non-interest sources.



Note that 51% of bank revenue is obtained WITHOUT CHARGING INTEREST.

Could 100% of bank revenue be obtained without charging interest to the poor? Looking at the 49% that is designated as "Interest Income" we find it is broken down into mortgages, personal loans, commercial loans and banks own investments. Commercial loans are in the millions of dollar category and generally do not affect the poor. The banks own investments are in the tens of billions of dollars and are outside this category as well. That leaves mortgages and personal loans as being of concern. Exact figures for each of these segments are not given in the report so I have to take an "educated guess" that mortgages and personal loans would constitute say one-third of the 49% that would be about 16 to 17 per cent of the total bank revenue. Of these mortgages and personal loans the poorest 30% of the country would perhaps account for 5% of the mortgages and personal loans (by loan volume). Five percent of 17% is about 0.85%. If 0.85% of the revenue comes from charging interest to the poor - then 99.15% % does not come from charging interest to the poor. So we can see that banks in Canada now earn around 99% of their current revenue without charging interest to the poor. Even if my figures are a factor of five out that would still mean that banks would earn 95% of their revenue without charging interest to the poor. It does not seem impossible that they could make this 100%.

Obviously a much deeper analysis with the exact figures is necessary but this small example helps puncture the myth that banks would "go broke" if they did not charge interest to the poor. Banking is perfectly feasible without charging interest on loans to those in need. There are many other profitable sectors of financial activity for banks to engage in. Muslim banks that are strict about their adherence to *sharia* law go into partnership with the person much as a venture capitalist does in the West. A July 5<sup>th</sup> 2001 New York Times article discusses the emerging market for Muslim banking in the USA with its dual requirements of a) no interest b) the lender and borrower share risk equally (thus the bank cannot foreclose in most cases). Large banks such as HSBC and finance companies like Freddie Mac are trying to tailor products, mainly house and car loans, for the USA's 7 million Muslims. Up until now this kind of lending has mainly been the province of small co-operatives. The nature of the lending varies but seems to be mainly based on a partnership contract between the lender and the home-buyer. One institution is funding the lending by making a bond issue on the loans and promoting it overseas to wealthy and religiously correct Muslims.

Why is interest one of the factors that is radicalizing people and producing terrorists? In the USA Muslims feel deprived of a way to buy a house or a car according to their value system. They feel they are being forced into sin by an unjust system. Or as one US Muslim executive said "It's frustrating when you know there is a right way and a wrong way, and you're being driven toward the wrong,"

Outside of the USA, in the developing world interest is crushing them. Here in the Philippines, which is listed 77<sup>th</sup> out of 170 countries in the Human Development Report and is thus in the "upper half" of world nations, interest is a huge problem. Firstly government borrowings have the nation heavily indebted, secondly the peso is falling and it is harder to pay those obligations, thirdly the average person pays anywhere between 18% to 50% annual interest on personal borrowings. Repayment periods are short, and deposits are high, typically a car is purchased on 50% deposit - "half down, the rest in two years".

The ability to earn decent interest on savings and investments is almost nil for the average person. Most are receiving only 1 or 2% return in real (after inflation) terms on their deposits in the banks. Many receive a negative real return. Banks routinely collapse taking depositors savings

with them and corruption has eroded the major government superannuation scheme with 8 billion pesos being siphoned off to a crony of former President Estrada

The repayment rate for most microfinance schemes is the reverse of the Grameen bank in Bangladesh where 95% do not default. Here 95% do not repay their funds and the micro-finance loan is seen as a handout. The vast majority of microfinance schemes fold and the only successful Christian microfinance scheme charges 3% per month interest (40% per year) and is highly commercially driven. Over 90% of co-operatives collapse due to corruption. A prevailing culture of grasping immediacy has developed as exploitation has bred an equal and opposite reaction of opportunistic commercial shrewdness even amongst the poor.

The early colonial mentality of Spanish conquistadors, pirates and spice traders seems to live on in a national culture of piratical plundering and holding people to ransom. Interestingly "national plunder" is a capital crime, and much is made of this in the media, but no-one has ever been successfully convicted of it! (The "national plunder" trial of former President Estrada is continuing as I write). Here, exorbitant rates of interest are the institutionalized and acceptable method of plunder. While it may be officially sanctioned it is still deeply resented. People who are scammed at every turn by financial institutions become angry much as you may have done at times when dealing with banks or credit card companies. When a whole nation is being done over systematically then you get millions of people crying out "economic injustice" and fighting back in ways that are both fair and unfair, legitimate and illegitimate. This backlash in the Philippines includes kidnapping and terrorism particularly on the extremely poverty-stricken southern island of Mindanao where three major Muslim insurgent groups operate and the Abu Sayaf regularly kidnap Western hostages for ransom.

When people are being economically oppressed by a practice their religion condemns they will react strongly and they will feel justified in that reaction. Charging interest is one of many economic practices that are creating deep resentment and breeding terrorists who believe they are fully justified in what they are doing.

## The Equal And Opposite Reaction



Newton's Third Law of Motion states that "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction". So if you push on a wall, the wall pushes back on you. This natural principle of the balance of forces seems to apply in the human and economic spheres in a somewhat modified form. If someone yells at you it is not uncommon for the equal and opposite reaction to be that you tell back at them. And similarly if someone smiles at you, normally we smile back at them. However unlike brick walls we have choices and so this is only approximate. We can turn the other cheek if someone insults us or yells at us, or we can be grumpy and not smile back when we are met with a cheery hello. However it generally costs us some energy to do this. So if equal and

opposite reactions are standard even in human conduct we should expect them to show up regularly in economic and political life and with some degree of predictability. When the USA was attacked by terrorists, few expected it to simply turn the other cheek on one hand, or nuke Afghanistan on the other. Rather an equal and opposite reaction was expected and was more or less achieved (the Northern Alliance has captured Kabul as I write).

The equal and opposite reaction can be delayed. I was a late developer at school and for a long while I was the smallest boy in my entire grade and was bullied by the larger boys. When I did finally grow six inches over one summer holiday I came back as mad as a hornet and spent a term or two getting even with the bullies. I even broke chairs over their heads! (I was not yet a Christian). If you have been oppressed, when you finally get the power to get even, you do! My teenage personal fury will pale into insignificance compared to the fury of the poorer Islamic nations if they get hold of the means to get even. These means of getting even may include weapons of mass destruction.

Islam is a religion of justice rather than a religion of forgiveness. In a search of the Koran I could find no mention of humans being obliged to forgive one another though mechanisms for peace-making do exist. Islam tends to be about scrupulous fairness and exact retribution. Thus it has enormous appeal to the economically oppressed because it does not ask them to forgive their oppressors and promises a God who will wreak vengeance upon those who exploit them. It also is intellectually less baffling than Christianity. Islam has a simple monotheistic God, a total prohibition on idolatry and no cross or any necessity for blood sacrifice. Islam is fair, logical, simple and straightforward. However it fails to bring eternal life, emotional renewal or personal grace and knows nothing of the Holy Spirit. Islam takes much of the inner complexity out of spirituality and avoids the mysteries of grace. However it is these mysteries of grace that contain the truth and power of Christianity.

This lack of grace and emphasis on justice and retribution make Islam a religion on contention in an unjust world. Every injustice must be compensated for and compensated completely and fairly. In Jerusalem every Palestinian that is shot but must be avenged and so the war goes on eye for eye and tooth for tooth until everyone is blind and toothless. It can also work as a form of restraint. Thus Osama Bin Laden claims to have nuclear weapons but says he is only willing to use them if the USA uses such weapons against him. His Islamic sense of justice will only allow him to deploy nuclear weapons in an equal and opposite reaction. This moderating influence is less common and is at best fragile.

The desire for a balanced sheet is much stronger and fuels Muslim hatred in Indonesia against Chinese, in Africa against Christians, in Bosnia against Serbs and so on. With the notable exception of Northern Ireland nearly every major conflict in the world today is being fuelled by this Islamic desire for exact retribution. While logical it is also illogical and dysfunctional. The cost of achieving justice is far greater than the cost of ignoring the original offense. Despite its intellectual rigor, sound logic and deep fervor fundamentalist Islam simply does not work in the real world that is full of sinful people and unjust situations. Grace, though puzzling at first, makes for a far better world.

When God says "For my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" the context of the passage (Isaiah 55:7-9) is the replacement of the ethic of exact retribution with one of pardon and of grace. Christianity is a higher, better, and more spiritual philosophy than Islam although Islam seems simpler and fairer in many ways. Christianity offers forgiveness as a way out of conflict, even conflict with God.

Unjust trade has plundered the developing nations and those that are Islamic have a very negative balance sheet when it comes to economic justice. For them there will be a tremendous psychological need to redress this. The obvious way to address the lack of justice is through jihad and in some cases through terrorism as a form of jihad. The problem is that jihad is not working. Iraq was defeated, Afghanistan is crumbling, the Muslims always lose. The deep logic of Islam (which invented algebra and Arabic numerals) will create and has created a deep crisis about this lack of victory in achieving justice. The logical inconsistency of poor Islamic nations and rich "Christian" ones is being explained in many mosques as being due to a lack of proper Islamic worship. The mosques teach that if Muslims get more and more fervent and fundamentalist then they will prevail. The collapse of the Taliban will put a partial end to that line of logic. The Taliban were as fundamentalist as it is possible to be and died martyrs and still lost. People of perception in Islam will note that every attempt to press Islam to its logical conclusions has failed to deliver results. Allah has not showed up even for his faithful. Perhaps the failure of Islam will be so evident that some will abandon it. More likely is a sustained round of re-interpretation much as cults indulge in when an end time prophecy fails. Islam is set for a time of deep religious crisis and such turbulent times can also easily become violent ones.

### **Cheap Weapons**

Violence is cheap. Its as cheap as a \$2 box cutter in New York or a \$40 used automatic rifle in Africa that you can rent by the day, a \$3 Chinese landmine that can blow up a tank, or a dollars worth of petrol in a old Coke bottle, and as cheap as \$5 machete that hacks a hundred people to death in Rwanda. Apparently you can get an anthrax starter kit for \$50. Never before in the history of mankind has violence been so cheap and major systems so centralized and vulnerable. Even the poorest of nations can develop biological weapons or support armed terrorists. While the expensive weapons still win in conventional military maneuvers and a person with an M-16 is no match for tank, who says the tanks is going to be anywhere near the terrorist with the M-16? When the IRA lobbed mortar rounds onto Heathrow airport a few years ago – where were the F-16's and the tanks? Fortunately it was little more than nuisance value.

Far more people are killed by cheap violence like mortars, handguns and machetes than are killed by high tech violence like cruise missiles. And because cheap violence can still be very deadly and spectacular it can have just as much psychological impact. When the Abu Sayaf beheads a captive with a bolo and sends the decapitated head to the President of the Philippines that has huge impact. A few hundred media savvy terrorists who carry out strategic violence and random bombings can paralyze entire nations.

The equal and opposite reaction, when it arrives, will be very hard to contain, and very expensive to contain. We have already seen how \$20 worth of box-cutters required a \$40 billion response! While such a high ratio may not always hold it will be hundreds and thousands of times more expensive to contain terrorism than to commit it. Nations without sophisticated surveillance equipment will be easy targets for cheap violence. Even if such equipment is installed in airports, convention centers and strategic buildings it may be bypassed, or the terrorists may simply bomb churches instead.

The cost of continuing with economic injustice will spiral out of control once the backlash begins. Unfortunately it may take entire societies with it. It is far better to begin the process of just trade and fair and equal business relations so that the developed nations can put more hope in business and industry than in terrorists and bombs.

## **The Process Of Radicalization**

We will move on to consider some of the ways in which radical terrorists are being produced and how the equal and opposite reaction is developing.

### **How "Peaceful" Jihad Became Radicalized And Militarized By The Wahhabi Sect.**

The equal and opposite reaction of Muslims to Western economic trade will come first from those most offended – the "Muslim fundamentalists". Those that the media calls "Muslim fundamentalists" are often Wahhabi's, an informal grouping (not actually a true sect of Islam) that follow the strict pietism of the Hanbali school of Islamic law. The name Wahhabi comes from the name of the founder Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, a reformer influenced by the writings of the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century pietist theologian Ibn Taymiyah (of the strict Hanbali school). Wahhabism is quite similar in many respects to many Christian fundamentalist groups. The Wahhabi doctrine espouses a return to simple, pure Islam untainted by idolatry and the world. It takes perhaps the most literal interpretation of the Koran and seeks its application to all aspects of daily life. The Wahhabis strive to create the perfect Theo-centric and just society that is perfectly obedient to the Koran. It does not accommodate easily to modern life and is steadfastly opposed to pornography or indecency of any sort. Tending to legalism and insularity they set up special schools called *madrasas* that teach mainly the Koran plus basic Science and a few other subjects. These schools provide free education to many poor Muslims that could not otherwise afford it. Wahhabism is most evident in Saudi Arabia and has been allied with the Saud dynasty since its inception. It is also strong in Oman and Yemen. Osama Bin Laden is from Saudi Arabia and is a Wahhabi as were many of the hijackers in the September 11th attacks. The Abu Sayaf are trained by Osama Bin Laden's brother and other Al-Qaeda members and are largely Wahhabi in orientation.

The original purpose of the Wahhabi's was the capture of the Holy Cities such as Mecca and Medina from the Turks and in this they were eventually successful. To justify this they redefined the Muslim doctrine of jihad from what we might call evangelism and apologetics to a much more aggressive and militarized version that espoused ejecting the (to their mind) worldly and compromised Turkish Muslims from Mecca. [The Turkish armies were noted for commercial shrewdness, bribery, corruption, drunkenness, rape and pillage] With a strong belief in Judgment Day and a deep contempt for worldliness the Wahhabi's now tend to see the Western world and in particular the USA as the Great Satan that will be brought to judgment while the piety of the righteous Wahhabi's delivers them on the Day of Wrath. Jihad is thus the military expression of the wrath of Allah against the Great Satan and an assertion of God's Will and perhaps an extension of the "realm of submission" to Allah, or as we would say "growing the Kingdom". Jihad in this context is not so different from John Calvin's use of military force in Geneva or the Anabaptist armies of the early Reformation. This missionary zeal has great appeal to those who want to know where right and wrong lie and who wish to find some explanation for their poverty and oppression.

While their logic is a severe logic it is appealing and consistent and not unlike that of some Christian groups.

Extreme pietism always tends to produce a dysfunctional triumph of doctrine and vision over common sense and logic. It truly believes in Excalibur and the Holy Grail and that the virtue of Galahad will make him stronger than a thousand sinners. This is simply untrue, but it has huge appeal. Unfortunately Galahad on his charger is no match for a machine gun wielded by a drunken sinner. The romantic dream of pietism is constantly shattered by brutal reality. As one cynic has observed "God tends to be on the side of the big battalions". Pietism makes the massive error of thinking that God governs the world on the basis of virtue alone and allots His resources and blessings (including military victories) to those who are most righteous. This is codswallop. If God allocated resources according to our virtue we would all be up to our necks in mud. None of us is sufficiently virtuous to earn a single cent from God - for we are all sinners (Romans 2 and 3). God's governance of the Universe is primarily based on His own sovereign will not on our personal piety. He has plans for us before we were born and before we have done anything right or wrong (Romans 9). Beyond this God tends to govern through justice and wisdom, which are very different from fervor and piety. The Pharisees were fervent and pious, but they were not just or wise with the wisdom of God, or they would not have crucified Jesus Christ. Having a zeal for the holy is good and is commended in Scripture, but it is insufficient in itself.

The Wahhabis are like the Jews of Romans 10 who "have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge" and are thus lost in their piety. We need to pray that they will find Christ and be filled with the love of God and of their neighbor and that they will go on to live lives of deep wisdom, discernment, justice, mercy and truth.

### **When Nothing Is Sacred Any More.**

How does an extreme pietist react when the Great Satan is violating that which he or she considers holy? When American bases are in Saudi Arabia the land of the Holy Cities and when Jerusalem (the second most Holy City) is under control of the Jews backed by the USA? Think of how you would react, as an evangelical, if a gigantic pornographic billboard was put up just across the road from your church. That intense anger that you might feel, that sense of personal affront and violation, is just how many Muslims feel about American cinema and lifestyle and about Western cultural imperialism. Combine this sense of personal affront and violation with the militarized doctrine of jihad and hat would you do? Burn down the billboard? Probably. Well some Muslim fundamentalists would not mind burning down the USA.

### **When Your Culture, Companies and Institutions Are Not Valued.**

In developing nations there is the strong feeling that world trade and foreign investors are not valuing their culture, companies and institutions. This applies especially to the IMF and the WTO. After the Asian economic crisis the IMF imposed strict measures that forbade government bailouts of major companies. There was to be no preserving of sacred cows. Yet in the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup> there is little comment about the government bailouts of the airline industries in the West, bailouts that would not have been permitted to Indonesia, Korea or Thailand. To Asians the dichotomy is clear. Third World institutions must be allowed to go under while First World institutions and culture must be preserved. Even the incredibly right wing and pro-globalization Far Eastern Economic Review fired a shot across the bows on this issue in its Nov. 8 2001 editorial about the SwissAir rescue saying "*But today, the principle of managing risk appears to have been stood on its head, arguably by some of the same commentators who had lectured Asia not too long ago about economic prudence. Now it seems there really are companies too big and too important to let fail.*"

Thus the economic rationalism of neo-liberal schools of economics are being applied ruthlessly to the weaker nations but inconsistently in the developed nations. The IMF ignores the multi-trillion dollar public indebtedness of the USA while the economies of heavily indebted developing nations are being brutally restructured with policies in Russia that Academician Oleg Bogomolov has described as "simply ruinous" in his recent paper *The Global Economy At Serious Risk: Looking For Solutions*.

Economic inconsistency is compounded with vast cultural ignorance. Even the right-wing media have admitted, "the USA has lost the propaganda war". The truth is the USA tends to devalue non-European cultures and that American business in particular is blithely ignorant and culturally insensitive when it comes to Islam. Being culturally sensitive is just being polite and well mannered to the other person. Respecting someone does not imply that you necessarily agree with them or subscribe to their doctrines. I will never be anything except a born-again Christian however I would not offer a Muslim a pork chop or a glass of alcohol. That is just decent human behavior. Now cultural sensitivity and understanding is a lot deeper than pork chops and Sabbaths. It means trying to grasp the other person's perspective. It also means not automatically discounting their practices as inefficient, primitive or sub-standard. However the ultimate form of being discounted is to be seen as having less value as a human being.

### **When Your Life And Labor Is Cheap.**

The impression is repeatedly given in the media that American lives are more valuable than other lives. That one American is worth perhaps 10,000 Iraqis. That Americans must not be allowed to die in war but rather the enemy should be wiped out, in large numbers, as mechanically and efficiently as possible because Third World people, particularly Muslims and Africans are quite disposable. This impression rankles those of other nations very deeply indeed. It is also given substance by wages and conditions they know that no Westerner would endure. Educated professionals with Ph.D's are paid \$10 or \$20 a day while Americans with the same skills and education, and sometimes even in the same organization, are paid \$200 a day. It does not take a genius to see where this will lead. In terms of equal and opposite reactions if you devalue my life, then I will devalue yours. Recently one Muslim cleric in Afghanistan said that "one Muslim was worth more than all sinners and especially Americans".

### **When Your Country Is Made Unstable, Corrupt And Unjust.**

IMF interventions, in most cases have made the country at least temporarily unstable and in Indonesia led to widespread rioting and starvation. US intelligence intervention tends to support corrupt governments and dictatorships that are amenable to US interests. Finally the more ruthless and exploitative multi-nationals such as Nike and some agribusiness firms such as Monsanto are manifestly unjust. Little distinction is made in the mind of the citizens of the developing world between these three flavors of exploitation. They are all Western are all bad, are making their society unstable, corrupt and unjust. The US dollar is so strong compared to most Third World currencies that it becomes a corrupting influence. Any way to "get dollars" – that is UD dollars, become legitimized. In fact you can fairly accurately pin-point the more corrupt sectors in a developing nation by simply asking "which sectors come most in contact with US dollars". The economic power of the USA is so overwhelming that it twists and distorts the economies of small nations – often into quite unhealthy configurations. Non-one likes living in chaos and corruption, no-one likes an unpredictable economy and riots and starvation. When this comes from without, from foreigners who impose their wills, it is deeply resented and becomes a factor in the equal and opposite reaction.

### **When There Is A Huge Gap Between The Rich And The Poor.**

Developing nations typically have a very wealthy elite and a huge poverty stricken underclass. This gap is growing both within nations and between nations. Globally the top 20% of people control 86% of the wealth while the bottom 20% control just 1% of the wealth. That's a ratio of 86:1 between the rich and the poor. Within a single developing country the ratio tends to be around 30:1 between the top 20% or so and the bottom 20%. The ratios between the generals, politicians and businessmen and the destitute beggars is even greater. Jim Wallis, in his book "The Soul of Politics" comments on the way poor and rich seem to live side by side and how the poor black neighborhood where he works is only 6 blocks from the White House. Where I live in Manila I am five minutes walk from two senators, and five minutes walk from shanty towns made of corrugated iron that are without water or basic sanitation, ten minutes walk in the other direction is the Muslim settlement of Culiati which is deemed to be so unsafe that taxi drivers will not go there. This proximity of rich and poor has an immense psychological impact on many people. It shocks Western visitors to Third World nations and in those nations makes the poor resentful and envious and tends to contribute to their feeling trapped and helpless.

### **When Earthly Hope Seems Impossible.**

This combination of chaos and inequality make a mockery of any earthly hopes held by the poor. Even if they had a little success the economic instability would soon see it dissipated or injustice would sweep it away. As Scripture says: *(Proverbs 13:23 NRSV) The field of the poor may yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice.* This smashing of earthly hopes leaves one hope intact – entering Paradise as a martyr by dying in battle in a jihad.

### **When A Fundamentalist Religion Gives You An Explanation.**

Fundamentalist religions of all shapes and sizes have very consistent and virtually identical explanations of why their adherents are suffering or poor. It is the fault of the Great Satan who controls the Big System that crushes the good little people who are devoted to God. The people "out there" are all bad and the people "in here" are all good. If you are faithful the Holy God will crush the Great Satan and the Big System will go up in flames like Sodom and Gomorrah. Now I DO believe something very like that - but the difference between what I believe, and what Muslim fundamentalists believe, is crucial. I do not believe that the good people are of a certain race or color or are easily identified by national or even by organizational or denominational boundaries.

Viktor Frankl the Jewish psychiatrist who spent many years in Nazi concentration camps had this to say *"From all this we may learn that there are only two races of men in the world, but only these two – the "race" of the decent man and the "race" of the indecent man. Both are found everywhere; they interpenetrate into all groups of society. No group is of "pure race" and therefore one occasionally found a decent fellow among the camp guards."* Somewhere else he says *"thus the line between good and evil does not go between this group or that group, but straight through the middle of the human heart"*

The good people theologically speaking are primarily born-again Christians who show the fruit of repentance in good deeds. They are not defined by Anglican or Baptist boundaries but are characterized by the life of God being present in the person. Some of the wickedest people on earth have been good churchgoers and some of the best such as John the Baptist have lived largely outside of the conventional ecclesiastical system. Whether one belongs to this system or that or do not belong to any system at all is of no great importance. What matters is the knowledge of Christ, the love of God, the life of God and the doing of good deeds.

The love of God and the love of a religious system are different. The love of a religious system can trap people. I call this the "Russian Doll Trap" because it is like those Russian dolls where the big doll contains a smaller doll that contains a yet smaller doll and so forth. In this trap

the believer thinks God is the large doll, then his religion as the next doll down, then within that layer lies his denomination or sect, then the next doll is his church with its hierarchy and his pastor, priest or imam, then finally, in the center, as the smallest doll of all, is himself. If he obeys the church and loves that then, his logic tells him, his church belongs to the right denomination, in the right religion, which in turn serves God. By being "in the right place" all the problems are solved. He serves the right church in the right denomination in the right religion of the righteous God. He is OK. (The problem is that righteousness is not so easily allocated, it is personal, not a product of where we belong.) So the difficult task of loving an invisible God with clear and high demands is turned into the somewhat more tangible task of loving a church, denomination, holy book or religious system. These things should still be loved, but as secondary loves not primary loves. The primary loves are to be God, neighbor and self.

It is easy to lose out on one of these primary forms of love. It is easy to neglect God, despise our neighbor or hate ourselves. For people caught up in fundamentalist Islam the love of self is lost almost totally so that suicide missions are contemplated. Religion without proper self-respect becomes not saintly but bizarre. I will explore this further later on.

Without getting too lost in theology the point is this – that fundamentalist Muslims have a well-defined enemy, it is external to their religion, and it is us. It may be just an error in logic but it may well prove to be a very deadly error in logic. People who are suffering are given an enemy that has a face – our faces. They have an easy enemy that has a geographical location and meets in certain sorts of buildings. This fanatical and erroneous explanation lacks sophistication and truth but makes up for it with intensity and believability. Especially when unjust trade gives them every reason to believe it.

### **When A Fundamentalist Religion Gives You A Caring Community.**

The mosque is the center of Islamic community and is frequently a caring community that is absolutely essential to the personal survival of the poor. Your friends in the mosque will bring you food, help you, lend interest free short-term loans to you and so on. The times of joy and feasting, celebrations, marriages and deaths all tend to involve the mosque. Five times a day the Muslim hears from the imam calling him or her to pray towards Mecca. The connection between mosque and Muslim is close and personal as is the concept of Muslim brotherhood.

Place yourself in the position of a poor Muslim in Afghanistan. Islam and the mosque provide food, shelter, friendship and finance. The "Christians" (and to them all Westerners are Christians) provide bombs, poverty and pornography. What would any sane person choose? Those involved in Muslim evangelism say that the claims of Christ will not be deeply heard by Muslims until we can provide them with a community equal to or better than the community that they currently belong to. Since Christians have failed to provide Muslims with viable Christian communities of practical love and friendship that demonstrate the gospel like the church in Acts the Muslims are staying in the mosque. And the mosque, when controlled by fundamentalist Imams is a place where the Great Satan is identified, Judgment Day is preached and terrorists are recruited. The mosque is the place where they are taught to kill.

### **When A Fundamentalist Religion Gives You A Free Education.**

Next to the mosque in importance in the radicalization of Muslims is the *maddarissa* or Islamic school. Here is what Benazir Bhutto, former Prime Minister of Pakistan, had to say about these Islamic schools in her essay "The Radicalisation of Pakistani Civil Society":

*The great religion of Islam is done a disservice by rulers like Mullah Omar (head of the Taliban). He, apparently, studied in a Karachi Maddarissa. Pakistani madarissas have a doctrinaire curriculum. Their graduates are singularly focussed on the sectarian nature of their studies. Independent thinking is prohibited. This prevents*

*students' access to a varied body of research and denies them the ability to assimilate knowledge beyond what is taught as rote. This education by rote, obediently accepted without question, is a form of brainwashing. The graduates are incapable of independent thinking or decision-making. They are pre-programmed. [Just to be confusing there are numerous English spellings of the Arabic word. spellings that I have come across madarissa, maddarissa, and madrassa.]*

These madarissas are free and this is an important factor for the poor. They are also strict, responsible, and unworldly. They are only taught things that agree with a conservative interpretation of the Muslim faith and they are taught by rote and by memorization. They are not taught to think deeply or critically about life or religion. Conformity takes precedence over truth. Of course this can happen in any type of school, secular, Marxist, Christian or Muslim. It is not necessarily a function of a particular religion but of an approach to socialization of youth. However it is an approach that suits fundamentalism of all types very well and produces serviceable recruits for further radicalization, and in extreme cases for becoming suicide bombers or terrorists.

### **When A Fundamentalist Religion Gives You A New Self That Feels Good.**

Steve Hassan, in his illuminating book "*Combating Cult Mind Control*" shows how cults impose a second "cult self" over the person's true self. On the surface is the adapted self, the conformed and regimented and controlled cult self. Deep down and often buried is the true self. The cult self is derived, it does not have life of its own and so tends to be wooden, or fake or "plastic" or rigid, a sort of imitation self that looks like everyone else in the cult but which lacks deep authenticity and true life. The true self is still there and from time to time erupts as when two terrorists went to strip club and got drunk (both forbidden in Islam) the night before their hijacking mission. The desire for "some life" was there and the thought that their martyrdom would send them straight to Paradise and make their sin forgivable was probably factored in.

The "cult self" initially feels very good because it lacks complexity, mystery or doubt. It is unambiguous and gets a great deal on initial reinforcement from the group as it is formed. On the other hand assertion of the "real self" is uniformly seen as sin or rebellion and punished severely. Rebellion can be something as simple as listening to music or a woman showing her face in public. In extreme cases the cult self is also a survival mechanism. If the penalty for listening to music is death – then you turn off the radio! Gradually you learn to adapt to a life without the radio and a music-less life becomes part of you, or at least part of your cult self.

The "cult self" controls the person through a complex set of fears and prohibitions. Some of these include: "The world is evil, only in here is safe." "The other denominations are all compromised and of the Devil and will only tell you lies." "This is the only place with the truth." "We are the cutting edge of God's work and our leader is specially anointed by God." And "If you do X God will punish you and you will go mad/die/lose your salvation." The gradual expansion of X from biblical categories (such as murder or adultery) to cult categories such as reading a newspaper goes unnoticed by many people until it is too late. The cult self is very real and very powerful and people under its influence can become missionaries or even become terrorists.

### **When A Fundamentalist Religion Says The Enemy Is Without Human Value.**

Because fundamentalist Islam says all good is within their group, and all evil is outside the group, and by corollary all that is outside is evil - then that which is outside has no redeeming features. Those outside Islam are perceived as children of the Devil to be destroyed mercilessly for their oppression of Muslims. The motto of the Inquisition regarding heretics was "kill them all and let God sort them out" and some of this medieval mentality permeates the more extreme sectors of fundamentalist Islam.

Strangely this is the equal and opposite reaction to the devaluing of human life by global corporations – that I wrote of earlier in this chapter. If we want Muslims to stop killing non-

Muslims then we need to get the extremists to see that non-Muslims can be decent human beings of value and worth. If our firms, that represent us overseas, do not behave decently, then the job is made doubly difficult and the stereotype is reinforced.

### **When A Fundamentalist Religion Selects You To Strike At The Enemy.**

Ahmed lives in poverty in Saudi Arabia, and is educated in a maddarissa, at the age of 19 he loses his job and later his girlfriend. He turns to his fundamentalist imam for counsel. What should he do with his life? He receives the advice "This was all part of the will of Allah whose plans are inscrutable, perhaps he is pruning your life so that you can serve him more fully." Many conversations later Ahmed is told: "There is a great need for warriors to be involved in jihad, I know you are specially chosen for this, would you like to go into training? Ahmed travels overseas for the first time in his life; he is treated as a person of some worth, and enters a tough but fairly boring training regime in Afghanistan. He is free to leave if he wants. This is not that important. He is just being watched and given basic military training and lessons in memorizing the Koran. He has, for the first time in years, a sense of mission and a feeling of significance. "This is good" he says to himself "I made the right choice in serving Allah, I am glad I was fired from that boring job and lost my girlfriend, now I have real meaning in life, I don't want to go back to living for material things like buying a motorbike ever again."

After a while Ahmed becomes involved in real missions, perhaps first as a courier and then later in more important roles. Finally Ahmed is sent along the network to a Hamas training camp for suicide bombers and is shown how to be calm and cool, to shave his beard, to be perfectly normal until he is at the target and can activate the button that detonates 10kg of high explosive. He is told that when the bomb explodes he will feel no pain but go instantly to Paradise as a martyr.

### **When You Die Killing The Enemy You Go To Paradise.**

Why does a Muslim terrorist want to kill us? Because he wants to go to Heaven, or more correctly - to Paradise. Getting to heaven by killing your enemies is not a very Christian concept and so I will explain it a little.

In the Koran in "The Chapter of Mohamed, Also Called Fight (XLVII Medina) it says "*When you meet those who misbelieve then strike off their heads and bind fast their bonds!...and Allah may try some of you by the others (those not conquered). And those who are slain in Allah's cause, their works shall not go wrong; He will guide them and set right their mind; and will make them enter into Paradise which He has told them of.*" (I am using a rather old English translation of the Koran.) Elsewhere Paradise is described as a place of perfect peace - "the land beneath which rivers flow", full of fruits, rivers of pure water, milk and wine, with silver and gold plates, thrones, luxury and wives. Contrary to the popular media I have found many references in the Koran to both men and women entering Paradise though it does seem a rather male idyll.

Martyrdom is thus a short-cut to sanctification, a way of instant perfection and the fastest route to comfort and luxury for those denied such things all their life. This is not a Christian concept. The Bible does not say anything like "martyred Christians go straight to heaven". Martyrs do indeed have a special place of sorts and a special reward; and precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His saints. That much is true. But absolution for sins comes only through faith in the cross of Christ, not by attaching 10kgs of C4 high explosive to your body and detonating it in a crowded shopping mall in Jerusalem. For Christians forgiveness comes through faith not through works; works are the fruit of repentance, and they come later – after justification. For Christians, works are the desired expression of the indwelling new life in Christ and are a result of His work of grace in us through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10).

In contrast to Christianity, Muslim martyrdom is a certain promise of otherwise uncertain forgiveness and a sure road to Paradise, luxury and bliss. Thus it is very appealing to the poor and the wretched.

### **When A Greedy System Oppresses A Crazy Religion Then War Is Inevitable**

This process of radicalization that we have examined in the past four chapters boils down to this – when a ruthless and greedy market system oppresses a coldly logical but crazy religious system then war is inevitable. The solution is that both the market and the terrorists must be brought to see the errors of their ways. I believe only the Kingdom can do that. Only the Kingdom can preach Christ to the Muslims and justice and restraint to the Market. Only the Kingdom has the values, power and perspective to change the situation for the good.

Both the internal logic of neo-liberal economics and the internal logic of Islam are seriously flawed, inconsistent and self-reinforcing. Both are producing death and injustice. Only the truth of Kingdom logic can bring the world back into balance and it is imperative that it does.

Prosperity has not shown up for Muslims as a result of fanatically following Allah. Neither has it showed up for the market by fanatically following “simply ruinous” IMF prescriptions. Prosperity will flow from God through wisdom and the Protestant work ethic. If the world wants real prosperity it will not find it in Islam neither will it find it in ruthless free market practices and lawless trade. It will only be found by following God’s kingdom prescriptions and building peace. That leads us to the next section.

## The Rise Of The Unreasonable Man



The somewhat sexist title of this chapter comes from the following quote by George Bernard Shaw:

*The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.*

**George Bernard Shaw , *Man and Superman (1903) "Maxims for Revolutionists"***

Thousands of white papers, green papers, Ph.D. theses, consultations, resolutions and erudite tomes have not made much impact on global injustice. The answers to poverty, development, justice and many other problems have been found, they are known and well-researched and written up by the numerous experts and agencies in these fields. But this vast knowledge is having little effect because powerful interests prevent its implementation.

Thus Reason is now perceived as having utterly failed humanity in its promise to deliver a golden age of justice and peace. This is giving rise to the alternative to reason – unreason, violence and the charismatic “Unreasonable Men” who are hatred incarnate.

Reason has left Africa with HIV and the Arab world with under-development and injustice. The “golden straitjacket” of globalization and IMF monetary policy has proved “simply ruinous”. Faith in the “reasonable man” is at an all time low. In response to this the hope for justice and prosperity and meaning has been transferred to a group of “unreasonable men” (and women).

Right across the globe people who are enemies of reason have become amazingly popular - from Eminem to Madonna to Bin Laden and Moqtada Sadr. Gangster rap, kabala mysticism, terrorism and insurgency now have millions even billions of followers. These enemies of reason are now often seen as greater hopes for the poor than lawful and reasonable discussion by elected representatives and scholars.

Truth is being trashed and documentaries such as Fahrenheit 911, which are little short of being pure propaganda, are now popular, and are not discredited in the media but instead, receive awards. The beheading of a hostage is now videotaped and broadcast on the Internet – and gets millions of hits. Visceral bloodthirsty propagandizing is starting to fill the airwaves in both East and West.

The event that made me realize that reason was dead was an inter-faith prayer day, organized by Pope John Paul II shortly after September 11. At this inter-faith gathering, held at the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, the great advocate of non-violence, the heads of all the major faiths signed an agreement that there would be no more religious wars, and no more violence based on religious grounds.

But what happened after this day of fine sentiments and prayers and signings and agreements? Did the Jews and the Muslims stop hating and killing each other? Did Osama Bin

Laden go on tape and say "Well, the top Muslim imams have said there should be no more killing so I will stop my jihad." Not a bit of it! Nothing happened, that's what!

If the same agreement had been made a couple of hundred years ago, there would have been a huge flow-on, wars would have ceased immediately, it would have been discussed for years and the signed document would be framed like the Magna Carta.

But now the signing of such a declaration is just one more media event among thousands – a mere show, with no teeth and no force and no impact. The combined resolutions of the world's religious leaders are not worth the paper they are written on and have no restraining effect on those that follow them.

And it is not just clerics that are being ignored. Any voice of reason that is not backed with money and power goes unheard – whether it be a wise academic, a pope, an imam or even the General Assembly of the United Nations. Thus the discourse of reason and authority has been replaced by the discourse of power and persuasion by any means.

## **The Abandonment of Principle**

The rise of the unreasonable man has meant a large-scale abandonment of principle. An illustration of this is that torture is now on the rise because it is "effective" even though it is clearly wrong. Power and persuasion by any means is now the driving logic of world affairs.

The large-scale abandonment of reason and principle by almost all parties is not just a minor philosophical shift – it is a moral and spiritual disaster that can only lead to ongoing conflict on a global scale.

Few poor white Americans believe they will receive justice from either of the current Presidential candidates (George W. Bush and John Kerry) – both of whom are strongly identified with the privileged. So they seek their solace in the lyrics of Eminem and the movies of Michael Moore. They go to the unreasonable, the untruthful and the violent to lead them and to shepherd them.

When reason fails people go elsewhere – to drugs, to mysticism, to promiscuity, to alcohol and increasingly to violence and to death. Just before Labor Day each year the Burning Man Festival is held in Black Rock Arizona. In this an annual experiment in temporary community (which its website says is "dedicated to radical self-expression and radical self-reliance"). During the festival a huge wooden effigy of a man is burned, along with a vast plywood temple containing prayers. Past themes have included Fertility, Time, Hell, Outer Space, The Body, The Floating World, Beyond Belief and The Vault of Heaven. The Burning Man Festival was attended by over 40,000 people in 2004 and is a post-rational pagan festival in the heart of America.

## **Rage**

A large chunk of the world is deeply angry at life. Firstly there is a fundamental sense of rage that is part of living in a fallen world that we know is "all wrong". Secondly there is directed rage at particular causes and injustices to the person, nation or culture. These fires of rage burn deep and volcano-like they brood within the heart of nations. The "unreasonable men" are tapping into this discontent and using it for their own purposes. Culture is all about the

restraint of this rage or its redirection to peaceful means and the upholding of social norms. If we allow people such as Eminem to teach that rage is good, and that violent rage is better - then we are unloosing a truly monstrous force.

Rage and passion and revenge feel sweet and are highly infectious. For the powerless, all the power they have is the strong sense of their own hate within them. This boiling hate is lawless and does not want to be restrained by facts or principles. Hate does not care that it is illogical. Hate knows that it destroys and it enjoys that knowledge. Hate is so lawless that it is not even bounded by basic human compassion. Thus the Chechen hostage takers in Beslan could be cruel to small children, abusing them, starving them and shooting them as they fled.

## **System Failure**

Among the enraged there is a deep belief that it is futile to follow the procedures of the system. As small instance of this I used to protest against indecent advertising by writing to the Advertising Control Board – until I found that it was run by the advertising industry and that less than one in a thousand complaints received any action. The system was heavily rigged against the complainants with no representation allowed, no appeal allowed and no ability to appear at ACB meetings. I soon found dozens of other examples of rigged regulatory bodies that were supposed to be “helping the public”. When you and I try to confront big industry or governments we are quite simply shut down. It took the “Janet Jackson” Superbowl incident to ignite an explosion of rage at how far things have been allowed to go and the “slap on the wrist” tactics of media regulators. Environmental regulations have suffered a similar fate, being routinely bypassed whenever a significant oil or gas field appears – especially in the Western states of the USA. Thus the citizens right to protect the culture and the environment is being ignored in favor of big business.

Being reasonable simply doesn't work any more. Ten or fifteen years ago an environmental or moral campaigner could sometimes win a just cause on a shoe-string budget. Now big money, celebrity lawyers and massive media coverage just gets you through the front door. People are waking up to the fact that they have lost the right to use the systems of democratic government to achieve justice.

This has even come to the ballot box. In the electoral map has been carefully drawn USA 95% of electorates are “secure” for one party or another so the incumbent politician is guaranteed a long term in office. Thus Carson, where I currently live is solidly democratic, and no Republican has a chance here. Our local congresswoman hardly bothers to campaign. By careful map-drawing voters have been largely disenfranchised from having any meaningful say in the election outcome.

To sum up – our votes no longer count, our petitions to regulatory boards don't count, our environmental protests go nowhere, our white papers are ignored, and our Ph.D. theses are politely received and seldom acted on. Reason doesn't work any more.

The rich and powerful have stitched up the processes of government to suit themselves and as a result they have created a simmering discontent that has given birth to the unreasonable man.

## **The Abandonment of Reason**

The abandonment of Reason has also meant the scorning of traditional theology, logic and so-called "linear thinking". Some rethinking has been both necessary and good, but much has been wooly and muddle-headed. Beyond this, at an ever-growing fringe it has become violent, dangerous and deceptive. Reason's impartiality is utterly necessary for the pursuit of justice. Cultures that abandon impartial reason for connection and relationship soon come to have huge problems with corruption as principles are held loosely but relationships are held tightly.

The human needs for hope, justice, and prosperity are so strong and so compelling that people will seek these things by any means – even unreasonable, irrational, superstitious, and foolish means – and increasingly by violent means. If reasonable means seem futile, then the quest will not be abandoned, instead unreasonable means will be utilized instead.

When Osama Bin Laden and the mujahaddeen wrested back Afghanistan from Soviet control it was the first significant Muslim victory since the demise of the Ottoman Empire. The unreasonable man offered hope and with his eloquence and austerity and commanding leadership he soon gathered an immense following as the only Arab leader who could deliver victory. This ability to deliver victory was further reinforced by the success of the September 11 attacks, the Madrid bombings, and the often-effective resistance in Iraq. A century of reason did not deliver self-respect for Muslims but terrorism has done it in a little over a decade.

India, with its British heritage has stepped back from the brink of unreason by voting the Hindu nationalists out of office, yet there are still great forces of rage and intolerance there. Buddhist-Muslim tensions are set to explode in Thailand and in South America and Africa strange new independent neo-pagan religious movements are stoking the fires of revolution. The "unreasonable men" are on the rise and there is some evidence that they are learning from each other.

There is no quick solution to this death of Reason, we will be living with the consequences for at least fifty years and maybe longer. In its extreme form the unrestrained, focused and nurtured rage gives rise to a "cult of death" and that is what we will discuss in the next chapter.

## The Cult Of Death



New York Times columnist, David Brooks, in his article *Cult of Death* on Sept 7<sup>th</sup> 2004 written shortly after the Beslan hostage massacre, said:

*We should by now have become used to the death cult that is thriving at the fringes of the Muslim world. This is the cult of people who are proud to declare, "You love life, but we love death." This is the cult that sent waves of defenseless children to be mowed down on the battlefields of the Iran-Iraq war that trains kindergartners to become bombs, that fetishizes death, that sends people off joyfully to commit mass murder.*

*This cult attaches itself to a political cause but parasitically strangles it. The death cult has strangled the dream of a Palestinian state. The suicide bombers have not brought peace to Palestine; they've brought reprisals. The car bombers are not pushing the U.S. out of Iraq; they're forcing us to stay longer. The death cult is now strangling the Chechen cause, and will bring not independence but blood.*

*But that's the idea. Because the death cult is not really about the cause it purports to serve. It's about the sheer pleasure of killing and dying.*

*It's about massacring people while in a state of spiritual loftiness. It's about experiencing the total freedom of barbarism - freedom even from human nature, which says, Love children, and Love life. It's about the joy of sadism and suicide.*

To my mind this is an incredibly accurate perception of the spiritual dynamics of the situation. In the Beslan massacre we saw all humanity stifled and all compassion lost - subsumed in total hatred of the "enemy". There was not the slightest trace of "normal human nature" which is the image of God within humankind. Good had been eradicated from their souls and replaced with cold, cruel evil.

This total renunciation of normal human nature is not something that "normally" happens to people - even in the most tragic of circumstances such as Auschwitz. This is organized hatred, group manipulation, hatred carefully constructed and nurtured by the leaders of these movements who have developed vast skills in psychological manipulation. It is a cult of death and it is quite demonic.

As David Brooks says the terrorists enjoy "the sheer pleasure of killing and dying". The pleasure of killing and dying is the enjoyment of god-like power over the lives of others, and in the end, your own life. It is thus a lawless and blasphemous power. Killing intoxicates some people. I remember reading an LA times article in which a soldier in Iraq said "When I first killed someone it was the greatest pleasure had ever felt, it was a rush, since then all I think about is kill, kill, kill and that worries me a bit." The LA times article went on to recommend counselling for such soldiers so they could fit in with life back home on their return. This soldier was at least concerned about his feelings and had some insight and basic morality. Death cults extinguish this last flicker of goodness in the human soul and produce complete monsters, demonic beings incapable of reform.

Increasingly even Western culture is glorifying people who kill. Killing has replaced rescuing as the manly motif. The message seems to be that true manhood now involves killing at least one bad guy.

In the last paragraph of the quote above Brooks says: *It's about massacring people while in a state of spiritual loftiness. It's about experiencing the total freedom of barbarism - freedom even from human nature, which says, Love children, and Love life. It's about the joy of sadism and suicide.*

Lets look at the phrase: "The total freedom of barbarism – freedom even from human nature". Barbarians are getting a lot of good press these days – from the Vikings to the Mongols. Barbarians are noted for roaming free across the world, killing whomever they want, bringing down whole civilizations and burning libraries. Break all the bounds – be a barbarian! On one level it might seem an innocent appeal to a couch potato generation but it is part of a global spiritual dynamic that reached its peak in Beslan.

Living outside the law feels good and free and powerful and breaking all conventions feels liberating. The fish can jump free of the water for a moment. But forsaking all humanity, forsaking even the best parts of convention and law and conscience is pure evil. Barbarism is destruction in the supposed name of liberation.

Lawlessness, unreason, barbarism and the cult of death are gaining strength around the globe. They shock us because we, as born-again Christians, simply do not think in that way or on that level. The gospel has renewed our minds and given us the mind of Christ. Yet even Christian fundamentalism has occasionally gone down that path – as in the case of Jim Jones in Guyana. So we must at least try to grasp the horror of barbarian death cults.

Kevin Toolis of the Observer describes the death cults thus:

*The cult of death began in Gaza. In its streets Hamas militants shroud themselves in the white robes of the paradise-to-come, and strap dummy explosives to their waists to symbolise their willingness to sacrifice their lives.*

*The city's walls are shrines to suicide bombers and the death toll they have inflicted on the Israeli occupiers. Many of the city's mosques are plastered with the 'martyrdom' posters extolling the deeds of suicide bombers. No details are hidden. Even the Sbarro attack, where most of the victims were young children, is celebrated with news photos of the aftermath.*

*Almost every day, even under the so-called crackdown by the Palestinian Authority, the streets are filled with another frenzied funeral, a dark pageant of martyrdom. Every martyr, or what remains of him, receives a hero's funeral. Each funeral is another blood ritual, a rallying call for more sacrifice and death.*

*By the side of the crowd we even found a stall selling a 2002 Suicide Bomber calendar displaying the faces of all the dead bombers, and Hamas's spiritual leader, Sheikh Yessin.*

*In life most suicide bombers are nobodies, but in death they rise and become shaheed, and their families rise with them. Each martyr's family receives an official certificate of martyrdom from the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, and a prize of \$10,000.*

How can it get to this point where a whole town clearly celebrates and worships death? The next part of this article will look at some of the work on mind-control by people such as Robert Jay Lifton, Margaret Singer and Steve Hassan.

In Steve Hassan's excellent book *Combating Cult Mind Control* he says that cults attempt control four things: information, feelings, behavior and thought. In an press release on November 11 attacks he writes:

*"Terrorist cult organizations apparently employ many of the same mind control techniques used by such destructive groups as Scientology," says Steven Hassan, director of the Freedom of Mind Resource Center in Somerville, Massachusetts. "These include isolation, hypnosis, sleep deprivation, dietary manipulation and the programming of phobias in the minds of members.*

*"The government and the public may think of the terrorists as radical extremists who were motivated by an intense and driving hatred of America - one cultivated by the militant Muslim leader Osama bin Laden. But there is evidence that at least some of the terrorists underwent a 'radical transformation' when they were recruited and were probably manipulated in ways that they were not aware of."*

*A high-ranking Moonie in the 1970's, Hassan was so heavily influenced by mind control techniques that he was prepared to give his life for the group. "When I was in the Moonies, I was trained to die or kill on command," says Hassan, author of *Releasing the Bonds: Empowering People to Think for Themselves*. "I understand the mindset.*

*"Suicide bombers undergo a thorough and extensive indoctrination - reportedly spending hours in a coffin reading from the Koran in an open grave. They are told that they are already dead and will be hailed in heaven for their heroic deeds," Hassan says. "Like members of other destructive cults, they are programmed to think in simplistic black and white, us-versus-them terms. They not only depersonalize but also demonize their enemies.*

*"The last thing we need to do is fuel their idea that we are Satan," Hassan says. He believes that U.S. military action against Muslim civilians will only reinforce the cultist's commitment and escalate the violence. "We should be using our knowledge of psychology to undermine the control and power of the people on top of the pyramid of this and other terrorist organizations," he says.*

Death cults train their devotees to see life as Hell and death as glory. From their religious perspective death is self-purification, death is the moment of significance and the final relief from, and outlet of, their self-tearing rage. Death is the moment of striking at the Great Satan, the moment of power, victory and self-transcendence, the moment of supreme cruelty.

Death cults are clearly Satanic, indeed death is the last enemy and is closely associated with Satan in the bible and Death along with the Devil is thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10-14). In Ephesians sustained rage is seen as "giving place to the Devil" *Ephesians 4:26-27 MKJV Be angry, and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down upon your wrath, (27) neither give place to the Devil.* So we can surmise that the sustained and cultivated rage of the terrorists and Islam's unforgiving spirit gives great opportunity for demon possession to occur.

Robert Jay Lifton pioneered research on mind-control and thought reform with his work on China and North Korea in the late fifties and early sixties. He identifies the following components of mind control. These definitions are quoted from Stephen Martin's article on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban at: <http://www.wellspringretreat.org/html/journal/taliban/taliban2.html> and you should read the whole article for its many illustrations on how these organizations share many aspects classic mind-control cults.

### ***Milieu Control***

Milieu Control is an environment in which the leader imposes a limitation of communication and interaction with the world outside the group, except, of course, for the purpose of recruiting. This limitation stems from the conviction that their group alone possesses the truth. In order to engineer the soul into this "truth," they believe that they must bring the person under full observational control. In effect, such a one is actually boxed in, or even isolated to one degree or another, and thus hindered from obtaining what is true and relevant outside the group.

### ***Mystical Manipulation***

A powerful means of instilling belief in someone or persuading someone is to strike a sense of awe and enthusiasm within the person through various forms of "mystical manipulation" by manipulating circumstances or the environment from behind the scenes. The resulting "mystical aura" that surrounds the system and the leader is sheer deceit. Such leaders perform these deceitful manipulations in order to maintain a sense of power over their followers. But more importantly, they feel driven by a sense of their own "higher purpose," and the belief that they are special agents chosen by history, by God, or by some other supernatural force in order to carry out what they think is their imperative mission. Their overriding sense of this mission makes these manipulations justifiable in their own minds. An awe-inspiring group and leader get the recruits excited about the cause and mission of the group, so that they devote themselves to this cause and this mission. A cult leader (or "ideological totalist," as Lifton calls them) will exploit this zeal and faith within the new followers to the point where the mission is given more importance than the immediate needs or even the lives of the members. These members eventually accept and endorse this "importance" of the mission as their own, even coming to the point where they feel it is necessary to submit to any abuse or command from the leader in order to fulfill the "higher purpose" which to the member may mean his own ultimate salvation. At this point, the member feels unable to escape from these forces that are (or seem to be) more powerful than he, so he gives in, subordinating everything to adapting himself to them. Lifton calls this "the psychology of the pawn."

### ***Demand for Purity***

This is a categorization of good and evil in which even human limitations, weaknesses, and imperfections are categorized as "sin," and perhaps looked upon with condemnation. It is a kind of purity that is unattainable; in other words, a demand for perfection. It is a standard of purity, of rightness and wrongness, as defined by the leader (the ideological totalist). Every human being has a certain amount of guilt and shame which can be tapped into. Given a totalist leader, this guilt and shame can be used to remind the subject of his limitations and weaknesses and be used as a manipulative appeal to search for the ultimate standard of good as defined by the authoritative leader. The result is a burden of man-made rules and prohibitions that come to be accepted as necessary for purity or perfection, but which are hard to bear, and this causes undue guilt and shame. Hence, it is a system of legalism. The guilt and shame are used as emotional levers, and serve to prod the member toward continuous reform of himself or herself. The subject keeps on striving painfully to meet the prevailing standard. But it is like being on a treadmill, or like the carrot on a stick that the wagon driver dangles in front of the donkey. If the subject does not progress according to the standard, measure up to the standard, or keep the rules, he can expect punishment, humiliation, and ostracism.

### ***Sacred Science***

The totalist environment maintains an atmosphere or an aura of sacredness around its teachings and practices. Therefore, any doubts or questions about the system are prohibited. The prohibitions may be either clearly evident or subtly implied. Anyone who criticizes or disagrees with what's going on, or proposes alternative ideas is looked upon as evil and irreverent. Thus, the ideas of a human leader are exalted to the level of God's thoughts. If an individual accepts and goes along with the teachings and practices, being caught up in the aura of sacredness can give a sense of comfort and security, and thus lead to a posture of unquestioning faith. The "sacred science" can gain such a strong hold over the person's mental processes that if he begins to feel attracted to contradictory or alternative ideas, he may feel guilty and afraid. Consequently, his quest for what is true and real is hindered. (And this actually contradicts the character of the genuinely scientific approach.)

### ***Doctrine Over Person***

Doctrine Over Person essentially consists of fitting everything under their control into a preconceived mold. This involves:

\*No appreciation of someone's talents, individuality or creativity; their only goal is to fit everyone and their personalities into the preconceived mold of the doctrinal system, opposing diversity and individual differences.

\*No recognition of one's feelings or sensitivities.

\*The rigidity of the doctrinal mold resists adaptation even when adaptation may prove to be best.

\*The rewriting of history to fit the system of the doctrinal mold.

### ***Dispensing of Existence***

The totalist environment draws a sharp line between those who have a right to exist and those who do not. Those outside their group have no right to exist. The group thus has an arrogant and elitist mentality, considering themselves superior rather than having equal rights as other humans.

***Cult of Confession*** is associated with the Demand for Purity and involves open confession in front of the leader and often in front of the group. It is intended to expose and rid the member of those impurities which the leader so labels. What it amounts to, however, is open self-degradation. This leads to exploitation of the member's vulnerabilities.

***Loading the Language*** involves the use and manipulation of words and phrases to produce "thought-terminating cliches." It is thus a tool and extension of the "Sacred Science" - language that is used in order to stifle doubts and criticism, resulting in a narrowing and constriction of thought processes.

There is so much written in this area that I could fill this book with quotes and articles. It also needs to be added that while Al-Qaeda uses many of the thought control techniques of cults it is perhaps even more sinister in that it integrates with wider social movements within Islamic nations and promotes general Islamic ideals.

In Al-Qaeda we are not dealing with normal human beings, we are dealing with mind-controlled, demon-possessed fanatics whose whole outlook is dedicated to evil, to revenge and to death. The terrorists themselves cannot be swayed by logic or even by kindness. Isaiah puts it this way:  
*Isaiah 26:10 Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord.*

Yes, we must kill the terrorists and thus making war becomes inevitable. But in the long-term we must try and prevent terrorists from arising. We need to create conditions that make death cults seem like pure insanity – which they are, so that they completely lack recruits. We must make a way for the reasonable man to prosper or in his frustration he will follow the unreasonable man.

## Part Three



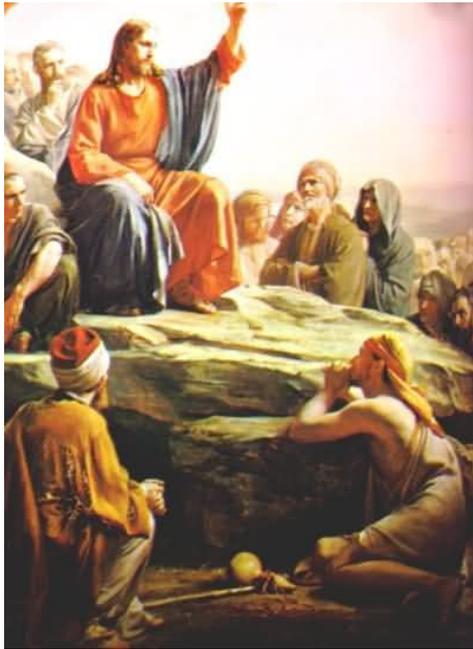
A “bodega binhi” mini-pharmacy gives free medicine to children with tuberculosis in Tondo, Manila

## Prosperity With Justice

This section tackles the tensions between the Kingdom and the Market and how to have both prosperity and justice. Christians are faced with a central paradox “*God wants us to be prosperous but forbids us to love or serve money or act unethically*”. Prosperity is seen as a good goal but a subsidiary one. The pursuit of prosperity does not justify wrongdoing. This section commences with chapters giving a Christian view of prosperity and poverty and Christians are shown how to generate “the power to make wealth” in God-honoring ways. “The power to make wealth” is the God-given capacity for the righteous to generate prosperity through the diligent application of specific and focused wisdom and knowledge towards a definite productive and useful economic goal. Much emphasis is placed on the importance of having a good biblical work ethic and wisdom from God. Prosperity and poverty can have a spiritual dimension and this unusual topic is discussed at some depth. Prosperity flows from a practical mindset and the term “solution-focused” is used of the practical search for ways to succeed and prosper rather than just blaming others or over-indulging in analysis.

The section continues with a look at how Christians can be actively involved in challenging the forces of globalization yet do so in a manner that is compatible with their faith. Christian involvement in politics is examined and a balanced and astute approach recommended. Finally the outlook of Christians is reviewed and some common assumptions about how we think and operate are challenged. We find out how to be masterful, practical and incisive - developing strong personal leadership in life’s situations, and how to transform our thinking and methods so we can be truly effective.

# A Biblical Perspective On Prosperity and Poverty



While God is opposed to us greed, He definitely desires that we become prosperous and everywhere in Scripture poverty, oppression and destitution are seen as evils to be eliminated. So then what is the proper Christian response to the elimination of poverty and the proper creation of wealth and prosperity?

This article will focus on poverty alleviation in the cities of the developing world as that is the area I have the best knowledge of and is also perhaps where some of the greatest difficulties lie; on the way we will touch on many principles that are of wider application. First of all to clear up some confusion, while God does not want us to be among the self-sufficient elitist rich he does want us to prosper and will prosper us to the extent that we develop the power to make wealth within His ethical boundaries. God wishes us to be prosperous but requires that money should be our servant not our master and that we do not seek our identity in material things.

Christian responses to the overwhelming problem of poverty are often out of balance in one direction or the other. Many ministries become so intent on poverty alleviation that evangelistic zeal is lost, others mistake "holistic" for comprehensive and fragment themselves by trying to run too many different kinds of programs, yet others become crass extensions of prosperity teaching while others see the poor as "in need of values" and descend into almost Victorian moralizing. All these approaches are either ineffective in the long term and do little to help the poor or advance the Kingdom of God. Balance is urgently needed. Thus the following chapter is split into three parts:

- a) What is prosperity?
- b) How is it generated?
- c) What are some practical means of applying these answers?

But first we have to ask the right questions before we can get the right answers!

## Two Major Reframes Of The Poverty Question

**Reframing the Question:** Notably missing from this article is the question "why are they poor?" The question being asked in this article is rather- "How can the poor be made to prosper?" When a problem-focused approach is taken, which concentrates on deeply analyzing "why are they poor" there is a whole host of undesirable outcomes. The causes of poverty are numerous, fascinating, deep and complex; and the search for causes can become as endless as Freudian psychoanalysis without being nearly as helpful. Also the search for causes tends to soon become a search for someone to blame and this is rarely constructive. The dysfunctional aspects of being problem-focused include: blaming a long list of people and institutions, framing the poor as innocent victims on one hand or valueless incompetents on the other, the generation of powerful but useless emotions such as outrage or hopelessness, and a paralysis of analysis that results endless

conferences, papers and discussion with little real and tangible transformation of the lives of the poor occurring.

Two sets of questions are much more effective in helping alleviate poverty. The first set of questions involves examining their resources: "How are they finding ways to prosper already? What are they doing that is working for them? How can they do more of it?" This takes advantage of their resourcefulness and acknowledges their informal economy and empowers them giving their current solutions some dignity. The second set of questions looks at moving forward: "What else can be done to help them to prosper? How can business and economic opportunities be generated? How can employment outcomes be increased? How can we find access to cheap capital, training, resources and markets? This unleashes a whole host of solutions that can genuinely create peace and prosperity for the urban poor.

**Reframing The Expected Answer:** When the question "why are they poor?" is asked a whole list of injustices are brought into view so that the "solution for poverty" seems to be aggressive and reactive legal action, mass action and even terrorism. However these are not solutions at all. Aggressive and reactive legal action, mass action and terrorism have not made the poor become rich or even middle class. Angrily pursuing justice has not solved the problem of poverty. In fact it has often made it worse. While issues of justice for the poor are real they need to be placed in a completely different framework. Firstly justice must not be sought in the context of aggression and reaction. By the laws of equal and opposite reaction this simply generates greater aggression and greater reaction from the powerful people they are seeking justice from. Neither can the need for justice be denied. Justice must be sought from what I call a "resourceful and mastery based" stance.

The resourceful and mastery based stance is a relatively unemotional and highly professional approach that avoids the anger and the helplessness of fight-or-flight based reactive approaches. It involves developing a professional campaign using the best possible people and resources and finding out what legal avenues are available at the local, regional, national and international levels and through various NGO's and sympathetic media outlets. This approach lobbies for deep change to laws and structures and seeks mechanism to be put in place that will stop injustice recurring rather than fighting highly emotional individual battles over "causes". Organizations such as Amnesty International that employ this approach and which focus specific high caliber wisdom, knowledge and talent of the task tend to do far more good with far fewer resources than more radical and aggressive approaches.

The second part of our new framework comes when we ask the question "How can the poor be made to prosper" which gives us the biblical answer "By giving them the power to make wealth.". Those solutions that have tackled the issue of "the power to make wealth" have been positive and successful in alleviating poverty. The poor have prospered. Their lives have been transformed. Concentrating on generating wealth for the poor while the injustices and larger issues are being corrected is by far the most successful way forward. To be a bit obvious, the solution for poverty is money. Yet while the solution to poverty is money it is not handouts or windfall cash that is needed but rather the ability to create wealth on a consistent basis with dignity and purpose within a righteous and just lifestyle. If a poor community is given the ability to make substantial wealth on a consistent basis then very soon it will no longer be poor and it will be generating its own wealth which is a long-term and hopefully permanent solution. When we see the issue of the poor lacking the power to make wealth then justice issues are included but in a far more constructive

framework such as "we are blocked in access to markets - lets take legal action so we can open up an opportunity for wealth creation".

## **WHAT IS PROSPERITY?**

### **Prosperity Is The Physical Manifestation Of The Blessing Of God.**

Prosperity in the Old Testament is condition by a group of words in the SHLM family such as Shalom and Shalem - meaning peace and wholeness respectively. Those blessed by God experience Shalom and those whose minds are faithfully fixed on God receive double or perfect Shalom (Isaiah 26:3). However there is no Shalom for the wicked. (Isaiah 48:22, 57:21). Shalom is thus the physical manifestation of peace and wholeness that flows from the blessing of God upon the righteous.

The underlying picture of the SHLM word family is one of rural bliss like you find in a Constable landscape painting. The righteous man and his godly wife have seven strong sons and seven beautiful daughters, the sun is shining, the birds are singing, there is a bountiful harvest in the field, a warm fire burns in the hearth, the land is at peace, the family is respected, the poor are taken care of out of their bounty, there is joy and singing and gladness of heart, the commandments of God are kept and even taught to others, the blessing of God is felt in every part of their lives and "God is in Heaven and all's right with the world".

Prosperity is thus a comprehensive wholeness of life that radiates from the blessing of God to those who fear Him and abide in His commandments. Blessing and prosperity are first corporate before they are individual. It is in the blessing of God on the nation and the city that the individual finds blessing. Even the righteous man does not enjoy great prosperity when God is judging the nation as a whole. The classic example of this is Baruch, Jeremiah's servant in Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian invasion. He longed for some prosperity but was told: (Jer 45:2 NRSV) Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: You said, "Woe is me! The LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest."... And you, do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for I am going to bring disaster upon all flesh, says the LORD; but I will give you your life as a prize of war in every place to which you may go." Baruch's "prosperity" was simply being allowed to live while others around him died of plague, famine and war. It was the prosperity of the escaping refugee who "makes it". Thus prosperity has a social component that can place severe limitations on individual prosperity. This will be a key factor when we come to examining prosperity in the urban context and how the social context of unjust trade can affect the prosperity of millions of people.

Because prosperity was seen as the physical manifestation of the blessing of God there is a very close and even absolute link in Scripture between righteousness and prosperity. Job's question to God was basically "I have been righteous, therefore it is not just that I should not be prospering, but instead be suffering". The times when the righteous suffered or the wicked prospered were major challenges to this world-view. Differences between the righteousness of an individual and their wealth were seen as anomalous. The prosperity of the wicked needed to be explained and a major source of personal grief. (Psalms 37, 69 and 73). This absolute linking of righteousness and prosperity persisted into the New Testament times. The disciples were astonished and cried out "who then can be saved?" (Matt19:23-25) when that the rich young ruler, who seemed to have so much of the blessing of God on his life, could not enter the Kingdom.

## **The Power To Make Wealth**

It is God who gave Israel the power to generate wealth.

(Deuteronomy 8:18 NKJV) "And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who *gives you power to get wealth.*"

Wealth does not drop from the sky. Wealth is generated by those who have the power to make wealth. God rarely directly gives people money. Rather He gives people the power to create wealth for themselves. As we shall see later "the power to get wealth" is given by God in a specific way that is - the righteous person receives wisdom from God then diligently and ethically implements this wisdom and it is this diligent wise and righteous implementation of wisdom and knowledge that generates wealth.

## **Prosperity Flows To Those Who Fear God and Keep His Commandments**

The relationship to God is primary as it is He who causes the blessings to flow and grants the power to make wealth. Shalom includes relational peace as well as financial prosperity for "he causes even their enemies to be at peace with them" (Proverbs 16:7). The prosperity of the righteous is stable and develops continually (Psalm 1) continuing even into old age when the normal power to make wealth has departed. (Psalm 92:12-14) and is a total prosperity unalloyed by evil. (Proverbs 10:22 NIV) *"The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it."* The life course or "paths" of God-fearing and the righteous are "made smooth" and directed by God (Proverbs 3:5,6 16:1-3) and the fear of the Lord and humility bring wealth and honour (Proverbs 22:4). The church should become the center of economic renewal as the place where people find righteousness and the blessing of God to change their circumstances. Introduction to the transforming power of Christ and right relationship to God is the very basis of Shalom. See also *Proverbs 3:5,6; 33; 4:22; 5:21; 10:6,7,11,16,17,22; 27; 11:16; 12:20,28; 13:21; 16:7;22:4, 28:10; 29:18*

## **Prosperity Comes To Those Who Seek Wisdom and Understanding**

It is said of Wisdom -"in her right hand are riches and honour". Wisdom results in righteousness (tsedek) and peace (shalom). Wisdom is characterised by accepting instruction from God and from the righteous and by a readiness to be disciplined for one's good. Wisdom acts wisely in all aspects of life and the outcome is wealth, honour and a long life. The opposite is folly which is our own proud, stubborn and angry way of acting, independent of the wisdom of others or of God. The result of this folly is sin, trouble and turmoil. Wisdom comes from God but is not exclusively religious. The instruction of the Lord can include craftsmanship (Exodus 31:3-5), selection of the most appropriate technology (Isaiah 28:23-29) and Joseph's economic wisdom in rationing during the famine. (Genesis 41:29-38) was seen, even by Pharaoh as being from the Spirit of God. (Genesis 41:38). Wisdom comes at a human level through diligent inquiry and at a spiritual level through prayer so that great scientists such as Newton and Pascal were also men of prayer. In particular wisdom comes through the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:1,2; 28:23-29; 1 John 2:20,27; 1 Cor 2:9-16) and cannot be found in any earthly location like silver or gold can (Job 28). Wisdom and knowledge are vital to wealth creation especially as we enter an information economy. A patent, a technological edge, a better piece of software can be a powerful tool for wealth creation. Wisdom goes to those who seek her diligently and transformation of urban communities needs to involve assisting them in the search for the wisdom and knowledge they need to be able to create wealth. Other verses include: *Proverbs 3:1,2,6,13,16-18,22; 4:10,13,22,23,26; 8:18,32,34; 9:11; 11:14, 13:10,14; 14:30; 15:24; 16:20-22, 19:8; 20:15; 24:6.*

## **Prosperity Comes To Those Who Are Diligent**

Wisdom needs implementation in order to produce wealth and prosperity. Proverbs 21:5 says "*The plans of the diligent surely lead to abundance, but everyone who is hasty only comes to want.*" Diligence takes wisdom and carefully and energetically implements it to bring about prosperity. Diligence and God's blessing work together. Without diligence our blessings are not implemented and the person remains poor. God seems to believe in the saying "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." The main way God imparts the ability to prosper is by giving us the wisdom we need to succeed and encouraging us to work hard. It needs to be said that hard work and diligence on their own are insufficient. In the absence of God's blessing hard work will produce only frustration and vanity – (see the section on curses and blessings). Part of diligence is using "the ox" to multiply your effort – using the powerful technology of the day. Other verses include: *Proverbs 8:17, 10:4, 11:27, 12:24, 12:27, 13:4, 14:4, 21:5,*

## **Prosperity Comes Through Well Ordered Relationships And Appropriate Personal Boundaries.**

As John Donne wrote "No man is an island, do not send to ask for whom the bells tolls, it tolls for thee." Proverbs is explicit in the kinds of relationships we are to develop, the kinds of relationships we are to avoid and the how these relationships should be ordered. Apart from the relationship with God, there are relationships of respect with "the King" representing government and with parents. Filial relationships include the brother and the neighbour and are to be carefully maintained. There are general social relationships such as with "the poor" who are to receive help and compassion. Among the most important relationships are family relationships with our wife/husband, children and parents which are to be ordered out of fear of God. They are to be characterised by a proper order and godly simplicity. Discipline, honour and respect are common themes in Proverbs. Our primary relationships are to be filled with teaching and the imparting of wisdom. Generosity and honesty are important qualities when dealing with brothers and neighbours. We also have relationships with the City and the wise and righteous person is a blessing to their society and is generally in turn honoured by it. Wise communication is seen as a key to good relationships. The economic impact of these relationships and the importance of appropriate boundaries is illustrated over and over gain from a person ruined because they angered the King or were enticed by a harlot . Other people had reduced power to make wealth because they employed a fool or sluggard to their cost. In particular relationships with the wicked, the violent or the immoral are likely to cause a severe loss of Shalom. Personal relationships in the family have great impact on the power to produce wealth -or in more modern terms a divorce is expensive! The good wife however is an economic asset. (Proverbs 31). Going surety for a friend is cautioned against and maintaining good boundaries is seen as a path to prosperity. The power to make wealth can be greatly increased if gracious speech, high quality work and faithful service brings the person to the attention of the King and others with the power to help (Proverbs 14:35, 16:13, 22:11,29).

In urban ministry the building of empowered community and business relationships, access to government agencies and the restoration of primary family relationships all contribute to the power to generate wealth in the community. Teaching urban youth to maintain Christian boundaries and to avoid the violent street gangs and illicit sexual relationships is not just good health and morality - it is also good economics. While superficially attractive these gangs detract from the Shalom of the community and severely limit the economic prospects there especially of their members. Learning to communicate appropriately with authority is a major skill to be imparted in urban ministry and there is much good biblical teaching on it. In many communities the ordering of

relationships to some degree of functionality is in fact the primary economic task. While these relationships are dysfunctional all other economic efforts will be dissipated and Shalom will not eventuate. Other verses include: *Proverbs 1:10-15; 3;31; 3:28-32; 4:1; 5:1-11; 6:1-5, 20;10:1; 11:11,15,29;13:24; 14:21; 15:4,20; 16:7,21,28; 17:6,18, 19:9,13,18,26; 20:2,20; 21:9; 22:9,10; 22:6, 22-25; 23:13,15,22; 24:21,28; 25:6-9,18;26:18,19; 27:10,14; 28:7,20; 29:3,5,15,22-25; 30:17; 31:27.*

### **Prosperity Is Accumulated By Paying Attention To The Means of Production And By Cautious Expenditure**

The wise person pays attention to their ability to create wealth by 'knowing well the condition of their flocks' (Proverbs 27:23) and even making sure their fields are producing well before building their house. (Proverbs 24:27). Making sure you have the power to make wealth is a high priority for the person who lives wisely. The sluggard pays little attention to his fields and means of production so his poverty "comes as an armed man" and despoils him. (Proverbs 24:30ff) The love of small luxuries and pleasures can fritter away wealth on a barely noticeable daily basis and prevent the accumulation of a powerful capital base. (Proverbs 21:17) Wealth can be squandered - especially by loose living (Proverbs 21:20, 29:3). Injustice can destroy the potential of the poor to create wealth and structural reform may be necessary to enable the poor to use their means of production efficiently. (Proverbs 13:23 NKJV) "*Much food is in the fallow ground of the poor, And for lack of justice there is waste.*" Paying attention to one's ability to create wealth can be as simple as making sure that you are in a good job and that your skills are up to date or it may be as complex as running a major business. The urban worker needs to be able to help people find and retain jobs and help them see the things they can constructively do to make wealth. Wealth creation has to gradually become a higher priority than expending money on pleasures. Budgeting skills will help some to control expenditure. The urban minister should be prepared to demonstrate the economic consequences of fast food, smoking, the excessive consumption of alcohol and the cost of nightclubs, drugs and prostitution. One of the spiritual consequences of the Wesleyan revival was precisely this - the poor gained the ability to earn money, to save money and to control expenditure on alcohol. This is credited with staving off an economically-based revolution in England similar to the French revolution.

### **Prosperity Is Retained By Righteous Living**

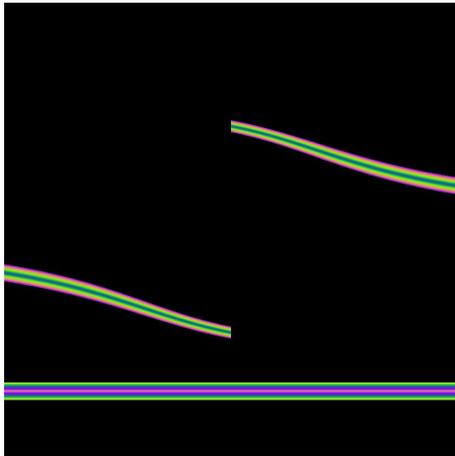
(Proverbs 13:22-23 NKJV) "*A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, But the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.*" Inter-generational wealth is based on righteous living and inherited blessing while the wealth of the wicked is transitory at best, in fact the wealth of the wicked is stored up for the righteous.(Proverbs 13:11,22). Habitual righteousness and wisdom protect the possessor from the foolish acts that destroy wealth such as giving into the temptation to be involved in a shady business deal. Furthermore righteousness brings God's favour and the three-fold blessing of fruitfulness, multiplication and authority discussed in the next chapter. The wealth of the righteous grows steadily and is still with them in old age while the wealth of the wicked has "taken wings" and flown away. (Proverbs 23:5). By making wealth a secondary concern to obeying God the wise and righteous person actually ends up better off. Any study of wealthy families in Europe will show this to be true time and time again.

## **APPLICATION**

What then is the proper balance in helping the urban poor? :

1. Shalom needs to be defined to include spiritual, relational and corporate aspects.
2. The urban poor should BOTH find riches in Christ through evangelism and discipleship and be given the power to make wealth and enjoy prosperity.
3. However wealth and prosperity is a secondary good. The end to be aimed at is Christ-likeness and New Testament Shalom.
4. Poverty must be reframed from being primarily an issue of injustice.
5. Instead poverty must primarily be seen as an issue of lacking the power to make wealth.
6. Necessary structural reforms and issues of justice can be incorporated into this biblical framework..
7. The urban poor should be incorporated into networks of relationships that truly empower them.
8. Creation of Shalom in the way relationships are handled in the community should be seen as foundational to building true and lasting prosperity.
9. The urban poor should be instructed in managing their relational boundaries to avoid toxic and disempowering relationships including entanglement in crime.
10. The community should become a learning organisation that seeks and finds the practical wisdom and knowledge that most empowers them to create wealth.
11. This includes being exposed to and participating in models of education that are of the highest utility.
12. The community should actively seek access to wealth, wealth generating ideas and technology.
13. The urban worker should facilitate the efforts of the community in gaining access to markets, acquiring appropriate technology and finding loans at low interest rates.
14. It is not uncommon for communities to be inexperienced in business affairs and to initially lack the judgment, wisdom and prudence required for success. In extreme cases they do not even know they need these qualities. The Christian worker needs to make them familiar with the biblical teaching on these attributes and to put them in contact with those who do have them and have the desire to impart business wisdom to the urban poor
15. A caveat here - most Christian workers think they have more business wisdom than they actually possess. While the Christian worker can impart the biblical principles an experienced Christian businessman or CPA is often much better at helping with the actual running of the business.
16. Product excellence is one of the keys Proverbs gives to wealth creation. Community-based enterprises must only enter those markets where they can produce goods of reasonable quality. This principle of excellence is frequently neglected when hopeful urban workers encourage their communities to go into programming and computer based businesses in which the urban poor are at a hopeless disadvantage. Food, clothing and public transport are less glamorous but generally more realistic areas for commercial success.
17. There may be a need to develop an appropriate work ethic among the urban poor. See the article "Is There Any Such Thing As A Christian Work Ethic?" later in this book.
18. The urban worker needs to encourage diligence by creating small successes that show that hard work pays off slowly building faith in the utility of hard work and diligence. It is not necessary to create a false dichotomy between "working smart" and "working hard". That is not a biblical distinction. The biblical injunction is "Get smart AND work hard".

## Spiritual Aspects of Prosperity



The economist Max Weber was one of the first people to systematically study the tie-ups between religion and economics. Firstly he found that the higher percentage of their GDP that cultures or nations spent on religion the poorer they tended to be. That is those that were more religious were poorer than those that were more secular. Secondly he found that the "Protestant work ethic" was part of the reason behind the success of the Western nations and his first major publication bore that name. Since then many people have written about the tie up between religion and economics. From an evangelical standpoint these statistical facts need to be re-interpreted slightly since we do not believe that all religions are of equal spiritual value. It is of no surprise to an

evangelical that Protestant nations are wealthier than equivalent economies with other religious allegiances. God blesses those who follow Jesus by faith. However why is Africa so poor? What is it about the spiritual dimension that makes nations that follow animism, tribal religions or voodoo so terribly poverty stricken? Also huge spiritual questions are raised such as "If God loves the poor and is in control of the financial realm why is there still poverty?" This article will answer that question in eight ways:

1. Prosperity is totally under the control of the sovereignty of God
2. There is a moral aspect to prosperity involving personal character attributes and right relationships.
3. There is a spiritual realm of blessings and curses that greatly influences our prosperity.
4. Satan steadfastly opposes God's prosperity.
5. People become poor because idolatry creates poverty.
6. The quest for "luck/fortune" creates an irresponsible mindset that in turn creates poverty.
7. The spiritual realm is used as a means of escape and illusion, an "opiate of the masses".
8. The spiritual world of primitive religion is chaotic and in need of appeasement not logical, lawful and predictable, it thus does not encourage long-term planning.

So we see that there are primary connections between religion and prosperity such as blessings, curses, idols and answers to prayer. Then there are secondary ones where our religion influences our mind so that we believe in ghosts or in luck or in gods that must be appeased in expensive ways. These religious beliefs affect the way we work and plan and have very real economic consequences. Lets examine these eight spiritual factors in prosperity and poverty a bit further.

### **Prosperity Is Totally Under The Control Of The Sovereignty Of God**

This was Nebuchadnezzar's hardest lesson. On the rooftops of Babylon he cried out "Is this not might Babylon which I have made?" For this act of pride he was punished by God by losing both his might and his mind for seven years. After his sanity and his kingdom was restored he said:

(Daniel 4:34-37 NKJV) ....and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. {35} All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?" ...Now I,

Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down. God is sovereign over the most might of rulers and "does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth". God is able to influence both position in life and prosperity in life. The following five verses illustrate and clearly testify to God's absolute control over the financial, social and political realms that influence prosperity, that is - *He gives them to whomever He wishes.*

### **God Controls Riches , Honor, Greatness and Strength**

(1 Chronicles 29:11-12 NKJV) {11} Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. {12} Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all.

### **God Controls Political Position**

(Daniel 4:17 NKJV) ..In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.'

### **God Controls Riches, Wealth and The Ability To Enjoy Them**

(Ecclesiastes 5:19 NKJV) As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.

### **God Controls The Entire Financial Realm**

(Haggai 2:8 NKJV) 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts.

### **God Can Give Us An Abundance For Every Good Work**

(2 Corinthians 9:8 NKJV) And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have ***an abundance for every good work.***

God is the totally sovereign giver of wealth and honor. He rules in the kingdom of men. His will prevails on Earth. He gives prosperity to whomever he pleases including the lowliest of men. He gives not only wealth, but the power to enjoy it. For the Christian worker He makes grace abound so the we may have "all sufficiency in all things" and "an abundance for every good work".

This is not a fatalistic view but rather an optimistic view. Since God controls all wealth and honor and since God cares for the poor then we have a powerful ally in helping the poor! To take these verses to mean "The poor have an allotted station in life, its poverty, God has not given them wealth, so be it" is to deny God's bias to the poor so evident in the Scriptures.

### **There Is a Moral Aspect To Prosperity Involving Issues of Character and Relationships**

Some people are poor because they or the culture they are part of ignores basic morality and wisdom. This is not just "blaming the victim". It is a real factor in poverty. The market factors and structural factors that cause poverty will be the main focus of the book, however, to be fair, we have to look at all the causes of poverty including those mentioned in Scripture. Irresponsible behavior such as getting drunk regularly, taking illegal drugs, gambling or engaging in promiscuous behavior leads to poverty. A case in point is the AIDS epidemic that is destroying the

prosperity of South Africa, which is a resource rich nation with generally good leadership. The working life of many South Africans requires long stays away from home at mines, and this has combined with traditional valuing of virility and the availability of prostitution to produce widespread promiscuity. Also part of the culture of virility is a deep scorn for the practice of "safe sex". This lethal combination of promiscuity and folly has led to a vast HIV-AIDS epidemic which according to South Africa's Medical Research Council is causing 25 percent of all deaths in the country and 40% of adult deaths in the 15-49 age group and which may reduce the life-expectancy to 41 years by 2010 (*reported in Newsweek , Oct 29<sup>th</sup> 2001 p5*) This is further compounded by a culture of shame about HIV-AIDS and government refusal to acknowledge the problem. Such a massive epidemic of course causes deep poverty in families bereaved of the provider and throughout the nation as a whole. Just one foolish immoral person can do great damage to their family and friends. When a nation, city or a sub-culture disregards biblical morality and wise living then disaster is inevitable. From gin-soaked London during the time of Wesley to the drug addicts of New York the effects of immorality, ignorance, pride and folly are obvious. In addition to the "sex, drugs cigarettes and booze" aspects of poverty are attitudinal character aspects such as laziness, contempt for learning and choosing friendships with "the wrong sort of people". These are extensively dealt with in the book of Proverbs and touched on in the section on prosperity so I will not discuss them further here. Thus while God desires all people to be prosperous the behavior of some people hurls them to destruction and poverty.

### **Curses and Blessings Have Great Influence On Our Power To Generate Wealth**

Curses and blessings are generally considered to be primitive superstitions but they are taken very seriously in the Bible. In Genesis 1 we find God's initial blessings on mankind bestowed three things that greatly affect our prosperity: Fruitfulness, Multiplication and Authority to "rule over".

Fruitfulness is the proper expression of the good aspects of life so that they reach maturity and are rich and abundant like a tree laden with fruit. Fruitfulness includes the crops in the field and the seven strong sons and enjoying the work of your hands; a life full of quality and richness. The opposite of fruitfulness is barrenness and sterility, dried up crops, a life that peters out and goes nowhere, that is dead, unproductive, unfruitful, wasted.

Multiplication is exponential increase . It is seeing your abundance produce more abundance and then yet greater abundance. Its classic illustration is how Jacob got large herds even though his wages were "the spotted and the speckled". The exponential multiplication of his flocks was a clear sign that God was with him and that Laban was unrighteous. The opposite of multiplication is frustration and futility.

By Authority to "rule over" we have dignity, headship, authority, the ability to be ascendant, to be the head not the tail, to be victorious and to maintain our boundaries in peace. Its opposite is being humbled, despised, invaded, to eat the dirt, to be crushed and humiliated, to be unable to rise.

Countering this in Genesis 3 we see the first curses in operation. The very opposite of the blessings is brought to bear by God as He judges Adam, Eve and the Serpent. The woman is made unfruitful, the man is made to work in futility and the serpent is told he will eat the dirt and eventually be crushed in utter defeat. Prosperity was denied. The power to enjoy Shalom was taken away.

Thus blessings are a spiritual influence that brings about fruitfulness, multiplication and authority. Curses are a spiritual influence that brings barrenness, futility and humiliation. Curses and blessings thus "tilt the playing field" and make it either easy or difficult to make wealth. Because the physical world is undergirded by the spiritual world a change in spiritual reality can profoundly affect human prosperity.

The close tie between cursing and blessing and national prosperity is clearly delineated in Deuteronomy 26-28 where the nation would be blessed and prosperous if it obeyed God and destroyed in futility if it served idols instead. The nation's power to make wealth thus depended on whether it was blessed or cursed by God. In the book of Haggai the curse on the nation (Haggai 1:5-11, 2:16,17 ) that was leading to economic ruin was removed when the people obeyed the prophets and laid the foundation on the Lord's temple (Haggai 2:18,19). Then prosperity was rapidly restored. God's claim in Haggai is that "the silver and gold are mine". The power to make wealth is thus contingent on a spiritual universe - which we know is in conflict.

### **Prosperity Is Opposed by Evil - Including Satan Who Comes To Steal and Kill and Destroy**

Jesus defines the mission of Satan as "To steal, kill and destroy" (John 10:10). In Scripture Satan is portrayed as destroying the prosperity of God's servants such as Job, unleashing persecution, and afflicting people with various diseases including mental illness. Satan also lays claim to the commercial and political realms falsely boasting to Jesus that he could give them to whomever he wished (Luke 4:5,6). In the "King of Tyre" discourse Satan is seen as "wise in trade" (Ezekiel 28:5). Indeed there is a kind of demonic and godless prosperity that is purely financial and does not participate in God's Shalom. At the end of history the choice will be between entering a Satanic world of trade and investment and maintaining faith in God (Revelation 13:16-18).

The reality of these principalities and powers can be readily seen in that some of the fiercest and most irrational persecution these days is directed at Christians who help the poor successfully and thus break some of Satan's society-wide strongholds. (Proverbs 31:8,9). Thus the principalities and powers behind social evils need to be addressed as these powers can greatly afflict the power to make wealth of a city or nation. The battle is not only political but spiritual.

In fact there are two spiritual battles here, Firstly is the battle to stop the Satanic destruction of the bodies, minds and prosperity of the poor. That is opposing the "steal, kill and destroy" aspect of Satanic rule. This requires a strong commitment to pastoral care, healing and vigorous intercession by Christian workers. The second and more sophisticated battle is against the Prince of Tyre aspects, against the power of trade turned evil.

Systemic injustices, drug trafficking, piracy, the effects of globalization and currency trading and usurious rates of interest can be seen as based in a power greater than mere human ingenuity. This requires a strong prophetic and political stance by Christian workers. Success is possible. Many of the Scripture passages that most vividly picture success and prosperity start with the phrase "a new heavens and a new earth".(Isaiah 65:17, 66:2, 2Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1). This phrase implies the heavens have been cleansed of demonic influence. Under the new purified heavens demons no longer torment people's minds or afflict their bodies. The principalities and powers in the heavenly realms have been totally defeated and are now bound so that the heavens are "new" and the blessing of God to mankind can flow freely and without let or hindrance. The power to make wealth is unleashed under the new heavens and great length of life and material wealth is promised in Isaiah 65. It is notable that during times of revival, when the heavens are

renewed, there quickly flows correction of systemic injustices (e.g. slavery was corrected by Wilberforce during the time of John Wesley) as well as a correction of social evils. National prosperity quickly follows.

### **Idolatry Creates Poverty**

During the ceremony in which the Law of Moses was enacted God made it very clear that turning to idols and following wickedness would result in poverty and destitution:

(Deuteronomy 28:15-20 NKJV) "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: {16} "Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. {17} "Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. {18} "Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. {19} "Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. {20} "The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me.

What sin could possibly bring such a devastating economic curse? Worshipping idols.

(Deuteronomy 7:25-26 NKJV) "You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. {26} "Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.

Those nations that are most involved with idolatry, such as Haiti, the African nations and those that use voodoo and magic are also the very poorest nations on earth. Among Christian nations those that follow an form of Catholicism that venerates statues and "Mary- Queen of Heaven" idols are the very poorest. Everywhere you turn idolatry brings a curse and creates poverty.

Those nations that rebel most against God do worst economically. The atheistic communist nations of Eastern Europe are now utterly bankrupt. The Islamic nations that persecute Christians are totally frustrated by the way their economies refuse to prosper. Since Indonesia started looking the other way when Christians were persecuted its currency has plunged in value. However the West is by no means exempt. We have generated a new form of idolatry that worships money and unless we repent of it we will be just as cursed as a voodoo practitioner in Haiti.

### **The Search for Luck/Fortune Creates An Irresponsible Mindset**

Many people do their financial planning by buying a lottery ticket. They believe that if they win they will be rich and their problems will be over. But the statistics are now out and 90% of people who win the lottery are worse off five years later, the money is all gone and the bills are still coming in and they have become used to luxury and cannot go back to where they once were. I believe around 50% actually go bankrupt within five years of winning a large lottery payout! Why? Because a lottery win only gives a person money, it does not give a person the power to make wealth. As we saw earlier the power to make wealth comes from specific and focused wisdom and knowledge, applied diligently and responsibly towards a constructive financial goal. Winning the lottery does not increase a person's wisdom and knowledge or give them diligence and responsibility. It only rewards irresponsibility. It gives a temporary increase in capital without the means to use that capital wisely and well.

Many "folk religions" around the world resort to divination, sacrifices, magic charms and spirit-mediums in the search for "luck". This can become brutal and bizarre. In a gruesome incident in Indonesia an American tourist was lured to a lonely location to partake in a "religious ceremony". Instead of a garland around her neck there was a rope. She was strangled as a sacrifice to a local

god so a spirit-medium could "prophecy" a lottery number. The number was, of course, a failure and the culprits were later arrested. However this illustrates the desperate and criminal lengths people will go to obtain "luck" and "fortune". Poverty is inevitable if people think that the way to get rich is as complex and brutal as "find a tourist, strangle her as a sacrifice, then get the medium to prophesy and then win the lottery". Real economic planning is defeated by this mentality. As a missionary I have lived in some places where the "luck" mindset was so prevalent that even the most basic economic planning was impossible. In one place I spent three months attempting to teach people just to ask "Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How" when planning church projects. I failed miserably. While they were Christians their cultural background was so imbued with a short-term "dreaming" and luck pursuing mindset that real planning was impossible. People who have this kind of thinking will pray and pray and pray rather than think. Now I do believe in prayer; but God has also made us to be responsible and wise, to reign with Him and to exercise His dominion on earth. The "luck" mindset, which is allied to false religions and superstitions, destroys this ability to think, reign and rule and totally undermines the power to make wealth so that cultures addicted to pursuing luck and fortune will always be in poverty.

### **Religion Becomes An Escape From Reality And An Illusion, An "Opiate Of The Masses"**

This is probably best seen in some of the ecstatic ceremonies of the Ancient Greek religions, the dances of the dervishes and in the peyote ceremonies of the American Indians or even in the use of drugs by the counter-cultural faiths of the modern city. It is also seen in some cults that produce altered states of consciousness or which use intense spiritual experiences as a way of not being involved with the world. Religion can create an alternative reality that is much more pleasant than the real world and this virtual reality can become "home" to many people. Unfortunately you cannot earn a living in the world of religious virtual reality. When a culture sends many of its young men off into monasteries for a few years of their life or retreats into mysticism and religious ceremonies or advocates trance states and the use of mind-altering substances then it is eroding the society's ability to be fully productive. Europe during the Dark Ages and Tibet and similar societies today are desperately poor because their power to make wealth is being constantly diminished by an over-involvement in other-worldly religion.

While we serve God, not Mammon, that does not mean that we need to become impractical and useless. True Christianity is incarnated. Jesus was a carpenter, Peter a fisherman, Paul a tent-maker. True Christianity strengthens you to cope with the outside world and exercise God's dominion in it. The true Christian need not be a monk or a mystic. The true Christian can be a high-school teacher, a farmer or an A-grade auto mechanic. The Protestantism of Luther and Calvin encouraged the sense of personal vocation, so that daily work was seen as a gift from God whereby you actualized His will in His world. Work, particularly working quietly with one's hands is seen as a solid Christian virtue throughout the New Testament. In the epistles to the Thessalonians Paul exhorts them to lay aside idleness that came from being taken up with end times speculations and get down to providing for their daily needs in constructive ways. The apostle repeatedly takes pride in his own ability to work hard and provide for his own needs though he was entitled to ask for support from the churches. (2 Corinthians 8 &9). Thus the gospel does not provide an escape from reality or from the daily business of making a living. Rather the gospel connects us with God who strengthens us to take in life fully and completely.

### **The Spiritual World Of Primitive Religion Is Chaotic And In Need Of Appeasement Not Logical, Lawful And Predictable, It Thus Does Not Encourage Long-Term Planning.**

Western science (including economics) has flowed from a view of the Universe that sees it as being superintended by a single eternal God who is constant in His ways and rational in His laws.

Therefore the search for those laws is a sensible, rational and noble thing to do. Isaac Newton said of his discoveries and research "I am merely thinking God's thoughts after Him." In direct contrast to this predictable and rational view of things are those cultures that believe in a chaotic spirit-world of many gods, demons and spiritual entities. For them the universe appears to be full of the personal malignancy of hundreds of spiritual agents that must be appeased. Magic is the only possible "science" in such cultures. Without the concept of a basically rational universe planning and research have no sound basis. Thus, up until very recently nearly all the world's great scientists have been Christian or Jewish or shared the basic tenets of the Judaeo-Christian world-view such as belief in a singular, lawful and rational universe. Very few, if any great scientists, have been committed animists or polytheists even though hundreds of millions of people still believe in spirits and many gods.

The Chinese were way ahead of the West for thousands of years with a complex culture, good administration and inventions such as gunpowder. At that time though the main religions were a jumble of ghost stories and tales of demons and "fox ladies" as well as the worship of spirits and ancestors. There was a vague and inaccessible supreme deity called Tien or "Sky/Heaven" but the prevailing world-view was mainly animistic. Thus there was no basis for concept-based science seeking out universal "laws" and so China, despite its ingenuity, never went beyond a certain basic stage of discovering inventions rather than discovering deeper laws and principles. Thus this superstitious mindset stalled any further intellectual and scientific progress in China, and the West as it became Christian and rational eventually passed China even though that nation had a thousand year head start.

In the world of economics a fascinating book by Peter L. Bernstein has come out called "Against the Gods" which sees risk management and economic activity as directly opposed to superstition and fatalism. He sees the powerful tools of risk management as rescuing us from the dominion of soothsayers and oracles and giving us "*the notion that the future is more than the whim of the gods and that men and women are not passive before nature.*" Bernstein is particularly scathing on the concepts of fate and original design, which he puts in capital letters and derides, seeing them as inhibiting serious thought about predicting the future. When the concepts of fate and original design are strong in the culture a mindset of helplessness and acquiescence to life is created that is inimical to developing a workable theory of risk and economic management. Bernstein's polemic is at times a little unfair according to this reader but his point is well made. If a society believes that life is determined by when and how you were born and future events are solely determined by the will of Allah then responsible thinking about the future is largely stifled. This applies very much to the world of fundamentalist Islam, as we will see later in this book, and is perhaps a real contributing factor to why such nations live in profound poverty.

### **A Seeming Paradox**

It is possible to be very, very confused by what I have just said. Firstly I have said that the spiritual dimension and the economic dimension of human life are inextricably linked and that things such as blessings, curses, and idols can greatly affect our prosperity. Secondly I have seemingly said that we are best off ignoring all that and taking a secular and unbelieving attitude tinged with the Protestant work ethic. (But I haven't) Well I think I had better explain myself.

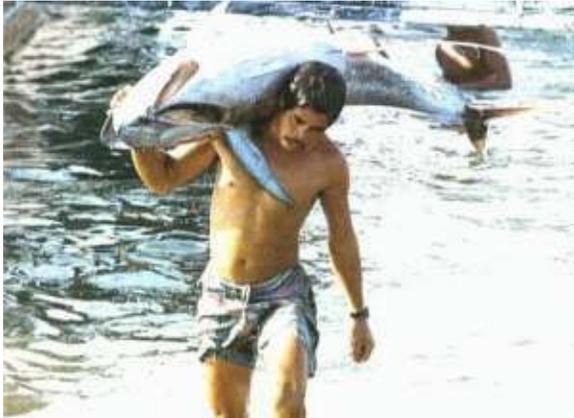
Firstly our allegiance is to be fixed on Jesus Christ and on a Creator God who rules His universe in lawful and rational ways and who will give us strength and wisdom as we do our work. In Christ alone are great blessings and shelter from curses. In Christ alone the spiritual side of economic life is dealt with. Forsaking idols and primitive religion is not enough. Completely secular and atheistic

nations do not prosper in the long run and Communism has fallen into ruin. Men and women need to move from trust in idols to faith in the living God and surrender to Him who controls all prosperity and embrace His Son Jesus Christ (Psalm 2).

When we grasp what Christ has done for us, and what the Bible says about life and work, we will be liberated from our counter-productive and superstitious mindsets. We will understand Christ's victory over the supernatural powers during the cross, resurrection and ascension. We will understand that God will judge our work when Christ returns and that we are to do our work "as unto the Lord". We will not gamble, believe in luck or let ourselves be ruled by irresponsible and greedy impulses. Rather we shall cultivate the godly and righteous power to make wealth through the diligent application of specific and focused wisdom and knowledge towards a worthy economic goal. Thus we will refuse to fear minor supernatural powers and will fear God alone.

The renewed mind is a mind freed from the dominion of greed, idolatry, superstition and the search for luck. It is a God-centered mind that is quickened, intelligent, thoughtful and responsible and which applies itself to creative work for the glory of God. We move into economic blessing not by appeasing a host of minor spiritual beings but by playing by the rules of Almighty God and by diligently applying the wisdom He grants us to our lives.

## Is There Any Such A Thing As A Biblical Work Ethic?



Part of reforming the market and building prosperity in developing nations is finding a method to generate prosperity that works “from the ground up” and builds dignity and self-respect into people. One of the assertions of this book is that the Protestant work ethic combined with a solution-focused and productive approach to generating the power to make wealth is the answer. Max Weber’s work on the Protestant work ethic has been much argued but, to my mind, never disproved. Sociologically speaking the Protestant nations tend also to be the prosperous nations. Of the ten most prosperous nations in the 1999 Human Development Report, the

top three are all Protestant (Canada, Norway and the United States) followed by Japan, which is not a Protestant nation but still has a strong work ethic. Belgium is 5<sup>th</sup> and another Catholic country Netherlands is 8<sup>th</sup> but both of these have been substantially influenced by the Protestant work ethic. The other three countries in the top ten are Sweden, Australia and the UK and all are Protestant. Thus seven of the ten most prosperous countries have a Protestant work ethic and the other three, while not Protestant, take a similar approach to their work. In fact of the top 20 nations, 19 are Christian nations with Japan being the only exception. Of the poorest 20 nations, none have completely renounced animism and superstition, or absorbed the gospel to sufficient depth to have developed a Christian approach to work as yet. Most of these extremely poor nations are Christian on Sundays or Muslim on Fridays but animistic/tribal and highly superstitious in “real life” including work life. However while the sociological dimension is important, the biblical dimension is vital, so lets see what Scripture has to say about a Christian work ethic.

Work occupies about a third of our life, is where much of our character and discipline is formed and is the main interaction we have with society around us. It is thus of profound importance to God. Jesus called most of his disciples while they were at work -e.g. fishing, or at a tax office. David and Moses were both called when they were out with the sheep. Elisha was called while he was plowing. Jesus seemed to like busy industrious people, commending shrewd stewards, hard-working managers that turned a profit, and centurions - who were senior military officers bearing considerable responsibility in tough times.

### The Origin Of Work

Work originated **before the fall** when Adam was given a digging stick and told to till the garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:16). There was to be such a close relationship between man and the land that the two words are related as the masculine and feminine of each other. The Hebrew word for ground or land is *adamah*. It is from the *adamah* that Adam came. The extra “-ah” ending is the feminine. Adam is the generic word for “mankind” add an “ah” and you get the feminine *adamah* – the word for ground or earth. In Hebrew the feminine of Adam is not Eve but “ground”! Work was originally meant to be incredibly fulfilling and agricultural work became arduous after the Fall (Genesis 3:17) as a result of God cursing the *adamah*. Part of our redemption in Christ is a renewing of the meaningfulness of work.

## **God, Work and Craftsmanship**

God is interested in our work and will supply us with wisdom so we can do our work excellently - whether it be sacred work such as building the tabernacle or the more mundane tasks of farming a field. God's wisdom is not just speculative, philosophical or theological but practical and craftsmanlike. God's wisdom constructs reality and all of creation in Proverbs 8. When it is passed onto mankind the recipients become skilled craftsmen also: *(Exodus 31:1-4 NASB) Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. "And I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze,*

So we see that the Spirit of God filled Bezalel, the constructor of the tabernacle, with wisdom and that this wisdom resulted in a job well done. This is the first mention of someone being filled with the Spirit in Scripture. In Scripture "first mentions" of major themes are often very significant for how it later develops and God tend to make those "first mentions" a definition of some sort. For instance the first mention of God is as a Creator and the prime cause of all things (Genesis 1:1), ancient in time. This is foundational to all later development of the concept of God. In this reference we find the first reference to being filled with the Spirit results in wisdom, practicality and craftsmanship and the ability to execute God's plans and designs in reality. Thus we can say that being filled with the Spirit should make us wise, skilled, productive, co-creators with God carrying out His designs on Earth. Practical wisdom that judges rightly and comes up with good solutions is a sign of the Spirit's presence that was recognized even by pagan rulers in Joseph and Daniel "in whom there is a spirit of God" (Genesis 41:38, Daniel 5:14). In Isaiah 11, which describes how the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus, the primary attributes of His anointing are those of good judgment and practical wisdom. *(Isaiah 11:2-3 NKJV) The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. {3} His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;*

Neither is God's wisdom to us confined to the religious sphere such as building tabernacles but can be thoroughly mundane and ordinary as this passage from Isaiah indicates (emphasis mine). *(Isaiah 28:23-29 NASB) Give ear and hear my voice, Listen and hear my words. {24} Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed? Does he continually turn and harrow the ground? {25} Does he not level its surface, And sow dill and scatter cummin, And plant wheat in rows, Barley in its place, and rye within its area? {26} For his God instructs and teaches him properly. {27} For dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, Nor is the cartwheel driven over cummin; But dill is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a club. {28} Grain for bread is crushed, Indeed, he does not continue to thresh it forever. Because the wheel of his cart and his horses eventually damage it, He does not thresh it longer. {29} This also comes from the LORD of hosts, Who has made His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great.*

The common daily farming practices regarding dill and cummin were nevertheless implanted by God and part of His wisdom in order that we may function practically, creatively and wisely on earth and thus demonstrate His nature to the world. God is not mere concept but is a pragmatic and clever constructor of reality and He wants us to work wisely and well with Him. God did not give us His Spirit so that we would spend our lives in a trance state or be erratic and unpredictable. Rather His Spirit is given so that we may be filled with true wisdom and do excellent craftsmanlike work as righteous and godly co-creators with Him carrying out His will and His designs upon the earth.

## **Solomon and The Power To Make Wealth Through Work**

In this book we have continually emphasized "the power to make wealth" which is a gift from God. The person that God gave the greatest power to make wealth to was Solomon. However God did not drop gold bars from heaven on Solomon, rather He gave Solomon deep business acumen and "wisdom". It was this wisdom that enabled Solomon to rule wisely, judge accurately, and make a profit. Solomon, not Calvin, is really the first advocate of what has come to be known as "the Protestant work ethic". Jews and Protestants are both wealthy because they take their financial attitudes from this great Old Testament king. In Proverbs and Ecclesiastes Solomon writes a great deal about work and wealth. Let see what he had to say in addition to what we saw earlier in the section on "the power to make wealth":

***Solomon sees work as a good thing that gives meaning and purpose to life:*** (Eccl 3:22 NRSV) *So I saw that there is nothing better than that all should enjoy their work, for that is their lot; who can bring them to see what will be after them?* For Solomon, doing one's work well and being satisfied with it was a central human satisfaction. This is in contrast to the Greek view of work as a burden for slaves and commoners and aristocratic leisure as the ideal estate. Or Solomon God is a God at work and so work is good and when we work we become co-creators with God. Work is thus a noble and an ennobling activity. Work is to be done vigorously and diligently because the only time to attain prosperity is now. (Eccl 9:10 NRSV) *Whatever your hand finds to do, do with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.*

On the other hand ***work is not an absolute good***, it has to be balanced with the rest of life and to be in context as a source of prosperity not a treadmill. (Eccl 4:6 NRSV) *Better is a handful with quiet than two handfuls with toil, and a chasing after wind. Again, I saw vanity under the sun: the case of solitary individuals, without sons or brothers; yet there is no end to all their toil, and their eyes are never satisfied with riches. "For whom am I toiling," they ask, "and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.*

***Enjoyment of work is a gift from God*** and while the sinner can be an accumulator of wealth such wealth will ultimately be distributed to others. (Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 NRSV) *There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? For to the one who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind.* True lasting prosperity and enjoyment of work is thus grounded in a solid relationship with God.

***Solomon is particularly scathing on laziness*** with his portraits of the sluggard and the fool which we saw in a previous chapter. Solomon's view is that entropy will take over unless disorder is kept at bay through work. {Entropy is the natural tendency of a system to ever increasing disorder.} The unworked field will soon be filled with thorns and thistles, the wall that is not maintained will soon become rubble, poverty will come "like an armed man"(Proverbs 24:30-34) For Solomon it takes effort just to keep things working, let alone to press ahead. Life consumes the lazy (Eccl 4:5 NRSV) *Fools fold their hands and consume their own flesh* - and can even kill them (Proverbs 21:25).

For Solomon ***diligence, wisdom and pursuit of excellence are the secrets of success*** along with a craftsman's pride in one's work and a being a good judge of people

especially those used for a vital task such as sending an important message. The righteous man and the good wife are both highly productive people. The good wife is able to sum a field and buy it, make goods and market them and to instruct and guide her staff (Proverbs 31). She is not an idle or merely decorative attachment to the powerful husband but is a productive and independent person with a judicious and practical mind. Proverbs advocates all members of the household being productive and household income, rather than personal income is seen as the true measure of wealth. The application by Chinese families in Asia of the principles of diligence and of family wealth/household income has caused them to prosper.

***Solomon is insistent on productivity.*** It is what we take the time and trouble to build that rewards us, not the fantasies we dream about (Proverbs 12:14 ) it is always better to get stuck into a project than waste production time by sitting around talking about doing it "one day". (*Proverbs 14:23 NKJV*) *In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty.* Work needs to be taken very seriously and professionally indeed as a little slackness can cause much trouble. For instance leaving the farm gate open can mean you lose all your livestock. For Solomon slackness is not akin to leisure but to destruction and is to be avoided at all costs. (*Prov 18:9 NKJV*) *He who is slothful in his work Is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.* Excellence however creates wealth and honor. (*Prov 22:29 NKJV*) *Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men.* It is easy to see this principle at work among sportsmen and artists where the most excellent 1% of sportspersons earn 95% of the money! Solomon sees productivity as a higher priority than domestic comfort or prestige and the wise person attends to their means of production, their power to make wealth, before anything else. (*Prov 24:27 NKJV*) *Prepare your outside work, Make it fit for yourself in the field; And afterward build your house.*

Finally, Solomon enjoins ***the value of synergy in partnerships*** where 1 plus 1 equals more than 2 and where three or more people add strength to the productive unit (*Eccl 4:9-11*). For Solomon work is a cooperative and productive activity guided by God's wisdom and rewarded by His blessing and producing the power to make wealth. Work is the engine of prosperity in a world that will quickly send you broke if you fail to master it - through the concentrated application of specific and applied wisdom in a spirit of excellence.

### **Solomon's Secrets of Success**

Some of Solomon's other secrets of success can be summarized in the following 12 simple formulas:

1. Stop Chasing Fantasies – Start Working Productively (Proverbs 12:11, 28:19).
2. Stop Scheming For Quick Money – Start Honest Diligent Planning (Proverbs 1:30-33)
3. Stop Sleeping - Start Working (Proverbs 6:6-11)
4. Stop Borrowing – Start Earning (Proverbs 22:7)
5. Stop Spending On Little Luxuries – Start Saving For The Future (Proverbs 21:17)
6. Don't think of distant future success – make it happen here and now. (Proverbs 17:24)
7. Diversify your enterprises. (Eccl 11:2)
8. When making plans get good advice from many sources (Proverbs 15:22, 20:18)
9. Plan your work and work your plan. (Proverbs 21:5)
10. But don't fall for the paralysis of analysis. (Eccl 11:4)
11. When dealing with governments follow the procedures even if you are upset. (Eccl 8:6)
12. No matter how keen you are on your project Work steadily and carefully, do not be hasty. (Proverbs 19:2, 21:5)

## Jesus and Work

Work seems to have been very important for Jesus. Nearly all the people that Jesus praises are hard-working middle managers or other people with a clear sense of priorities - such as the widow giving away her last small copper coins. Muddle-headed, ineffective and lazy people end up being called "wicked" and cast into the outer darkness, foolish young women are shut out of the wedding feast, and poor managers who rule unjustly are "cut in pieces" and assigned a place with the hypocrites. James says oppressive masters that withhold wages will face severe judgment. Paul tells the day-dreaming busy-bodies in Thessalonica "if any man will not work, neither let him eat."

The New Testament was when the practical Hebrew culture encountered Greek culture with its dislike of work and manual labour. Whether it was "spiritual" to work hard was a real issue for many Christians. The Christian answer was a renewed emphasis on hard work and diligence. However a new emphasis appears in the NT - an emphasis on the motive for work.

Christians are not to work for "food which perishes" (John 6:27) or to fix their mind on "earthly things" (Colossians 3:1-3) anxiously worrying about food, shelter and clothing (Matt 6:19-34). They are not to love the world or the things of the world. ( 1 John 2:15-17). Rather Christians are to work "as unto the Lord" not pleasing men but God.(Colossians 3:23,24) They are to work hard and diligently and ethically. Those who do so are rewarded with authority and receive God's approval. Faithful stewards (managers) are often commended (Luke 12:42). Christians are to work with their hands (1 Corinthians 4:12, Ephesians 4:28, 1 Thess 4:11) and they are to provide for their families. Not to do so is a denial of the faith and makes a Christian "worse than an unbeliever". (*1 Timothy 5:8 NRSV*) *And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

If a Christian does not work then he or she is not to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). Work is defined to include preaching the gospel and Christian ministry providing that it is done diligently.( 1Thess 5:12,13) Support of Christian workers is commended and not seen as them merely indulging their religious sentiments. Jesus and the disciples (Luke 8:3) and Paul were supported by others. (2 Corinthians 11:7-9) and elders who taught and ruled well were to be given "double honor" - that is adequate financial support ( 1Timothy 5:17).

There is a great wisdom in the NT approach which is only now (and unwittingly), being realised in the secular literature such as *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*. If we work to satisfy earthly desires we become enslaved and never have enough. We become ruled by fear and desire. Those who desire to become rich wander from the faith and pierce themselves with many a pang (1 Timothy 6:6-10). By working for something external to the economic process (for wisdom and for God) we gain a leverage point to control our life and in the end we gain greater prosperity - both financially and spiritually. (Matt 6:19-34)

## Application

When we see that the top ten nations have developed a strong and biblically based work ethic and that secular proponents have adopted many of the same principles we can be sure that we are onto a good thing. Part of what we as Christians in the developing world can do is to teach and to model a truly biblical work ethic. Instead of inviting people to become victims of a speculative, unpredictable and lawless market we can impart to them the power to make wealth through work and wisdom. If you are a pastor or a bible study leader you can teach these principles so that people truly gain lasting prosperity.

At this point it may be worth saying that many of the Christian prosperity teachers are simply superstitious animists. They do not impart the responsible power to make wealth to those they speak to but give them a believe in a "blessing" that will magically make them rich or a "hundred-fold anointing" that the evangelist possesses. God is interested in us becoming wise,

mature, co-creators and rulers with Him not immature and greedy followers of gurus. There is a right and responsible prosperity teaching and I believe I have given it to you in this book. As we teach it to the nations we will greatly assist them in their development, maturity and wisdom.

Ok, the Church can help the poor with work ethics – but on its own that could end up being a case of just blaming the victim. What are we going to do about the excesses of the big end of town? Well, teaching a good work ethic its not just blaming the victim, its giving people part of the secret of success. Yet we also have to liberate them so that they can pursue that success in a rational and just environment where they stand a chance of making ends meet. Hence the next chapter – what the Church can do about the big end of town.

# The Church And The Challenge of Globalization



How can the Christian church influence Monsanto, Nike or Allan Greenspan? How can a pastor stop George Soros from selling the rupiah? Preaching sermons against globalization to one hundred little old ladies will not change anything. The people who need to hear are not there to hear. We need to take the message of justice to those in the market who are prepared to listen to such a message. But how can this be done? There is also the issue of scale. Generally speaking global issues require a global response. The Church must be able to co-ordinate internationally against the excesses of globalization. The Church needs to focus on effective rather than ineffective approaches and target those with the power to make decisions or to enforce justice.

The Church is limited in how she can respond to ways that are ethical and godly and Christ-like. For instance we cannot go and throw rocks at McDonalds or join a terrorist group. But that is not a huge limitation, not only are such methods illegal and unethical they are also generally quite counter-productive. There are fundamentally only four major methods the local Church can use Firstly public protest and use of the media. Secondly – litigation, where there is a civil or criminal court that can deal with the injustice. Thirdly the Church can engage in dialogue and in ethical appeal to individual major company directors, investors and fund managers. Fourthly the Church can wield her financial power in responsible ways by engaging in ethical investments and using Christian money in Christian ways. A fifth approach – Christian political involvement is covered in the next chapter.

## Public Protest And Use of The Media

**Letter Writing.** It is hard to get published say in the New York Times but quite easy to make an impact in the local but respectable paper. Such letters are sometimes picked up by regional media, which are then picked up by national media. This is called “the halo effect” – that is if you have made it into one media source you must be good and worth covering in another media source. What makes it even easier is that newspapers and media outlets are extensively syndicated and pass on information about “color” stories to each other. That is they are often looking for an articulate opposing viewpoint to add conflict and interest to their stories. So if on Tuesday morning you read about Nike opening a big factory in Thailand you hop on the computer and write/fax/email a letter to the editor that is tight, powerful and less than 150 words. Because you are responding intelligently to their story it has a good chance of getting in.

**Press Releases and Press Conferences.** Form a small protest organization and give yourself a name that the press can come to recognize as “Joe Smith from Economic Justice For The Poor”, or if you are a pastor, Rev Smith from the Mennonite Church. Learn to write tight press releases with each paragraph being one well-written sentence and with a good large headline and your contact details. Most media outlets are lacking material on Sundays so if you call a press conference for 2 pm Sunday afternoon you often get at least one outlet to show up. The other advantage of Sunday press conferences is that your church can be praying for you.

You need to always keep in mind that for a long while your press releases will be “just color”, a filler, an opposing viewpoint worth 30 seconds if that on local TV. The media are not coming to you because you are an expert, they are coming because they want interest and conflict and cannot bother hunting down an expert opposing viewpoint. They will come because you sent them the only press release that presented a contrary point of view in a sensible fashion. So *do not take yourself seriously* and do not take what the media will do with what you say too seriously

either. As soon as you puff up or show signs of over-sensitivity the media seem to sense it and they vanish. The media will trash you until they respect you and that takes time. My first two or three years of media involvement were truly horrible until I learned these lessons. Learn to be graphic and visual like the OT prophets without being too corny or sensationalist. Hold press conferences in relevant locations such as in front of a Nike factory or a politician's office. Stick tightly to the issue, never talk about yourself or your emotions, be humble, factual, tight and professional. Rehearse short, relevant dot point answers to expected questions. Never complete a sentence/paragraph without it being properly balanced in its ideas. Don't just say "Nike is evil"- which will get you written off as a fool. Say "Some firms are learning the benefits of being ethical and we would like to commend them, however Nike is not among them and the establishment of this factory under these wage conditions will only add to the burden of the poor". Use the technique of "I am not saying X, but I am saying Y". This makes you sound balanced and wise and adds credibility.

**Protests:** Any protest is generally better than no protest and you don't need a cast of thousands. A protest of forty or more people can still seem effective on TV though six people looks drab and ridiculous. Generally the media like to see interdenominational unity or some sign that it is more than just one pastor's opinion so it's a good idea to have at least two other churches involved. Small protests can be assisted by a good dramatic location such as outside a monument, office or against a billboard where they look like a decent crowd - not straggling along a street or out in an open space where they tend to look lost and forlorn. Have two or three good speakers at the protest and a short one to two page handout for the press that includes names correctly spelled, organizations, and contact details for the main people involved. Of course if you need permits then obtain them from the relevant authority and make sure your banners are legal (in Australia wooden placards are illegal but posters and banners are OK). Above all pray that God may make your protest effective.

### **Litigation**

This is not an area I have any personal experience in however it is essential in some cases where the firm is not listening and the situation must be changed. A well-publicized court case about an obvious injustice can do a great deal to change public awareness and influence government legislation. While I am not a lawyer my suggestion is to pick your fight well and go into battle in a jurisdiction where litigation is relatively inexpensive and anti-globalization sentiment is already strong. If you took on Monsanto in Libya for instance, and won, then the result could be publicized back home with almost as much impact as an expensive trial in a Western country. Taking the litigation into the countries where they are doing the damage seems to be to be both good justice and good tactics. The church in say the USA can fund its denominational counterpart in say South Africa, to take on an unjust mining giant there. Of course if the corporation is acting criminally you can just go straight to the police or appropriate regulatory authority.

### **Dialogue With Decision-Makers**

Many company directors attend their local church and though globalization is a complex issue it can be studied in seminars, bible studies and in introductory books like this one or Ronald Sider's classic "*Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger*". Executives can best be reached if the material is factual and is sympathetic to the pressures of the working environment, for instance as outlined in the chapter "Why Decent People...". On a slightly larger scale the churches in a city could combine to offer a public seminar on globalization and business ethics. Such combined events can attract media attention and you may even be able to publicize it in groups such as Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce. The speaker should be able to answer tough questions. Multinational businesses with major offices in the city can be asked to send representatives.

Personal contact with decision-makers can sometimes be established through writing to them and taking a constructive practical and solution-focused approach. For instance suggest a way their operation can be improved to make it more just and fair.

Decision-makers are most open to suggestions during times of change or crisis or when they have just attained office. When a new civic official is elected write to them and congratulate them on their win and then say a few words about what you would like and ask for an appointment. It will often be granted. When you go the appointment go well prepared with a one to two page handout.

The following handout format is the one I use successfully and which politicians often say "This is good, I wish more people came prepared like this, I can do something with this". I arrange my material under four headings:

**What I Want** – specifically and constructively in one sentence.

**Why I Want It**- three to four paragraphs.

**How It Can Be Done** – practical, solution focused, one paragraph

**How You Can Help It To Be Done** – what I want the politician to do in specific terms e.g "Refer to parliamentary committee on XYZ and contact me re progress in two weeks."

I actually use those headings – "What I Want" etc. In a few cases I also add another heading "What Will Happen If This Is Not Done" – when I am prepared to take legal action against a firm, but like I said earlier, it has never come to that yet (praise God). Of course add name, address, signature, contact details, use proper titles of persons involved, and be concise, practical and positive. Ranting gets nowhere.

When dealing with politicians and business leaders remember that they are busy and try and be in and out of their office in ten to fifteen minutes. They will appreciate it and you will get another interview another day. Also remember they are part of "the machinery" of government or business and your suggestion has to go through many layers before it is acted on.

Clarity is part of the secret here. If your idea is so complex and confusing you can barely explain it to the first person then when he or she explains it to the second it will get muddled and by the time it gets to the fifth person it is lost entirely. If you keep it simple and solution-focused and make the concept as clear as you possibly can then it will retain its life and survive a bit longer inside the wheels of a bureaucracy. Clear ideas, put in writing, on a single page, travel best. The exception is when you have a major report say on an environmental issue and it is 500 or 1000 pages thick and the data is important. Even then a 1-4 page executive summary is essential to success.

Deal with the highest level of officialdom you can on a peer-to-peer level. By that I mean if your idea is good and it has national implications, then take it to your denomination's national office or a specialist lobby group and persuade them to advocate it to the national politicians, NGO's and also to other denominational leaders. A national level idea is often seen as more credible and more appropriate if it comes from the national HQ of a major denomination than from a single pastor or Christian individual. And if you cannot persuade others at the top of your own spiritual community you are probably not going to have much luck going outside it and trying to persuade congressmen and senators. You will be surprised how ready bishops and Christian leaders are to listen to a good constructive social justice suggestion.

Finally don't be impatient, the machinery takes a while, often 6 months or more. Oh, and if possible, do not ask politicians to take on really controversial "causes" in an election year. Controversial causes are generally best advocated just after they have been elected and feel safest.

## **Ethical Investments**

Churches are not as rich as everyone thinks or as poor as everyone thinks! The investment funds of major denominations such as the Presbyterians and Southern Baptists are probably quite significant. Furthermore churches have as members people of considerable wealth and financial power. Some figures have up to 70% plus of the world's wealth being held by Protestant believers. Ethical investment funds are being set up that do not invest in tobacco, alcohol or the arms trade. Others take note of firms that are abusive in their approach to globalization. For ethical investments to work a breed of qualified Christian investment advisors with good credibility must be produced who can both invest ethically and get a good return. Few people are so ethically concerned that they will lose money for a good cause. However if there are two funds offering good rates and one is ethical most Christians would prefer the ethical fund.

If the churches and wealthy Christians disinvested in stocks of ruthless corporations and did not engage in currency speculation as part of their portfolio then the market would quickly respond. The dollar talks and it can talk very loudly indeed. If the figure of 70% of the world's wealth being in our hands is anywhere near correct then the church can make the market tremble. The trouble is that Christians have not worked out a marketplace-based faith that can address issues of investment, fair trade and reasonable profit-taking. So without guidance Christians are investing in the same unjust ways as non-Christians and as the apostle Paul would say "brethren that should not be so".

A similar economic strategy is to buy enough shares in a company to be entitled to ask questions at the AGM and to stand up, well prepared and tackle the corporation on its policies. Various other tactics include boycotts (which sometimes work but often don't) and petitions and letter writing campaigns to the corporation concerned.

## **Networks**

There are many anti-globalization networks in operation that Christians can join as well as the international linkages between denominations, missionary societies and Christian charities and development organizations. It may be best to join some of these networks and get the feel of the issues and what is going on before plunging in yourself. There are tricky areas of theory, procedure and doctrine and using the right economic figures and terms. Participating in social justice networks, meetings and forums can give you the grounding you need to be effective for the Lord – even if some of these forums are far from Christian.

## **Procedures**

Finding the right procedure and process for a particular issue can save much wasted time and trouble. For instance taking your issue to the International Labor Organization as a private citizen may indeed be possible, but I doubt it, you probably would need legal representation or approval of a national level body or major NGO. About 75% of my time spent tackling an issue is working out procedure and doing background research on the issue to validate every fact I present and working out a method of presenting it that will move it easily through the wheels of that particular piece of bureaucratic machinery. If the right facts are presented to the right person in the right way at the right time, then the success of the cause is optimized.

## **Beware the "Resolution"**

A resolution announced to the media is often pointless. All it generates is applause. It has little chance of exerting any real influence because it is not being presented as a plan of action to a person who can make a decision based upon it. To say "We believe in the synergistic, holistic transformation of global resources with equity and social responsibility so that no child can live in poverty by 2020" (I just made that one up) will do exactly nothing. It is simply a self-congratulatory exercise that says, "Look we have good intentions". Effective social justice involves direct action where it can do the most good. Resolutions are not social action; they are an announcement of an intention to perhaps engage in social action. The resolution has no power

until it is actually implemented. In itself it is not a step forward. (And most resolutions are not implemented). Only action is social action - writing letters or doing research or making appointments with leaders and politicians will get a lot more real, actual tangible good done than a hundred resolutions.

### **Journal Articles**

A well-researched and well-presented journal article can have a huge impact. If you are an academic and you can do top-notch, high quality research in globalization then please do so. A surprising amount of people who are decision-makers will take note. If possible publish both in print and electronically as people often use the Internet for research.

### **Waking Up The Church**

You may notice that I keep assuming individual action. That is because I have not seen too many evangelical churches that are keen on social justice. Most find it a rather uncomfortable and guilt ridden topic. They think you will want them to sell the Mercedes and give the money to the poor. This is why I believe in being solution-focused and guilt free.

If you are problem-focused and go in with something like: "Listen to how evil X is and how many people are suffering while we sit here in comfort" then people will become problem-focused, defensive and try and wriggle out from the implied blame – or put the blame back on you. On the other hand if you say "How would you like to help solve X by doing Y" some people may even hop on board and help you. Because the information is presented in a solution-focused framework it elicits a positive and solution-focused response.

Being specific helps. Many people supported the Jubilee 2000 Debt Relief Coalition because it was a specific and obvious issue with a definite and positive plan of action based on a clear biblical principle. So instead of saying something vague such as: " We are going to tackle the iniquity of world trade" which will go down like a lead balloon, say "I have been concerned about some of the excesses of globalization and one thing I'd like to do is invite all the partners in the major stock-broking firms for lunch at the local Sheraton hotel and to have someone come and talk to them about ethical investing. Who would like to be involved?" I hope you get the idea.

Not only does the church need to be woken up to globalization and social justice it needs to be woken up to its own economic and poverty issues such as the concept of a biblical work ethic or the power to make wealth. Some evangelical Christians have highly superstitious and irrational mindsets that can neither make money nor do justice. They are trapped in spiritual fears, conspiracy plots and wild end time theories and have a view of prosperity that is either totally secular, non-existent, or based on personal merit. That is why the final chapter on this section will be on assumptions, beliefs and logic! However before we do that we need to look at Christian involvement in politics as I promised you earlier.

# A Biblical Perspective on Politics



## Introduction

Christian involvement in politics is a controversial area and is often avoided because we do not wish to be seen taking sides for one party or another or because we say that "politics is dirty and is not for Christians". The following is a summary of what I see Scripture saying about politics plus some observations from my own involvement in political life in Australia.

## Jesus The Politician?

Jesus is the ultimate example of a servant leader who sacrifices Himself for His people and becomes the King of Kings ruling over the nations of the world.

**Jesus got involved with the real world:** He stepped out of the safety and glory of heaven to become involved with and to die for an imperfect and sinful world. He came to an oppressed, politically corrupt nation on the edges of the Roman Empire dominated by the world power of the day and "bent" local politicians. He did not enter a perfect society or just stay where it was clean and tidy and nice and comfortable and where He was honoured. He went where it was sinful and where He would be criticized and crucified because that was His calling and mission ..

**Jesus was subject to temptation but He did not sin:** Although He was "tempted in every way as we are" (Philippians 2:5-11, Hebrews 4:15) He did not sin. Part of this temptation was political temptation - for instance being offered "all the kingdoms of this world and their glory" if He would bow down to Satan. (Matthew 4:8,9) and again when people came by force to make Him King. (John 6:15). Thus it is not a sin to be subject to political temptation -as long as you do not bow down to Satan or to the pressure of mob rule.

**Jesus commented vigorously on cultural issues:** While Jesus did not run for public office He did take a prophetic stance against the social issues of the day to the point where He was regarded as a major threat to be done away with. He did not just "stick to religion and values" but talked about fair wages, unjust trade, oppression of widows and the economic injustices and corruption of his day even overturning the tables of the moneylenders.(Matthew 12:40 etc)

**Jesus did have a "political agenda" but not one that this world understood:** When Pilate asked if Jesus was a King it ended up with him scratching his head and saying "what is Truth?".(John 18:36-39) The rulers of this world completely misread Jesus. (1 Corinthians 2:8) . The political agenda of Jesus is a very interesting topic that would take far too long to discuss here. His proclamation "repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand" would have been interpreted by many people as "cleanse yourself for a holy war which will restore the Kingship to Israel." - as that was the current Messianic interpretation. The last question the disciples asked was "when will the Kingdom be restored to Israel" just before He ascended into Heaven. Only after Pentecost did the spiritual nature of the Kingdom become completely obvious.

**Jesus will eventually govern the whole world:** Jesus saw Himself as a King whose Kingdom was not of this world (John18:36,37). Revelation gives Him the title "ruler of the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:5) . His Kingdom would eventually crush all the kingdoms that are of this world (Daniel 2:44, Revelation 2:26,27) which are passing away. ( 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, 7:31, 1 John 2:17). His Kingdom however will last forever. (Daniel 2:44). We will be co-rulers with Him in this Kingdom (Revelation 2:26,27, Romans 8;17) and will have "cities" to govern. (Luke 19:17-19). So ultimately some faithful Christians will be mayors and politicians in the Kingdom of God!

Well the point is that its not wrong to rule. David ruled well as did Hezekiah and Josiah and of course Daniel and Joseph. Government is Ok for some now and eventually will be part of our ultimate destiny in Christ. The precise nature of our governing is however not revealed.

### **Is God Political?**

God is not corrupt or unrighteous but He does govern and He does carry out political activities for instance He makes laws and covenants, has an immense administration of angels, has heavenly courts and books and dispenses justice. He is impartial and exalts some and demotes others. God also acts to ensure that He stays in power and that the kingdom of darkness will be defeated. He governs in wise and subtle ways as Psalm 18 indicates. *Psalms 18:25-30 NKJV) With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; {26} With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. {27} For You will save the humble people, But will bring down haughty looks. {28} For You will light my lamp; The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness. {29} For by You I can run against a troop, By my God I can leap over a wall. {30} As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.* Thus the skills of discerning people and situations and responding to them with justice and good government, is one of God's main activities and a very fit activity for human beings. Another way of looking at this is that God's will is to be done on earth - as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10) For this to happen his standards must be enacted in laws and encoded deeply into the cultures of the earth. This means involvement by Christians in law, politics and culture. In fact John Calvin, the reformer saw government as the highest calling of the Christian. Politics can even affect evangelism. Generally countries that are "closed" with governments hostile to the gospel see few people saved while countries open to the gospel see many people saved. Thus the eternal destiny of nations to a large degree depends on their governments ( 1 Timothy 2:1-4) so Christians should pray for their governments and even, where wise, participate in them.

### **The Basics**

(1 Timothy 2:1-4 NIV) I urge, then, **first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- {2} for kings and all those in authority**, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. {3} This is good, and pleases God our Savior, {4} who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

(Micah 6:6-8 NIV) With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? {7} Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? {8} He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? **To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**

***The basic involvement of every Christian is to pray for good government and to act justly, humbly and mercifully in their life, business dealings and politics. This is not negotiable.***

## Further Involvement

If you are interested in a deeper involvement in politics than just praying for your government the how should you personally be involved? And to what depth? And in what manner? These are complex questions and to greatly simplify matters I will say that it depends on two factors:

- A) Your calling, gifting, ministry, abilities and passions - the good works God has assigned for you to do. (Ephesians 2:10).
- B) The nature of the government and how open it is to involvement. Some governments have one response from God (e.g. judgement) while others get another (support or blessing). We need to discern how God is responding to that administration.

## Your Calling

Each of us is called to a life of good works - in fact we are designed for them! (Ephesians 2:10 NKJV) For we are His workmanship, ***created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand*** that we should walk in them.

- Has God called you to be a prophet and to speak out about social conditions like Amos?
- Has God called you to be an administrator like Joseph or Daniel? (Daniel 1 and 2)
- Has God called you to be a "king" - like David ?
- Has He called you to be a priest to the powerful - giving guidance and ministering grace like Abiathar did for David? ( 1 Samuel 23:9)
- Has God called you to be a "witness before Caesar" like Paul?

Each of us has different personalities and gifts and belong to different "worlds". Some of you may be naturally "prophetic" while others are much more comfortable ministering grace. Each has its place.

## Nature of The Government

We find in Scripture a wide range of responses to different kinds of government. God says different things to different kinds of administration and calls His Church to react in a wide variety of ways to the prevailing political climate.:

- Is the government generally **seeking righteousness** like that of Solomon so you can BLESS it like God did? (1 Kings 3:5-15)
- Has it committed a **wrong act** so that it needs to be REBUKED like Nathan did to David? (2 Samuel 12:1-14)
- Is it **idolatrous and wicked** like that of Ahab and Jezebel so you can OVERTHROW it like Elisha did? (2 Kings 9:1-37)
- Is it **stubborn and cruel** so that you must LIBERATE people from it like Moses did? (Exodus chapters 1-15)
- Is it a **"good pagan"** government like that of Nebuchadnezzar so that like Daniel you PARTICIPATE in the government and DEMONSTRATE the power of God to the ruler so he is converted (Daniel 4)?
- Is it an **efficient but unrighteous** pagan government like Rome - with good law and order but hostile to God so you RESPECT the government but SEPARATE yourself from its wicked ways? (Romans 13:1-8)
- If a government is **corrupt** we must never ally ourselves with it but rather EXPOSE it. (Psalms 94:20, Ephesians 5:11)
- Is it **crafty and dangerous** like the government of Herod so that you SAY NOTHING AT ALL and keep your distance like Jesus did? (Luke 23:8-9)

To sum up this section: There is no "one right way" to respond to all types of government. We have to discern the nature of the government and then react appropriately. The way to do this is to find a parallel situation in Scripture and how God spoke to it.

### **Issue By Issue VS Party Politics**

There are two main approaches to politics by Christians in open democratic countries:

The first is the "prophetic" stance where the Christian stands outside of political life and independent of party politics and comments on an issue by issue basis say tackling abortion or economic injustices. The focus is on what God says to that nation and its government about one particular issue. The advantage is that it is "clean" and rarely corrupt, that it is focussed, and that many Christians will line up behind and issue that will not line up behind a political party. The disadvantage is that it is easily dismissed by those in power - except perhaps during a very close election or in a marginal seat.

Secondly there is the "princely" stance of actually running and participating in party politics. The Christian must chose a party where his or her Christian beliefs are at least allowed some room for expression and which is large enough and influential enough to have some impact on government. It is my experience that small idealistic Christian political parties are unsuccessful in significantly influencing policy. When a significant number of Christians form a bible study groups within a major political party and work together then this method can have a lot of impact on public policy. However its weakness is that it is hard to be fully prophetic and outspoken on issues when a member of a party. A certain amount of compromise is needed.

My personal method combines both. Basically my personality is outspoken and uncompromising thus I am much more happy being a "prophet" on the outside and leading marches and rallies however I have belonged to and run as a candidate for political parties. The result is that now I am a "prophet" (as in Christian social critic) who understands the world of politicians and can relate to them and thus influence them better that I could before.

### **Freedom Of Conscience**

If you choose to go with involvement in party politics you should respect the freedom of conscience of other believers. For instance a pastor who is passionately involved in the Labor Party should not imply that all Christians in his church should vote Labor. In the USA there is, to my mind, an over-identification of conservative Christianity with the Republican Party and of social activism with the Democratic Party. Personally I am a generally right wing politician who has strong convictions about justice and social action as well as being anti-abortion and anti-pornography. I pinch the best from both sides of politics. Thus you do not have to fit into a particular "slot". It is unthinking to say "I am a conservative Baptist therefore I will totally support the Republican agenda." That is not intelligent spiritual reflection or a seeking of whatever truth there may be in both sides of politics. You should believe in and support whatever is true, worthy and in line with a fair judgment of the facts. Therefore Christians should allow each other to work out what is true, worthy and in line with a fair judgment of all the relevant facts. We ourselves should not blindly fit into a set of opinions or a political philosophy and neither should we use our power to imply that others should unthinkingly line up with us.

### **Responding Appropriately In Politics**

Proper Christian politics involves calm, levelheaded responses based on a deep internal passion. When Christians engage in responses that are hasty, inaccurate, ill-informed, ill-timed or overly emotional they lose credibility and detract from the impact of the gospel. It takes some time to know your limits and scope of action in the political arena. Here are some of the lessons I have learned.

1. The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. (James 1:20) Involvement in politics should be wise, intelligent and from deep conviction not from anger or hostility. Inappropriate "flash-pan" political responses from Christians are a poor witness.
2. Flee from flattery and lies. They will quickly distort your thinking. (Psalm 12:2-4, Proverbs 26;28)
3. Build alliances slowly, carefully and with discretion. A corrupt "friend" can end your political career. (Proverbs 12:26, 18:24, 22:24)
4. Avoid hot-headed revolutionaries and those who are hasty to bring about change. (Proverbs 24:21-22 NKJV) My son, fear the LORD and the king; Do not associate with those given to change; {22} For their calamity will rise suddenly, And who knows the ruin those two (God and the King) can bring?  
This is calling for wisdom in being an agent of change. It is saying do not react against the government simply because it is the government.
5. Where possible find the appropriate person and procedure for the matter. (Ecclesiastes 8:5,6)
6. Be discreet in all you say, even in private -especially regarding powerful people. (Eccl 10:20, many verses in Proverbs).
7. Expect opposition but let God deal with it. See how David responds to opposition in the Psalms - not by taking personal revenge but by taking his case to God for action. Never take revenge (Romans 12;19).
8. Build unity through demonstrating love for your enemies. Make them friends. This was David's tactic - see 1 & 2 Samuel. Peacemakers will be called "sons of God" (Matthew 5:9)
9. God has made you to be a person with a mission not an actor with a role. Base your political approach on who you are as a person not on a particular model or theory. You need an approach that is so much "part of you" that it will survive when tested by conflict and pressure. If it is just a "role" you are playing then it will crumble. There is a strong temptation to become an actor in the name of success, but that is flimsy success indeed. You may be better off being a back-room analyst than an upfront media star if that is more "you".
10. Think about where you can make the most strategic contribution and where your unique gifts can best be deployed. Look around for an area where no-one else much is doing anything and where you have the ability to help. There are thousands of Christians tackling abortion and pornography, but there are few Christians tackling currency trading. Be a person who stands in the gap for God and works righteousness. (Ezekiel 22:30)
11. Do not give into fear and especially to conspiracy theories. The Lord alone shall be your fear and your dread. (Isaiah 8:11-13)
12. "Kings" are supposed to be wise and to seek counsel. Have many advisors and take their advice. (Proverbs 15:22)
13. Pick your battles with wisdom, not by emotion. (Luke 14:31)
14. Don't fight battles that are over. Sometimes the church loses on an issue and sadly, we just have to walk away. The fight is over, recognize defeat, move on, try again. For instance Sunday trading is a lost cause in many countries. Putting effort into a cause that truly is lost is not good strategy.
15. Pick issues where you can offer a constructive solution in non-religious terms.
16. Neither be surprised and upset at corruption so that you are agitated and dismayed (Eccl 5:8,9) or so comfortable with it that you take bribes. (Ex 23:8).
17. Never personally handle money if you are running for office and have a campaign manager who you can trust and put in place proper externally audited financial procedures. Financial allegations about campaign contributions going astray or into politicians pockets can ruin you. Similarly never be alone with any woman other than your wife. These measures may seem extreme but remember your opponents will try to trap you in these areas.

18. Settle your priorities before you go into the battle. Know what you truly stand for. "Set your face like flint.." Ezekiel 3:9
19. Keep theological differences out of the public eye and build coalitions across a wide spectrum of standard denominations while maintaining integrity. (I do not suggest coalitions with cults.) Keep your theological debates in house and in private. Display public unity on the issue at hand. You can all say "The following 20 churches think X is wrong." Agreeing with another denomination about a specific social issue is fine and does not include the implication that you totally agree with them theologically.
20. Pursue peace with all people but always remember that holiness is the top priority. (Hebrews 12:14)

### **The 7-Step Method of Gaining Influence**

If we study the lives of successful politicians in Scripture (Joseph, Daniel, David, Nehemiah, Esther, Mordecai, etc. ) we find a clear seven step method for gaining and keeping power that was developed by the Israelites in Babylon and has served the Jewish people very well since. In brief outline it is as follows:

1. **Access** – get access to those in power, get close to "the King", the source of power - even as a cupbearer, harp player, exiled youth or prisoner.
2. **Solidarity** – form a group or join a group of people you are "one spirit" with- even a small group such as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.
3. **Distinctiveness** – of purpose, philosophy and personal standards, do not lose Christian values. Moses, Daniel and friends, Joseph etc. Mordecai was distinctive and this initially made enemies but eventually turned out for good.
4. **Contribute Vertically** - Do good for others especially the King, make a contribution, solve difficult problems, build credibility, demonstrate excellent wisdom. Daniel and Joseph read the King's dreams, Mordecai stopped an assassination, David calmed Saul's moods with his lyre...
5. **Mutual Promotion** – bring your group with you as you are promoted – Daniel and his friends, Joseph and his brothers, David and his mighty men etc.
6. **Strategy** - Aim for key positions and control points even if they do not have much prestige at the time. Joseph and food distribution, Mordecai was a door-keeper, Nehemiah a cup-bearer of the King.
7. **Unity** – resist attacks and threats as a united group. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Esther & Mordecai etc.

**Access** - Legitimate power is always a gift from a superior. Therefore one must be in contact with such a superior and in a favorable relationship with him or her. Power is rarely handed to someone unknown to those in authority. The superior authority generally must feel safe, and recognize the person as a being of genuine worth and not simply another "want-to-be". Simply put you need to put yourself amongst the powerful – even in a very humble role as an office worker, intern or aide-de-camp. It can help to join a political party and to turn up when others don't, and to contribute positively and diligently over time until the break comes.

**Solidarity** – Politics is all about loyalty to a group. It involves networks, coalitions, interest groups and political parties. A one-man political party is doomed to failure. Join a group or form a group. You probably need three groups (or more). The first group is your core group that you pray with, are one-mind with and which "fires you up" and shares your passions, a band of brothers. The

second group is your "interest group", a small section within the larger political party that you have common interest with e.g. those with environmental concerns. The third group is the political party as a whole – Bangon Pilipinas, Republicans, Liberals, Christian Democrats etc. There is no perfect political party and you will find yourself in tension with any that you join, but is generally better to join that not to join. You are free to disagree if the group goes against the will of God – though this may be difficult.

**Distinctiveness** – You must be salt and light and leaven. This means being different. You are not there for yourself – to just blend in and be promoted, you are there for Christ to transform the political realm for God. All politically effective Bible characters were distinct from the surrounding culture – Joseph, Daniel, Moses, Mordecai, Esther, Nehemiah, and of course Jesus. If you are faithful to God, He will be faithful to you. The distinctiveness of these heroes of faith sometimes involved conflict – but God delivered them and their courage was noted and they were promoted. Moral distinctiveness helps you stand out from the crowd and be noticed by "the King".

**Contribute Vertically** – Be useful to the King. Go the extra mile, solve problems, interpret dreams, show discernment, have an "excellent spirit", be someone who makes the boss look good, work out what the King wants most and ensure he gets it – and that you get the credit. Mordecai stopped an assassination attempt, Joseph and Daniel interpreted dreams, David helped assuage Saul's moods and fought Goliath. Always work to build your credibility, so contribute humbly and not in a way that looks like you are overly ambitious.

**Mutual Promotion** – Bring members of your core group and interest group with you when you are promoted. Joseph promoted his family, Daniel promoted his three friends, David his mighty men, etc. This surrounds you with people who care for you and who are loyal to you and is the best form of political protection.

**Strategy** – Target the key political positions, not just the most honored political positions. Some high status political positions carry very little real power and influence. Gain the positions that control ideas, legislation and money or which are key "control points" such as a licensing or censorship board. Work out where you can have the most genuine influence for the gospel. Joseph took over food distribution and used this to control the country and purchase the land for Pharaoh.

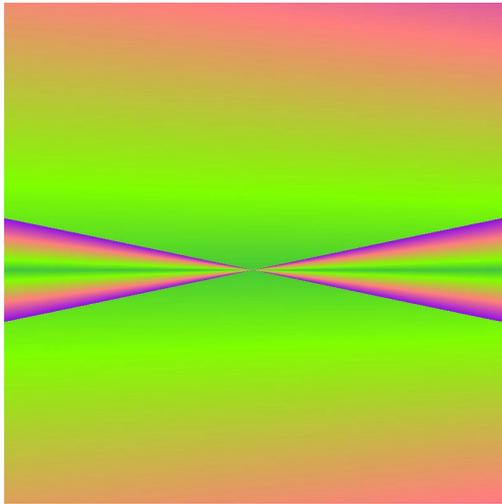
**Unity** – Resist attacks as a united group. Politics has its rough spots and if they are survived as a united core group then the bonds grow even closer. On the other hand disloyalty during a time of crisis creates much bitterness. Like the Three Musketeers – it should be all for one, and one for all. Unity also builds spiritual strength and power and makes all things possible (Genesis 11:4) - Daniel and his friends, Mordecai and the Jews in Babylon, Jesus and the disciples.

The 7-step method for gaining influence is found all throughout the Bible and in most successful groups today. Yet it is not "magic", it is just a simple, commonsense political technique. It can be used for good as well as for evil, for Christ or for the Devil. You will still need to pray, fast, study the Scriptures and obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Conclusion** Combating the injustices of globalization and advocating for the poor and for fair trade will mean Christian political involvement of one sort or the other. Not every Christian will take the same approach or be called to the same political stance or even the same political conclusions. Some will write letters to politicians, while others might teach business ethics at Harvard, others will chain themselves to a tree in prophetic protest while yet others may sit on the

board of a multi-national and try to "be a Daniel". Others will march around the city in spiritual warfare and intercession for the sins of the city while yet others may run for mayor. However all are called to seek justice and mercy and truth, all are called to be wise, and discreet and professional in their approach so no disgrace is brought to God's name. All are called to carry a cross and to suffer shame and persecution for the cause of Christ and of His rule in the world. All are called to holiness and purity of life and not to engage in dishonesty or in overly pragmatic practices even for a noble cause.

# A Theology of Politics



Christian political involvement, social action and peace-making require a clear "theology of politics" and this chapter is a start in that direction and covers a general introduction then moves to consider the community, the city and the nature of authority.

1. God is the Creator of Heaven and Earth and the seas, and all that is in them and as such has authority over all people and nations and powers and principalities and institutions which are to be brought into conformity with His moral will and goodness and grace. (Genesis 1, Psalm 103:19, 104, Isaiah 40:9-16)
2. Mankind has fallen into sin which taints all persons, institutions, political processes and governments. (Romans 3:23, 11:32)
3. This present world order is largely governed by powers and principalities led by the Evil One, (Ephesians 2:1-4, 1 John 5:18, Luke 4:5,6) and these act through world leaders to keep people from Christ (Acts 4:26, 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, Revelation 16:14, 17:1,2) and to set up structures that reinforce the sin of mankind. Thus there is an intense spiritual battle in the heavenly realms that from time to time has political consequences. (Daniel 10, Ephesians 6:10-20)
4. God came in Christ to reconcile "all things" to Himself - including persons, powers and principalities. (2 Corinthians 5:18,19, Ephesians 1:11-14, Colossians 1:15-20)
5. The basic duties of government are justice and protection and the fundamental moral quality of leadership is incorruptible impartiality (Exodus 18:21, 23:1-8, Leviticus 19:15, Deuteronomy 10:17, 1 Timothy 5:21, James 3:17). The government's duty before God is to bring His justice to the relationships (personal, commercial etc) in the community and to protect the weak. (Ps. 72)
6. A Christian leader must also be competent to rule and should have wise policies. Wisdom (chokma - practical wisdom, savvy) is a spiritual attribute that is given by God and which is highly desirable in Kings and in all who lead. (1 Kings 3:1-28) The Christian politician must aim to become wise and astute and able to read people and courses of action. (see Proverbs, Ecclesiastes)
7. God is Sovereign over all mankind and both "brings low" the proud and "exalts" lowly people to office, in Daniel it is made plain that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He will, and sets up over it the lowest of men. (Dan 4:17, 25, 32, 5:21)
8. Politics is ultimately God's concern and He determines the succession of kingdoms (Daniel chapters 6-12) and their times and boundaries (Acts 17:26).
9. Thus intercession to God on the basis of His Word can change national destinies e.g. Jeremiah's prayer concerning the release from the Babylonian captivity. (Daniel 9)
10. Jesus commanded us in the Great Commission to bring the entire world into obedience to God, firstly through conversion and then through instruction in God's will. (Matt 28:18-20)
11. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and convicts the world of sin, and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8) and this includes prophetic conviction in the political, economic and social arenas - which were often the concern of the Old Testament prophets. (Amos 5)
12. The center and standard of all Truth is Jesus Christ (John 14:6) and that Truth should be applied to every area of life, in all places and at all times - not only the Christian community.

13. The spiritual renewal of the mind and non-conformity to world systems (Romans 12:1,2) is essential if politics is to become godly.
14. True Christian politics is the expression of the nature of Christ through a system of government led by wise and Spirit-led leadership. (Acts 6:1-8)
15. Jesus is the King of Kings who will judge the kings and rulers of this world upon His return and Jesus will set up His government here on earth - and Christians will reign with Him. (see Matthew 24,25 and the books of Daniel & Revelation).
16. God will bring this world to a climax when the world systems, led by the Anti-Christ go to war against God and the saints. God and the saints will win and will bring history and politics to their proper conclusion. [2 Peter 3:13](#) But according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.
17. The concept of the separation of Church and State applies only to the formal institutions. Religion and politics have always been closely intertwined and as such are inseparable.
18. Politicians and political regimes are accountable to God but not necessarily to the clergy.
19. It is generally wisest to separate spiritual and temporal authority so that the "High Priest" and the "King" are different persons.
20. The Christian political objective is not merely to put Christians into power - but to bring the nation(s) into obedience to Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20, Romans 1:5, 15:18, 16:26)
21. Christianity is first spiritual then political (not the other way around). Ideally there should be an ongoing and active synergy between the spiritual and the political. Unless the spiritual values change then the politics will be "the same old thing" and unrenewed. All "revolutions" in Scripture such as the Exodus and the overthrow of Jezebel were firstly spiritual, dealing with the principalities and powers before dealing with the government.
22. The Ideal Person is Jesus Christ, the Ideal Kingdom is the Kingdom of God, the Ideal Religion is that of faith in Christ, the Ideal Law is that of the Holy Spirit, the Ideal City is the New Jerusalem.
23. Faith and personal belief is mainly formed in community (family, friends, church, school, university, military, tribe, nation, etc) and politics regulates the community that forms the value system. So we should pray for kings and those in authority so the Christian faith may progress (1 Timothy 2:1-4)
24. Christ is not the sole property of any one person or political party or system of government.
25. Christians are first citizens of Heaven (Ephesians 2:19, 3:20) and are pilgrims passing through this world (Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 2:11). Human politics is thus non-ultimate and earthly citizenship useful but secondary. Our ultimate destination is not an earthly city or a utopian system of government.
26. Bible characters just as Joseph, Daniel, Ezra, Mordecai, Esther and Nehemiah participated honorably in pagan governments while maintaining proper spiritual priorities. Also some of the early Christians such as Erastus (Romans 16:23) seem to have held high government positions.
27. Christians are generally to be non-violent as the disciples were - who did not fight even at the arrest of Jesus. [John 18:36 MKJV](#) Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would fight so that I might not be delivered to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here.
28. Right action takes precedence over right system. It is better to have a just monarchy than an unjust democracy (or vice-versa).
29. Christian politics is not about setting up ecclesiastical systems or planting churches but rather deals with the powers, principalities, laws, leadership and systems of government that provide the overarching context for faith, worship and community life.
30. In the event of a direct clash of loyalties between God and the State Christians are to obey God rather than the State. (Acts 4:19)

31. Christians are obligated to be ethical and act according to God's will in all situations, even in politics. Yet at the same time we are to pay great attention to how to wisely use the best means possible (within God's will) to achieve effective, Christ-centered social transformation in our communities.

### **The Community (The Ground Of Politics)**

32. Politics forms and regulates community life.
33. Community life then forms and regulates the values of the persons in the community including their spiritual values.
34. If a person is to maintain spiritual values different from those of his community he has four choices:
  - A) be in conflict with his current community and perhaps try to change it.
  - B) become part of another community that has his new values
  - C) be a secret believer or a hermit dwelling alone.
  - D) start an entirely new group/community based around his spiritual values.
35. The decision about which choice to take will be, in part, a political process and be determined by political factors such as the laws and leadership of his community and the dynamics of the group.
  
36. There is an evolving realm of human thought and ideas that the Jesuit theologian Teilhard de Chardin termed the "noosphere" (like the biosphere, atmosphere, exosphere etc) from the Greek word "nous" for mind. For Teilhard this was the "group mind" of humanity where Christ was formed in society. (The Internet is an almost physical representation of the "noosphere".)
37. I am not as optimistic as Teilhard and do not see the "noosphere" leading inevitably to the formation of Christ in community. I believe it is possible that a corrupted noosphere can also lead to the formation of anti-Christ.
38. Thus politics, which regulates the processes that form the beliefs and values of the community, is a key to the formation of Christ in that community. When politicians burn bibles and ban churches and persecute Christians and form "closed countries" the gospel is hindered in that community and many perish spiritually (e.g. Albania). On the other hand when politicians open the community to missionaries, bless the church and let Christians live godly live in peace then the gospel prospers and many are saved (e.g. Philippines, Tonga) which is why Paul says: [1 Timothy 2:1-4 MKJV](#) First of all, then, I exhort *that* supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, (2) for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. (3) For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (4) who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
39. A community can also have a relationship with God and reject or accept His messengers and His rule over them. Communities will be judged by God for their response to the gospel as Jesus mentioned in His discourse about Capernaum and the unbelieving cities of Galilee. (Matthew 11:20-24).
40. The Church is a community based in the Polis (city) yet distinct from the Kosmos (world). It is a source of an alternate value system that leads to faith in Christ and where Christ is formed in community. The word ekklesia means (among other things) "political assembly" e.g. that used in Athens. Thus the church is meant to have its own "polity" - political and intellectual life.
41. Christ is formed through the action of the Holy Spirit within the life of the community so that Christians are built up by speaking the truth in love and thus reach the fullness of maturity in Christ. (Ephesians chapters 3&4)
42. Ideally the ekklesia should transform the polis.

43. This will often involve political conflict with the prevailing value system and the Church needs to be equipped to handle this. Politically skillful ambassadors for Christ have opened many doors for redemption.



The above diagram illustrates some key New Testament theological concepts. Firstly the ekklesia or church is part of the city (polis), in Athens the ekklesia was the assembly that governed the city from ancient times, it was a political institution. Jesus chose this term, with its primary meaning as a political assembly rather than "synagogue" (synagogue) with its purely spiritual overtones. By using ekklesia Jesus was saying that the Church should be involved in the political life of the city. In New Testament times each city had its gods and temples "the gods of the city". The community lived in a social contract with the kosmos – the spiritual powers and principalities over the city and obeyed certain taboos, customs and rituals that Paul refers to as "stoichea" or elemental things – the long list in green on the right of the diagram. Christ frees us from having to observe these practices in order to please the "gods of the kosmos". (Kosmos is often translated "world"). The powers and principalities then dwell "in the heavenly realms" (Ouranos in the diagram) and there are at least three levels – third heaven where God is, mid-heaven where angels fly and the air or sky where the "birds of the heavens" fly. Above the heavens is God Himself – Theos who rules over all the affairs of men. Thus human politics takes place in a city, ruled by principalities and powers and where the Church is trying to establish the Kingdom of God and break the grip of the local religious bondages or stoichea and bring the city out of its relationship with the powers and principalities and into relationship with God.

## The City (The Polis Of Politics)

The following are twelve points that I see in Scripture about the spiritual nature of cities, they are gleaned from the 1322 references to city, cities or citizens in the New King James Version..

### ***44. The city is a multi-layered reality with a spiritual as well as a geographical component eg Tyre and the "Prince of Tyre", Jerusalem and Zion (the spiritual Jerusalem).***

The city is portrayed as a geographical realm connected to and possibly ruled by an associated spiritual realm. Cities were ruled by kings and princes and corresponding to those were "principalities" in the spiritual realm. Jerusalem is a special example because it is the city of the Lord.

(Matthew 5:34-35 NKJV) "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; {35} "nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

On the other hand Ephesus was the city of Artemis (Diana of the Ephesians) a demonic principality and pagan goddess. The people of the city saw their city as "belonging to" Artemis just as the Jews saw Jerusalem as belonging to YHWH. They held festivals in her honour and maintained a magnificent temple This dark being opposed the preaching of the gospel by Paul and seems to have worked through those associated with its cultus to create a riot and drive the apostle from the city.

(Acts 19:27-28 NKJV) " {27} "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." {28} Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

Such persecution of Christian workers by spirits associated with a city is not unknown today and some cities are deeply resistant to the gospel. A Biblical example of this is Pergamos (also known as Pergamum or Pergama) which was ruled by Satan himself and thus was vigorously hostile to the gospel. Apparently this even resulted in a "faithful witness" called Antipas being martyred.

(Revelation 2:12-13 NKJV) "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: {13} "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Thus we see that the church in the city stands in direct opposition to the spiritual powers and principalities that govern it thus creating a direct conflict and hostility. This can lead believers to feel besieged and helpless and unable to break through. To the believers in Ephesus - where the temple of Diana was, Paul wrote....

(Ephesians 6:10-12 NKJV) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. {11} Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. {12} For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

***45. The associated gods of the city were responsible for its prosperity including its defense from invasion. If one city or nation was able to invade the other it was assumed that its protecting deity was the more powerful.***

(Isaiah 36:18-20 NKJV) Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria? {19} 'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand? {20} 'Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"

***46. Salvation can be corporate and the city can experience salvation ie a change of dominating spiritual reality. We see this with wicked idolatrous Jerusalem (before the exile) being changed to righteous Jerusalem after God had dealt with her.***

(Isaiah 26:1-3 NKJV) In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: "We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. {2} Open the gates, That the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in. {3} You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

This salvation can involve having God dwell in its midst. (Zechariah 8:3 NKJV) "Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain. The Holy Spirit seems to be able to indwell corporate entities (eg a church) as well as individuals. Scriptural examples include the Holy Spirit dwelling in the temple (Ezek 43:5-7), the city (Zec 12:10) and the nation (Ezek 39:29) and sanctifying them through conviction and purging (Isaiah 4:4) and the production of the fruits of the Spirit in the community as a whole (Isaiah 32:15-18, 61:3). The nation can grieve the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10) which is "within them" (Isaiah 63:11) and gives them rest (Isaiah 63:14).. Ezekiel talks of a "new spirit" being given to the house of Israel (Ezekiel 11:19,20, 18:31, 36:26-28) that results in national prosperity.

When God's judgement comes the righteous cities will experience salvation while the unrighteous will be destroyed. Eg Jerusalem and Babylon which are contrasted in succeeding verses of Isaiah.

(Isaiah 46:12- 47:1 NKJV) "Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, Who are far from righteousness: {13} I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion, For Israel My glory. "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; Sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no more be called Tender and delicate.

This judgment is like the judgments of individuals in that it seems to be based on how they have responded to God's revelation in Christ.

(Matthew 11:20-24 NKJV) Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: {21} "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would

have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. {22} "But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. {23} "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. {24} "But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

***47. The city can make a corporate response of repentance and faith in God. This is generally through the leadership. Perhaps the best example of these "multi-individual" people movements is the repentance of Nineveh under the preaching of Jonah. Note that the people seem to be affected first, then the King hears and orders the whole city to adopt sackcloth and ashes and repent.***

(Jonah 3:4-10 NRSV) Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" {5} And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. {6} When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. {7} Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. {8} Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. {9} Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish." {10} When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

They can also reject God as a corporate entity. (Luke 10:10-12 NRSV) But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, {11} 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.' {12} I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town. This happened to Antioch in Pisidia.....(Acts 13:50-51 NRSV) But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region. {51} So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium.

***48. The city has spiritual qualities eg righteousness, holiness, faithfulness, truth, praise and glory. A city can experience the indwelling presence of God and be properly called righteous and holy. When it is unfaithful to God it can be called a harlot. In the final stages of ungodly rebellion the presence or glory of God can leave the city and the city as a whole can experience God's wrath.***

(Isaiah 1:21 NKJV) How the faithful city has become a harlot! It was full of justice; Righteousness lodged in it, But now murderers.

(Isaiah 1:26-27 NKJV) I will restore your judges as at the first, And your counsellors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city." {27} Zion shall be redeemed with justice, And her penitents with righteousness.

(Ezekiel 11:23 NKJV) And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city.

(Daniel 9:24 NKJV) "Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

(Zechariah 8:3 NKJV) "Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain.

***49. Cities have spiritual focal points e.g. temples, palaces and courts at which they transact business with their spiritual overlords through pacts, festivals and observances to the gods and the enacting of the laws handed down from those gods. These transactions reinforce their (the gods) control over the city. The customs of a city are thus not merely cultural and artistic but spiritual as well.***

(1 Corinthians 10:19-22 NRSV) What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? {20} No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. {21} You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. {22} Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

God's message to cities is often proclaimed during festivals and at the very "spiritual hot spots" of the city. When Paul spoke at the Areopagus (Mar's Hill) he was addressing the people in control of the religious customs of ancient Athens. When Jesus ministry reached its peak He "spoke daily in the temple". When Paul evangelised a new city he tended to start at the synagogue or local Jewish prayer meeting. Many of the prophetic messages to cities in Scripture were proclaimed during festivals in the temple or at the "high places" such as Bethel which were respected for great spiritual events having occurred there in the past. A message proclaimed in Westminster Abbey seems to carry more weight than if it is proclaimed from the small church I go to here in Townsville, Australia. If we want to take cities for God we must proclaim His message from the points that the city itself recognises and authenticates as being a part of its spiritual tradition and centre.

***50. The city is often dominated by a certain spiritual associations or sets of meanings.*** Just as we would associate Zurich with money, Washington DC with power, Paris with fashion and romance, Rome with religion and culture, or Los Angeles with beautiful people. In the Bible Bethel with meeting God and dedication to Him, Jericho with spiritual warfare, Tyre with bartering for souls, Dan with idolatry, Babylon with organised proud rebellion or "hubris".

***51. The people in the city are affected by this atmosphere and their salvation and the cities salvation are intertwined.*** That is not to say that an inhabitant of Babylon or Tyre is beyond salvation but that it is harder to be saved there than say in the restored Jerusalem. The classic case of this is Lot and his family in Sodom and Gomorrah.. Lot's family had spent so long in Sodom that many members of it had absorbed its values. (Genesis 19:12-26) While the New Testament tells us that Lot's soul was tormented day and night by what he saw (2 Peter 2:7,8) it is clear that this did not rub off on his family. His wife ended up as a pillar of salt and a memorial to the consequences of loving this present world. His two daughters were on the brink of marrying unbelievers who scoffed at angels and perished in the destruction. These daughters had spent so

long in Sodom and been so eroded morally by its values that they later got Lot drunk and committed incest with him. (Genesis 19:30-38). The descendants of this union became the Ammonites and Moabites, perpetual enemies of Israel. What may have originally been a godly (but possibly weak) family was shattered into fragments because it had been deeply affected by the ungodly value systems that dominated the cities where they lived. With respect to their salvation they were "saved as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15) escaping with their lives and nothing more when the cities were destroyed.

**52. Cities are not immutable.** They can, and do, change character after a trauma. They can be purified by judgment or sink into idolatry. Jerusalem was a godly city under David and Solomon then gradually fell into idolatry until it could only be described as a "harlot". God punished Jerusalem with war and famine and exile and after the exile in Babylon it again became a God-fearing city. Nineveh (above) changed drastically for a while under the preaching of Jonah.

**53 . God has destinies for cities as well as for individuals.**

There are many prophecies concerning cities in the Bible eg Jericho, Tyre, Sidon, Jerusalem, Babylon, Ekron, Gath all have destinies mapped out for them in Scripture. The prophecies for Tyre for instance have been fulfilled in exact detail though given hundreds of years before the events occurred. Sometimes the fulfilling of these destinies involves the active prayerful cooperation of God's people.

(Isaiah 62:6-7 NRSV) Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest, {7} and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it renowned throughout the earth.

**54. Cities can suffer as a whole unit and experience desolation.** Isaiah vividly describes the abandoned Jerusalem as (Isaiah 54:11 NRSV) O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, I am about to set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. The distress of the city is abandonment, desertion, lack of people and an absence of glory in its midst. Proverbs describes the ruination of a prince and his city (Proverbs 14:28 NRSV) The glory of a king is a multitude of people; without people a prince is ruined. It is the people, not the structures, of a city that are its glory. When they leave or are decimated by famine, war or plague then the city suffers as a whole. We see a reflection of this today when a major employer in a city lays off thousands of staff and the whole economy of the city is affected as they move to other areas. The city is so inter-related that when one part suffers it tends to affect the rest. The biblical images of suffering cities are not just metaphors for individual suffering (which is described elsewhere eg Lamentations) but a real description of the anguish of the corporate entity.

**55. Glory is a central concept to the identity of a city.** The city seems to reach its fullest meaning, its zenith, when it is described as "full of glory". This reaches its zenith in the new Jerusalem.

(Isaiah 66:10-11 NKJV) "Rejoice with Jerusalem, And be glad with her, all you who love her; Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; {11} That you may feed and be satisfied With the consolation of her bosom, That you may drink deeply and be delighted With the abundance of her glory."

(Revelation 21:23 NKJV) The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

The glory of a city is its ability to be honored and to bless all who dwell there. It is a combination of total prosperity and absolute holiness.

(Isaiah 54:12-13 NRSV) I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of jewels, and all your wall of precious stones. {13} All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your children.

### **Authority Spiritual And Temporal (The Power of Politics)**

56. Authority is always a gift from a superior. (Matthew 9:5-8, 28:18-20, John 17:2, Luke 9:1,2 etc)
57. Authority operates over a specified sphere of influence such as **authority to do** a certain thing e.g. authority to heal, to cast out demons etc. (Luke 9:1,2) or **authority over** a certain group of people ( 1 Samuel 9:17)
58. The Father has given Jesus authority over all flesh. (John 17:2, Matthew 28:18)
59. The authority given by the Father to Jesus during His earthly ministry included authority to forgive sins and heal the sick (Matthew 9:5-8), and to give life and execute judgment (John 5:26,27).
60. It also included the authority to give eternal life to those who believe and to grant them status in Heaven as children of God. (John 1:12; 5:26,27; 17:1-3)
61. Jesus delegated that authority to those undertaking ministry for Him and empowered them to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons, and preach the Kingdom of God. (Luke 9:1, 10:1-3, )
62. Authority is also granted because of the position a person holds in life. Spiritual authority is given to Christians because they have ascended with Christ and are seated with Him in the heavenly realms as full citizens of Heaven. (Ephesians 1:20, 2:6,7)
63. Spiritual authority is spiritually transmitted. One of the means of transmission is through the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8) just as it was also given to Jesus when He was baptized with the Spirit. (Matthew 3:13-17, 4:23). Another spiritual means of transmission is the "laying on of hands" (Acts 8:17-19, 13:1-3, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6, Hebrews 6:2) in the Old Testament anointing with oil was used in this way.( Leviticus 8:10-12)
64. Jesus is now at the right hand of the Father with universal authority over all things in Heaven and on earth and exercises this vast authority on behalf of those who engage in the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:34,35; 5:31)
65. In the process Jesus gives authority to people like Paul for the building up of the Church. (2 Corinthians 10:8, 13;10) One use of this authority is to "tear down" the Satanic resistance to the progress of the gospel so that people may come to faith. ( 2 Corinthians 10:3-6)
66. Jesus' authority over Heaven is no longer contested (Revelation 5) but His authority over earth is bitterly contested by Satan (Revelation 11-20) and by the "kings of the earth" who abrogate this authority to themselves.
67. Eventually Jesus authority will be total and He will "rule the nations with a rod of iron" (Revelation 2:26,27) and all kingdoms will be replaced by the kingdom of God (Daniel 2).
68. God has the power to conform all things in accordance with His will. (Ephesians 1:11)
69. This includes the political sphere and human authority. (Colossians 2:15-20)
70. God may delegate to certain people spiritual authority over the nations: [Jeremiah 1:9-10 ASV](#) Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: (10) see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over

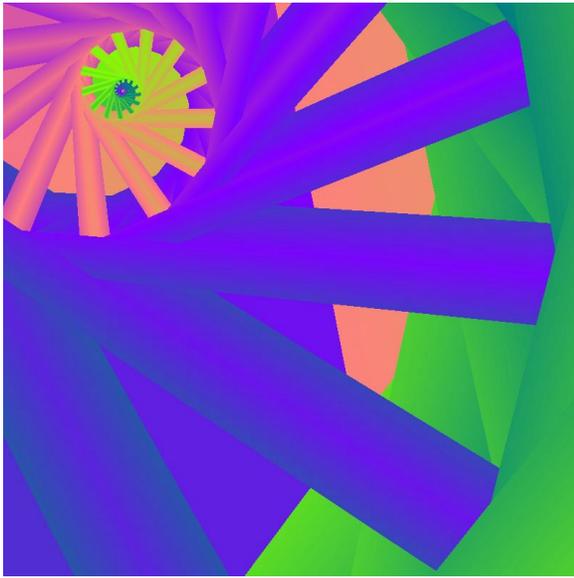
the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

71. The three ways in which Christians exercise political authority are as prophets, priests or kings.
72. Prophets - stand outside the system and speak the word of God to the system on the issues of the day e.g. Jeremiah, Elijah etc.
73. Priests - pastorally care for those within the system, but are not actively involved in administration themselves e.g. Abiathar the High Priest and his care for David.
74. Kings - take an administrative post within the system and operate as God's people to affect the outcome of major decisions e.g. Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther, Mordecai.
75. Authority is maintained by faithful stewardship. (Luke 12:42-48) Stewardship involves diligent, profitable use of the delegated authority and resources. (parable of the talents). Where a Christian has been unfaithful to his stewardship another may be selected to take his place in that role or ministry. (Acts 1:15-26) Christians need to use their spiritual and temporal authority to advance the kingdom of God - not to pursue their own interests. (Philippians 2:21)

### **Conclusion**

The gospel is necessary if politics is to be redeemed and politics is necessary if the gospel is to effectively capture the culture. Where the missionary has taken note of and appealed to political leadership first of all massive people movements have often been the result. Where the missionary has avoided them and concentrated only on the marginalized the gospel has often been stigmatized as belonging to the politically unacceptable. Where the worker has been brash or politically naïve then the gospel has sometimes been rejected or persecuted. The gospel can be assisted in its spread by Christians with political skills and the gospel can only fully reform a culture if it reforms the power structures in that culture and that will inevitably involve tackling some thorny and potentially divisive political issues.

# The Rational Pragmatic Christian Leader



The excesses of the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church led Protestants and especially those who were “non-conformists” such as Baptists, Methodists, Mennonites and Quakers to reject involvement in politics and to argue for a total separation of church and state. On the whole the church focused on morality and theology and worship and perhaps only in health and education did it make much impact on daily life. Late in the nineteenth century through most of the twentieth century the battle against liberalism and various theological controversies consumed much of the energy of the church. Faith became internal and theological, mental and at times emotional, but rarely practical and powerful.

However this retreat from political life and practical concern has now gone to almost as great

an extreme in its direction, as the power mad papacy of the Middle Ages took it in the other direction. We have avoided power and avoided conflict and avoided speaking to business and political leaders in our communities. Now we are powerless and discarded or treated as a “voting segment” to be placated a little with a few phrases at election time. We are not seen as a source of wisdom and practical and useful suggestions for the life of the realm. At best we are a “source of moral values” for young people. However we are not allowed to be a source of moral values for politicians! We have gone from the harlot church to the Cinderella church.

This would not be so bad except now the world desperately needs us. We are at a crisis that requires the Kingdom and its values and which will not be solved by science and technology. The problem of millions of angry radicalized people in dozens of countries is not a technological problem; it’s a spiritual and personal problem that only the Church can truly fix. And we have no power and little idea of how to acquire power. We are waiting for Prince Charming. We need our political power back, in a redeemed form, as political power that is used honestly and wisely and well, if we are to be transformational. Yet we have been going so long in one direction that now all thoughts of power seem strange and we have invented the logic of the helpless and oppressed, we have a thinking that is now so impractical and other-worldly that it cannot take hold of reality in strong and useful ways. Before we can hope to achieve justice and wield power on God’s behalf we must think justly and understand power.

This chapter will be quite unlike most of the rest of the book and will deal with achieving a logical and masterful mind that understands justice and can transform communities. This is a chapter about you and your own quest to become a just and transformational individual. Much of it is from other material that I have written.

## Justice and The Objective And Masterful Mind

Justice depends on an objective mind. The Scriptural injunction for a judge is that the judge be impartial. (*Leviticus 19:15 NKJV*) *'You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.* Thus there is no role for sentiment in the actual application of justice. No-one can trust a judge that will let someone off because they cry or because they come from a poor family. Likewise no-one will trust a judge who is overawed by the rich and mighty and lets them escape.

People look to leaders to first of all be strong and fair, after that the leader can, from time to time be merciful. The ability to be strong and fair is foundational and without it no-one will trust us with real power for long. People will not live under a chaotic and sentimental ruler. Here in the Philippines the lack of objectivity of former President Estrada led to his overthrow after less than two years in government. His kind heart and sentimental nature won him many votes but when that same kind heart built palaces for his six mistresses and gave away the nations superannuation fund to his cronies, then people were outraged. He was seen as unfit to rule because he followed his heart. Similarly in Australia the sentimental and kind Labor opposition leader Kim Beazley lost the last election (which many say he should have won) because he came across as lacking objectivity and resolve in dealing with people smuggling into Australia.

Evangelical Christianity has overemphasized mercy and grace and sentiment and emotion and spiritual feeling to the point where we have no "ticker", no ability to tackle the tough situations wisely and well. We are often "all mush" and cannot bring even our churches into line let alone deal with globalization or terrorism. We are out of balance. We need to learn to be nice and kind to the broken and to the hurting and as tough as nails with the ruthless and predatory. We desperately need to rediscover the objective mind and a whole neglected swathe of virtues such as strength, courage, dignity, wisdom, objectivity, discernment, justice, nobility, incorruptibility, integrity, and so forth. If we want power we will have to have the virtues that power requires.

We have frequently defined love and the Christian life as 'being nice', yet Joshua was not told "Go into Canaan and be nice and they will all agree with you". Rather, God told Joshua, "Be strong and courageous" because he saw Israel as having many battles ahead. We need a real, strong and courageous faith that will operate in the real world. We need to go beyond the Desiderata and Footprints and rediscover 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God'. Courage is required if we are to pursue a reasonable faith in an unreasonable world.

If we are to rediscover the virtues of leadership: such as strength, dignity, and justice; then we need to move from a merely subjective and pietistic faith; to a faith that incorporates and develops the objective mind. We need to develop a faith that can sum up life's situations judiciously and apply the Scripture to them. We need to move beyond merely being satisfied with our doctrines and with our spiritual feelings - to being satisfied with our judgments of life, and the fruit of our actions. We need to find our way out of the powerless muddle to a rational, objective, pragmatic and solution-focused faith that can actually transform life's difficult situations. In fact the Kingdom will probably be unable to transform the Market until it has developed the same levels of objectivity and power in its thinking that the business world has.

## **Kings In The Kingdom**

Part of the redemptive process is being made like Jesus who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords so that He makes us "kings and priests" (1 Peter 2:9, Rev 1:6, 5:10). Thus the church is not just a hospital it is also a Kingdom and part of the central promise of that faith is that we will rule with Christ, even that we will rule the nations with a rod of iron:

*(Revelation 2:26-27 NKJV) "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations; {27} 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'; as I also have received from My Father; and in Heaven the song of the Redeemed is:*

*(Revelation 5:9-10 NKJV) And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, {10} And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."*

Christians will not just reign in a spiritual sense as in ruling over sin or over passions, but in a very literal sense of being rulers over nations on the earth. This is no minor doctrine; there are over

200 references in the New Testament to the church being a Kingdom or Jesus being a king and us reigning with Him. Thus Christian maturity involves, in part, acquiring the virtues and reasoning of a ruler. Maturity goes far beyond not smoking, dancing or drinking, and far beyond being nice and kind and appropriate, it also goes beyond being frugal and having a good work ethic. True Christian maturity grasps hold of mercy, truth and justice and understanding and fairness and wisdom and dignity and knowledge.

### **The High Cost Of Being Foolish**

The Church is paying a very high price for its retreat from wisdom, objectivity, and the sterner virtues of true servant-leadership. Irrational subjective and superstitious thinking is leading many into poverty (as we saw in the section on the spiritual basis of prosperity and poverty). Fanatical religion can lead to cruelty (as we saw in the section on radicalization of Muslims) and even some Christian churches are guilty of this. Furthermore problem-focused or overly pietistic thinking leads to powerlessness as the church is either overcome by the world or retreats from engagement with it. On top of this some areas of the church have developed a helpless and fearful outlook that has retreated into conspiracy theories including a martyr complex that operates even where there is little real persecution. In some quarters a reliance on the magical and the magician has reduced large sections of the Church to dependency as they wait with glazed eyes for their miracle from the anointed preacher. Such dependent people largely fail to take responsible action at the level of their daily lives. (Now I do believe in miracles and I am a charismatic, but I do not believe in folly and dependency or in improper hero worship.) The price of this weakened and subjective faith is enormous - the very Church that is supposed to be offering them salvation is driving Christians into poverty, cruelty, fear, compulsion and dependency! To retreat into seclusion, mysticism, fear, subjectivity and emotional rigidity is to employ a false shelter. Folly is no protection. Only wisdom preserves the life of its possessors and biblical wisdom (*chokmah*) only operates in the real world. The Church needs to be strong in spirit and bold in action, full of faith and wisdom and capable of intelligent engagement with the real world.

### **Teaching The Church To Think and To Act And To Be Present In The World**

Jesus was Present in the world and directly changed people and situations. He was there, in the middle of the crowd, hands on, and face to face. The prophets also did not prophesy to the air, they walked up to the crowd or the king, then they said their prophecy. They were present in the world, they were there, in the midst of life's action. Biblical action was direct, unmediated, real and tangible. For some reason we fear this, and run away from actual engagement and prefer committees, conferences, sermons, prayer meetings and bible studies. True biblical action is to speak directly to the people who most need to hear and have the power to make decisions based on what you have to say.

The Church, like her Lord, must learn to be present in the midst of the world offering healing and salvation and calling people to justice where possible. We need a direct unmediated and active approach to life. This is very humbling. It easy to dream big dreams in a worship service but when you sit down and say "how can I change Manila" you feel powerless and small. At first this is not a good feeling. In fact being "present" can initially be painful as our illusions about our own efficacy are punctured. Presence often creates a crisis of faith. The disciples went where Jesus went and were present in many faith-testing situations such as the storm on the lake, the epileptic boy they could not heal, and the feeding of the five thousand. By being present and being scared they eventually learned mastery. Lets take a few pages to look at what it means to learn mastery of emotions and of life as this is one of the keys to being an effective agent of change.

## **Fight, Flight or Mastery**

You may have heard of the “fight or flight response” that humans and animals have in response to threat. When the fight-or-flight response occurs blood flows to the hands and feet and away from the brain and huge shots of adrenalin and other hormones take over and the fast action control centers of the brain come into play and suddenly you are exploding at people, or running, or fighting. In common parlance your “buttons have been pressed” and you are just reacting at an entirely visceral and instinctual level. This is not a bad thing when you are running away from a charging rhinoceros. Speedy reactions may be a very good thing. However in modern life the provocation that sets off the response may be a cutting remark or a threat to our ego in the office. The feeling of threat is enough to set off the entire chemical cascade that is known as the fight-or-flight response. A minor incident becomes a matter of life and death.

The perception of threat and the impact of adrenalin cause us to react without choosing our reactions. Startled people have accidentally shot their family members thinking they were burglars and soldiers have fired on their own troops through the sheer speed and inaccuracy of this response. The fight or flight response removes our ability to make wise, free and balanced moral choices and is definitely not the stuff on which Christian character, good judgment or justice is built. Unfortunately the Church has tended to engage in “flight responses” such as pietism, monasticism or conspiracy theories or in “fight responses” such as declamatory preaching when confronted with an unjust world. There is an alternative – personal mastery.

## **Mastery**

The alternative to the fight or flight response is to achieve mastery of the situation. Jesus always demonstrated mastery of any and every situation He was presented with. He neither fought the soldiers who arrested him or fled them but rather throughout His entire trial demonstrated an amazing degree of personal mastery. At no point in His life did Jesus give in to the adrenalin-filled panic of a fight or flight response. His actions were masterful, strong, wise and spiritual. His Spirit-filled mind had total mastery over His flesh and His instincts. This gave Him power, poise and a degree of personal authority that seems to have been the main aspect of His personality that people admired and is frequently commented on in the gospels. The following verses are just some of the verses that show how other people saw Jesus as having authority and how Jesus saw His own authority being used to master situations. (Matthew 7:29, 8:9, 21:23-27, 28:18-20, Mark 1:27, Luke 4:32, Luke 9:1, 10:19, John 5:27, 7:17, 12:49, 14:10, 16:13, 17:2)

Jesus was not thrown even by encountering the Devil in person. During the temptation in the wilderness Jesus met the Devil in a face-to-face spiritual encounter that must have been of incredible intensity. The Devil was out to destroy Jesus, he was malice incarnate, and he was beguiling, tempting, and pushing Jesus into a wrong response. Jesus neither fled nor fought. Jesus mastered the situation, resisted the temptations and used His authority to deal with the problem. Jesus calmly stood His ground against pure evil. Jesus did not fight or flee. Jesus did not launch into an aggressive tirade against Satan. There was no raw and red-necked stream of spiritual vitriol directed against the Devil. Instead Jesus defeated Satan through the calm use of God’s authority based on God’s Word. Jesus mastered the situation.

The biblical example of Jesus in the wilderness shows us that even if we think a situation is utterly evil and threatens our health, identity and success (as the wilderness temptations did for Jesus) that we do not need to get upset and become reactionary. Nor do we need to pack our bags and run. We just need to calmly and authoritatively expose that situation to the truth of Scripture and the authority of God. We want to end up moving through life as Jesus moved through Israel, and cope with our pressures and threats as he coped with His. When it comes to social justice it means asking: “How can I master this situation?” rather than “How can I fight this

situation?" When the Church decides to use her spiritual authority rather than her reactivity then she is strongest. The difference is often subtle. There is a way of saying "God says this is wrong" that is full of faith and which has presence and power and there is a way of saying it that is fearful and reactionary. The Church needs to speak with mastery, faith and authority.

When I speak of mastery I am not speaking of sinless perfection. Mastery is more like a combination of faith, courage, decisiveness and balance. It is having spiritual authority, poise and power in all situations. It asks questions such as: How can we master every threat and every frustration with grace, power and poise? How can we move through a grossly unjust trial without losing our cool? How can we forgive those that nail us to the cross? These reactions are the supreme achievements of a Perfect Life. They are what made Jesus the spotless Lamb of God. Lets move from the cosmic to the comical and consider my attempts at playing golf. Once every few years a friend drags me out onto a golf course. When the ball lands in the rough, as it often does, I have three possible responses – fight, flight or mastery. I can become depressed at the difficulty, give up on the shot and pay the penalty – that is the flight response. I can hit wildly with all my might and try and blast it out of there – that is the fight response. Or I can call up my considerable golf prowess, concentrate carefully, keep my eye on the ball, visualize the wonderful trajectory it will take and get it out of there with just the right touch. This is the mastery response and as you may well guess it is the most difficult response and the hardest to perfect. I rarely get it right, but it is the one I would wish to practice and reinforce. There is really no other possible choice since the other two responses just lead to failure. Mastery is the hardest choice but it is the only choice that goes anywhere –and mastery comes from the Mind.

## **The Mind**

I need to spend a few paragraphs defining what I mean by "Mind" before we go too far and get confused. By the Mind I do not mean various individual thoughts or mind as intellectual activity or a set of intellectual abstractions. I mean mind as the entire mental framework of the person. We use the word Mind this way in the phrases "single-minded" or "open-minded". Mind in this sense is an inner state of consciousness that has certain properties. The mind is controllable and can be focused by the believer. Paul asks us to set our mind on various things such as the Spirit, things above, and the pursuit of maturity so the mind is something we can focus on God. For those of you who enjoy Greek the phren word family phroneo, phronema and phronesis, phronimos is in view here. Thus the mind is that part of our total consciousness and awareness that we have some control over. In this definition it does not include dreams or the sub-conscious. The sub-conscious is part of our mind in a larger sense but not part of it in this narrow sense we are using it here because we have no real control over the subconscious and cannot discipline it or focus it. Neither is mind in this sense the scattered thoughts that drift in and out of a person who is daydreaming or watching TV. Of such people we sometimes say "their mind was switched off when they watched the movie". Their inner consciousness was inactive. Thus the mind is what thinks when you do some real thinking. The mind is where you receive and mull over wisdom and where you make real choices about your actions. That's your mind. It is that part of your consciousness that you can control and exert and which bears a close relationship to the "real you".

The mind is the only part of our consciousness that we can control, and therefore it is of vital importance. I do not mean to imply that we are all mind by doing this or that the mind is superior, it is part of an integrated whole which it directs. The mind is like the wheel on the bridge that controls the rudder of a ship. The navigator plots the course and then the wheel is turned to a definite bearing and the ship holds that course. The course of the entire ship is determined by where the captain's wheel is set. The wheel is the only part of the ship that can be focused on a direction or course of action. The engine will drive the ship anywhere, the cargo hold does its job,

the air-conditioning makes it bearable but the wheel, connected to the rudder sets the entire direction and destiny and decides which port the ship will go to or even if it will be shipwrecked through carelessness. The mind is that part of us which we can steer and which we can plot our course with. It's the only part of us that can do that job. Therefore it is decisive.

We need to love God with our whole being – mind, spirit, soul, and strength, and all these parts of us are vital and important but it is the mind that directs the spirit, or the soul, or our energy and strength onto God and His purposes. The mind is the critical point where the decisions are made and the course committed to. The mind is the part of us that can grasp issues of justice, mercy and truth and it is through the mind that we will enact justice on the earth as co-regents with Christ.

The mind in the sense of the *phren* word family generally means the wisdom and understanding especially of the righteous (Luke 1:17, Ephesians 1:8). This mind be set on various things. When Jesus rebuked Peter he said he was "not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." (Matthew 16:23, Mark 8:33), the legalistic Romans nit-picking about food and drink were literally "rules-minded" in the Greek (Romans 14:6). The mind can be set on: The flesh or the Spirit (Romans 8:5,6), things above (Colossians 3:2), or on earthly things (Philippians 2:19) -which caused Paul to weep. Due to the renewing and infilling of the Holy Spirit we can even have "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:14-16) and when we are humble servants we have a mind like Christ's (Philippians 2:5). On the other hand we can have a childish mind (1 Corinthians 13:11, 14:20) Unity of mind is important and Christians are to be one-minded and like-minded. (Romans 12:16, 15:5, 2 Corinthians 13:11) This word family can also mean the careful, prudent mind, that which thinks of others, the mindful and thoughtful person (Philippians 1:7, 4:10) though the word "mind" is rarely used in English translations of this aspect.

Thus it is clear from the New Testament that the sort of mind we end up with is entirely our choice. We can focus or mind on God's interests or man's interests, the Spirit or the flesh, the things above or earthly things. We can choose to be humble, like-minded, unified and thoughtful of others - or we can choose to be puffed up, childish, contentious, worldly and carnal. We have to make a definite decision to move towards acquiring a noble and objective mind that loves justice and truth and is focused on the things above. We need to train our minds like a racehorse, submitting them to the will, thoughts and purposes of God so we can be a force for good mastering the world we live in and bringing it into His Kingdom.

### **Mastery and The Mind**

Mastery is a product of the focused and disciplined mind bringing the whole person into submission to an over-riding ethic or ethos. Throughout history everyone from Zen monks to Spartan warriors and corporate traders have discovered this. People have become masterful human beings by disciplining themselves in all sorts of pursuits from archery to fencing to philosophy. That is why competitive sports, while trivial in themselves, have shaped many a person for the better. The somersaults of a champion gymnast are in themselves quite pointless. They don't feed the hungry or make any great philosophical point. Its not doing somersaults that makes the gymnast great but the discipline he or she puts in. The sport builds mastery and mental strength into the gymnast so that when the days of gymnastics are over the character remains. The focus must be external to self. The gymnast does not find self-mastery by focusing on self-mastery. He or she finds self-mastery by focusing on somersaults.

The mind is the only part of our consciousness that we can focus and direct therefore it is the only part of us that can give us mastery. A million dollars will not give you personal mastery. People who win the lottery often end up poor because of their lack of personal mastery. The money has not made them masterful. A strong body will not give you mastery except of certain

physical skills. Athletes can be enslaved to alcohol or drugs. Education will not give you personal mastery, there are many well educated people who are small-minded and weak-willed. Willpower won't give you mastery as the will can simply become stubborn and inflexible, unable to adapt to changing situations and thus lead to inevitable defeat. Even religion won't give you mastery. Many people are enslaved by cults, caught up in bondage to religious guilt or overtaken by idolatry and superstition. Only the adaptable, flexible, trained, focused and disciplined mind can bring mastery.

Please be clear about this, I am not advocating mentalist philosophies, mind science, Christian Science, or think and grow rich kinds of mental mastery. They are half-truths. The mind is not a terribly significant force in itself. The mind does not have the ability to create heaven or hell as Blake thought. God creates Heaven and Hell. Reality is His creation, not ours. The mind does not create the world but it does enable us to move through it with poise and power. The mind is not God. The mind works best when it is set on God. In biblical terms personal and emotional mastery is a product of the mind set on God and imbued with His Word and authority. The unaided mind operating alone by itself cannot produce mastery of the kind we see in the life of Jesus Christ. For that kind of mastery we need more than positive thinking. We need a direct connection to God and the mind must be resolutely set on God, on the Spirit, on things above, on the Kingdom, and the righteousness thereof.

### **Directing The Christian Mind**

So we see that we are faced with three universal truths: Firstly that personal mastery is the only wise option. Secondly that such mastery is solely a product of the mind. Thirdly that the mind becomes masterful as it is disciplined and focused on something outside itself. The highest degree of mastery can only be attained when the 'something outside itself' is God. You can achieve a sense of mastery by focusing your mind on fencing or gymnastics or horse-riding but you won't end up like Jesus just by focusing on those things. The mind must be directed onto Christ. That is its proper place.

This directing of the mind is a forceful and decisive activity. It is hard to put into words. It is not concentrating on Christ, neither is it speculating about Christ or studying or daydreaming about Christ. It is not even thinking about Jesus as such. It is not an internal, reflective or meditative process. It's similar to standing outside yourself and directing yourself onto Christ. Its like standing at the top of a high-dive tower and looking down and plunging in with total commitment. It's choosing where your life energies will be focused and your mental processes directed. It's like going outside yourself but towards Christ at the same time. I suppose you could call it faith, or at least faith is very much involved in it. I am stuck for an analogy. It's a little like those missiles that lock onto their target or a cat focused on a mouse. The whole of the mind is fixed on Christ and directs the total life energies of the believer in that direction. As this focus is attained everything else is entrained, the emotions, the will and the responses. Just as someone absorbed in a video game entrains all their concentration, emotions and will into the game so a Christian absorbed in Christ, with their mind set on the Spirit, inevitably brings their whole life into conformity with Jesus.

It may not be immediately obvious but when we direct our mind to a purpose it means that we commit ourselves to the rules and techniques that the particular purpose requires. For instance in writing this book I must follow the rules of the English language. I am hardly conscious of that because I have internalized many of the rules. Now and then the spell-checker or grammar checker on this computer alerts me to where I am going wrong. Then I correct it. That is part of writing, part of the project, and part of being focused on writing a book. Following the rules of English grammar is not bad or awful. It's not a restriction on my freedom or a legalism or a lack of grace. It's just required. Mastery of anything means sticking to the rules. Similarly, following Jesus

has rules. Submission to the commandments of Jesus Christ is not optional if we are to stay focused on Christ and know life and peace. Obeying these commandments is not the whole of the Christian life but they are part of the discipline of the Christian life. They make it flow and if you are to have mastery in the Christian life you must decide to obey the rules. You cannot just make up the spiritual life as you go along any more than you can decide to reinvent English grammar every time you write.

Deciding to totally set your mind on Christ and achieve total life mastery is the very hardest thing you will ever do. But what are the alternatives? To potter along lamely is not much of a life. To refuse it totally is to go into eternal darkness. But the effort seems tremendous, the focus too narrow and the rules too hard. The focus must be kept and we are unruly. We are prone to distraction. We are far too easy on ourselves. We don't want to get up and practice. We want heaven from our armchairs. So we make a commitment to Christ, then that fades, then another one, then a spiritual breakthrough, and then a slack patch. We are all over the place. Our minds are set on ourselves, or on our finances, or on the opinions of the Christian community or on the success of our ministry. We find easier goals and substitute foci. We become anxious, stressed, harried and spiritually weak. We need to come to a point of final decision where we look at the mess, pull ourselves together and decide with all that is within us to focus ourselves totally on Christ alone and pursue single-minded, focused, disciplined mastery.

### **Prerequisites For Self-Mastery**

The absolute prerequisites of spiritual progress are that you are born-again with a new nature from God, that you have the filling of the Holy Spirit and that you are single-mindedly devoted to God in obedience to His word. Without these three things you do not stand a chance.

Unless you are born-again you do not have a new nature. Without the new nature it's an impossible job. If you are not Spirit-filled and led by the Spirit in your daily life then you will not have power over the flesh (see Galatians 5:16-18) and you will struggle continually and lose continually. If you are not single-minded you will be double-minded and double-minded people receive nothing from the Lord (James 1:5-8). You will be left wallowing in your doubt and indecision. These three things are the basics. Before I go on to talk about techniques in self-mastery you must have these three things in your life or be prepared to have these three things in your life as soon as possible.

### **Practical Techniques For Emotional Self-Mastery**

It's fine to talk about the need for a personal relationship with God and having one's mind set on things above but how will that keep someone from exploding next time someone cuts them off on the highway? What are the practical tips for mastering our fight-or-flight response and for mastering life?

There are thus two levels to emotional self-mastery. Firstly we must set up the foundations of the new self and the God-focused mind. That renews our connection with God and sets up some spiritual lines of control over the fight or flight response. Then we must learn the practical details of responding to life intelligently and wisely.

- Pay attention to your physical state. If you realize that your fists are clenched and your neck is rigid and you are physically tensed up and alerted for danger then try to undo those physical states. Unclench your fists, rub your neck, relax your posture. The fight or flight response is partly a physical response and as we undo its physical correlates it will lose much of its power. Perhaps try and relax or use deep breathing if you are tense, guarded or explosive.

- Be aware of the magnitude of your emotional responses and the quick “zoom” to anger or anxiety that the fight or flight response produces. Learn to recognize when you are zooming to disaster and practice keeping a lid on it.
- Take time to think. Use your God-given right to choose your response. Do not just respond on auto-pilot. Once you stop and think you are far more likely to choose a good and much more optimal solution.
- Disengage. If you have started to move into attack mode pull back the troops! Go for a walk, cool down. Have a pray about it.
- If you are going into a situation that you know aggravates you (such as dealing with an annoying person) try to make a conscious decision about how you are going to react in that situation. Then rehearse your balanced and biblical reaction over and over in your mind. Perhaps seven times or seventy times seven? (see Matthew 18) Train yourself mentally to react rightly just like professional golfers ‘see the ball going in the hole’ even before they make the shot. Use mental rehearsal to disarm potential conflict situations.
- In the converse of this - don’t mentally rehearse the wrong response. Don’t see in your mind’s eye a picture of yourself strangling the boss of the phone company. It may be very satisfying but it is not helpful. It is educating yourself in the wrong direction.
- Use the ‘what would Jesus do?’ question as a quick reference.
- Question your perceptions of threat. Is this really a life or death issue? Am I getting tensed up over nothing? What does it say about me if I am so easily riled? Or on the flight response: Is it really that bad? Is the world going to end over this? Is this fear, anxiety and emotional reactivity helping me? Has running away from things helped or hindered my life?
- Learn to find your emotional center and to live from it and to know when it is in balance and out of balance. This is quite difficult for many people.
- Some people will push you wanting you to explode so they can take advantage of your immature reaction. Be alert to this and deliberately react the opposite way they are pushing you. (1 Corinthians 4:12) For instance when they revile you greet them with a blessing. (1 Peter 2:23 NKJV) who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;
- Remember that when you react rightly to unjust treatment that “great is your reward in heaven”. So rejoice and give yourself a pat on the back when you keep your cool. Positive reinforcement for good behavior. (Matthew 5:11)
- Do not return evil for evil. (Romans 12:17) Keep a lid on your desire to retaliate. Leave retaliation to the Lord. (Romans 12:19) If we return a blessing instead we will inherit blessing. . (1 Peter 3:9).
- If people rip you off and insult you don’t escalate it into a life or death struggle over honor and pride. This is what Jesus means when He says “do not resist him who is evil”. (He does not mean that the police should not arrest robbers!) Rather it means “don’t let the evil person push you into a full-scale, adrenalin packed, fight or flight response”. Deny the natural man’s urge to strike back. If he slaps you, turn the other cheek, if he takes your cloak, let him, if he makes you walk a mile, go two. If he says “give me money” let him have some. (Matthew 5:38-42). Deny your reactivity and show you are made of different stuff.
- Don’t let unkind, ungrateful, stingy, mean or small-minded people get to you. God is merciful to the unkind and ungrateful and we have a great reward in heaven when we do likewise. (Luke 6:35) Brush their meanness to one side without taking it too personally and treat them as well as you can with reasonable safety (because some are quite toxic).

- Do not get your ego hooked into the game of “Christian comparisons”, my church is bigger than your church etc. This only leads to fuming and fighting.
- Do not let theology push you into fight or flight mode. For instance “I won’t study the Second Coming its too contentious” (flight response) or “You are a heretic and I will torch you verbally since the law won’t allow me to burn you at the stake” (fight response). The mastery response is to learn about the Second Coming and other aspects of theology and grow in God and only debate under circumstances that are harmless to the hearers (such as with good friends in the ministry) unless of course there is an urgent apologetic reason. Even then your speech should be seasoned with salt.
- Learn correct responses by modeling mature Christians and by studying the heroes of the faith.
- Make a personal commitment to grow in this area.
- Have some friends keep you accountable for your reactions and encourage you to maturity.
- Enjoy the feeling of grace rather than the feeling of explosive emotional power.

### **Application To Social Justice**

Suppose that a bank is acting in a punitive way towards its poorer customers – do we fight, do we flee – or do we find a way of mastering the situation? A “fight response” would be to send an angry protest letter to the bank or hold a demonstration outside one of its branches. A flight response would be to withdraw your account or just to sit and do nothing putting the whole business in the “too hard basket”. What are some solution-focused mastery responses? Here is my suggestion: Research the issue and the lending policies of bank X and also the lending policies of bank Y which is more just in its policies. Work out how bank X can still earn revenue without exploiting the poor. Buy a few shares in bank X. Send the letter outlining the problem, its consequences and the constructive alternative to the chairman of the board, the CEO and the chief lending officer at least two months before the AGM. Indicate that you are a shareholder and that if you have not received a satisfactory response by the time of the AGM you will stand up and ask about this aspect of bank lending policy. If they refuse to comply, go to the AGM and protest, if that fails go to the media who will probably be at the bank AGM anyway. Show clearly the plight of the customers, the sensible solution and the intransigence of the bank. At that point the bank will have to start taking the issue seriously.

If the bank does not give in, go to your local politician with your constructive suggestion, your evidence and the bank’s response. Inform the politician that you will be calling a press conference after your visit and you would like to be able to report a positive response. Send your documents to the politician’s office at least 48 hours before the interview and press conference. By this time you have a “real issue” in political terms in that constituents are affected, a constructive solution exists, it has been to a major AGM and in the newspaper, its “hot”. The politician needs to get on the phone. The 48 hours gives him or her a chance to do this and have some solutions in place even before you even arrive. If you allow a politician time to find a solution and be seen as effective they will be grateful. The bank will be put under enormous pressure at this point.

This solution-focused, well researched “mastery” solution takes much more time in the beginning and lacks the “high” of campaigning on a rush of adrenalin; but it is ultimately more effective and far less demanding of manpower and resources in the long haul. First the Christian leader needs to put in maybe two weeks of part-time digging around for facts, evidence and possible solutions and the preparation of an intelligent and workable alternative. This intelligent and workable and fairer alternative is the key. It gives the entire case a much higher level of credibility and demolishes any reason the bank may have for holding on to their unjust policy. It indicates that you are not just a powerless reactionary, a “complainer” who can be written off. It demonstrates that you are thoughtful, wise and practical. And when it is shared externally - to the

AGM, press or politicians it becomes a blueprint for action. Then you give the solution time to pass through the proper processes, to be considered and be effective. In your research you find the leverage points you can use – the Chairman and CEO and lending officer, being a shareholder, using the AGM, the press and the politicians. And you use those leverage points in the correct order so it is obvious to all that you have followed procedure and given bank X the right information and a chance to change.

Every major society has proper procedures in place for its own transformation. The church can transform society by using these procedures first and using them skillfully. We have just as much right to call for justice as do any other group of citizens. The church will become effective when it neither fights nor flees but by takes a solution-focused, mastery based, authoritative and well-researched approach to problems.

### **Why The Church Is Often Ineffective**

To explore this a bit further – why do Christians engage in highly ineffective behavior? Lets take conspiracy theories as an example. Quite apart from the fact that Scripture explicitly forbids conspiracy theories (Isaiah 8:12,13); nothing constructive is accomplished by publishing a book linking the IMF and WTO and the Trilateral Commission and the Bilderberger Group and the Masons and the Knights Templar. The conspiracy theory book acts within a religious framework to reinforce the fears, dreads, and persecution complex of the buyers. The book gains religious approval and financial reward and gives the author a temporary feeling of importance. Readers can get a false sense of having engaged in a big and important issue through reading a conspiracy theory book. In reality they have spent some money and some time and done nothing of actual tangible value. It is virtual involvement not real involvement.

Virtual involvement rather than real involvement is common in all aspects of life but especially in the Church so that the atheist Bertrand Russell could write of “poor, little, talkative Christianity”. Recently this has even become evident in teaching on prayer where, contrary to Scripture, we are told not to pray “for things” but just to pray to get religious feelings and experiences and dialogue with God. However God has given us prayer to usher in His Kingdom and to bring real changes in people and situations. “Whatever you ask for in prayer..” means that you are asking for truth, justice, the salvation of the lost and so on. When prayer degenerates into mere sentimental emotions it is no longer the muscular force of faith that transforms the world.

The reasons for virtual involvement include, fear, ignorance, poor teaching, lack of self-esteem, a prejudice against social action, a lack of understanding of political rights and so forth. I am not interested in analyzing it in depth. What I am interested in doing is seeing the church move beyond dreams and hopes and wishes and into reality. We know what we should be doing, we just don’t do it. Underneath the dreamy waffle of church life lies certain assumptions and errors of fact and logic that are patently wrong and which the whole world tells us are wrong. Here are just some of them, stated a bit plainly, and I am sure you can think of others.

1. The Church should be concerned about spiritual things and anything practical like money and politics and social conditions, are by definition, not spiritual.
2. The more abstract, vague and nonsensical something is the more spiritual it is.
3. Trances and spiritual experiences are a higher priority than helping one’s neighbor.
4. It is important to keep myself pure and uncontaminated by sin, so I do not want anything to do with social issues.
5. Wishing and dreaming will get you what you want.
6. God just wants me to be aware of these issues, not to actually do anything.
7. My gift is suggesting; other people can do the action.
8. If we get too involved in social action we will lose our love of evangelism.
9. The Bible tells us not to rely on our own understanding, which is why I do not think at all.

10. Jesus will return soon anyway and the Anti-Christ will take over so it's useless to think about social action as whatever we do will soon be destroyed.

The church in Acts keenly anticipated Christ's return but was very involved in meeting needs and being a relevant Christian community. A quick read through the epistle of James or through Proverbs or the Sermon On The Mount or Luke 10 will convince you of the folly of the above ten propositions and others like them. By disengaging from reality the Church is losing credibility, as someone once said "The culture does not abandon the church until the Church abandons the culture."

### **Logical, Pragmatic Christian Action**

Jack Welch, the recently retired Chairman of the world's largest company General Electric, attributes his success to a mother who constantly said "Jack face reality. You have got to see the world the way it is." Jack Welch's mother was right. The ability to see reality clearly and to act on that reality constructively is one of the keys to success in life. Jack Welch also talks about being "boundary-less" and seeking solutions from up and down in the organization and from both inside it and outside it. Putting this together, Jack Welch's success in leading a company as massive as GE can in large part be attributed to seeing reality clearly and constantly seeking better and better constructive solutions from wherever they can be found.

***A heavenly perspective is not an imaginary perspective. The heavenly perspective should be what God says about reality.*** Its what the Scriptures say about what is right in front of your nose. Thus the logical pragmatic Christian leader lives in the reality of God's Word rightly interpreted and the reality of real life situations. One reality is eternal and abiding – God's Word, the other reality is never final. Or as Benjamin Disraeli said "Finality is never the language of politics". Once one campaign seems finished, another arises, life twists and turns and progress in justice is "three steps forward and two steps backward". While finality can be reached in mathematical calculations or in certain theological conclusions it is elusive in real life. Even our very changing of our society means that it will be different in a few years time.

Thus social action has its real reward in eternity as it seldom sees a final reward here on earth. Moses did not get into the promised land, William Wilberforce died just before his anti-slavery legislation finally became effective and Martin Luther King was assassinated before his Dream came true. Enacting justice is every bit as much an act of faith as planting a church.

In enacting justice we are seeking to conform reality to the will and purposes of God. We cannot afford to be weak, sentimental, superstitious or illogical. Here are some of the sometimes almost paradoxical pieces of logic that make for effective Christian action.

1. Reality is all we have to work with, but reality includes God.
2. The choice is to engage with reality or to engage with nothing.
3. I have permission from God to change the world. The permission of other people such as Pharaoh is not really necessary.
4. God who "needs nothing" requires our hands and feet and mouths and money. He has delegated this world to us.
5. There are no elves. There are no invisible realities that will magically appear and do the work. If the world is a mess, and someone does not fix it, it will stay that way and probably get even worse. Its up to us.
6. The ends and the means must both be just. To achieve a good end with improper means is often just to continue oppression in another form. To have just means without just ends is to wander in pointless wishfulness.
7. Most societies contain both the seeds of their own destruction and the mechanism for their own transformation. I will choose to find the mechanisms for transformation and use them first.

8. Utopian perfection is not possible in this present evil age but improvement is possible and by God's grace I will improve those things I can.
9. I might not be able to do everything, but I can do something and that which I can do, I ought to do, and that which I ought to do, by God's grace I shall do.
10. It is always just one man that has changed the world. The world has never been changed by a committee.
11. One workable solution is better than a thousand pages of analysis and excuses.
12. Most change proceeds from the source of power. Persons are the only source of power. Even a billion dollars has no power when it is in the presses in the Mint. It only has power when it is in someone's hands.
13. Truth on its own is powerless until it finds residence in the mind of a person who has power. One paragraph addressed to the person who has the power to make a decision on the issue is worth a million words on the issue that are left hidden in a cave. There are thousands PhD theses full of good ideas that have produced little or no social change because the author did not produce an executive summary and send it to someone who could act on it.
14. Only clear ideas, supported by facts, have power. Confused emotional exhortations are an exercise in futility.
15. People are generally most influenced by those they know best or have at least heard of. It's time well spent when the church takes time to develop relationships with local leaders of business and industry.
16. A dead issue is a dead issue. Tackling issues after society feels it has been dealt with is too late, no one wants to listen. We need to respond when the issue is live.
17. There is a time when issues can be influenced and a time when they are a waste of energy. Tackle the issues that are in process of change and leave the other issues until later, for instance Jesus did not specifically tackle slavery. (Hint: Globalization is still "live"!)
18. The thing that most infuriates you may be the thing God is asking you to change.
19. You cannot change a Supreme Court decision by preaching but you can change it with a legal appeal. Each issue has a right mechanism, use it.
20. Righteous powerful prayer aims at specific targeted social change such as Elijah's prayer for the drought or the prayers of Moses, Daniel and the prophets.

### **Changing the Market**

This chapter has been tough on the Church, or rather on the ineffective means the Church employs when dealing with social change. I do not want to leave you with the impression that I am dismissive of God's Church. I believe in the Church, regularly attend and preach in a local church and work for the Kingdom as God leads. As a missionary I seek to establish the Church. I believe that the Church has permission from God to change the market so it is fair and just. The Church should persuade the governments that they need to act and the market that it needs to change. This prophetic role will be far outside our comfort zones. Yet while the market is hurting from the terrorist attacks and the recession there is a window of opportunity to persuade both government and industry and trade of the need for a fairer world. We probably have twelve months. By the time we have preached sermons and called conferences our window of opportunity may be lost. We need to pray now and we need to act now. Whether your contribution is as small as an hour spent writing to your local politician or as substantial as organizing a delegation to visit a key Senator you should make it now.

The market tries to ignore the Church and treat her opinions with disdain. It will take enormous effort to get heard but as I have shown the task is not impossible and the means and

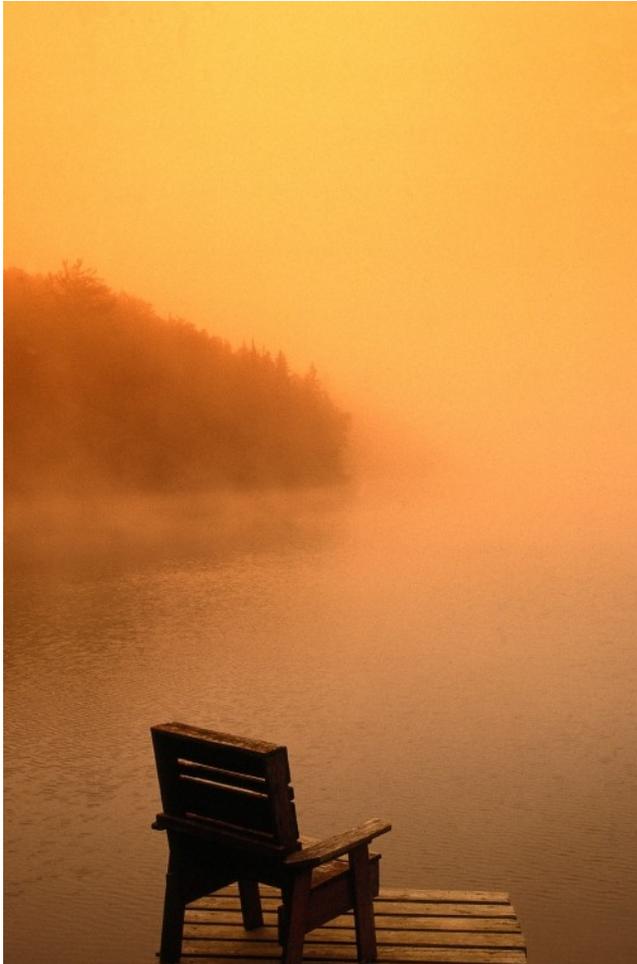
methods do exist for influencing the decision-makers in trans-national corporations. The fact that engaging major firms is not easy does not mean that it will not be worthwhile or that we are not called to tackle the task. If you did succeed how would you feel? If your policy initiative and creative solution was adopted by a major multi-national and affected millions of lives – would you feel the struggle was worth it?

There is more to church life than deeply exegeting another verse of Romans (though that is very important too). Church is more than adding to your knowledge of the Bible, it's about adding to Christ's lordship over this world. Your knowledge of the Bible is an important foundation - so you can go out and act as one of God's vice-regents in His Creation, making His Kingdom come, and His will be done.

If we are to make Christ's Kingdom come then we must act in mastery and not from the fight or flight response. We must act with power and poise and become transformational people in that situation where God has placed us. We have to be assertively Christian not just passively Christian. We can learn from Muslim assertiveness but not from Muslim methods. We need to develop the virtues of rulership, such as patience, endurance, strength, dignity, justice, wisdom and noble-mindedness. We need to learn to manage the world that exists rather than imagining a world that will never exist. True Christian leadership involves managing reality so it conforms to the Kingdom. Reality is not that malleable; so such leadership can involve a struggle that is both physical and spiritual. We have to pay careful attention to our ethics, our facts, our methods and our ends and means. Out of this disciplined struggle to find workable Christian solutions to otherwise overwhelming social problems comes the glory of the Kingdom.

When it comes to tackling globalization and lobbying for a fair market, not just a free market the Church should select those areas that God calls her to. Globalization can mean a loss of jobs in North America because of low wages in Mexico, it can affect California as well as Afghanistan and we may be called to counter its manifestation in our own backyard, not just across the world. We may find refugees moving in down the street and needing acceptance and help or we may find ourselves working for a firm that dumps toxic waste in Bolivia. In each and every case we will need to move from mastery and not from fear, and move in wisdom and in a solution-focused and well-researched way. Our boundaries will be stretched and our courage will be called on but as we master our environment and ourselves we will grow into beings of whom the term "the image of God" is appropriate.

# Part Four



This section deals with the tensions between the Kingdom and the Terrorists and seeks solution-focused alternatives to Christians and Muslims killing each other - while acknowledging that real and permanent divisions will always exist. The section draws on some previous material I have written on urban peace-making and starts with the powerful parable of St. Francis and the Wolf.

The discussion of peace-making comes after the previous section on justice because people are much more inclined to sit down at a negotiating table with those who they can see are treating them fairly, doing their fair share of correcting injustice and who seem to have a genuine interest in their welfare and prosperity. Thus peace is established on justice. Fair trade and accessible prosperity will be major contributors to world peace. The hope for a just prosperity is a key to the hope for peace.

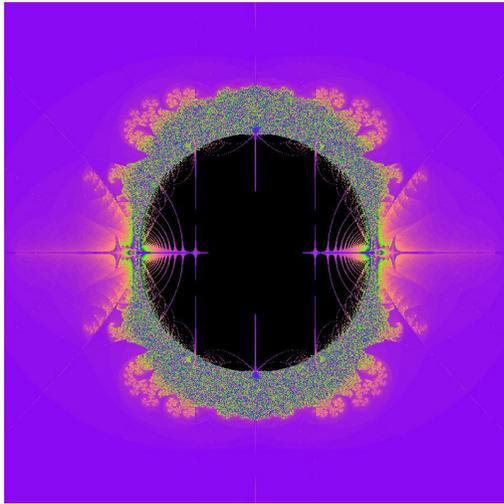
Much of the material is as applicable to inter-denominational rivalry as between Christian-Muslim rivalry. The problem of dealing with irreconcilable religious and cultural differences is thus not new to us. We will see the parable of the Good Samaritan is a key to serving and loving those outside our religious boundaries. We will look at what the New Testament says about peace-making and some biblical material on conflict resolution. With all this established we shall turn to consider the topic "When Your Enemy Is Hungry.."

## Peace-Making

## In An Imperfect World

# St Francis, The Wolf And The City

## A Parable For Urban Peace-Making



### The Story Of St. Francis And The Wolf

The town of Gubbio was being afflicted by a ravenous wolf that tore apart both beasts and men and which nobody could withstand; so that the people of the city either went about heavily armed or stayed inside the gate. As the wolf ate even those who were heavily armed, eventually they all stayed inside the city gate. St Francis of Assisi was in their midst at the time and decided to deliver them from the wolf. He went outside the gate and, when the wolf charged he withstood in the name and authority of Jesus Christ and commanded it to be meek by making the sign of the cross. To the astonishment of all but St. Francis, the wolf stopped its charge, closed its mouth, bowed low and obeyed St. Francis. The saint then informed the wolf that in the

normal course of justice it should be horribly hacked to pieces but that if it was prepared to attack neither man nor beast and be fed by the people of the city that he would spare it. The wolf indicated his agreement by appropriate and humble movements. That day St. Francis preached and a covenant of peace was drawn up between the wolf and the people of the city, the wolf pledging his agreement by raising his right paw at the appropriate moment. The city raised a tremendous cheer and thanked both God and St. Francis for their deliverance from the ravenous wolf. As for the wolf, it kept its part of the bargain and begged its food from house to house, becoming a part of the city and a constant reminder of the mercy of God and the blessedness of St. Francis. This went on as related for around two years until old age claimed the wolf and it died.

[Summarized from "The Little Flowers of St. Francis, trans. E.M. Blaiklock and A.C.Keys]

### The Moral Of The Story

The legend of St. Francis and the Wolf at left is a metaphor for the saintly Christian response to urban problems. The wolf can be any problem that presses the people into a fear-based fight or flight response; a problem which the city consistently fails to solve, and which tears them apart day and night without mercy. Whatever is "tearing a community apart" – that is its Wolf.

The Wolf killed to satisfy its hunger, but it did so in a lawless and uncontrolled way bringing judgment on itself and fear to the city. Similarly the Wolf that afflicts a given urban community is generally the lawless meeting of an out of control need.

St. Francis represents the Christian exercising God's mandated authority in the name of Jesus Christ and working with the cross in view. The Wolf is made both lawful and peaceful through the exercise of spiritual authority and its needs are met through creative problem solving.

St. Francis demonstrates personal mastery and an approach to the Wolf that is entirely different from that of the townsfolk of Gubbio. Francis neither fights nor flees. He has no fear and does not resort to a fight or flight based solution. He faces and confronts the Wolf in order to peacefully

master it. Urban problems need to be faced calmly without retreat from the city on one hand or strong arm law and order approaches on the other. Reactivity should not determine response. Rather faith in the gospel will guide the response. Faith-based mastery is the desire for a personal stance rather than fear-based fight- or-flight.

St. Francis demonstrates that even the worst and most lethal of problems have an imaginative, peaceful and truly beautiful solution. He does not see the Wolf as a dramatic problem needing a drastic solution or as a big problem requiring a massive and expensive solution. For St. Francis the Wolf is a moral problem requiring a gospel solution.

There is no relationship between the size of the problem and the size of the solution or the nastiness of the problem and the severity required in its solution. Big problems sometimes have easy but unseen solutions such as the terrible plague of scurvy that was stopped by eating fresh fruit or deaths in operating theatres that declined when Lister discovered germs and told doctors to wash their hands.

Similarly quite deadly problems can sometimes have beautiful and almost quaint solutions. An urban squatter community in a particular Two-Thirds world city was being torn apart by unusual levels of community violence; so a Christian worker went in and did an ethnographic study of the possible causes. It emerged that the women, who had moved to the city, were without gardens and were bored and without the things that formerly gave meaning to their existence. To fill the void some of them had resorted to playing a rather lethal game of "my husband is tougher than your husband" that had got out of control. When the women were introduced to crafts that could earn them some money and give them self-esteem and meaning, the need for competition with its inherent violence subsided and their normal peaceful pattern of life resumed. This is just one example of how ugly, brutal, apparently complex and in this case lethal problems can have simple, beautiful and spiritual solutions.

I believe that peace-making should be solution-focused rather than problem-focused otherwise we can get bogged down in "the paralysis of analysis". St. Francis goes out to confront the Wolf convinced that God and the gospel will give him an answer. St. Francis did not go out there to psycho-analyze the Wolf or analyze its pattern of killing or assess whether it had a vitamin deficiency or which species of wolf it was. He went out there to "solve the Wolf problem for once and for all". He sought peace not information. While data collection and ethnography can be immensely useful (as in the squatter settlement story above) it must always be gathered in the context of actually making peace and solving urban problems. We need to proceed to the solution as quickly as possible and St. Francis does just that.

Christian urban peace-making also addresses the needs of both parties. In the story at left there is a meeting of mutual needs in a climate of mercy. The wolf if he is to change needs food. Indeed we are to feed our enemies! "If your enemy is hungry give him something to eat". The city if it is to be merciful needs a guarantee of peace. The two needs are met by having the penitent wolf fed by the city, so that its formerly out of control needs are met in peaceful and lawful ways

Just covenants are central to peace-making and one is forged here between the Wolf and the town of Gubbio. Formal peace-making ceremonies such as that described in the full version of the story in Blaiklock's book bring a sense of closure to the process and enable a sense of confidence and normalcy to be achieved. Such covenants should be clear, fair and well-celebrated.

Finally the story tells us that once a problem is tamed it can even be a friend and more than that it can give glory to God.

The St. Francis and The Wolf parable leads us to consider actively engaging in Christian peace-making in the urban environment. If we seek to love others in the name of Christ and seek a just peace the answer to the problem will be given to us by God. The very act of seeking to be a peace-maker is creative. Therefore we seek to find peaceful, just, Christian, creative, mastery based and solution-focused answers to the problems that tear cities apart.

# Christian Peace-Making



It is widely thought that there is conflict between Christians and Muslims and that Christians ought to dislike Muslims. But we need to ask "What would Jesus tell us to do?" Firstly I think He would tell us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48), and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39), including those with whom we have irreconcilable religious differences - like those between the Jews and Samaritans. He would also

say "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12) Here is a short article I wrote called "Who Should We Love, Who Should We Hate?":

## Who Should We Love? Who Should We Hate?

*(Urban Peace-Making, The Good Samaritan and Muslim-Christian Relationships)*

### The Four Questions

True Christians and true Muslims cannot and will never come to any real agreement. To Muslims, Christians, while people of the book, are perceived as still in the "realm of war", not yet submitted to Allah. To Christians, Muslims, though respected, are perceived as unbelievers and are yet to be converted to Christianity. The differences between the two faiths are enormous, vital and substantial. A bible-believing Christian cannot follow Mohammed or agree with many of the teachings of the Koran. A true Muslim cannot believe in the Trinity or the incarnation. These are impossibilities. Our two faiths are irreconcilably different. Our two faiths have been at war for centuries and our two faiths will always seek to convert each other. True believers in each camp will always see the other as sinners, outside the faith, and on their way to Hell. Given that biblical Christianity and fundamentalist Islam will never agree, and will always see each other as sinners then:

1. Should we **kill someone** because they are a sinner, outside our faith, and going to Hell?
2. Should we **walk on by and let someone die**, say in a car accident, because they are a sinner, outside our faith, and going to Hell?
3. Should we **refuse to spend money** on someone to help them recover back to health if they are a sinner, outside our faith, and going to Hell?
4. Should we **hate our neighbor** because they are a sinner, outside our faith, and going to Hell?

In short what is the realm of people I should love? And what is the realm of people a holy and righteous person should hate and detest? Are the boundaries of my love determined by the boundaries of my nation, ethnic group, customs, practices or my faith? Who should I show mercy to and who should I show no pity to at all?

### The Story

These were also the urgent questions of Jesus' day when relationships between Jews, Romans and Samaritans were tense. Jews saw Romans as unclean Gentile dogs and despised the Samaritans as corrupted, idolatrous apostates. No good Jew would talk with a Samaritan. Romans saw Jews as stubborn troublemakers and Samaritans generally hated Jews and would not give anyone

hospitality who was heading towards Jerusalem. In the midst of this irreconcilable religious tension Jesus told the following story:

(Luke 10:25-37 NKJV) And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" {26} He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" {27} So he answered and said, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" {28} And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." {29} But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" {30} Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. {31} "Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. {32} "Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. {33} "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. {34} "So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. {35} "On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' {36} "So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" {37} And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

1. A certain lawyer asks Jesus what should he do to inherit eternal life.
2. Jesus points the lawyer to the Jewish Law and asks him what it says.
3. The lawyer replies that eternal life comes if we love God with all our heart mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.
4. Jesus replies - Correct! Now go and do this and you will live.
5. The lawyer hedges, it looks too hard a task, too big a job. So like a good lawyer he goes for the definition and asks "Who is my neighbor?". The real question being "who do I have to love?" or in the context of the original question about eternal life "Who do I have to love in order to inherit eternal life?" The hidden plea is "Tell me I can have eternal life by just loving a few people, give me a definition that lets me off the hook so I can justify myself."
6. So Jesus tells a story about a well-known and hazardous bit of road between Jerusalem and Jericho, the highway probably just outside where they were talking.
7. A Jew is robbed and badly beaten and left for dead, the clergy that were supposed to look after him and show compassion (a priest and a Levite) just walk on by. Jesus clearly thinks this behavior is wrong.
8. Then a Samaritan comes along and has compassion on the Jew (who to him is a sinner, outside the Samaritan faith and going to Hell)
9. The Samaritan does not kill the man but instead heals the wounded Jew.
10. The Samaritan does not leave the Jew to die but bandages him and puts him on his own donkey, so the wounded man rode while the Good Samaritan walked.
11. The Samaritan pays money to the innkeeper to take care of this man who is outside of the Samaritan faith.
12. The Good Samaritan promises to come back and check and see how he is going and to pay any additional expenses.

13. The Samaritan does not convert the Jew and the Jew does not convert the Samaritan. Both remain very different in their religious beliefs.
14. The Samaritan does not hate, but rather loves and shows practical mercy on, someone with whom he had an irreconcilable religious difference.

## The Application

Jesus/Isa told that story to answer the lawyers implied question "Who do I have to love in order to inherit eternal life?" .

- Do I have to love sinners?
- Do I have to love people who believe wrongly?
- Do I have to love people of other races and cultures?
- Do I have to love those who despise and oppress me as the Jews despised and oppressed the Samaritans?

If you are to have the sort of love that God/Allah will take note of on the Day of Judgment ; the sort of love that will cause Him to grant you eternal life, then the answer to all these questions is Yes. Yes, you must love sinners. Yes you must love those who believe wrongly. Yes you must love people of other races and cultures. Yes you must love those who despise and oppress you. According to Jesus only this sort of love will be great enough to make you fit for Paradise. In another place Jesus teaches about what our attitude to our enemies should be:

(Luke 6:27-38 NKJV) "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, {28} "bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. {29} "To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. {30} "Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. {31} "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. {32} "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. {33} "And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. {34} "And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. {35} "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. {36} "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. {37} "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. {38} "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

Here Jesus is quite specific. There is no reward from God for behaving just like ordinary sinners. The righteous must live by a higher and holier standard and have a deeper and greater love. If sinners can show a little mercy then the righteous should show much mercy, if the sinners can lend, then the righteous can give, if the sinners can love their friends, the righteous could love their enemies.

If we are to demonstrate a greater love than that of the sinners, and bring ourselves eternal life on the Day of Judgment, then we must love our enemies. So Christians and Muslims must love each other, if they are to listen to the teaching of Jesus and inherit eternal life. Like the Good Samaritan we must show practical love, care, mercy and hospitality to people with whom we have an irreconcilable religious difference.

You do not have to convert to their beliefs in order to love them and help them. You can bandage their wounds without having to believe their religion. You need not follow their behavior or their lifestyle. You can still disapprove of their sins while you take them to hospital. You do not have to agree with their actions or whitewash their past atrocities. But you must not kill them for it either.

Muslims and Christians must not kill each other because of their religious differences. Murderers do not inherit eternal life. Only people who love their enemies can inherit eternal life. If your heart is cold, if you are filled with rage and anger, then you are filled with darkness and you will stumble and fall. John, one of the disciples of Jesus, wrote these wise words:

(1 John 2:9-11 NKJV) He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. {10} He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. {11} But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

There are some religious people, both Christians and Muslim, who go around saying "I have the light, follow me" and a few of them are full of hate and anger. Of these John says they are "still in darkness until now". People of great light are people of great love, they are not people of hatred and anger. Anger and hatred is darkness and blinds us. Our anger keeps us from seeing what is good in other people and so we do not see life correctly. Soon we add to our list of people to hate. Eventually we hate many people and love only a few and our soul is in deep darkness.

To sum up God is love and love leads to eternal life. God is merciful and we should also be merciful. Our righteousness should surpass that of the sinners and our love should be much greater than theirs. If sinners can love those who love them, then the righteous must be able to love those who do not love them. The righteous must love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them. The realm of those we are to love includes those we disagree with, and sinners, and those of other cultures and faiths; in fact it includes the whole world. The realm of those we must hate in order to be considered righteous is nobody, it is empty.

In the modern city Muslims and Christians live side by side, travel on the same roads. go to the same schools, work in the same offices. If a Muslim is injured by the side of the road I as a Christian will stop and help. If I am in a rush at work I would hope a Muslim colleague would show compassion. This world is too small a place and the modern city too close and complex for us to fight and hate and kill over religious differences. We may not agree with one another, but we can and must love one another.

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Do you agree with this? Do you think it is wrong to kill a Muslim - just because they are a Muslim? Loyalty to Christ does not mean hating those who disagree with Christianity. If we are to be loyal to Christ we must love our enemies, even though we may always disagree with them.

To put the Golden (“do unto others”) Rule in context of this book “If you or I were an educated 30 year old moderate Muslim in Karachi in Pakistan and we were looking out at our country what would we want the developed nations to do for it?” Firstly I don’t think we would want handouts that would keep us dependent. I think we would want our pride and dignity, we would want our culture respected, we would want development and we would want it on fair terms. We would want opportunity and we would want a place where our children would have a bright future. We would want justice and we would want respect and we would want the genuine power to make wealth and to prosper. That’s what I would want done for me if I was in that situation and I think it’s a good rough guide as to what we should consider as fundamentals of foreign policy. However what can we do at a local church level towards this end? Here are some suggestions:

- Individuals and churches can at least pray for peace based on justice. Do not just pray that the terrorists will leave us alone. Rather pray that the underlying injustices may be corrected. The peace must work for both sides, good must flow in both directions.
- Have a dinner between your church and the local mosque and serve food that is acceptable to them. You don’t have to pray with them or agree with their doctrines, just befriend them.
- Learn a bit about Islam, pray for Islamic countries during Ramadan, have a missionary to Muslims as a speaker.
- Get involved with the Jubilee 2000 Debt Relief Coalition, the Post-Washington Consensus, and other worthy initiatives in developing countries.
- Learn to buy products that are “just” where possible. Try to avoid exploitative firms.
- Correct those injustices that we may be overtly or covertly involved in.
- Individuals or perhaps the church as a whole could decide to make their legislators aware of how these nations are being destroyed by economic injustice and how it is in all our interests to have those injustices corrected.
- The church could support missionaries and others working in these nations to bring both economic relief and the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Wealthier church members could invest in these nations and help them to gain ‘the power to make wealth’ referred to earlier in this book. Five thousand dollars US can go a long way towards setting up a small to medium sized business in most less developed nations. Many people in these countries do not earn \$5000 in a lifetime. (Hundreds of millions live on less than \$100 a year, the average income in Mozambique is less than \$80 per year)
- Perhaps the local church could link up with organizations working in these countries and become partners in prayer and fund-raising.
- Some church members could visit the poorest of the poor Muslim nations on a “fact-finding” mission / missions exposure trip and come back and inform the church about conditions there.
- Those with business skills could do some study in development issues and become part-time Christian development consultants using the Internet sharing their expertise for free to those in the Two-Thirds World who can access an Internet café or terminal at a University.

As you can see there are as many possibilities as the sanctified imagination can come up with and little real reason for total non-involvement.

# Personal Peace-Making



Probably few of you will be called on to make peace with terrorist groups or to be involved in international peace negotiations but we are all called to be peacemakers in our families, neighborhoods and churches. The following is an article from a series on the Sermon On The Mount.

(Matthew 5:9 NKJV) Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God

In Matthew 5 the first three beatitudes (poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness) deal with humbling ourselves before God and man and are fundamental to any form of personal piety. The next three (hungering and thirsting after righteousness, being merciful and being pure in heart) concern ones own right actions and attitudes. The last three - (peacemaking, persecution and being vilified) deal with the righteous person in conflict with an unrighteous world. Peacemaking presupposes the other beatitudes. It is futile and self-defeating to try to make peace without virtues such as meekness or righteousness or mercy or purity of heart.

"Blessed are the peacemakers" calls the Christian to take the peacemaker within their hearts and let Him loose on the world. Peacemaking takes good people and asks them to produce a good world. There are too many badly divided churches full of very good people. Good people need to learn to get along, to let Jesus in them make peace among them, if they are to be truly called "sons of God".

## Being A Peacemaker

Peacemaking is the strenuous exercise of wrestling a self-centred and conflict ridden world into the peaceful and blessed paths and patterns of God. The Bible tells us to *"(Ephesians 4:3) strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* Thus unity comes from the cross and is of the Spirit. We need to maintain it. But maintaining peace is hard work. Verbs like endeavour, strive and pursue are used to describe the effort needed. *(Romans 14:19 NKJV) Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.* Peacemaking seems to be strenuous stuff indeed!

Peacemaking is based on applying godly wisdom to human relationships. It is the opposite of the competitive relationships that divide the world. *(James 3:16-18 NKJV) For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. {17} But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. {18} Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace*

## Peacemaking vs Being Holy

It may seem incredibly obvious but in order to be a peacemaker you first have to stop being divisive. Believe it or not divisive people are often liked in religious circles because their basic statement is "our group is right and all the other groups are wrong". This is a great struggle for me because as a bible teacher I consider correct doctrine to be very important. God requires it of

me. (James 3:1, 2 Timothy 2:15). I have at times been overly harsh on my brothers and sisters in Christ who do not share my calling or my burden. At times I have been divisive and controversial. Sometimes this has been proper and necessary. Often it has not been. Jesus was both a controversialist and a peacemaker. Lets see what He had to say about this balance. *(Mark 9:50 NKJV) "Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavour, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another. "We are called to be BOTH salty and peaceful - but saltiness has the priority because without it we are useless.(Matthew 5:13) The same thought is expressed in (Hebrews 12:14 NKJV) Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. We are to pursue peace with all men and we are also to pursue holiness . Our attempts to procure peace must not cause us to compromise core values or cause us to become corrupt of heart.*

Many Christian groups that seek broad-based appeal have drifted away from sound teaching and its "saltiness" in order to avoid internal conflict. Though this is a common mistake it should not totally dishearten us in our attempts to make peace. What we need to do is study the boundaries that the New Testament sets for who is in and who is out. In Galatians 3:28 and James 2:1-10 we are clearly told to make peace between different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (eg Jew and Gentile), between different social backgrounds (rich and poor, slave and free) and across gender (male and female)). In Romans 14 we are not to judge our brother with regard to food or drink or Sabbaths. Jesus made it clear that we are not to judge externals such as giving (Mark 12:42,43) which is internally regulated (2 Corinthians 9:7). These are our issues of tolerance. However there are some things we are not to tolerate but instead to discipline if we are to have peace. These include immoral lifestyles (1 Corinthians 5:1-13), indolence (Titus 1:12,13, 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12) participation in idolatry or the occult (Revelation 2:20), and blatantly wrong doctrine such as denying the resurrection. (1 Timothy 4:1-8, 2 Timothy 2:15-18)

God's peace comes from God's rule and there is no peace without it. *(Isaiah 48:22 NKJV) "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."* While it is ungodly to have a sharp dispute over whether the rapture will occur at the beginning, middle or end of the tribulation - such disputes are fleshly (Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 3:1-5); it is equally ungodly to gladly tolerate adulterous or homosexual lifestyles (1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 6:9-11). Peacemaking must reflect God's rule and God's values. Thus peacemaking is not universal niceness but the ordering of creation into the righteous and peace-filled paths of God. Peace is not just absence of conflict. It is the creation of a community that knows the presence of God and which fixes their hearts on Him. *(Isaiah 26:3 NKJV) You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.*

Godly peacemaking is at war with sin. The great peacemakers have a powerful ethical conscience. *(1 Peter 3:11 NKJV) Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it.* Jesus, Paul, and John the Baptist were all peacemakers of great power and strong ethics. This ethical basis gives a strong platform for winning the war against the angry, disordering and conflict ridden forces of the world. Without such an ethical basis you end up giving too much ground. There is a historical tendency to end up being ruled by that which you tolerate. Israel became tolerant to idolatry under Solomon and was soon ruled by idolatrous kings. Unless the Church's ethical conscience is aroused it will be taken over by the sins it tolerates. The current moves in the Uniting Church in Australia to ordain active homosexuals is a case in point. The Christian peacemaker needs to have worked through his or her faith and have a firm grasp of those values which are essential and non-negotiable. This is especially true for those working in cross-cultural situations.

## Pursuing Peace

To swing the pendulum back a bit, now that we have established our ethical boundaries, we will look at our duty as Christians to refrain from division and to pursue and promote peace. Lets start with a few very well known bible verses...

*(Galatians 5:19-23 NKJV) Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, {20} idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, {21} envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. {22} But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

The "works of the flesh" are incredibly divisive: "hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders." And the fruit of the Spirit are incredibly peaceful: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control". So the starting point for peacemaking is living a life under the control of the Holy Spirit. Paul restates this in his epistle to the Romans *(Romans 8:4-6 NKJV) that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. {5} For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. {6} For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

The starting point for peacemaking is a renewed mind that is set on the things of God and which is soaked in faith-filled prayer and free from undue anxiety. *(Isaiah 26:3 NKJV) You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. (Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; {7} and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* Peacemaking is thus, first of all, a spiritual activity that flows from faith.

There are two sides to this. At the same time that we pursue the things of the Spirit we must also actively put to death the things of the flesh if we to make peace. *(Ephesians 4:31-32 NKJV) Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. {32} And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.* It takes self-control not to gossip, not to vent our frustrations and not to take revenge when we are provoked. Its a good idea not to let the war start in the first place but to absorb the insult with grace. *(Luke 6:27-31 NKJV) "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, {28} "bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. {29} "To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. {30} "Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. {31} "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.* Peacemaking depends on not retaliating and having the spiritual greatness of heart to be able to temporarily set aside one's legitimate rights in the cause of the cross.

Tying this discussion together we can see that peacemaking requires a powerful infilling of the Holy Ghost if we are a) To manifest the fruits of the Spirit b) have our minds full of life and peace

3) be self-controlled with our gossip etc 4) be able to graciously absorb insult and injury. Fortunately God is not stingy in the way He dispenses the Holy Spirit to those who admit they are in desperate need of His power. *(Luke 11:13 NKJV) "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"* You and I need to come before God daily and ask God to be filled with the Holy Spirit so we can be peacemakers in His world. *(Ephesians 5:18 NKJV) And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,*

Today, while I was writing this article a friend rang me to say that he did not need a poster I had spent many hours doing for him. Yet it had been a huge rush to be done ASAP. Now it didn't matter. I fumed. I wanted to tell him how insulting and thoughtless he was. God always convicts me at such times and I could hardly write an article on peacemaking and bite someone's head off!" Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you" came to mind so I prayed that the event the poster was for would be successful and that Mike would have a good day. I also prayed that God would teach him to be a bit more considerate! That's allowed I think. Though in the cosmic scale of things this was just a minor irritation such irritations, when dwelt on, can become contentions. As Proverbs says it is best to stop these contentions before they creep into the relationship and spoil it forever. *(Proverbs 18:19 NKJV) A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

## **Sons of God**

Peacemakers will be called "sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). In other words their godliness will be so evident that people will characterize them as being "just like God" in character, sons of God. There is an interesting association between peacemaking and being called sons of God which happened just after Jesus came to the disciples walking on the water. Matthew records it as follows. *(Matthew 14:32-33 NKJV) And when they (Jesus and Peter) got into the boat, the wind ceased. {33} Then those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."* Jesus ability to master the unruly elements and bring peace marked Him as a "son of God". Something similar may have happened in the multi-cultural church in Antioch which was a united and vibrant congregation. *(Acts 11:24-26 NKJV) For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. {25} Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. {26} And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.* It seems that the harmony in the church resulted in them being called Christians that is "little Christs".

*(Galatians 3:26 NKJV) For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.* All Christians are sons of God but not all Christians are "called" sons of God by those who know them. Our nature as sons of God is hidden and awaits to be revealed. *(Romans 8:14-19 NKJV) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. {15} For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." {16} The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, {17} and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. {18} For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. {19} For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.* As we engage in peacemaking we bring creation out of its bondage into decay and into the peace of God. (This will happen in all its fullness at the resurrection but we can have a foretaste now) As we do so our nature as sons of God is

fully revealed. For instance when Jesus healed the sick and restored peace to broken bodies and reversed the bondage to decay it was evident that He was a son of God. Jesus yearned to reveal who He truly was. When the Devil tempted him it was with in appropriate answers to the challenge "if you are the Son of God...". As sons of God, led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14 above), we declare who we really are when we avoid quarrels, mend our relationships, care for the sick, free the captives and reconcile people to each other. It is our ability to bless others and to love our enemies that sets us apart from the world and all who live according to the flesh.

### **Practical Pointers For Peacemaking**

1. Pursue peace as a worthwhile and high priority goal. (Romans 12:18)
2. Develop the proper spiritual foundations for peace. Confess your sins to God. (1 John 1:7-10) Then ask to be filled with the Spirit.(Eph 5:18)
3. Develop godly boundaries based on Scripture so that you know what is negotiable and what isn't. (Romans 14)
4. Put away the flesh and things such as envy and selfish ambition which only create disorder and "every evil thing".(James 3:16-8)
5. Ask God for discernment about which issues/relationships to make peace on. Don't rush in to situations that are too hard for you.(Philippians 1:9)
6. Practice blessing people and wishing them peace.(John 14:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:23)
7. Be quick to listen to others. (James 1:19,20)
8. Don't broadcast your opinions all the time for that is the mark of fools.(Proverbs 18:2, Ecclesiastes 5:3, 10:12-14). Instead show restraint. (James 1;19,20).
9. React slowly especially when you have been offended. (James 1:19,20)
10. Fix things fast before they get "set in concrete". (Proverbs 18:19, Matthew 5:23-26)
11. Be willing to yield on unimportant matters (James 3:18)
12. Do to others what you would want them to do to you. (Luke 6:31)

# Christian Conflict Resolution



## The Place of Conflict Resolution

Peace-making between groups with irreconcilable religious and cultural differences involves conflict resolution. This is true whether the peace-making is between various brands of Baptists or between Muslims and Christians. When it comes to peace-making in the developing world there must first of all be the establishment of reasonable justice and the hope of prosperity. People are much more inclined to sit down at a negotiating table with those who they can see are treating them fairly, doing their fair share of correcting injustice and who seem to have a genuine interest in their welfare and prosperity. Conflict resolution skills are thus secondary to social justice and political and economic skills. However they are still vitally important. Clumsy conflict management can make things worse while highly skilled conflict management can make a pathway where none seems to exist.

## Conflict Is Inevitable

If you are like me you don't like conflict and you think that if you skip learning conflict management skills then you might be spared having to deal with it. However conflict is so inevitable for Christians that Paul tell Timothy that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.". (2 Timothy 3:12). Many Christians regard being in conflict as being in sin. It is not seen as a normal part of the Christian life. Yet Jesus has taught us, at some length, how to manage conflict and Proverbs has whole sections on it. Conflict is inevitable for three reasons a) Our knowledge is incomplete and imperfect so even sinless people in a perfect world would see the same situation differently through their own knowledge and perspectives. b) Satan engineers conflict whenever and wherever possible especially amongst Christians. Satan sets us in conflict with ourselves, God and one another. c). We knowingly enter into and initiate conflict with evil whenever we proclaim the gospel, preach holiness, protest against sin in our society, teach against cults or testify to Christ in the midst of a world that does not want to change. Thus conflict is here to stay and we must learn to manage it in a Christian "Kingdom way" until Christ returns to take us home to heaven where there will be no more crying or sickness or pain. Here are twelve handy hints on how to manage the conflict in your life in a Christian way.

1. Go before God until you get His perspective on the conflict. Do not act or speak out of rashness, anger or a sense of injustice. Moses had to learn this , his impetuous loss of temper in conflict situations cost him 40 years in the wilderness on one occasion and the loss of entry to the Promised Land on another. However when Moses did get God's perspective on situations he was able to intercede with power and resolve even the most difficult of situations such as national apostasy and idol worship, religious rebellion and "takeover bids".

2. Remember God is bigger than the problem. The God who created the heavens and the earth is able to deal with giants in the promised land, fortified cities and huge warriors called Goliath. Pray through the problem until you are walking by faith not sight and you see the problem as just like a small pebble in the hand of an Almighty God.

3. Act in the "opposite spirit". If a person is stingy be generous to them. If a person is insultingly aggressive - turn the other cheek. If they impose on you do even more for them than is asked of you. Return love for hatred and prayers for persecution. This actually does work and I have seen lives totally transformed by it. It transforms both lives too! Instead of returning evil for evil and causing the problem to escalate you learn how to overcome evil with good. When combined with persistence in doing good this is a powerful life-transforming weapon against evil. It can produce

deep harmony out of raging conflict. (Matthew 5:38-48 NKJV) "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' {39} "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. {40} "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. {41} "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. {42} "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. {43} "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' {44} "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, {45} "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. {46} "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? {47} "And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? {48} "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

(Romans 12:17-21 NKJV) Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. {18} If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. {19} Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. {20} Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." {21} Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

4. Read Proverbs until you know it backwards. There is so much wise advice on problem solving and human nature in this one book of the Bible that it is amazing. For instance when I was called into help with an industrial dispute I prayed beforehand and the Scripture "(Proverbs 22:10 NIV) Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended." came to mind. That was just what that situation needed and fair but firm disciplinary action against the troublemaker brought peace to the workplace. Proverbs is an invaluable source of wisdom that has proven itself over time. Derek Kidner's commentary in the Tyndale series is excellent.

5. Study how to say things. How something is worded is vitally important. (Proverbs 25:11-13 NKJV) A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver. {12} Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear. {13} Like the cold of snow in time of harvest Is a faithful messenger to those who send him, For he refreshes the soul of his masters.

Whatever you say should be clear, kind, true and appropriate. There is a right time and a right way to say things that is learned by practice and the study of people. Never lie, never muddle about, never forget you are speaking to a fellow human being with feelings and choose your time and place and manner with care. It can make all the difference in the world.

5. Do not use emotional or forceful language or "legal sounding" words. Phrases such as "cease and desist" just make you sound pompous and overbearing. Subjugate your desire to make your point to your desire to communicate in a clear and profitable way that will bring the results you want out of the negotiation. Never threaten legal action in a secular court against a fellow believer.

(1 Corinthians 6:1-8 NKJV) Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? {2} Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? {3} Do you not know

that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? {4} If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? {5} I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? {6} But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! {7} Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? {8} No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!

7. Do not be too harsh or absolute. *(Proverbs 15:1 NKJV) A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. Don't go in like a dogmatic bull in a china shop. (Proverbs 12:18 NKJV) There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health. (Proverbs 25:15 NKJV) By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, And a gentle tongue breaks a bone. Be gentle, reasonable, merciful pure, full of good fruits. (James 3:16-18 NIV) For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. {17} But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. {18} Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*

8. Act soon and keep it small. *(Proverbs 17:14 NKJV) The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.* For this to be the case you may have to undergo a cultural change whereby you cease stuffing your anger down inside you until you "blow up or blow over". Unless people are confronted with their wrong behaviors they most likely will not change. And we are more likely to learn from a gentle reminder than an all out blazing row which necessitates the use of all our defensive capabilities. If you are in a church or Christian organization then institute gentle and regular correction as a part of the "corporate culture" so that it becomes an easily accepted part of life. Do not involve others unless they need to be involved. This is the basic wisdom behind the three stage process in Matthew 18 and Jesus' exhortation on a number of occasions to "go to your brother in private, if he listens to you then you have won him". Once others are involved it is much harder to change your mind without losing face. Also facts tend to be altered a little to garner support.

9. Avoid angry and easily disturbed people. If possible keep them out of the process. *(Proverbs 29:22 NKJV) An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression. (Proverbs 15:18 NKJV) A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention.*

10. Pay attention to the moral character of the people involved and only rely on humble people of integrity and faithfulness to help you in the peacemaking process. *(Proverbs 28:25 NKJV) He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered. Many who wish to become involved are unsuitable because they are gossips, or unreliable in some other way. (Proverbs 16:28-30 NKJV) A perverse man sows strife, And a whisperer separates the best of friends. {29} A violent man entices his neighbour, And leads him in a way that is not good. {30} He winks his eye to devise perverse things; He purses his lips and brings about evil. (Proverbs 11:12-13 NKJV) He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbour, But a man of understanding holds his peace. {13} A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.*

11. Do not forget that in Christian circles many conflicts have the Accuser of the brethren as the primary cause. In such cases "we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities in the heavenly realms..". The mocker who needs to be "driven out" may be Satan himself. Thus we need to look beyond personalities to the spiritual forces which are taking

advantage of their weaknesses and preconceptions just as Satan took advantage of Peter's concept of the messiah at Caesarea Philippi. (Matthew 16:21-23) When this happens good people can be used for bad purposes. Thus we need to be spiritually alert and keen to "maintain the bond of peace". Good teaching, prayer in the Spirit on all occasions and holy living will give us an impenetrable armour against such schemes. (Eph 6:10-21)

12. Be strong and courageous on the basis of God's word. Before Joshua took on the military conquest of Palestine he was told.

(Joshua 1:8-9 NKJV) "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. {9} "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Godly courage solves many giant sized problems.

### **Issues of Religious Identity**

The Harvard Negotiating Project has produced an excellent book called "Difficult Conversations" and its central premise is that tense and difficult conversations contain three levels – fact, feeling and identity and each of these needs to be skillfully addressed. For instance if a worker is rebuked for a poorly completed and late project there are the *facts* – the project was late, the work was poor; there are *feelings* of annoyance from the boss and maybe a sense of pressure or shame on the employee and there are *identity* issues – the boss may think "who do you think I am handing in work like this to me" and the worker may think "I guess you will always think I am stupid and incompetent from now on". Just discussing the facts does not get very far. It may take a conversation that courageously addresses the issues to fix it and the participants may have to say things like "I don't think you are stupid, but this work is unsatisfactory and late and you need to do it again and you are holding everyone up. I know you are bright and can do better so don't let this happen again".

When religion, culture and economics get involved the conversations can be very difficult indeed. The identity issues in religion can be of the order of "I am righteous and you are an infidel and my job is to kill you." This puts office disputes in the pale! False and prejudiced identity issues such as "I am wealthy because I am from a superior race and you are poor because you are inferior and stupid" come into play in cross-cultural encounters and are easily sensed by the other participants in the discussion. In such situations the facts tend to become obscured in a welter of emotional and identity issues. This is where the parable of the Good Samaritan is so important in showing us that we can maintain different religious identities and still make peace.

Unless we adopt the "mastery" stance I wrote of earlier then when our emotions and identity are threatened we will lash out in a fight or flight response. Mastery enables us to find our center of calm, to know who we are and to respond appropriately. The fact that someone believes entirely differently to me is not a threat to me, though it is a difference from me. I can understand that difference, manage it and move forward constructively while all the time maintaining my own beliefs and practices. Jesus was not threatened even by the Devil, the Pharisees or the Sadducees - let alone by the Samaritans. His agenda was not a reaction to their agenda, they did not press His buttons in any way. He would at times criticize them at this point or that and point out the error of their ways but his identity was secure and He pursued His own agenda in which they were but bit players.

Competitive identities such as my church is better than your church or my religion is better than your religion are destructive. Now I am not saying that all religions are equal paths to God. That is simply not true, the only access to God is through Jesus Christ of Nazareth who rose from

the dead and has ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high. The salvation question is thus not "what group do you belong to?" but "do you know, believe in and follow Jesus?" The shape of the building you worship in is irrelevant, I know of Christians who worship in mosques (but they do not honor Mohammed). In the early church Christians met in the Jewish temple and in synagogues. What Christian would worship in synagogue today? Messianic Jews for one! The building you worship in, the day of the week you meet on, the festivals you observe, are all totally irrelevant. Christ has ascended through the heavenly realms and "taken captivity captive" and put an end to religious practices as a means of access to God. Only Christ on the cross gives us access to God and that is by faith alone, not by any religious works. Temples, tithes, Sabbaths, feast days, circumcision or uncircumcision, food and drink, do not bring in the Kingdom of God. Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists are outside the Kingdom of God because they do not know, do not believe in and do not follow Jesus Christ of Nazareth. They are not outside the Kingdom of God because they do not worship in our churches or follow our religious practices. As I wrote in an earlier chapter all real power comes from persons. [A gun is just a rusty object until someone wields it. Money has no power in the Mint. Land and oil have no power until someone owns them.] So you have to have access to a person before you can have access to power. The power to save is confined to one Person – Jesus. He is the One, and only, dispenser of the power to have eternal life. Churches, bible colleges, even evangelists do not have the power to dispense eternal life – only Jesus does and He gives eternal life freely to whoever will believe in Him independent of buildings, foods or festivals. The Church is a contingent reality that points people to Jesus and is established by Him to carry out His will along with governments and other authorities established by Him to carry out justice. The Church does not own Jesus any more than the government owns Jesus. Jesus owns the Church, which is His body. The Church does not dispense salvation according to its rules. Jesus dispenses salvation by faith alone. This is very important. The Church is loved by God and important but it is contingent, secondary, and totally dependent on God for its existence. It does not own or confine God or keep Him in a box. God is in charge and can do what He likes with His Church. If a church does not do God's will He can "spew it out of His mouth" (Rev 3:16-20) or "remove its candlestick" (Revelation 2 and 3). The only proprietor of eternal verities is Jesus Christ. The Church does not stand in-between the believer and God.

Thus our ecclesiastical system is not that important but obeying the commands of Jesus is very important. Yet we should honour the systems that God has established and which have continued to do His will. Daniel prayed toward the temple in Jerusalem even though it was demolished and at the end had been idolatrous. He honoured that which God had established. God has established many great churches, denominations and missionary societies to do His work. Some have now fallen into disrepair and idolatry, others have been removed completely. Though these are but shells we should not despise them. Yet again, it is we who have eternal life, not our denominations. Our primary relationship is to be with Jesus Christ not a church or a denomination or a certain theological stance. Theologies, churches and denominations will pass away but Jesus and believers will remain. Our denominations should not be a matter of life and death identity struggles and we should seek to make peace between all believers in Jesus.

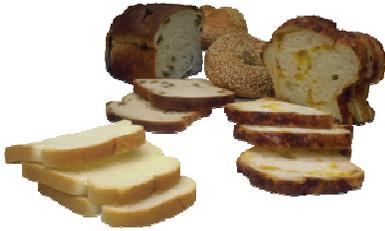
The clear teaching of the New Testament is that all power and authority is vested in one Person – Jesus Christ who is King of King and Lord of Lords and will reign upon the earth. All systems that try to compete with His authority will fall. Salvation can thus be in no other name. Mohammed cannot save on the day of wrath and neither can a denominational leader. Only Christ can save and it is through knowing, believing and following Him that we are saved. Thus as Christians we are secure. Our identity and eternal security and salvation are not in doubt because of another competing religious system. It cannot prevail.

Therefore as Christians connected to Christ who has all power and authority we do not have to defend denominational practices, Sabbath days, and matters of food and drink, which are

peripheral matters. We are not in a war of competing religious practices. We can take a secure mastery stance knowing that our identity is in Christ not in a religion or a denomination. The vital identity question is thus not "What religion do you belong to?" but "Do you know, believe in and follow Jesus?" and "If you don't, would you like to find out about Jesus?". Thus Christians are not so much in conflict with Islam as they are in conflict with sin and unbelief.

What has this to do with conflict resolution? Because primary to conflict resolution is having a firm standing point and a proper understanding of what is really at issue. If we make the fact that Muslims worship on Fridays and we worship on Sundays a central issue then we will just go in circles. The real core issue is what Muslims think of Jesus and what we know of Jesus. Conflict over pork or veils or wearing beards is nonsense. The issue we need to resolve is the Jesus issue. Once they believe in Him and understand the gospel, matters of food and drink will seem far less important.

## When Your Enemy Is Hungry



There are three major references in the NT to how Christians are to treat their enemies:

(Matthew 5:43-48 NKJV) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' {44} "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, {45} "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. {46} "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? {47} "And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? {48} "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

(Luke 6:27-38 NKJV) "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, {28} "bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. {29} "To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. {30} "Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. {31} "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. {32} "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. {33} "And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. {34} "And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. {35} "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. {36} "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. {37} "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. {38} "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

(Romans 12:20-21 NKJV) Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." {21} Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

I think when the war in Afghanistan is finally analyzed it will be the food parcels not the bombs that will be seen as winning the day. The concrete and definite hope of a full stomach during winter will be found as the driving force behind the defections and the overthrow of the Taliban. America gave them food, maybe America will give them money, maybe they will have a decent nation at last and be able to eat and drink and play music and have fun. These forces, more than any ideology, will be found to be the forces of victory. The average poor person loves definite tangible things – like chocolate, more than intangible ideals like democracy. You cannot eat democracy. The poor will support whoever feeds them, hence after the feeding of the five thousand the multitudes wanted to make Jesus King by force (John 6:1-15). Likewise the French Revolution was inevitable after Marie Antoinette's disdainful "give them cake" remark to the hungry masses. Communism succeeded in poor countries because it promised to give the wealth of the rich to the starving poor. It collapsed when the poor figured out that capitalism might feed them even better. Thus feeding your enemy is not just good Christianity - it is wise foreign policy.

As we have seen terrorists thrive on poverty and economic injustice. Likewise they shall lose support if the poor have full stomachs. The bulk of Muslims will see reason when they see food. As economic injustice is corrected and foreign aid programs put in place that are more than

just handouts, but which actually generate the power to make wealth, then the anger of Muslims will slowly be abated. A sound economy in Muslim nations and the hope of a just prosperity and a full stomach for their poor are vital if we are to see even a semblance of true peace in the world in our lifetime.

The Christian injunction "do not overcome evil with evil, but overcome evil with good" may be by far the most cost-effective solution to terrorism. For instance Mindanao, in the southern Philippines is locked into a vicious cycle, poverty creates desperation which produces terrorism and banditry which creates instability which causes investors, missionaries and businesses to withdraw from what should be a very prosperous area, which in turn creates poverty, which then creates desperation and terrorism. If Mindanao can stabilize for long enough for the power to make wealth to be given to it and established in the culture than this cycle will be broken. Once even minimal security and stability is established then massive investment and setting up of businesses will be needed, and should be done on the "power to make wealth" model rather than the "handout" model. As the Mindanao economy recovers this potentially prosperous region will yield a good return to investors thus making the recovery and stabilization of the radicalized Muslim communities eventually cost neutral.

For every active terrorist there are probably 1000 angry and hurting Muslims. These are not yet totally radicalized and they are not totally sold on violence just yet. Basically they want peace but the price of that peace is justice, food and fairness. If justice, food and fairness are not delivered then these angry Muslims will supply the terrorists of the future.

Most poor people do not demand to live in a luxury mansion in Bel-Air. The demands of the poor are generally fairly basic and include items such as rice, fish, clean water, reasonable wages, basic housing, education and affordable community level medical care. Above all they want to feel that there is a reasonable hope of economic progress and that they are not trapped and oppressed. On a cultural level they wish to lose their sense of being despised for their poverty and lack of development and they wish the strengths of their culture to be recognized. They already are fully aware of any weaknesses it might have.

Our enemies are hungry and thirsty and they need food and clean water and if we give those basic things to them then many of them will become our friends. According to Charles Handy sixty percent of the world's trade in cereals such as rice, wheat, maize etc, is controlled by the Cargill family in the USA. Cargill Corporation also has a larger sales turnover in coffee beans than the GDP's of any of the African nations from which it buys its coffee. This one family could make a huge contribution to world peace if it decided to help feed the developing world. Apparently Brazil has a huge problem with food production because much of its arable land is being used to raise beef for export rather than food for the domestic market. Again one family (the Rockefellers) is the major player. A few families and corporations such as Dole, Cargill and the other agri-business giants can do more to feed the poor than the UN can or even the US government can.

The point is this- if we don't feed our enemies we will reap a harvest of terrorism and lawlessness. And if we continue in economic injustice we will reach that final market that God judges and burns. The price of economic injustice will be terrorism, lawlessness, economic breakdown, a global lawless and idolatrous market and a final catastrophic judgment. This whole either/or scenario rests on perhaps 500 to 1000 people in western countries who control the food supply and money supply of the world. The church must reach those top 1000 people and persuade them that it is in their interest to establish a fair and just market particularly for basic commodities. The church must also reach governments and persuade them to regulate the market and to institute practical overseas aid. All these people could fit in one large church. The task is that defined and that achievable. We must reach these decision-makers with the truth. Because if we don't - who will?

In Revelation 6 the four horsemen of the apocalypse go forth and one is a merchant with a set of scales.

*(Revelation 6:5-6 NKJV) When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. {6} And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."*

A denarius was a day's wages for a laborer— maybe \$50 in today's money. So that is incredibly expensive wheat and barley! The luxury goods such as oil and wine are being protected while the price of basic commodities goes through the roof. The black horse is a time of gross economic injustice that will occur when the world market gets out of control under the Anti-Christ. The black horse is followed by the horseman called Death, and the three final seal judgments. This fits with my previous assertion that unjust trade is one of the final signs of a city, empire or world that is about to be judged.

We have a choice. We can let lawless and greedy people rule the world economy or we can insist that the world economy be made fair and just. Rich Christians make up a sizable chunk of the world's wealth. One figure says 70% but that seems too high a figure to me. Whether it is 40% or 70% our portion of global wealth is still sizable and influential. If all those who call themselves Christians absolutely insisted on a fair and just world economy then economic injustice would end. God has given His church the power to create a fair and just world and enough resources to accomplish it with. However we seem to lack the willpower and the obedience to make this happen.

The task of feeding our enemies and holding the world back from anarchy for a few more years rests with the Church as she draws power and authority from the King of Kings and preaches the gospel of salvation. As I see it there are four core economic tasks for the Church:

1. Convince the most powerful 1000 or so people of the need for a fair market.
2. Convince our legislators of the need for international law in this area.
3. Use the vast financial muscle of Christians ethically and persuade the Market to change.
4. Teach the principles of prosperity, the power to make wealth and a biblical work ethic.

This is a discrete and achievable task and God will help us to do it if we commit ourselves to achieving it. Can you start with a polite and practical letter to major corporations and politicians in your area? Can you make an appointment with a major CEO who is known to you or to someone in your church? In this networked world we are no more than "six handshakes" away from any one person. That is we know someone, who knows someone, who knows someone etc. who knows that person. I am just a missionary, but a neighbor went to London and became a stable-hand for the Queen so I am just "one handshake" away from royalty! Similarly I know someone from the Texas Republican Party that knows President Bush. In this amazingly networked world we can often find a connection that will lead us to the person we need to influence. What I am trying to say without big-noting myself is that you may have a bit more influence than you think you have and that with God's help you may be able to do your bit to make this a more just world.

We need to ensure that our enemies are fed and have the hope of justice because God is merciful both to the just and the unjust. It is up to Christians to move beyond adrenalin-filled fight-or-flight responses to a mastery based, Spirit-filled Christian response that takes the situation in hand and produces peace.

## The Clear Implications



To summarize and conclude this book, economics is clearly not a spiritually neutral activity. It affects and is affected by the spiritual realm and is one of the main teaching areas in the New Testament. God is very concerned with wealth being obtained by just and wise means that bring dignity and nobility to people. He is utterly opposed to wealth being obtained by unjust, and fraudulent means or by oppression because these means reduce and demean people and are fundamentally unrighteous. God is implacably opposed to idolatry and superstition, which do not generate luck or blessing as

their adherents believe but actually bring a curse and poverty. Satan, on the other hand, has come to "steal, kill and destroy" which has obvious economic consequences while Jesus has come that we might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). By stealing, killing and destroying Satan aims to impugn the goodness of God and cause His creatures to turn from Him.

The Kingdom is a place of abiding and true prosperity, which is first of all spiritual then physical. First prosperity is inward and in Christ, then only later, is it outward in peace and prosperity. In the Kingdom, loving God, not money, is the bottom line and seeking first the Kingdom and God's righteousness is to be the focus of life. The Kingdom is a place of just wealth creation where God gives His people the power to make wealth by righteous means that they may provide for their families, pay taxes, bless others, help the poor and assist those who minister the gospel. This wealth creation takes place by diligently applying specific and focused wisdom and knowledge towards a productive economic goal in the context of a righteous relationship with God and respectful and just relationships with men and women. As a community the Kingdom involves the mutual meeting of economic means and is international in scope with for instance, churches in Corinth and Macedonia helping those in Jerusalem who were suffering from a famine. The Kingdom is not a place of economic injustice and oppression, unfair wages, grasping economic activity or speculative fast money. Rather it is a place where people are valued for who they are, not how much they can earn, and where there is sense of the sacredness and beauty of life. In the Kingdom money is a mere servant being deployed for the glory of God and the blessing of His people.

The market is supposed to be a place of fair trade that operates by the laws of God and men. When it does so God is pleased and just economic activity takes place. Instead it has become corrupt. Powers and principalities governed by the "Prince of this World" – Satan, have taken control of market forces and formed it into a system that is independent of, and largely hostile to, God. As the market has grown in power so its injustices have grown in enormity especially in the areas of currency trading and speculative activity as well as the areas of greatest darkness – such as the arms trade, drug trade, slave trade, sex trade and wildlife trade. This lawless and spiritually controlled market is seeking to throw off all restraint by God and governments in the name of free trade and develop an idolatrous and unjust world market ruled by the violent and ruthless which the Bible calls Babylon.

The terrorists are evil and cruel people that are a direct creation of the work of an unjust global market system, which has provoked and radicalized them. Enraged at the injustices they see in their own countries they have embraced a response to poverty that searches for someone to blame and have chosen violence and retaliation as the cure for injustice and poverty. With their minds imbued with a belief in fate, original design and the will of Allah they see their poverty as

being a result of having not served Islamic law with sufficient zeal and faithfulness. They have become omitted to the destruction of Western institutions that are opposed to Islam and which defile its holy lands. In taking this course they have set up a cycle of religious reasoning that will only lead to further destruction and poverty. However God has used them to bring us a warning that things are seriously wrong with world trade and to delay the process of unjust globalization.

Muslims will always disagree with Christians but peacemaking is possible even when cultural and religious differences are irreconcilable. Muslims and Christians do not have to kill each other. When justice is established in the market then peace will be established between nations. Peace without justice is unstable at best and impossible at worst. The poor and the radicalized can largely be won over through economic justice and the hope of a reasonable prosperity.

The Church is the body of Christ who is the King of Kings. Jesus wishes to rule the world with equity and justice. Though this will have to wait until the Millennium for its complete fulfillment we are still called to do His will on earth as it is done in Heaven. To do this we need to adopt the virtues of leadership such as noble-mindedness and wisdom and justice and to pursue Spirit-filled personal mastery and a solution-focused approach to social problems. In doing so Christians need to learn to abandon ineffective and untargeted approaches to social change and embrace wisdom and understanding. The Church is not in a war over religious practices as Christ has made them irrelevant to knowing God. The Church should call all people to faith in Christ not to belonging to this system or that.

The task of attaining economic justice is highly centralized and revolves around maybe 1000 or so key people. While millions are affected a relatively small handful of people control the levers of the world economy. These people mainly live in North America and Europe and are in easy reach of the church and many probably go to church. For the first time this century many of the world's leaders are openly Christian – including President George W. Bush and Tony Blair. They will listen to Scripture. Thus God has set His Church a definable and achievable task.

Satan, the prince of trade, wishes to set up His Babylon. He will oppose the Church at every turn. The Church will not win the battle for economic justice and godly prosperity easily. Yet in recent years God has ensured the Church has adequate information on spiritual warfare. We are no longer unarmed, unaware and gullible. We have the facts, the power, and the contacts to start to make a difference. If we win the battle for economic justice then fundamentalist Islam will collapse, the borders of previously closed Muslim nations will be opened, and millions even billions will be freed to hear the gospel. Will you join me in the struggle?