

# ZADOK

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WORKING IN

## *Economic Exile & Illusion*

BOB GOUDZWAARD

SIMON BIBBY

EMILY BELZ

DAVID LYON

# 'We are now dead.'

## Thatcherism and the loss of true Pluralism

**Gordon Preece**

**O**n 17th April I went to Maggie Thatcher's funeral. Being in London we lined the streets with many others, including one lonely woman with her back turned towards St. Paul's, the Occupy movement site now re-occupied by the 1%. We were there to mark the end of the era of the first-female PM of the UK. For all her achievements re-activating a moribund English economy, the 'Iron Lady' ironically became the model for the macho politics of divisive class and gender conflict of John Howard, Tony Abbott, and even Australia's first female PM Julia Gillard.

There are several arguments to support this claim. I can only outline them here.

1. Thatcher's pompous royal plural quote, upon the birth of her first grandchild, 'We are now a grandmother,' juxtaposed with her other famous quote that 'there is no such thing as society'. The latter quotation and its context are much disputed. The whole quote, from October 1987 *Woman's Own* is:

*If children have a problem, it is [said it is] society that is at fault. Who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families. The beauty of that living tapestry and the quality of our lives will depend on how much each ... is prepared to take responsibility for ourselves and ... the unfortunate. No government can do anything except through the people, and people looking to themselves first.*

Thatcher believed in individual voluntarism and virtues, saying in September 1981: 'My policies are not based on some economics theory [though influenced by Hayek, and Milton Friedman's mantra that the business of business is to maximise profits legally], but on things I and millions like me were brought up with: an honest day's work for an honest day's pay; live within your means; put by a nest egg for a rainy day; pay your bills on time; support the police'. This most publicly Christian

and middle-class Methodist of PM's believed the 10 Commandments and New Testament were 'preoccupied with the individual ... in his relationship to others'. 'Relief of poverty and suffering is a duty' but one not necessarily best performed by the State. The State 'will dry up in individuals "the milk of human kindness"'. 'I wonder whether state services would have done as much ... as the Good Samaritan did'. Further, 'no one would remember him if he'd only had good intentions; he had money as well'.

My middle-class, small-businessman father taught me similar virtues to Thatcher's grocery shop owning father. 'If a job's worth doing it's worth doing properly' etc. But he also treated his workers like family, my unofficial aunts and uncles. He'd visit them in their old-age, on their death beds, and later, their widows. Workers shared Christmas bonuses when the business went well, and he'd give ex-prisoners a job. My parish's WorkVentures social entrepreneurial employment projects like ITEC, (teaching IT and business skills to the unemployed) were designed to survive the harsh winter of Thatcher's welfare state. There is nothing wrong with entrepreneurialism, if it retards social erosion.

2. Thatcher was a conviction politician, self-mythologising in the quote 'The lady's not for turning'. 'If you just set out to be liked, you would be prepared to compromise on anything at any time, and you would achieve nothing'. On unveiling a bronze bust of herself she famously said she'd prefer iron. Yes, core convictions should not be compromised. But the recent film *Lincoln* showed the greater leadership of one who, without compromising on the abolition of slavery, compromised politically on lesser things and was well aware of what he didn't know, allowing for divine mystery. Turning, or repentance, is a biblical virtue too.

Thatcher never got that politics is the communal art of compromise – in democracies you govern for everyone. Though she had many aspirational working class supporters, who purchased council flats through her bribe for their votes, she often governed for her 'friends', in a partisan

way. In putting money from public housing sales into consolidated revenue rather than better public housing, her policies produced the chronic shortage of public housing in the UK and Australia today. Little thought was given to the astronomical price rises in privatised and monopolised public utilities.

The centre-left admitted Thatcher needed to regain democratic control over the sometimes arbitrary power of some unions, cutting power supplies to a three day week etc. This was typified by Arthur Scargill's illegally instituted and disunited miners' strike. But in restoring pride to Britain and enterprise to the economy, especially to London as Europe's financial capital, she also laid the foundations, through unaccountable privatisation and de-regulation, for the GFC's financial speculation – a rejection of the Protestant productive work and thrift ethic of her roots in favour of speculation and consumerism.

3. Thatcher also split her country between North and South. She imposed the unjust and politically insensitive poll tax on my Scottish grandmother's relatives making them guinea pigs a year before the rest of the UK, something they've never forgiven. And she and her ministers discussed, after the Toxteth riots in Liverpool, virtually letting it sink into the sea through de-industrialisation. The full truth of the Hillsborough tragedy of the 96 dead Liverpool supporters was hidden because the Murdoch press in the UK was in thrall to Thatcher and a manufactured image of Liverpoolians as a lazy, lying, drunken drag on the UK. This blinded their eyes to the cops' conspiracy. Full credit to the working-class solidarity and perseverance of friends and relatives demanding 'Justice for the 96'. Also to Liverpool Evangelical Anglican Bishop James Jones and his committee of inquiry for exposing the truth and standing in solidarity with the victims. They remembered what it meant to be we.

Thatcher's politics of division (and that of her employment minister Norman Tebbutt, who told unemployed Liverpoolians 'to get on their bikes' (cont. inside back cover)

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# The glorious amateur

**Alison Sampson**

I have spent most of my adult life wondering which profession I should adopt. I still have no idea. My husband, rather irritatingly, met a lawyer when he was sixteen, thought 'I'd like to do that', got the marks, loved law, and now loves his work. Meanwhile, many of my friends are not only working in fields they love, but are now managing teams, developing strategic plans, and building their professional names. Somehow, I missed that boat.

“ I LOVE FOOLING AROUND IN THE KITCHEN MAKING THINGS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS; I LOVE COOKING FROM THE HARVEST; I LOVE SOLVING THE PUZZLE OF HOW TO USE UP THE VEGGIES IN OUR WEEKLY BOX; I LOVE GLEANING FOODS FROM PUBLIC PARKS AND LANEWAYS AND TURNING THEM INTO SOMETHING GOOD. ”

At times, I've worried about being a dilettante, unable to stick at anything. But lately I've been attracted to the idea of the amateur. 'Amateur' comes from the Latin for 'love'; so an amateur is someone who does things for love, not money – and what better description of a Christian?

Now, I realise many readers think of me as a writer – but is that my profession? Well, writing is not the most important thing for me, and rarely does it pay. I don't have a book waiting to be written, or the drive to submit to lots of publications. I enjoy writing for *Zadok* and one or two other magazines, but I don't seek out paying work. I'm hardly a professional. Gladly, however, will I accept the title of amateur, because everything I write emerges out of love: of life, experience and learning; of kids, neighbours and the world.

Because of the writing, I've also become an amateur lecturer. From time to time I'm invited to address a class, conference or church to talk about my loves: everyday spirituality, parenting,

children in the church, and even local food. Occasionally I am paid a gratuity that doesn't cover the cost of childcare; I don't do it for the money! Instead, I do it out of passion for ideas which may bring health, even joy, to people or systems; in other words, I do it out of love.

On Wednesday mornings, I'm an amateur teacher. Buckling down full-time to the demands made of teachers these days would drive me berserk, but I love to spend a few hours each week teaching kids how to read, write and play with words.

I'm even an amateur cook. I love

fooling around in the kitchen making things for family and friends; I love cooking from the harvest; I love solving the puzzle of how to use up the veggies in our weekly box; I love gleaning foods from public parks and laneways and turning them into something good. I blog about food out of sheer delight, and out of gratitude for the world's often overlooked bounty. If even one of my posts inspires someone to pick a handful of dandelions or laneway figs and discover how good they are, then it has been worthwhile.

Clearly, the role of amateur arises from a position of privilege: my husband earns enough that I don't need to work for pay. We are also content with less than many of his professional peers. But being an amateur comes at a price, too. I am often invisible; as a stay-at-home mum I've been cruelly snubbed; and I have had to become accustomed to the lack of credibility or respect that are associated with no job title and no income.

Predictably, one of the worst judges has been myself; even though I chose this path, the lack of pay can feel humiliating. Our society still values work almost solely as an economic endeavour. In subtle ways we often value a childcare worker over a stay-at-home parent ('I'm just a mum'), just as we value the chef who concocts fussy meals for the privileged few over the parent who, despite hating to cook, churns out meal after meal as a necessary act of loving service. It's hard to resist this dominant world view year after year, and all too easy to make our choices based on economics, too.

Yet money is not our ultimate value; love is. Some of us are lucky enough to be paid for doing the work we love; my husband is a case in point. But all of us can make choices about how we use our time; and if we have the opportunity to work as an amateur, even at an economic cost, then we should do it with our heads held high; for in that moment we are living out God's call, which is always an expression of love.

**ALISON SAMPSON**

writes about small things at  
[www.theideaofhome.blogspot.com](http://www.theideaofhome.blogspot.com).



# Does anyone out there have a secure and satisfying job?

**Paul Tyson**

Last Labour Day I realised that I only know a handful of people who actually work in a secure job for 40 hours a week who are the sole income provider for their family. People either work a lot more than 40 hours a week – and often both partners work – or considerably less than 40 hours a week, if at all. And then contractual and temporary work is now so common that feast and famine patterns of income are pretty normal for many Australian households. Work which is secure, satisfying and provides a comfortable family income – but is not a life-consuming identity – seems

gap between the rich and the poor is ever widening. Growing workplace alienation and increasing income inequality are now the big work and income trends in Australian society.

The 2011 ABS census summary tells us some pretty disturbing things about work and wealth in Australia.

Regarding income distribution, if you are in the 20% of Australian households at the top end of the income spectrum, then your average annual household income, after tax, is \$88,608 and you have \$2.2 million worth of assets. If you are in the 20% of Australian households in the lowest end of the income spectrum, then your average annual household income (after tax) is \$16,328 and your total assets are worth

officially unemployed (5.6%). There are also 630,000 Australians who are 'away from work' (5.9%). But remember one in four households live primarily off the family tax benefit, disability pensions etc. and 40% of Australian households really are scraping financially.

But these figures should not disturb us for Australia has a sound economy. We also play some important and future-oriented roles in the global economy. For we are a great quarry for raw materials, we are a good (though pretty small) market to sell consumer goods in (particularly new electronic gadgets) and Darwin is a strategic place to locate American troops (for the US police the global economy, and we are their friends so we can rely on their interest in maintaining the 'stability' of our region). So as a post-industrial society we are now integrated pretty completely into free capital flowing, Chinese labour exploiting, global corporation governed, consumer paradise (i.e., 'the free world'). We can keep structurally underemployed Australians happy provided they can still consume. Thus (and I am not attacking that very noble thing, state-funded social security) we *must* enable our sizable population of unemployable people to have an income, for this keeps the current status quo bubbling along.

Ten years ago Michael Pusey published a devastating book titled *The experience of Middle Australia; the dark side of economic reform*. This book documents how the egalitarian work ethos of post-war Australia died, and what stress this death has put on middle Australia since. Reading Pusey's book reminded me of Psalm 115:8 'those who make idols will be like them'. We have made the economy our idol, and we are now the slaves of the grim instrumental logic of merely monetary necessity, and work itself is debased. We have become like what we worship; lifeless and without any intrinsic meaning or higher value. How do we climb out of this hole? Perhaps smashing the idol would be a good start...

**PAUL TYSON**

Australian Catholic University, Brisbane School of Theology and Philosophy

“ WORK WHICH IS SECURE, SATISFYING AND PROVIDES A COMFORTABLE FAMILY INCOME – BUT IS NOT A LIFE-CONSUMING IDENTITY – SEEMS TO HAVE GONE THE WAY OF THE DODO. ”

to have gone the way of the dodo.

Come to think of it, lots of things have gone the way of the dodo in Australian society within living memory. Agriculture and manufacturing work now account for only a small proportion of our national work force. However, if we don't work in food production or making things any more, what do we do? The optimistic answer to this question is that we are now a post-industrial economy characterised by high tech value-adding services done by really smart and innovative people. In reality, however, many of us have not transitioned from an industrial/agricultural economy to a high tech 'tertiary' economy at all, even though our jobs and demands for our skills have indeed evaporated. The truth is, one in every four Australian households have, as their primary source of income, a government pension or allowance. That is, far more people are simply unable to find secure and meaningful work than our official unemployment rate would have us believe. On top of that, the

\$30,000. People between the top fifth and the bottom fifth are usually moving up or down as the middle is under a lot of stress to either break through into secure wealth or stop falling over the cliff of poverty. This kind of trend in widening household income inequality with its resultant middle demography squeeze started in the 1980s and this ever solidifying trend has radically reshaped Australian work and life in the past 30 years.

Regarding work, the official unemployment figure is a very poor indicator of how many people do not have regular, secure or meaningful work. The ABS has determined that there are 10.6 million Australians who are of working age and capacity (this excludes a significant number of people living on various types of disability or carers pensions as well as people doing any sort of training or education). 6.3 million of the labour force work 40 hours a week or more (nearly 60%). 3.1 million Australians work part-time (28.7%). Then there are 600,000 Australians who qualify to be



# MONEY, MAGIC, GREED AND THE POWER OF ILLUSIONS

**Bob Goudzwaard**

*This paper was originally presented as a Sir Fred Catherwood Lecture, Belfast, Northern Ireland, December 1, 2011.*

*'It is time we looked again at the moral order we have lost.'*

**S**IR FRED CATHERWOOD wrote these words in the Preface of his well-known book, *The Creation of Wealth*. I would like to take these impressive words as my theme. They also underline my main motivation. For if we are surrounded by many problems, even to the point where they are perhaps overwhelming us, then we need to probe deeper levels in our understanding than we are ordinarily prone to do. Then indeed we might discern that the moral order of life itself is at stake.

But how shall we do that? My main suggestion is simply to take the complex reality we confront today with utmost seriousness. This reality is not just a matter of human experience, it is also God's reality. In ways that confront us at our deepest level, God is always present in what happens around us: He is challenging us, testing us, but also encouraging us through His Holy Spirit. It is my hope that we will experience this today, especially now, as we deal with the roots of our current financial and economic crises. The usual suggestion is that, whatever the current crisis may be, it can be solved by the most brilliant brains among us. It is suggested that we should leave them to do their work. But the reality has much more to it than those things our brains can address. Is there not greed, illusion, perhaps even magic at work in this situation?

But let me not run ahead too fast. Let us first briefly try with utmost care to analyse today's economic and financial reality. Only when we have done so should we try to look deeper also at the cultural levels of our situation, and finally consider the moral order which, according to Sir Fred, we may have lost.

Let me now discuss three of our major problems. They are: a rising global indebtedness; a deepening crisis in the European Union; and the remarkable fact, problematic in itself, that most solutions are obviously not working well, particularly at a national level.

## 1. GROWING WORLDWIDE INDEBTEDNESS

A first characteristic of our time is worldwide rising indebtedness. We all know of course about the persistent indebtedness of the poorest nations of the world. Their huge debts continually cast a dark shadow over their economic future. But now, the amount of debt is on the rise in almost every part of the world. No longer is increasing debt linked mainly to the poorer countries. It is also evermore evident in the so-called wealthy countries. The US is not just the world's largest economy. Along with Japan, it is also the nation with the largest public debt. So it comes as no surprise that alongside of rising public debt private indebtedness is also growing all around the world.

*TIME* magazine, for instance, the well-known American weekly, recently drew the attention of its readers to the fact that since 1980, average consumption levels have risen enormously in the US, but at the same time, this increase was not made possible by a corresponding rise in wages. No, it was facilitated by an explosion in credit. Household debt has risen 20-fold in the US in the last thirty years. The average American family has, at this moment, no fewer than 13 credit cards. Household or private debt is estimated to be \$14 trillion, about the same as the enormous US public debt. In his book, *Empire of Illusion: the End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* (2009) Chris Hedges makes the interesting remark that:

*America seeks to perpetuate prosperity by borrowing trillions of dollars, which it (however) can never repay (p.143).*

Of course, this kind of profligate living cannot continue indefinitely. And, perhaps not unrelated to this, poverty in the US is also growing. There are now more than 36 million Americans who have to cope daily with hunger, and that is a rise of 3 million since 2000.

## 2. THE EUROPEAN CRISIS

Over the last year, there have been media reports on a weekly basis that a financial crisis is looming for Europe. The reports continue with growing intensity. The latest daily columns now announce that a full-blown crisis has arrived. And indeed, there is good reason for this kind of commentary.

I have already drawn your attention to the world's rising indebtedness. But in this context, Europe has its own specific story. The key theme of this story is the often ignored fact that the European Union is, in the first instance, an economic and monetary union, and not a political union at all. This suggests that the Union is always oriented to promoting its own material well-being, as is clearly stated in Article 2 of the Treaty of Rome. The Union is thus less concerned about the political situation in its member states; they are left to take care of themselves. Take Greece for instance. It followed its own liberal interpretation of the European principle of wealth-promotion. And particularly under the rule of Papandreou Snr., Greece took the opportunity to make an enormous jump in its

“ SINCE 2003 THESE BIG BANKS HAVE CREATED FOUR TIMES THE AMOUNT OF MONEY NEEDED BY THE REAL ECONOMY TO MAINTAIN GROWTH. ”

public expenditure. However, this was not financed by higher taxes but by treasury bonds and by the loans that were greedily offered on easy terms by Europe's leading banks. Other countries also choose such an expansionist credit policy: Italy, Spain, Portugal, and at a somewhat later time, Ireland. No wonder that, after a number of years, the so-called financial markets began to have doubts whether all these countries would ever be able to repay their huge loans. It was also at that time that new financial derivatives were created, such as the so-called Credit Default Swaps, which give speculators the possibility of cashing in when a company, bank or even a country ends up in bankruptcy. It is no wonder then that the European crisis was enhanced and deepened along this path that ostensibly was headed toward material well-being.

The European Central Bank, as we all know, is now trying to prevent a further deepening of the crisis by buying up these doubtful debts and treasury bonds. But it is also enforcing, together with the IMF, a more stringent budgetary policy, especially in Italy and Greece. Both their Prime Ministers have recently been replaced. But that did not silence the outcry in the streets of Athens and Rome about the cutting of salaries and the slashing of social expenditure. These protests are so intense that this top down European financial policy will sooner or later come to an end. The concept of a broad economic and financial European Union is now itself at stake. Yes, indeed, Europe is involved in a deep crisis.

## 3. FAILING SOLUTIONS

My third point is about failing solutions. In economic textbooks the solutions that are put forward to abate the impact of economic depressions are relatively simple, although there are striking differences among them.

Just to remind you: in the Keynesian school of thought, economic depressions can be overcome by means of more government expenditure. A higher deficit is temporarily accepted in order to stimulate the economy so that the level of private investment and private consumption can once more follow a growth path. The other solution, usually associated with the Chicago school, emphasises lower taxes and direct stimulation of the supply side of the economy as the way to go. I remind you of these two leading opinions because they immediately make clear to us why neither of these two standard solutions work well in the present predicament. For how can one expand government expenditure when public debt is already far too high? At the same time, lowering taxes is not an option at a time of intense budgetary constraint. For lowering of taxes increases the deficit again, unless you also drastically cut government expenditure. That was what the US Tea Party proposed. And such action will, once again, have the effect of aggravating the crisis.

It is in this embarrassing situation that we sometimes see Federal Banks and governments giving in to the temptation to pump more money into the economy. Using the fiscal printing press, as it is sometimes called, will of course mean an increase in the availability of liquidities in the economy. But the amount is already far too large. And like penicillin, it also brings more colour onto the cheeks of the patient and so perhaps also contributes to a rapid recovery. Enormous doses of this type of penicillin are then needed, so why not give it a try?

The problem behind this so-called 'solution' is, of course, that it was precisely the policy of easy money creation which caused the present economic and financial crisis in the first place. This was just as much the case for Europe as it was for the United States. Joseph Stiglitz explains that clearly in his recent book, *Free Fall: America, Free Markets and the Sinking of the World Economy* (2010). He tells us how, in the years before the crisis, both politicians and most Western economists entertained very optimistic, even over-optimistic views of the economy and of the possibilities of further growth. This optimism led most banks, for their own very speculative purposes, to a very easy-going money-lending policy. This policy, Stiglitz explains, was driven mainly by their own greed. Indeed, since 2003 these big banks have created four times the amount of money needed by the real economy to maintain growth. These loans or debts, public and private, now hang as a huge cloud above all of us, and they hamper each and every economic recovery. Our economy has thus indeed gone into 'free fall', with increasing debts and indebtedness, in both the private and the public spheres.

Here, in this place tonight, we are all convinced, I am sure, that money should serve the real economy; that is, money is to serve the production and consumption of real goods and services. But today it often looks the other way around. What we call the 'real economy' has become more and more dependent on the bloated financial sector, with its inherent whims and volatilities. Sir Fred pointed to this same fact by speaking about what he calls the new electronic economy:

*The electronic economy enables money to flash around the world at the speed of light, driving currency flows out of control and plunging stock markets into crisis (p 14).*

How true that is. Speculative money indeed now

plays a powerful de-stabilising role around the globe. For these capital flows are always searching for higher financial rewards, especially in the short run, and they often even induce many businesses to report higher profitability over the short-term to maintain the image of longer-term viability. George Soros was therefore correct when he observed that financial markets have now taken their place in the driver's seat of the global economy. That is to say that money has now clambered up onto a throne of its own making from where it presumes to exercise its lordship over all real economies. Indeed, most governments today are full of fear of the havoc financial markets may wreak upon them; they lurk like a latter-day Big Brother watching from day to day to constrain their legislative action and to bring in favourable amendments.

## A DEEPER-LEVEL ANALYSIS

With these remarks we already begin to take the first steps toward a deeper kind of analysis. For how it is possible that money and the financial markets could ever gain such an enormous hold over our economies? How is it that money could ever lead us into this present crisis? Is it wholly and solely a result of the exponential growth of greed in the big banks?

Let us therefore look for a moment at a somewhat contrasting vision. Another recent book, written by George Akerlof and Robert Shiller, *Animal Spirits: How Human Psychology Drives the Economy, and Why it Matters for Global Capitalism* (2009) seems to give us a somewhat different diagnosis of the causes of our present crisis. These authors see so called 'animal spirits' as playing the dominant role. The term 'animal spirits' comes from Lord Keynes. And it refers to those irrational factors or non-economic motives that heavily influence people in their decision-making. The authors mention as examples: an unlimited confidence in what markets can do; the illusion of money; and several forms of bad faith. These kinds of instincts, they argue, caused people to seriously believe that, for instance, house prices would always go up, and it heightened their faith in the possibility that they would get richer and richer.

Akerlof and Shiller conclude that their theory of animal spirits answers the conundrum of 'why most of us utterly failed to foresee the economic crisis'. A somewhat different interpretation indeed. But the similarity is of course that they also underline the fact that the idea of unlimited progress can bring people to decisions which later on cause great harm to the economy.

Terms like greed, as used by Stiglitz, and the power of illusions, as mentioned by Akerlof and Shiller, point to a deeper level and cannot be accounted for in terms of economic processes alone. It is the level of *culture* which should enter into consideration here: the level of human intentions and human drives. We should especially be alerted to the role illusion plays in human life. Illusions allow people and nations to believe what they want to believe, instead of taking reality seriously.

In *Empire of Illusion*, Chris Hedges defends the thesis that, in our time, the distinction between illusion and reality is increasingly blurred. We live in a culture of entertainment, which is a culture of continuous illusions. Hedges underlines this with utmost seriousness. If a culture can no longer distinguish between reality

and illusion it must sooner or later die. But even more remarkable is his conclusion:

*The cultural retreat into illusion is a form of magical thinking. It turns worthless mortgages and debt into wealth. It turns ... destruction ... into an opportunity for growth (p. 190).*

Magical thinking? Here we confront an altogether new concept. Could it be that magic has played and continues to play its own distinctive role in our time? Of course, when we first hear this it sounds fantastic. But it may not be as strange as we think. Two centuries ago, the great German poet, Johan Wolfgang von Goethe, wrote his well-known drama, *Faust*. Faust is a scientist who sells his soul to the devil in order to be able to obtain superior knowledge, the kind of knowledge God has. In the second part of this tragedy, Mephistopheles, the devil's advocate, brings Faust to try to produce gold. But when that fails, he suggests that he choose instead the magical path of creating paper money! Indeed, it is that magic which turns Faust into a rich and extremely powerful man, who could scarcely be saved by the angels. Goethe, by the way, was once minister of Finance in the German republic of Weimar, and so he had some acquaintance with what he was writing about.

Money is indeed a very strange object, particularly when it takes on magical properties. Money represents value, but only so far as we collectively believe in it. Without that collective faith, printed money would be no more than a rectangular piece of colourful printed paper, or a simple written line in a bank-account. The magic of money is such that it seems capable of seducing people into thinking that it is most desirable, *the* most desirable thing to have. Of course, and let there be no doubt about this, money can be very useful in facilitating economic transactions between people. But it can also grow into an idol, a pseudo-saviour, a Mammon which can betray you at the very moment that you need it most.

This kind of deep analysis helps us see more clearly. If the amount of money in the hands of people or in their private accounts is growing, it can easily create for them the illusion of growing wealth. And thus we can be induced to believe that there is continued growth in the economy, even if there is no solid ground for that kind of faith. Money can also feed the illusion of increasing control, of exercising power over others. It seems that such an illusion played a crucial role in the outbreak of the recent global financial crisis. The banks, the speculators, simply believed in the endless growth which was made possible by the perpetual creation of more money.

## GREED, ILLUSION, DEBT AND FAITH

A greed for more money may inspire illusions, but growing indebtedness can also lead that way. Debts form an illusory path along which we may perpetuate our desires, even if, in fact, the fulfilment of such desires is no longer possible! Our desires prevail only for a moment, until the illusion of money breaks down and the harsh reality takes over. Did not Jesus warn us in his parable about unjust Mammon that money can easily fail us?

It is clear, I hope, that with these remarks we have reached a deeper level, a dimension which goes beyond and beneath the cultural dimension of our human drives and the development of our imagination. Here we are

confronted with the almost forgotten dimension of religion, and to the role of faith and ideology in human society. For the power of illusion, just like the power of magic, never stands on its own. Neither is the unlimited pursuit of one's own material happiness ever a merely neutral attitude. The views, goals and attitudes formulated under the spell of illusory magic look very much like goals and attitudes of last resort. They are rightly seen as expressions of living ideologies. John Kenneth Galbraith has already expressed it many years ago: 'A rising standard of living has become an article of faith in western societies'.

Let me say it otherwise. In the hardening of our economic crisis, in both Europe and in the world as a whole, we can observe something of what the prominent French Catholic philosopher, René Girard recently described as the whirlwind of a heavy hurricane. A hurricane, as we all know, can catch everyone and everything in its devastating course. Similarly, Girard wrote, it looks as if our present world is in the grip of a growing lust for ever more wealth and money, by which peoples and nations continually imitate each other, and he calls it a hurricane of desire. This is similar to what Sir Fred Catherwood once observed:

*What drives greed is covetousness. Just because (the other) wants something, we want it ourselves.*

It looks indeed as if somehow western society has become a victim of its own growing covetousness. We take up all means that may help us to fight for our ever-increasing wealth, to maintain at all costs and by all possible means what we have already. And for all those purposes, money is grasped as the most important weapon in our struggle.

No doubt this is a hard kind of diagnosis. But let us also observe the message of hope and perspective which is involved in this message. Illusions can indeed take us captive, and idols can abandon us at the most critical moment. But of course we can also decide to say goodbye to them. As a mature society we can break through the power of deeply unrealistic illusions. Somehow we should now come to our senses, as the prodigal son did in the parable of Jesus.

## THE PATH OF HOPE

But what could be this path or this pattern of hope? Could it also imply Europe's return to the Father's house?

As I have noted already, René Girard compares our present global situation to a hurricane of desire and greed, a violent weather pattern extending across the globe, catching all nations in its turbulence. But each hurricane, he suggests, also has a centre, a centre of silence. What is this centre? Two significant terms he used to describe it.

Firstly there is *love*, for in real love the goods that are transacted between us as persons and nations, the *interesse* which so easily lead us to envy one another, simply fall away. Love makes room for what the other needs, and this then leads to sharing.

His second word is: *following*. That is a deeply religious word, related to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But it is used by him in contrast with the lust to endless imitation of other persons and nations in their quest for always more material wealth.

I think this deep approach of René Girard should

be followed here. But first let me try to make it also somewhat more concrete.

We have already seen that modern societies, like those of the European Union, are primarily characterised by their ultimate goal orientation. They strive primarily for more economic wealth, for more financial stability and for more safety for themselves, and then proceed to try to derive from those ultimate goals the instruments they need to achieve them. This implies that if they are confronted with problems, they will systematically choose those economic and financial policies which are required to preserve their goals!

But is that also valid for a Christian approach to our personal and collective problems? Surely not. For the heart of each truly Christian approach is not an ultimate Goal orientation but an ultimate Way-orientation. 'The people of the Way' was the oldest name of Christians, as mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. There we read that it was in the city of Antioch that 'these people of the Way' were first called 'Christians'. A basic Way orientation in politics is therefore just the other way around from a basic goal-orientation. It implies the willingness to follow ways or principles like justice, love, stewardship and community instead of putting first our own desires, wishes and material interests.

Of course, in a Way-oriented approach goals or targets will sooner or later enter the picture. But they only come in, and are only pursued, if and when they are and remain fully in line with what justice, love and stewardship ask of us. Way-orientations – and it is very remarkable that we find them in almost all religions! – therefore always have self-critical, self-denying and self-limiting elements. They acknowledge that we could be wrong or could have done wrong. And precisely because of this element of personal and communal critical self-reflection, Way-solutions can also reach far deeper than goal-oriented solutions usually do. They may include a solid critique of what is going wrong in our modern self-centred societies. And can thus also ask for turns, or express the need for healing, justice and reconciliation as the recent history of South Africa shows.

But uncritical, self-chosen paths do not have that vital characteristic. They not only easily feed further illusions, but can also tempt nations to comply with the ideological madness of fighting for what they wish to maintain at all costs and with every means possible.

## A WAY-APPROACH TO OUR CURRENT CRISES

So let us now return to consider today's problems, and look first at the problem of *rising indebtedness*. Debt, indebtedness, these are words we often hear in church. They are even mentioned in the Lord's prayer, not only in the context of God's forgiveness of our debts, but also of our forgiveness of the debts of others. But do those much prayed lines also have practical significance for us and for the Western world?

The ongoing indebtedness of the poorest nations should especially shame us. In the Torah, the Mosaic laws of ancient Israel, the maximum legal term for debts was six years, because in the seventh year, the sabbatical year, a general forgiveness of debts was to take place. Faith in the eternal God prohibited that debts would be perpetual. Only God is eternal, and so indebtedness must

not go on for ever. But that is obviously not the situation now between rich and poor nations. Why not? Why do all of their debts still persist? Are there here perhaps similar factors at work as in the rise of global indebtedness?

In tackling the enduring problem of indebtedness it is the way or path of *public justice* which needs to come onto our horizon. In relation to debt, public justice has been a severely violated principle. Did you know that in almost every year in the last twenty to thirty years there has been a so-called negative transfer between North and South? That means that, in almost every year, the sum of interest payments and loan-amortisation paid by the poor countries of the south to the rich societies of the North was higher than the sum of direct investments plus development aid that came to the South from the North? When the then British Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, first heard about this fact, she reacted with astonishment: 'But that is just the opposite of development aid!' she said. Indeed, for it implies that rich countries and their banks still continually extract more money from the impoverished south than they send out.

Underneath this strange kind of continuous enrichment of the rich lies the distorted and unjust global imbalance in which only a small number of privileged countries are permitted to create international liquidities, the key currencies acceptable in international trade. Rich countries can create key currencies, such as the dollar, the euro and the yen as much as they like, because their currencies are accepted by every other country. But poor countries don't have any direct access to international liquidities. They can only earn those currencies by increasing their exports or by borrowing money from the rich, usually at high interest rates. This is the main reason for the growth of the indebtedness of the poorest countries in the last thirty years. And it is still growing, which means that their own economic development is continuously hampered by the enormous amounts of debt payments that they need to make each year.

If the west would truly take the problem of increasing poverty in the South seriously, then it would accept that at least a substantial part of the benefits of creating international money should go directly to the poor countries, which would then enable them to pay off their debts. This simple gesture of international justice could solve the most painful sides of world poverty, not to mention that it would also contribute to our own economic recovery. It would even be an echo, albeit a distant one, of what was once meant by the year of Jubilee in Israel, the return of land to its original owners as a source of economic well-being to the poor, since it was their own legitimate share of capital resources.

But is the rich West really prepared to act in this way? No, it is not. We prefer window dressing over justice, sharing of the fruits of progress over sharing in the sources of progress. And so, meagre development aid is given preference over any kind of international monetary reform.

Indeed, there is a link between several kinds of indebtedness. It is greed and opulence which still sustain the unbroken monopoly held by the big western banks and governments in the creation of new international money for themselves. If we really wish to end the structural problem of the world's rising indebtedness, then it is that monopoly which must end. Money and the creation of money should not rule over us, but serve us in

the way of good *stewardship*.

Here another principle of the Way-orientation, *stewardship*, comes onto our horizon! If in their greed, banks continually create more money than the economy really needs, then they are simply committing an economic wrong and should be publicly stopped from doing so. In earlier days, money was seen as a public good; it received a public stamp or mark to guarantee its value. Money needs to be brought back to this kind of economic serviceability. This also implies that highly speculative financial derivatives like credit default swaps should be forbidden. Monetary reform stands therefore not at the end but at the beginning of any enduring solution to the problem of global indebtedness.

This is also true for the *second problem*, the current global economic crisis and the European crisis which is deeply connected with it. Europe still tries to find its juridical foundation in the logic of striving for more and more material welfare. The common market has brought us many economic benefits and therefore, so goes European reasoning, it should be protected by all means. This explains to a large extent the behaviour of the European

“ AS WITH THE FRUIT TREE THERE ALSO COMES IN THIS ECONOMY A MOMENT, AND IN MY VIEW THAT MOMENT IS NOW, WHEN THE PRIORITY MUST BE GIVEN TO NATURAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BLOSSOMING INSTEAD OF FURTHER GROWTH IN MATERIAL CONSUMPTION. ”

central bank and of countries like France and Germany. But what happens if our starting-point is no longer the ideology of maximum economic growth and instead we follow the principle of true stewardship? Then Europe should be willing to admit that unending increases in its own material welfare contains an element of unwillingness to share with other poorer nations and also with weaker member-states. And we should also be willing to admit that the track of maximum economic growth is no longer ecologically sustainable. We should be, according to the saying of Mahatma Gandhi, willing to live more simply, so that others, including our children and grandchildren, can simply live.

But here you could object: sure, a lower consumption level may be a fine ideal, but doesn't that have the effect of deepening our economic crisis? Didn't President Eisenhower, for example, openly declare in one of his speeches, that it is 'the duty of every American to consume'? More consumption, he said, implies a higher demand for goods and services and thus also more employment.

This is an understandable response, and it is entirely accurate within the framework of a primarily expansion-oriented economy. But that is not a true perspective for a Way-orientation to public justice and stewardship. That approach will not grow a shalom-oriented economy that celebrates its Jubilee year in cancellation of debts. Think for a moment about a growing fruit tree. It utilises all cells in its growth and survival. But does the fruit tree always strive for a greater height, so that it can finally reach the heavens above? No, of course not. Sooner or later it redirects its energy-patterns away from vertical expansion

towards blossoming, to fruit-bearing.

Now compare that to what we now have with our own European economy. As with the fruit tree there also comes in this economy a moment, and in my view that moment is now, when the priority must be given to natural, social and economic blossoming instead of further growth in material consumption. That means taking a turn in the direction of investing in: the growth and preservation of human capital – human health and education; social capital – like community services; and of natural capital – the upholding of our natural environment. A trade-off is needed between any increase in consumption and our human and natural wellbeing!

An important positive aspect of such an economic transformation is that those alternative investments are relatively labour-intensive, so that there will be enough employment for everyone. It all boils down to an effort to build together a relatively new non market-oriented sector in the midst of today's market economies. To me this signals one of the most likely remedies that has a chance of making an enduring impact upon today's economic crisis.

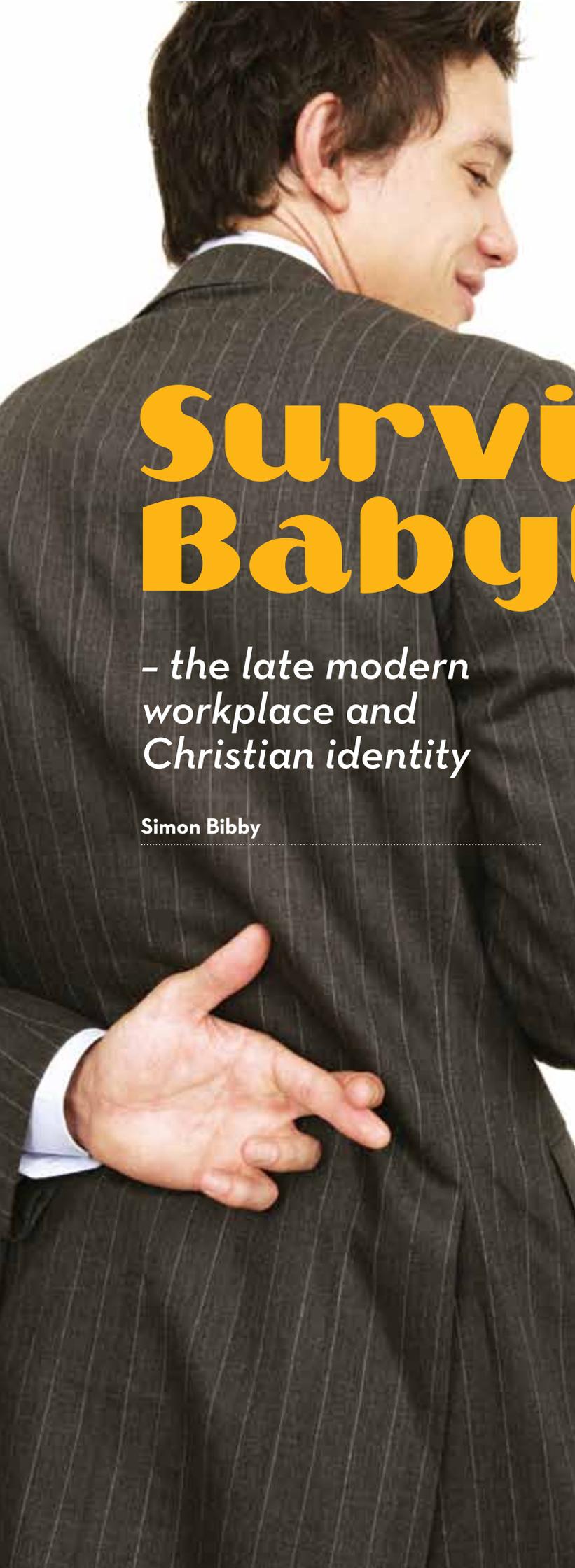
But there is also another aspect of this transition, and here the principles of *solidarity* and *community* enter the picture. You can only afford the transition from an expansion-economy to a fruit-bearing economy if people are generally willing to agree with at least a stabilisation of their current income – or consumption-levels. For these new types of employment do not originate from the market sector. No, they are funded by higher savings levels, achieved for the purpose of making these alternative investments possible. Think of the conversion of the British economy in wartime, when Winston Churchill prepared the population of Great Britain to abstain from any further growth of their consumption and to accept so called forced savings, just to be able to defeat Nazi Germany. But a new enemy has entered today, and we can recognise his presence in the growing deficits in our social, human and natural capital. So we could better say, instead of echoing former president Eisenhower's consumption slogan: 'It is the duty of every European British and Irish citizen to save, for the just purpose of investing in the protection and growth of the common good'.

Would this course of action lead to a higher degree of community, solidarity, stewardship and justice in our economy and in the world economy? It may still sound idealistic. But if we take our urgent global problems really seriously then we begin to realise that in fact there is no alternative. Somehow we need now to listen more to God-given norms or ways, and less to our own self-centred goals and desires. For nations which merely continue to build on illusions are now indeed on the brink of losing their balance, their power, and their true wealth.

There is a danger of winning the entire world and at the same time losing one's soul. This appears at this moment in history not only to be a crucial message for persons, but also and even more particularly for nations, especially the rich nations of the West. Let us thus learn to choose life again.

## BOB GOUDZWAARD

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Christians in the late modern workplace face considerable pressures to 'conform to the pattern of this world'. Globalised competition, and the way it has shaped modern workplaces means that employees today will face longer working hours, greater uncertainty

# Surviving Babylon

*- the late modern workplace and Christian identity*

Simon Bibby

about their future employment and pressure to perform consistently to meet demanding targets. Alongside this, more subtle pressures are exerted to think in a certain way (functional rationality) as well as to see their faith and work in separate compartments (privatisation). Christians find themselves inducted into a set of practices whereby their imaginations are captured by a way of seeing the world that depreciates faith and enhances a secularised perspective on life. To stand in this place, Christians need to make use of the resources in the gospel that will help develop a deeper sense of vocation; enable a richer reflection on, as well as a more constructive engagement with their work; and have a clearer understanding of what faithfulness means in such a context. Over time, this will enable them to express what James Davison Hunter refers to as the practice of 'faithful presence' in their workplaces.

## INTRODUCTION

Just imagine the following scenario. A bright young Christian leaves school, attends a theological seminary and then, with a passion for seeing the gospel preached in the third world, decides to become a missionary to Africa. After two years of intensive study, learning the language and culture, he flies out to deepest darkest Africa. Three years later he returns. There has been little contact with him, partly because of the inaccessibility of the place he was sent. The local church rejoices on his return and can't wait to listen to how the gospel has triumphed in another unevangelised corner of the globe. But to their shock he turns up to church in the tribal dress of the people he was sent to and can hardly speak English any more. After some weeks the church discovers he is meeting with a group of Africans in a local suburb for worship of the local tribal deity of the place he was sent.

Imagine the shock to all who were concerned in sending him on this mission. This would be seen as a massive failure of his initial training. There would be

deep soul-searching to discover why it was that he was so unprepared for the challenge that awaited him. Among the many questions that would need to be asked, one of the most central would be 'how was it that the culture managed to so comprehensively shape this young person's mind and heart?'

The reality for those of us in the West is that our workplaces are the cultural spaces which exert an enormous influence on who we are as persons. To go to work today is to engage in a process of cultural formation every bit as powerful as the experience of the imagined young missionary. However there is a significant difference between our missionary and the average church-going Christian. The former will have extensive training to discern the cross-cultural issues that they must deal with; the latter will have none. This despite the fact that most sociologists would recognise that modern Western culture is far more lethal to faith in Christ than any other culture since the first century.

Let us firstly consider the changes to our working lives that have arisen through our globalised economy, to understand why these changes have come about, and then to explore the impact that they will have in forming us to be a certain type of people. We will then look at some of the resources we have in the gospel to discern what aspects of this process of cultural formation we need to resist.

## THE LATE MODERN WORKPLACE

Western nations have been undergoing a marked transformation in their economies over the last 40 to 50 years. In September 1996, the *Australian Financial Review* ran a three part series on the revolution that was occurring in our working lives as a result of these changes. Some of the things that were reported included:

- The standard working week – a stable 38 hour week with regular starting and finishing times is no longer the dominant form of employment in Australia.
- A quarter of the working population are subject to the 'casualisation' of the workforce.
- While jobless figures grow, full-time employees are working longer and longer hours. The article cited the fact that 37% of the full-time working population were working 49 or more hours a week.
- In broad terms there is an inverse relationship between employment growth and wage rates. In high wage, high skilled industries, jobs are disappearing; in low wage, low skilled industries, employment is rising. The latter however are marked by boredom and a lack of career opportunity.
- The number of people holding more than one job has almost doubled.
- The standard working life of continuous employment from school leaving age to retirement is a thing of the past.
- Innovations in industrial relations, with the deregulation of the labour market and the introduction of enterprise bargaining, have not resulted in a 'win/win' for both employers and employees. The majority reported that they were working harder, felt more stressed, less secure, and found it more difficult to

balance their work and family responsibilities as a result of changes at the workplace.

This was over 15 years ago. The trend has not only continued but accelerated. The environment is now shaped by what Richard Sennett, Professor of Sociology at New York University refers to as the 'new capitalism'. This is the globalised, hyper competitive free market economy which has delivered such affluence and growth in the West. Whilst it has many benefits, Sennett identifies the way in which the emerging economy in North America is socially corrosive in weakening the relational links that hold communities together.

A major reason for this shift in the way we work is that we are now enmeshed in 'globalised' markets and competing with other nations. With the advance of communication technologies and transport, we now do business and politics conscious that we are part of a world-wide network. As a consequence life is governed more and more by economic considerations, and our future well-being is seen in terms of how well we adapt.

The implications for our working lives are very dramatic. Organisations now realise that they are competing internationally. Goods and services made on the other side of the world are cheaper to buy in Australia than the locally-produced equivalent. Indeed my own employment has been shaped by this shift. I began an apprenticeship in the late seventies at Chamberlain John Deere, which produced tractors. At that stage the chassis was produced in Australia, while the more sophisticated technology came from Germany or America. Within eight years the company would disappear, as the Australian product eventually lost ground to overseas imports.

To respond to this new economic order businesses are required to restructure to reduce costs in order to stay competitive. Across the world companies are shrinking in size while at the same time increasing the quantity and quality of their product. Charles Handy's *The Empty Raincoat* (1994) notes:

*A chairman of a large pharmaceutical company had summed up his policy... ½ x 2 x 3 he said; half as many people in the core of his business in five years time, paid twice as well and producing 3 times as much, that is what equals Productivity and Profit. Other businesses may not formulate it so crisply but that is the way they are all going: good jobs, expensive jobs, productive jobs, but much fewer of them. It makes good corporate sense.*

This then shapes the type of workplaces we enter. Those of us who have full-time jobs will find ourselves working longer hours. Others will have part-time or casual roles which will bring other challenges. People work longer hours and take fewer holidays. At the same time the material rewards have improved. All of these pressures, and many more, conspire to have a formative influence on people. These become the 'habit-forming practices' that slowly shape the way we live our lives.

What I have described above has a profound effect on our workplaces and our society. We have all been shaped by forces which have now become the features of modern life in general. Missiologist Darrell Guder notes the following distinctives of the modern West:

- urbanised life with its complex patterns of social relationships
- multiple tasks and responsibilities that fragment time and space
- an economy shaped and driven by technology and its advances
- job, career, and identity defined by professionalised roles and skills
- submerged racial and ethnic identities in a stew pot society
- the pervasive influence of change and rapid obsolescence
- bureaucratic organisations run by rules and policies
- individualised moral values concerning such matters as divorce and sexuality
- radical forms of individuality producing isolation and aloneness
- hunger for some overarching story to give meaning and structure to life.  
(*Missional Church – A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, Eerdmans, 1998, 37).

## THE WORLD SQUEEZING YOU INTO ITS MOULD

Christians entering these workplaces are not exempt from the pressures noted above. Sustained exposure to such an environment has the potential to form the type of person who will find it difficult to maintain their faith in Christ.

James K A Smith, in his book *Desiring the Kingdom*, has reworked the Augustinian notion of desire and applied it to life in the modern world. He notes that we are surrounded by 'secular liturgies' that not only shape desire but re-orient us to a different notion of what the good life is. In short we become what we love. He begins the book by looking at how a shopping mall shapes the way we see the world and ultimately forms our desire. The same reflection could equally be applied to a workplace:

*Because our hearts are orientated primarily by desire, by what we love, and because those desires are shaped and moulded by the habit forming practices of the mall – the liturgies of mall and market – that shape our imaginations and how we orient ourselves to the world. Embedded in them is a common set of assumptions about the shape of human flourishing, which becomes an implicit telos, or goal, of our own desires and actions. That is, the visions of the good life embedded in these practices become surreptitiously embedded in us through our participation in the rituals and rhythms of these institutions. These quasi-liturgies effect an education in desire, a pedagogy of the heart.*  
(James K A Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom – Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation*, Baker Academic, 2009, 25.)

To give a specific example of the sort of formation that Smith is talking about, listen to a recent account concerning employees in Apple stores:

*Apple stores have it down pat. Often crowded with people, old and young, these bright white minimalist interiors are more gallery than shop. Employees do*

*not sell. They 'enrich lives'. The creed is printed on a wallet-sized card that staff are encouraged to carry. They are taught to create memorable moments for their customers. A-P-P-L-E becomes an acronym for five pillars of service: Approach with a customised warm greeting; Probe politely to understand the person's needs; Present a solution; Listen and address unresolved questions; End with an invitation to return. Combined with a quality product, Apple's almost cultish attention to the customer experience drives retail success.*  
(Kate Legge, 'Clicks and Mortar', *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, August 25-26, 2012, 20)

Any employee entering into this workplace would need to submit to its 'rituals and rhythms'. This is not necessarily a bad thing, for the product in question has so many uses that are socially beneficial. The point for Christians in this context is that they need to be aware of the way one's identity can be moulded by sustained exposure to such an environment.

What then could be some of the dangers involved in a modern workplace?

Firstly, people are employed on the basis of their skill in what the sociologists call 'functional rationality' (Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File*, IVP, 1983, 61). Reason and technique hold sway in business; nothing is left to chance and all is subject to meticulous calculation. When consistently exposed to this over time it will be harder to believe in an invisible God revealed in Scripture and to walk by faith and not by sight.

Secondly, identity is now, more than ever, tied to our economic utility. When we are asked to identify ourselves we commonly respond by talking about our work. As many have noted, the culture of modernity has shaped us to locate our identity in terms of our achievements in the economic order. Success in this context is often seen in terms of the size of salary or the position one holds in an organisation. Faithfulness to Christ and his gospel will not come high on the ladder of what is important for success in one's career.

Thirdly, we are now chronically 'time poor'. This is the obvious reality that we all regularly experience. There are at least three aspects to this. Firstly, as noted above, the reduction of the size of organisations means that those who are left will now work longer hours as well as having more demanding and complex jobs. This will drain their energy, particularly over the long haul. While there are many techniques that are put forward to help people cope with these pressures, it will mean that there is very little energy available for much else after our working day/week is finished.

The second aspect of time deprivation is the fact that technology now invades every nook and cranny of our existence. Hence work keeps on spilling over into one's leisure time through emails and text messages. As most observe, we are the most distracted of all generations.

*This fragmentation is often reinforced by a world of hyperkinetic activity marked by unrelenting interruption and distraction. One the one hand, such conditions foster a technical mastery that prizes speed and agility and facility with multiple tasks – for example, using email, I-M, the cell phone, the iPod, all the while eating lunch, holding a conversation, or listening to a lecture. But on the other hand, these very*

*same conditions undermine our capacity for silence, depth of thinking, and focused attention. In other words, the context of contemporary life, by its very nature, cultivates a kind of absence in the experience of 'being elsewhere'*

(James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*, Oxford University Press, 2010, 252)

Lastly, we are impoverished in terms of time by the way organisations roster employees to be available in a 24/7 globalised economy. In more recent times the Federal Government has begun an inquiry into the impact of 'fly in/fly out' arrangements. But consideration also needs to be given to the way that the traditional weekend has now disappeared. For example the introduction of 12 hour shifts, where employees will now work extended hours over weekends, is likely to have a dramatic impact on the activities that were traditionally practised by families and churches on weekends.

But is this dangerous? Hebrews 2:1 warns of the subtle drift away from the faith that can occur gradually over time. I am not aware of any hard evidence that outlines the extent of employees drifting away from the faith, but my own experience suggests that it is quite widespread, particularly amongst professionals. The demands of work and the allurements of career combine to make church attendance irregular and then eventually non-existent. In Smith's words, they succumb to the secular liturgies that abound in the context outlined above. As a result their hearts are directed to a different *telos* or goal. From the standpoint of the last day, this could be catastrophic.

## IDENTITY AND PRESENCE

In the context of such powerful cultural pressures, what should Christians do? I suggest that we need to recognise that in any age, discipleship requires attention to the preservation of our identity as Christians, while at the same time ensuring we maintain a faithful presence in the context we find ourselves in. In John's words, we are to be 'in the world but not of it'. At its heart, Christians will maintain their identity only to the extent that they have a deeper grasp of the gospel.

By the gospel I mean the work of Christ, in his life, death, resurrection and ascension. This is the root from which the fruit of transformed lives flows. Our essential identity as Christians is formed by Christ and the gospel and not by our achievements or failures at the workplace. It is Christ's death and resurrection that have cleansed us from the guilt of sin and begun the process of transforming us and liberating us from sin's power and dominion. We are now his transformed people, set apart for his service and for a deepening transforming relationship with him. In St Paul's terms, and with direct reference to the first century workplace, he notes – 'You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters' (1 Cor 7:23).

What resources then can be found in Christ's gospel to help Christians preserve their identity in the late modern workplace?

The first area where the gospel can help is in the area of vocation. A fruit of the gospel is a deeper sense of vocation which gives a deeper integrity to our lives. One cultural pressure that all Christians face is to compartmentalise their faith into the 'weekend world'

and live an alternative existence from Monday to Friday. This is seen in many ways but is highlighted in a comment made by Ray Crock, the founder of Macdonald's. He was reported in a *New York Times* article as saying: 'On Sunday I believe in God, family and Macdonald's – and in the Office the next day, that order is reversed'.

The Gospel does not countenance any form of dualism. The world is not divided into a public world where we go to work and a private world where we go to church, raise families and play sport. Given Jesus Christ is Lord of creation, every inch of both spheres belongs to him.

Vocation safeguards this by insisting that we are working before the face of God, to whom we must give an account (see 2 Cor 5:10, Rom 14:12). There has to be an essential integrity as to who a Christian is. You cannot be one person on the weekend and another in your workplace. In Paul's words to the Colossian Christians, 'whatever we do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him, to God the Father' (Col 3:17).

Sadly, the church undermines a sense of vocation by insisting that 'full-time' ministry is more important than secular work. But this ignores the important emphasis Paul puts on the context in which we find ourselves. Some may be missionaries or pastors in what we unhelpfully call 'full-time' Christian service. Others find themselves in 'non-religious' roles like raising families, factory work, law and so on. Whatever place we find ourselves, Paul is clear, we are all called by Christ to work 'as unto him' (1 Cor 7:24, Eph 6:5-8, Col 3:22-24). Given that Paul often addresses slaves in his letters, it is clear that no work is too menial or insignificant to be beyond the reach of service for Christ.

But if there is no place exempt from Christ's Lordship, the content of our work is just as significant as the way we work. When asked about the really significant work they do, many lapse into a discussion about being honest, caring and diligent in their work. These are essential virtues that we must cultivate. But rarely do we hear of people who are thinking differently about the work they are doing. Paul exhorts us to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:5). This includes much of the unbiblical thinking that pervades our workplaces. We need Christians in the arts, the sciences and businesses thinking biblically about their professions or trades and practising these disciplines in ways that cause life to flourish rather than to disintegrate. This would not only bring benefit to our culture but also promote the gospel to those outside the faith.

Chris Wright, in *The Mission of God's People – A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, (2010) outlines a helpful framework to think about how we might go about this task. In his view, the exilic narratives in the Old Testament now become our best resource to reflect on where we are, and what we are called to. As with the exiles in Babylon, we are called to seek the welfare of the city (Jeremiah 29) but in such a way that we don't lose our distinctiveness and so fail to bear witness to God's redeeming work amongst the nations. He suggests that Jeremiah 29 may have provided the encouragement for Daniel to engage with surrounding culture.

*It must have been such advice that created the freedom that Daniel and his friends felt to settle down in Babylon and accept jobs in its government service. And their position in such office was clearly not 'just a job.' Nor are we told that it was some form of 'tent-making'*

*to help them earn a living while they held Bible Studies in the office or evangelistic meetings in their homes.... But what the text emphasises is that they were first-class students, model citizens and hard working civil servants, and they were distinguished for their trustworthiness and integrity... The 'welfare of the city' was what they pursued, as Jeremiah said they should. And in doing so for a lifetime, opportunities to bear witness to the God they served, and to his moral demands, judgement and mercy, came along at key points – one in each of the first six chapters in fact. (233)*

We are therefore called to constructively engage with the world. This is God's world, created by Him, passionately loved by Him, at the cost of the life of His Son and so valued and redeemed by Him.

But this should not be seen as a call to accommodation. As Wright notes we are also called to a courageous confrontation with this world because it is in rebellion against its Maker and stands under His condemnation and ultimate judgement. This is the tension we are called to in the marketplace. Christians today need much more wisdom about what this will mean in the light of the many serious challenges that face humanity. Daniel gives some insight into what is involved, and it would seem that the central issue that he addressed is the idolatry of the pagan society he was exiled within.

This raises the unpopular issue of suffering as disciples of Christ in the workplace. We are to be salt and light as Jesus says in Matthew 5. John Stott, in *Christian Counter Culture* (1978), has shown that the images evoke a clear picture of the tension that should exist between the people of the Messiah and the world. Without salt meat putrefies and without light we stumble and fall in a dark place. Salt and light will inevitably promote a confrontation which, more than likely, will involve disciples suffering for their faith. In the context of a workplace, this may prove costly.

## CONCLUSION

The above is the briefest description of the complex task of engaging as a Christian in the late modern workplace. In short it requires wisdom and resilience to negotiate the culture and to discern those areas which are for the 'welfare of the city' and those that are idolatrous and therefore detrimental to its life and vitality.

James Davison Hunter's *To Change the World* outlines the broad requirements of such a wise engagement. He calls for a recovery of what he calls 'faithful presence'. This is the set of practices that engages with the public square in a distinctively Christian way yet with a deeper sensitivity to our calling to be salt and light in modern culture. Taking his cue from Paul's exhortation to be 'imitators of God, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God' (Eph 5:1), he suggests we need a theology of faithful presence. It is worth quoting him at length:

*I would suggest that a theology of faithful presence first calls Christians to attend to the people and places that they experience directly. It is not that believers should be disconnected from, or avoid responsibility for people and places across the globe. Far from it. Christians are called to go into all the world, after all and to carry the*

*good news in word and deed that God's kingdom has come. But with that said, the call to faithful presence gives priority to what is right in front of us – the community, the neighbourhood, and the city, and that people of which these are constituted. For most, this will mean a preference for stability, locality and particularity of place and its needs. It is here, through the joys, sufferings, hopes, disappointments, concerns, desires and worries of the people with whom we are in long term and close relation – family neighbours, co-workers, and community – where we find authenticity as a body and as believers. It is here we learn forgiveness and humility, practice kindness, hospitality and charity, grow in patience and wisdom, and become clothed in compassion, gentleness and joy. This is the crucible within which Christian holiness is forged. This is the context within which shalom is enacted....*

*.... Indeed, when our various tasks are done in ways that acknowledge God, God is present and glorified. Such tasks may not be redeeming, but they can provide a foretaste of the coming kingdom. What can be said of tasks generally can be said, for example, about specific professions. To manage a business in a way that grows out of a biblical view of relationships, community and human dignity before God has divine significance, irrespective of what else might be done from this platform. Policy pursued and law practised in the light of the justice of God is a witness to the right ordering of human affairs. Inquiry, scholarship and learning with an awareness of the goodness of God's created order is a discovery of what is truly higher in higher education. And, not least, reflecting the beauty of God's creation in art or music is nothing less than an act of worship. It short, fidelity to the highest practices of vocation before God is consecrated and itself transformational in its effects.*

*As to our spheres of influence, a theology of faithful presence obligates us to do what we are able, under the sovereignty of God, to shape the patterns of life and work and relationships – that is the institutions of which our lives are constituted – toward a shalom that seeks the welfare not only of those of the household of God but of all. That power will be wielded is inevitable. But, as Hunter shows (To Change the World, 253), the means of influence and the ends of influence must conform to the exercise of power modelled by Christ.*

Hunter writes to Christians in the American context. Australians can draw from this wisdom but need to recognise that ours is a different context. We need to see the cultural pressures that are applied to our lives at work. In responding to these pressures we must grasp the important resources that are available to us in the gospel. These include seeing our work as a place of calling; recognising that our ultimate worth is not in how well we perform in our workplaces; and venture on with this for the long haul so that we continue to have a faithful presence at work.

## SIMON BIBBY

worships at Parkerville Baptist in WA, is married to Sally and has four children and a granddaughter. He is a senior employee relations consultant.



# The sessional academic bicycle versus the market discipline road train

**Menno S. Leys (nom de guerre)**

If you don't work at a university you will probably find it hard to believe that there is an entire class of highly educated intellectuals in Australia who live with structural work-place insecurity and who are often paid a smaller annual income than tenured unskilled employees of the university. The National Tertiary Education Union estimates that there are at least 8,000 doctorally qualified sessional academics teaching our university students and marking their papers, without tenure, and without any income security from one 12 week semester contract to the next.

It was not always like this. The heavy sessionalisation of lecturing started to kick in hard in the early 1990s under the Keating government's rationalisation of federal funding to universities. This trend was powerfully continued by the Howard government and has not abated since. University administrations responded to the new fiscal environment of the 1990s in a number of ways.

The first thing university administrations did was to break the power of faculties to determine their use of funds on the basis of academic concerns. Instead of faculties being run by academics for academics, they were now managed by career administrators who were accountable to the centralised executive arms of the university, not to the academic staff. This remarkable administrative coup happened across the board in Australian universities, even in universities with a strong tradition of a genuinely collegiate and academic governance of faculties. Once the criteria of economic efficiency replaced academic notions of quality in how faculties were run, then sessionalising and de-prioritising non-grant attracting academic work (that is, lecturing and tutoring) was the obviously rational thing to do. Think of it. There are only 24 teaching weeks in an academic year, but you have to pay high incomes to tenured academics for 52 weeks in a year. So if you employ as many contract lecturers as you can to teach only during the teaching term, this saves you *at least* 50% of your salary outlay per unit taught over a calendar year. On top of this, it must be

recognised that academic staff only *make* income for the university when they publish (research grants are given to the university on the basis of research performance). So the less teaching tenured staff do, the more publishing they will do and the more grant money they will attract from the government. So 'rational' university management now sees students as a source of fees and funding, but lecturing is simply a necessary cost which must be minimised where possible.

Secondly, university administrations made signing up full fee-paying overseas students into a multi-billion dollar import industry, with, at best, mixed implications for the academic quality of our courses. Undoubtedly many overseas students are indeed brilliant, even though English is not their first language. Yet the children of rich Asian families who are not bright enough to go to the UK or the USA, but who still want the kudos of a Western degree, will only pay steep fees to Australian tertiary institutions if they are confident of getting the award. In order to pump foreign fee-paying students through the award process – and thus to protect an increasingly important income stream – I have observed what looks very much like financially driven downward pressure on academic standards and the emergence of a virile underground industry in ghost assignment writing, particularly in MBA courses.

Thirdly, university administrations have formed financial alliances with powerful industries (such as the pharmaceutical industry) to 'partner' with universities in exchange for intellectual property rights to what used to be fully publically funded research which used to be pure research, which used to be freely available to all.

Fourthly, the now academically unfettered culture of university administration sees market place success as the main game, and this – of course – requires super high salaries and perks to attract quality administrative CEOs, increasingly large marketing and PR budgets, enormous growth in administrative supports for the institution, and the imposition of ever-increasing layers of administrative accountability on academics.

Fifthly, universities upped HECS fees and increasingly marketed cash cows like full fee-paying coursework

masters programs.

In short, the entire operational and ideological culture of Australian universities has undergone a radical transition over the past quarter century. This process has certainly produced losers for those who work at the university.

I think it fairly obvious that the biggest work place losers from the intensive reform process which our universities have undergone are early career academics. (It is outside the scope of this piece to look at the questions of what losses students and learning itself suffer under these conditions). For it is now very, very hard – if not impossible – to go from doing a good Australian doctorate straight into a tenured academic job, and it is now very, very easy – if not inevitable – to get into an inherently insecure and exploitative sessional lecturing trap which you cannot get out of.

This year I walked away from sessional lecturing after 9 years of untenured contract work. Even so, I have not entirely given up on academia, so I must use a disguised name and make no specific reference to the universities I have worked in or what discipline I am in. If I can be identified by this article I will burn whatever tenuous bridges there might be for me to tenured academic work. This also is a function of the vulnerability of the sessional academic. But let me tell you something about the type of working life I have lived over the past 9 years.

Since 2004 I have done a lot of lecturing, tutoring and marking, yet I have also done a wide range of unskilled work too. For, as already stated, the working year for a contract lecturer is less than half a calendar year. Because I did not make enough money to support my family out of academic work alone, and because my academic qualifications are specific to my speciality, the only work I could get outside of academia was – you guessed it – unskilled, low paying and insecure work. It was like being a student forever. I am now well and truly middle-aged, but our family income means we can run only one car, so I bicycled to uni and I did 'holiday jobs', just like I did 25 years ago as a student. Because of this financial stress, I struggled to find the concentrated space I needed to write publishable journal articles and books. For, of course, I did not get paid to research. Even though I was an excellent lecturer with very good student evaluations of my work, I have bitterly discovered that this means nothing – not even to the universities where I have done a lot of sessional work – when a tenured job is on offer. For it is one's success at attracting research grants and the size and 'quality' of one's publication portfolio which demonstrates to a university that you will be value for money as tenured staff.

So I was on an impossible ride trying to transition from untenured work to tenured work after completing my doctorate. I tried to teach well *and* publish *and*

make money on the side, *and* be a family man, but I just could not crack through to a real job and everything else suffered as a result. I can now see that the transition from sessional to tenure is only for the very few; most of us sessionals will simply never make it. Even so, I loved being a scholar and lecturing. I even enjoyed tutoring and marking (OK, I only enjoyed marking the work of highly engaged upper year students).

Nine years ago I only taught a lecture here or there whilst I was doing my doctorate, and it was a real buzz. I vividly remember my first lecture. I had 400 students in the lecture theatre and I held them riveted, captive to my love and knowledge of the subject for the full two hours. The back story to this is that I spent two weeks intensively preparing for the lecture, re-reading all the relevant primary sources and making sure that I had really mastered the topic. It was a great learning experience for me, and a good teaching session is very satisfying. I was paid \$160 for the lecture. That is, I was paid \$2.00 an hour for the time I spent on it. But I loved it.

After I finished my doctorate, the realities of the new academic job market started closing in on me and my signature on 12 week sessional lecturing contracts eventually became the symbol of my untenured and financially insecure work place bondage. In recent years I would often times find myself thinking of the grounds men, the library staff, the security guards, HR staff, administration and marketing staff, the cooks, even the cleaners, with a certain envy. They had tenure. They had a year round income. They *belonged* to the institution, or at least to the company the institution sub-contracted with. They could get a house loan. They did not have to wonder if they would be able to earn anything in the next semester or not. But I, a mere untenured academic teaching undergraduate students, was very much on the periphery of work-place belonging.

Enough of my story. What does it all mean?

Michael Hanby observes that 'the manner of thinking generated by market discipline is the art of management'. (*Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed., Hauerwas & Wells, 2006, 241.) Hanby points out that a financially focused notion of managerial efficiency is great for things like building roads, and a good servant to higher aims generally, but is a very bad master as the ruling principle of any organisation where intrinsic values are important (i.e. any organisation fit to employ or serve real people).

Perhaps market discipline is destroying the meaning and humanity of the university and impossibly morally eroding the work place environment for would-be new professional academics. Perhaps, even, this pattern is not just found in our universities, but is endemic to the operational managerial logic of our very materialistic, competitive and consumption orientated way of life. This type of management logic actually thrives on the



exploitation of the vulnerable, and this is, if you like, a signature of the governing 'principalities' of our times.

The logic of market discipline goes like this. In the real world, financial viability is the bottom line of any venture. The first thing a good manager of any institution needs to be cognisant of is, then, the financial realities of the institution's situation. What are the unavoidable costs (hardware and maintenance) what are the controllable costs (salaries) what are the incomes (fees and funding) and what areas of expenditure will produce profits (marketing, high remuneration for quality management).

Once you can see these things, everything else the institution does has its necessary and subservient place. Thus, for example, universities who exploit vulnerable untenured academics (who merely teach students) are simply acting as the financial necessities dictate that they must act – there is nothing personal or avoidable about how sessional academics are treated. Thus, for example, large supermarket chains can only maintain their dominance of the market if they provide better quality and cheaper products than their competitors, so if anyone in the game is undercutting them by exploiting cheap labour – even child labour (cotton) or slavery (chocolate) – or simply squeezing producers by the application of 'market power', then financial necessity dictates that they simply have no choice but to do the same.

The entirely amoral logic of this type of financially 'realist' management is operationally blind to the intrinsic aims of an organisation. So the inherent purposes and intrinsic nature of the traditional Western university – quality teaching and learning, scholarly community, humanisation via education, and the worshipful contemplation of goodness, truth and beauty – are only significant to those who now run our universities to the extent that they can be harnessed for marketing purpose. Further, the institutional logic of university management is operationally blind to the exploitative treatment of its staff when such treatment is deemed 'necessary' because of financial 'realities'.

## WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN TO MAKE OF THIS?

As Michael Hanby's above-mentioned article points out, the brutally exploitative and inhuman art of financially efficient management is a function of market discipline. 'The market' governs and disciplines us because we do not have any collective understanding of objective goodness. That is, we are individualists who equate 'this is good' with 'I love this' where self-love is the only broadly accepted driver of personal and institutional desire that makes sense in our consumer way of life. Yet, as Christians who live within this way of life, we too tend to accept market discipline unquestioningly. Thus good Christian managers and Christian institutions can be

structurally brutal to their Human Resources (and usually via HR personnel who are 'only following policy') so that work place brutality is rationalised as both rational and necessary. Even so, having entirely instrumental relationships with our structurally insecure work force may – at times – cause us some internal emotional distress, but the 'realities' of our situation make inhumane action necessary and even 'good' if we are to be accountable as good managers. For it is only efficient managers who diligently work within the financial realities of the real world who make it possible for our organisations to exist at all. Thus the boot of power is 'morally' placed over the face of work place vulnerability.

To swing across to the Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann, the message of the Pharaoh is 'there is no alternative' to the governing discipline of power in our times. In our day, the Pharaoh is the market. The Pharaoh has all the power – and obviously so – so 'realism' is found only in working with the Pharaoh and playing by the rules which the Pharaoh upholds (and enforces).

But, Christian... but... what of the prophetic imagination? What of the dreaming of the 'impossible' and the 'unrealistic', what of the naming of the power of the Pharaoh as heinous exploitation and what of daring to aspire to the impossible desire for liberation from his power? And how, on the ground, can we situate a prophetic vision of intrinsic human dignity and objective goods against the governing managerial arts of our times so that our organisations do not accept work place exploitation and insecurity as a necessary and rationally inescapable competitive norm?

Thinking about structurally vulnerable workers and market discipline raises some fundamental questions about what it means for us to be faithful to Christ in these increasingly exploitative and anti-human times. This challenge is now of a very extensive nature. Traditionally, a highly educated and experienced professional such as myself would not be considered vulnerable. Yet competitive and exploitative instrumentalism has become so entrenched in our way of life – as a necessary discipline of the market – that the big divide is now not between classes, but between ruthlessly competitive instrumental winners who manage and thrive; and humanly sensitive and intrinsically focused losers who are managed and milked. Here just a touch of Old Testament scholarship could go a long way for us Evangelicals. For it is remarkable how often God proclaims His solidarity with the poor, the marginal and the vulnerable, and how often He promises judgement against those who oppress the weak. Are we with God or against Him when it comes to acquiescence in the disciplines of the market that entrench the exploitation of the vulnerable in today's competitive workplace environment?



# An economy built on affection

Emily Belz

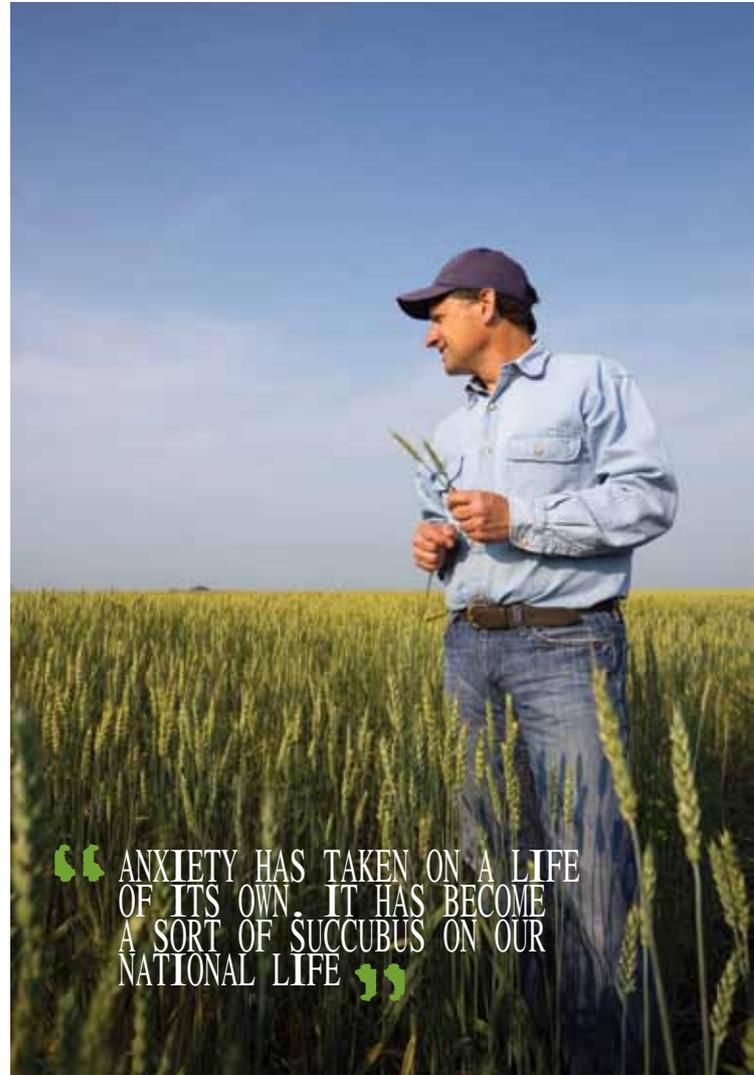
Likely the only time you'll see anyone wearing a plaid shirt with a flapping hole in the elbow arrive for an evening at Washington's Kennedy Center is if Wendell Berry is speaking.

In late April, the Kentucky poet-scholar-farmer drew a crowd of thousands; threadbare attendees mingled with policy makers, lobbyists and think-tankers. In the chamber that usually hosts the National Symphony Orchestra, Berry wove stories of his family together with themes of his life's work – commitment to place, affection for the earth, an economy based on relationship and a suspicion of unfettered capitalism. Berry titled his lecture, 'It All Turns on Affection', a line drawn from E.M. Forster's *Howards End*. He described the climactic confrontation between Forster's heroine Margaret and her businessman husband, where she resisted his 'hardness of mind and heart that is 'realistic' only because it is expedient and because it subtracts from reality the life of imagination and affection, of living souls'.

Berry translated Margaret's commitment to affection over expediency to the economy. Economic decisions are not about just being 'realistic' and 'practical' – they should be decisions based on values deeper than dollar signs. 'We should, as our culture has warned us over and over again, give our affection to things that are true, just, and beautiful', Berry said. 'When we give affection to things that are destructive, we are wrong.' He questions economists who would do 'permanent ecological and cultural damage to 'strengthen the economy'. Berry thinks neither political party is equipped to address the 'losses and damages of our present economy' – the problems are bigger than Washington.

It's not unusual for Berry to talk about the economy, but other preeminent cultural minds have also started to talk about the question of our spluttering economy and what the political debates we're having now *mean*. Marilynne Robinson's new book of essays, *When I Was a Child I Read Books*, includes a piece titled 'Austerity as Ideology', in which she reproaches the current zeal to cut public spending. She, like Berry, hints that society 'all turns on affection'. Also like Berry, Robinson doesn't have anything good to say about either party; she argues both are operating, and have operated since World War II, as though the nation is under a constant threat to its existence.

*Anxiety has taken on a life of its own. It has become a sort of succubus on our national life. Yet fear is the motive behind most self-inflicted harm. Western society at its best expresses the serene sort of courage*



“ ANXIETY HAS TAKEN ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN. IT HAS BECOME A SORT OF SUCCUBUS ON OUR NATIONAL LIFE ”

*that allows us to grant one another real safety, real autonomy, the means to think and act as judgment and conscience dictate. It assumes that this great mutual courtesy will bear its best fruit if we respect, educate, inform, and trust one another. This is the ethos that is at risk as the civil institutions in which it is realised increasingly come under attack by the real and imagined urgencies of the moment. We were centuries in building these courtesies. Without them 'Western civilization' would be an empty phrase.*

Berry and Robinson come to slightly different conclusions about what to do to solve our nation's economic woes. Berry aspires to a more restrained view of government's place in civil society than Robinson does. But they recognise the same theme: humans shouldn't make economic decisions as though they were islands unto themselves. When we do, we damage a fragile web of relationships that are not only political but cultural, ecological and spiritual.

'We do not have to live as if we are alone', Berry concluded, walking away from the podium so quickly it took the audience a few moments to realise the lecture was over. It was the kind of unpolished stage exit that comes from someone who is not a politician.

## EMILY BELZ

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# SOCIAL MEDIA SURVEILLANCE AND THE FACE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

**David Lyon**

Using social media has rapidly become commonplace, everyday, unavoidable. Many embrace Facebook, Twitter etc as ways of staying connected; as a vital dimension of daily life in a fast and fluid world. Beyond this, social media are also seen as playing political roles, from contacting voters to organising street action in the Arab Spring or Occupy. They permit a new interactivity with public events, whether sports, politics or even religion. Sometimes they spawn new watch schemes for policing neighbourhoods.<sup>1</sup> And of course they're seen as a key way of keeping customers and clients informed – 'follow us on Facebook' is a standard invitation.

Not everyone is a social media aficionado, however. Some involve themselves at a distance. They have accounts but hardly use them. Others just avoid participating altogether. They query how much time is sucked into status and update checking (Americans average 11 hours each week on social media; more if they're younger<sup>2</sup>), or worry about what happens to their information. People complain that Facebook is a spy machine. Can anything be 'private' now? Yet others are all too aware of specific ways that marketers, employers, police and others use social media for surveillance.

So, what does happen to personal information? That's the focus here. What happens when our personal details are both avidly sought by major corporations and willingly 'shared' by participants in social media? Has unlimited surveillance become not only acceptable but also participatory? I ask these questions, not just in the context of social media or cultural changes that they reflect and inform, but in a much wider context of what they mean for our social relationships as human beings. Only through this kind of analysis can we make informed and ethical choices about our participation in social media – from how much time to spend online to whether privacy settings matter – as well as our ongoing involvement in the digital world.

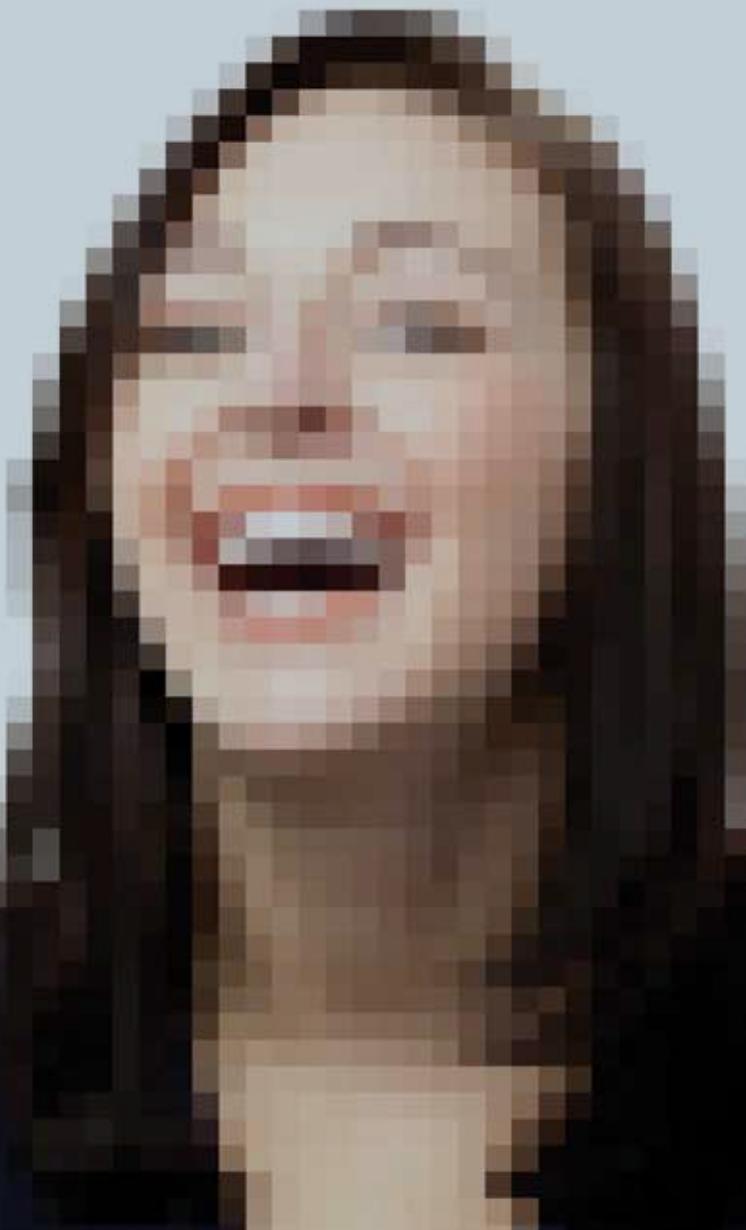
My title is 'social media surveillance and the face of personal information' which deliberately plays on the idea of the face. Personal information on Facebook includes many kinds

of text but also, crucially, photos and video. Why is Facebook so-named and why are faces so important? However incongruously, I want two people to meet and to see what happens. One is Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's founder (legal proceedings notwithstanding) and the other is a leading French philosopher of the twentieth century, Emmanuel Levinas. The former offers a social media view of faces, including their economic value, while the latter reaches back to the Jewish scriptures to show how the face is fundamental to human relating. Are they talking about the same thing? Could they speak to each other?

## FACES OF FACEBOOK

Facebook originally described a paper document issued to college 'freshmen' (first year students at university) containing photos with names, intended to help newcomers get to know each other. Zuckerberg's version put the same idea online but permitted many other kinds of connections also. Today, photos remain a hugely significant part of Facebook, generating for example a much bigger proportion of 'likes' than any other post. Facebook's 2012 purchase of Instagram, the mobile photo-sharing app, shows just how much they want to hold onto this market.

Facebook also manipulates what may be done with



uploaded photos, including identifying faces displayed through their own tagging process, using facial recognition technology (FRT).<sup>3</sup> Such technologies are well-known in policing, security and intelligence work but in this case are used for networking – and commercial – purposes. The system recognises faces in new photos and suggests names of friends in photos as they are uploaded. Users themselves are identified by the Internet Protocol (IP) address assigned to their computer. Facebook searches constantly for ways to discover with whom its users interact, so that companies using its data can more accurately customise advertising to individuals.

From a surveillance point of view the photo-tagging has consequences for everyone (including those who choose to opt-out of the default system). Facebook is building a massive searchable database of photos (300 million photos are uploaded by users each day; the more there are, the more accurate the faceprints generated). If nothing changes this means that before long it should be possible to find out about someone simply by taking a photo – anywhere – posting it on Facebook and checking the online details of whoever it is. Thus Facebook's 'social graph' becomes yet more public as what once might have been thought of as private is accessible by anyone.

Many find tag-suggestions plain creepy while others, such as European data protection regulators, succeeded (2012) in limiting Facebook's use of facial recognition technologies (FRT) at least temporarily. Also, the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) has lodged a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) about Facebook's use of these biometrics.<sup>4</sup> The issue promises to be bigger than just what happens on Facebook. Public camera surveillance systems are increasingly upgraded with FRT for security purposes, and marketers have also experimented for some time with FRT for keeping track of customers. Facebook's response to European regulators is in some ways a test case.<sup>5</sup>

As far as Facebook is concerned, this is just one issue among many that has been raised about the personal data collection and processing methods of this giant corporation. For all the enjoyment and addictive status-and-posts checking that Facebook is famous for, the fact remains that Facebook exists to make money from trading personal data of all kinds, not just photos. This in itself is unremarkable. Bus companies handily transport us from A to B or bookstores provide us with satisfying reading matter in hope of making a profit. Bus companies and bookstores also capture personal data for marketing purposes. But Facebook exploits not our travel and reading but our very relationships, the 'connections' they constantly induce us to multiply, for profit. They find out about us not merely from our posts but by seeing who

we associate with – our 'friends' are actually informers, for Facebook.

In the first flush of mid-twentieth century consumerism, Vance Packard exposed the 'hidden persuaders' of advertising (1957). He exposed the use of depth psychology and subliminal tactics, to the delight of alert consumers and to the displeasure of American corporations. Today, by collecting consumer data in spades, companies like Facebook and Twitter create the consumers they need and we comply all-too-readily with the process. But what is really happening in this new world of advertising? Cory Doctorow catches part of the problem in a TED talk: Facebook '...lavishes you with attention from the people that you love... in service to a business model that cashes in the precious material of our social lives and trades it...'<sup>6</sup>

## FACEBOOK'S CULTURAL DIAGNOSIS

Non-users may wring their hands about social media. Enthusiastic users will explain why they can't live without social media. But beyond the surface level, what do social media really mean? By looking at just one aspect of Facebook, tag-suggestions and FRT, we have already seen that Facebook is highly surveillant. But is it enough to define Facebook as a spy-and-snoop machine? In some ways this is an easy way out, that suggests the problem lies only with Facebook. Another approach is to ask what this product of the early twenty-first century tells us about the society that produced it? Facebook actually diagnoses us rather well. It holds up a mirror to show what kind of society we've become. A world dominated by consumer desires, short-term commitments and fluid relationships needs Facebook.

Conventionally we use the word 'friend' to distinguish someone who is well-known and maybe even loved by us from a stranger, someone we've never met or are unacquainted with. But on Facebook, to confuse categories – in what might sound like a good way – a stranger can be a friend. This fits the larger world of what Zygmunt Bauman calls 'liquid modernity' where committed long-term relationships are less common and where social arrangements are 'until further notice.'<sup>7</sup> Indeed, on Facebook, 'unfriending' is as simple as 'friending.' It's as quick as a click. Not only do we discover who is with whom or who's having a baby on Facebook, more than one person has discovered that their marriage is over from reading their ex-partner's status update.<sup>8</sup>

What sets social media apart from other new media is the development of user-generated content. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and the rest depend on the activity of ordinary users for the system to work. Rather than just seeking information from the internet, as in web 1.0, information seeks us.

Rather than merely being consumers of available

information, sought through Google for example, users are producers as well as consumers, the so-called *prosumers* of this new media era. This is one aspect of why social media are so-called. But how *social* is it?

There are probably many reasons for using the term *social* media to describe phenomena like Facebook. They help people connect with each other (although it's curious that the telephone was never referred to as 'social media') and to share messages, images, videos. They also blur the boundaries between public and private in new ways. What were once thought of as some fairly clear distinctions between one's private life and one's public existence have been challenged by the prevalence of the private in a public domain. These are important dimensions of what makes social media distinctive.

But beyond this a new generation has 'grown up digital'. Until recently, the world of media – telephone, radio, television – was analogue. Social media integrates the world of digital media. Not surprisingly, social media like Facebook have their first uses by members of a younger generation and it is still the case that social media users tend to have a young profile. The various features of digital information, unexceptional to the younger generation, are that it is manipulable, networkable, dense, compressible and impartial. This too is the reason why it sells and, ultimately, the reason why the impacts of computer-powered communication will be felt.<sup>9</sup> But this is also a reminder that social media are not distributed equally across all social spheres. Youth dominates, and access still depends heavily on background, education and income levels.<sup>10</sup>

All that said, it would be difficult to argue that these new digital media are 'social' in the sense that we have evolved into a more 'social' as opposed to 'individual' state. Indeed, as Barry Wellman argued some time ago, much online activity, including so-called community activity, is better thought of as 'networked individualism'. People have an enhanced capacity to act independently, to solve their problems and organise their lives, but they do it in a networked way. They refer to help groups for medical issues, use buy-and-sell networks to find the item they need and so on. But individualism persists. Most of what happens is people pursuing their own ends but using a broader base of like-minded people to do so.

The same world of networked individualism spawns others, such as 'collaborative consumption'. This is an example of 'prosuming' described earlier. This is where we find couch-surfers, car-poolers, skill-sharers and the like. My wife and I have had fun using airbnb, the global online home-sharing system (which unlike most collaborative consumption has more 55+ than 25 year-olds!). British retailer Marks and Spencer encourages 'shwopping' and some car manufacturers are behind car-sharing schemes. Some have estimated the sharing economy to be worth US\$500bn.<sup>11</sup> But what am I saying? This is still, essentially, networked individualism now on a larger scale than ever and remarkable because of its economic value.

What we are really talking about is new applications, some technical shifts that permit further levels of integration, particularly as more and more uses become mobile, depending on devices usable in transit. Sure, more people may use them, and some uses may foster more sharing and even treading more lightly on the earth

– which is good – but beneath it all the incentive is still to get what we can from the system. This is true from Facebook to the full spectrum of 'user-generated content' to prosumption in general. New applications will continue to dazzle or distract, but what we do with them and what they do with us is far more significant. What long-term, qualitative changes are occurring? What do social media mean for how we think about meaning, change, power, organisation and the ways that we communicate and connect with others? And how might we not only recognise the difference between the superficial and the deep, but also face those emerging challenges?

## WHERE'S THE FACE OF THE OTHER?

One way forward is to return to the question of the face. The Jewish and Christian traditions value the face and they do so because their holy books focus on the face. A basic biblical blessing is that YHWH would 'make his face shine on us and be gracious to us' (Num 6:25). In the New Testament, we're told by Paul that God makes 'his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor 4:6). The face is front-and-centre in the book. But why does it matter, in particular?

One answer comes from Emmanuel Levinas, who says that the face is where ethics begins. To encounter the face is to recognise relationship and not only that, but also responsibility. The face calls me to respond to the other before a moral code can be introduced or language can be found to articulate what's going on. The face of the other says, most extremely, 'don't kill me' but in the ordinary, the day-to-day it simply says, 'care about me'.<sup>12</sup> At the everyday level we have no time for categorising the face and we certainly can't delete it (even though we may be tempted to obscure or hide it if we can).

Don't get me wrong. In the social media world the face on the screen may well bring joy and delight, especially if the person is known well to the watcher. If I'm on the other side of the world – say, Tasmania, where I was a few months ago – then to see my new granddaughter on skype in Ontario was nothing short of thrilling. Equally, if I can talk with grandchildren on skype and see what they're doing, this is a great boon. I recently had an appointment with a specialist surgeon in another city by video conference and I felt as if he was in the room with us and empathising despite the distance.

But what happens in more routine contexts when the face is mediated by a screen and especially when it's pulled up by facial recognition software? Some such as Lucas Introna argue that our ethical responsibility for the other is more easily diminished when we see them through the screen. Think of the border official or the welfare caseworker. Or, more extremely, think of the surveillance drone operator, perhaps on another continent from the target (whether that target is simply in the field of vision or is singled out for assassination). It's easier for us to reduce the person to an object; we can easily dispose of the representation with a click of the mouse. Introna writes about education, online gaming and facial recognition systems associated with camera surveillance. And he argues that great care should be taken with software such as FRT.<sup>13</sup>

When a face is before us, suggests Eric Stoddart,

there's a revealing, an epiphany, but the screen provides only an appearance.<sup>14</sup> The face fades on the screen. How far can this be applied to the world of social media? Even more than in the world of camera surveillance, the face is central to the images that proliferate on Facebook and elsewhere. Of course, different uses are made of images, even on Facebook, but they do tend to be fragmented and decontextualised in ways that contrast with Levinas' face, one that is integrated and made whole.<sup>15</sup> How they appear and are organised and accessible on Facebook has everything to do with the economic worth of the image to Facebook. We may be able to redeem the situation in specific cases but we'll battle the system to do so.

Levinas writes philosophy as someone steeped in Judaism and so his work resonates strongly with the Christian tradition. Fundamental to the Jewish-Christian outlook is the demand to 'love our neighbours as ourselves' which in turn is connected with humans being made in the 'image of God'. As Levinas points out, we're bound to each other as human beings: we dare not reduce who we are to self-seeking individuals. Precisely when we regard our own desires or pleasures as paramount, we deny the other and thus deny our true humanity. Individualism, even networked individualism, is a less-than-human mode of being.

Of course, this is highly counter-cultural and goes against the grain not only of the social media world but also of many popular spiritualities. Contemporary culture has for more than a generation encouraged us to think that we're isolated selves with desires and needs that have to be fulfilled. Pop spirituality highlights the 'needs' that we have for deeper meaning in life or to fulfil what our selves lack. We think of ourselves as free, autonomous, self-sufficient and in control of our circumstances. But Levinas, shockingly in this context, speaks of the other, of responsibility, obligation and self-giving.<sup>16</sup>

Being faced, for Levinas, is different. This shifts attention from my gaze, which tries to bring everything under its surveillance, to the gaze of the other, which sees me without my knowing who is looking at me. The question of 'facing being' turns around to become the question of 'being faced' – 'with the gaze, look, request, love, command or call of the other'.<sup>17</sup> But the way Facebook works makes it hard for us truly to encounter the other. Facebook works with the adage, beloved by marketers, that 'birds of a feather flock together'. The idea is to connect the like-minded, to seek sameness, not to be distracted by difference. From inside our own 'filter bubbles'<sup>18</sup> finding the face of the other online is a challenge, to say the least.

This is why I urge us to consider the face. Focusing on the face yields crucial clues for dealing with the digital. This starting point helps us engage quite differently with the Facebook world. It raises the question asked of Jesus, 'who is my neighbour?' and obliges us to work out answers suited to the online world. It may apply to our general dealings with others – how do I show neighbourliness to my online friends, demonstrate care for these digital others? – and it may be quite specific in relation to how we post messages on walls or tweet and re-tweet or how we deal with the data of others.

But focusing on the face also offers resources for thinking about how to assess surveillance generally. Perhaps it also offers opportunity for redirecting policy.

Many worries about surveillance are stuck with the self; is my autonomy threatened? Surely if I have nothing to hide I have nothing to fear? If our concern was rather with the plight of the other, or simply our responsibility to the other, then the challenge would be to organisations that collect and use personal data, to be clear and open about how they use those data, about how people are classified. It might also encourage resistance to existing market-oriented categories.

Now we see through a glass darkly, but then, face-to-face. This suggests, beyond Levinas, that not just ethics, but a new beginning is called for. Paul points up a promise, based on a spiritual breakthrough that valorises love above all, that the church's relationship with Jesus, though at present not entirely clear, will one day be full and complete. This is what we are to hope for, indeed, to live for, the completeness of relationship, when the togetherness for which we were created is finally realised. As Jesus reminds his followers (Mt 25) we're supposed to see his face in that of the other – 'these little ones' as he called the vulnerable, the marginalised of the earth. As Levinas says, in the face of these others is the 'real presence of God.'<sup>19</sup> Until then, we work towards that day of the full face-to-face, taking every opportunity to clear the glass, to minimise the effects of the screen.

## DAVID LYON

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## ENDNOTES AND RESOURCES:

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3. Obtained from an Israeli company Face.com/
4. [https://epic.org/privacy/facebook/facebook\\_and\\_facial\\_recognition.html/](https://epic.org/privacy/facebook/facebook_and_facial_recognition.html/) Biometrics refers to technologies that measure and analyse human body characteristics, such as DNA, fingerprints, eye retinas and irises, voice patterns, facial patterns and hand measurements, for verification or authentication purposes.
5. [https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/22/technology/facebook-backs-down-on-face-recognition-in-europe.html?\\_r=0/](https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/22/technology/facebook-backs-down-on-face-recognition-in-europe.html?_r=0/)
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16. See Terry A Veling, 'In the name of who? Levinas and the other side of theology', *Pacifica*, vol. 12, October 1999.
17. Veling, 284. Citations from Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995, 68.
18. Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalised Web is Changing What we Read and How We Think*, Penguin, New York, 2012.
19. Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav, Athlone, London, 1998.

# ZADOKREVIEWS

## *Faith, Hope & the Global Economy: A Power for Good* (IVP, 2012)

Richard Higginson, IVP, 2012

Reviewed by Gordon Preece

Richard Higginson is one of the leading figures in the renaissance of theological thinking bridging the gap between faith and work, particularly between faith and business. He is a long-time lecturer at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, founder-editor of *Faith in Business Quarterly*, and the author of some of the best books in this area. In his latest book Richard provides a positive, but not Pollyanish perspective on faith and business, in the light of our 'sure and certain hope'.

Written from a British and European perspective but with wide exposure through his travels to visit global parables of hope in the business world, Higginson reminds those of us in the jaundiced secular West, especially Europe and Australia, that about 30% of South Koreans, 36% of Americans, 48% of Brazilians and 78% of sub-Saharan Africans attend church weekly. And that their church attendance is having a growing impact on their working lives through 'attitudes of enterprise, thrift, hard work and trust, all conducive to economic growth'. (Higginson is aware of some of the ecological problems of growth but in a predominantly positive book it probably doesn't get enough attention).

This is seen in the drivers of the global economy in Shanghai and Wenzhou, practising a helpful marrying of the 'supernatural' virtues with the natural and cultural world of work and business. Here he is in considerable agreement with celebrity Harvard economist Niall Ferguson that the 'killer apps' of Max Weber's Protestant Work Ethic thesis are significant drivers of global growth, for all Weber's misreading of Calvinist anxieties (rather than their distinctive assurance) about predestination, and puritanical self-denial about salvation and other details.

Higginson is more careful about giving *carte blanche* to a marriage of Christianity and Capitalism than Ferguson. He regards Christianity as 'a power for good in the global economy when it fulfils five criteria: stimulating enterprise; reducing poverty; promoting integrity; encouraging

sustainability; and fostering discipleship'.

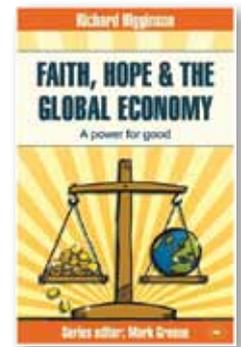
Higginson uses these as criteria for critiquing the distorted prosperity (e.g. Oral Roberts and most televangelists) and anti-capitalist theologies (e.g. Left wing Barthian, Timothy Gorringer). He finds the former guilty of ignoring poverty and ecology and twisting Scripture in their search for quick theological fixes. The latter condemns capitalism as an imperialist ideology of global pillage, inflicting a curse of death on the developing world and future generations.

However, Higginson considers this unhelpful and unbalanced, ignoring the irrefutable statistics of increasing global life-expectancy and living standards since the rise of industrial capitalism. While the gap between rich and poor is increasing, the poor too are getting slightly, but significantly richer, witness China, Brazil, and India. At this point Higginson could have drawn on the Christian Socialist John Atherton's *Transfiguring Capitalism* to bolster his case against Gorringer's apparently armchair advocacy of restoring socialism. Higginson notes that critics of capitalism never acknowledge the kind of Christian and other capitalists that he has met globally and through his Faith in Business project in Cambridge. Instead they are 'demoralising the troops on the front line'.

Higginson also notes the way that Latin American Liberation Theology has given way to a Pentecostal Protestant Work Ethic and democratic capitalism, raising the prosperity of Latin America. He rightly notes Moltmann's about-face on seeing indigenous Pentecostals being more successful than western Marxists in making the poor the subjects of their own liberating experience. However, I think Richard does not stress sufficiently the influence of democratic socialist, nationalist and ecological models in leavening Latin American capitalism and protecting it against the Global Financial Crisis.

Higginson's hope-filled perspective was triggered by the great theologian of hope, Jurgen Moltmann. But Moltmann rarely brought hope and work together. Richard felt called to do the job. He adds a dash of Tom Wright's *Surprised by Hope* to the mix to show how the earthiness of the new heavens and new earth based in the resurrection of the body enables us to see the ongoing significance of our work. However, he does critique Wright for a lack of commercial examples of this significance, drawing more from high culture.

The rest of the book is structured around



*Faith, Hope & the Global Economy: A Power for Good*



Christ, Society and the State

hope for business life as expressed from creation through Fall, Israel, the Incarnation and death and resurrection of Jesus, to the Church and future signs of the Kingdom. The biblical insights are important and the global business examples inspiring.

I have two quibbles though. I'm not sure Higginson succeeds theologically as much as he might have if he had built on the ways Moltmann's student and my PhD mentor, Miroslav Volf, applied his teacher's eschatology of hope to his *Work in the Spirit*. This is the paradigm-changing and primary example of a kind of Pentecostal theology of work that Higginson applauds in its practice in South America.

Miroslav stresses the role of gifts in relation to work and the continuity between creation and new creation in our work. In my *The Viability of the Vocation Tradition* I put Moltmann's and Volf's eschatological and hopeful theology within a Trinitarian framework to provide both hopeful and critical bite for a renewed theology of vocation for a more global, mobile working world. For all the recent gains, too much of the current Christian theology of business, as Richard notes, thinks it enough to have been called by God to business, as if this provides some kind of blank cheque.

These academic and friendly-competitive quibbles aside, Higginson's careful integration of the theology and listening carefully and pastorally to reflective practitioners in the field is, along with Paul Stevens' work, the pre-eminent body of work on faith and business. We can only hope that the rest of the books in this UK IVP series on work edited by the magnificent Mark Greene will be as much of a power of good as Richard Higginson's.

**Gordon Preece** is Ethos Director, on the Executive of [www.theologyofwork.org](http://www.theologyofwork.org) and author of *Changing Work Values, Marketplace Ministry, Christianity & Entrepreneurship* with Samuel Gregg, and the recent e-book with Will Messenger, *Calling*.

## Christ, Society and the State

Brian T Trainor, ATF Press, 2010

Reviewed by Gordon Preece

First, a word of introduction to the author of this impressive tome. Dr Brian Trainor is Senior Lecturer and Head

of Postgraduate Studies in Humanities at Tabor Adelaide. Along with Mark Worthing's expertise in science and religion in the same institution, this constitutes a pretty impressive covering of the Two Cultures of the sciences and humanities. While he is well-versed in Protestant, particularly political, theology, he appears to be a Catholic, dedicating the book to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. So the book constitutes an ecumenical contribution to a Christian perspective on politics. However, it is done as an attempt to build on the 'doorway to dialogue' between sacred and secular exemplified recently by Pope Benedict XVI and the great secular philosopher Jurgen Habermas.

The book is divided into four parts, strangely not linked to page numbers, so some guesswork is involved in locating sections and chapters, which is not particularly user-friendly. The first part is on Christ and Society. Chapter One argues, against the fashionable postmodern pursuit of the particular and local 'for a re-evaluation and rehabilitation of the "universal"'. By this he means that while nothing is culturally neutral, it is possible and normal for the universal faith to be expressed and incarnated in a range of different cultures. Here he finds himself often at odds with Christians like Hauerwas, Grenz and Stassen who often stress the particular and the communitarian. He is more at home with HR Niebuhr of *Christ and Culture* fame and Michael Walzer, the Jewish political theorist, who take the particular seriously but not ultimately.

In Chapter Two Trainor argues that the universal includes the particular, specific or concrete as its complement and completion, in order to avoid abstraction. He sees this as critical in Chapter Three to the critical issue of social ethics: how and to what extent is the church responsible for society? Another critical distinction is that between *the right* or *just* in recognition of the primacy of persons, their infinite preciousness and value, compared with *the good* which attempts to realise values concretely. The church tends to be on stronger ground in upholding the former fundamental value of humanity. It needs to be more cautious in seeking to realise the common good through the classical philosophical values of the good, the true and the beautiful, but also values of liberty, independence and equality in some cooperative, concrete, political form of the common good. He sees a Christian commitment to the common good in Reformed and Catholic Social Ethics and Lutheran Two

Kingdoms theology.

The second part majors on demonstrating how those common values express our common humanity over against the postmodern critique of power-laden, totalistic truth claiming metanarratives. Chapter Four suggests that the baby of Truth has been needlessly thrown out with the bathwater of 'totalistic ideologies'. The quest for truth needs to be kept central but by being servants, not masters of truth. Chapter Five argues that the ideal 'own self' I seek to be personally true to 'is spiritually connected to the "collective own self" to which we, as a society, wish to be true'. Further the state or public spirit or collective self requires that we seek the good and the true personally and together in a 'deliberative democracy'. Admittedly this is hard to see in our present parliament or governance, but that is to be judged in light of the larger ideal of the state or our corporate best self. Trainor identifies the latter with the Holy Spirit's 'social promptings' amongst us in what Protestants call 'common grace', though at times it sounds like Hegel's spirit of culture.

Over against Foucault's stressing the irrelevance and in fact manipulative malevolence of the state's use of truth, Trainor appeals to Bernard Bosanquet's 'ethical theory of the state' and 'truth-oriented communitarianism'. That is 'consensus seeking and ... generating'. At this point Trainor upholds the traditional nuclear family as basic to society and gay marriage as a detrimental form of 'adulthood' which is insensitive to the rights of children to know and grow with both their biological parents. Trainor is also sympathetic to Oliver O'Donovan's rehabilitation of classical liberalism as being more in tune with and birthed by a Christian concept of society than later modernist varieties such as those celebrated by democratic relativists and pragmatists like Rorty who try to take liberalism out of its original Christian context.

Chapter Six seeks to save this earlier 'universal liberalism' from postmodern particularist liberalism of an infinite number of interest groups. This relies on the nurturing of 'universal politics' or 'universal criticism' often subjecting our political practices to the 'court of our common humanity'. This is something that particularistic defences of liberalism by John Rawls, Joseph Graz and John Gray and Samuel Huntington don't do, seeing liberalism as somehow self-justifying. But this is something some have tried to do in relation to the appalling adversarialism of both

federal leaders and their parties, though they do not have Trainor's categories to help them articulate it and he sadly does not apply them much to Australian political realities.

Part Three is Christ and State. Chapter Seven draws on idealist political theory to argue that the state, as well as comprising a broad network of political and judicial institutions, is a 'living ethical reality' or community, even 'the "angelic presence" of the Spirit in the socio-political realm. While I found this language unusual I could see its arguably biblical roots and I admired its daring and directness while seeing the dangers of political leaders and parties and lobby groups claiming to commandeer it.

Chapter Eight makes the biblical and Barthian roots of this perspective clearer, seeing the principalities and powers as not merely evil but as created, fallen and redeemed in Christ.

Part Four, on the Holy Spirit, Law and the State, uses Hobbes as an unlikely hero to argue that his notion of the 'person' of the state and his strong view of natural and civil law provides a platform for understanding the indirect presence of the Spirit in the state through the spirit of brotherhood. Again, in a way typical of Trainor in bringing unlikely bedfellows to share a very crowded bed, argues that the later Barth is more rhetorically antagonistic to natural law than substantially so, and so may be reconciled with Hobbes. The natural law tradition is seen, surprisingly by Trainor, as an ally to Barth's theological politics.

Trainor seeks to reconcile Protestant and Catholic perspectives on human sinfulness and natural law; I'd describe them as the 'depraved versus deprived' original grace views. While rightly not seeing us as being as bad as we possibly could be, in the stereotypical view of the Reformers and especially Calvin, he sees the way Catholics adopt a more static, ontological, essential view of human 'capacities' whereas Protestants tend to take a more relational, personal encounter perspective of human nature. He seeks to draw these two together with the law standing as a prescriptive reminder of what we once were and still can become.

Having duelled with Foucault earlier, Trainor finally takes on Derrida who sees law as having its origin not in God but in a foundational act of violence. However, contrary to the common evangelical stereotype of Derrida as a postmodern relativist, he is actually a Kantian with an implicitly

metaphysical affirmation of universal justice which deconstructs many of the violent ways in which law operates in political practice.

Trainor ends on a positive, reconciling note, seeing the doorways to dialogue across the sacred-secular divide opened by the Pope and Habermas as holding continued promise, and seeing the Holy Spirit at work even in the deconstructive work of Derrida. This is a book of enormous erudition, a kind of magnum opus. Many will be daunted by its 600 pages, though that is partly due to the very large type. The argument is often difficult and convoluted, and despite conclusions to each section, could have had a whole chapter of conclusions to draw some of the looser threads together. Nonetheless I enjoyed it, was challenged by it, had lots of questions raised by what is, along with ACU Professor Robert Gascoigne's work, probably the major political theology produced in an Australian context.

**Gordon Preece** is Director of Ethos and commissioning editor of *Zadok Perspectives*.

## *Zero Dark Thirty*

*Directed by Kathryn Bigelow*

**Reviewed by Darren Mitchell**

A defining image of the war against terror is that of the US leadership watching the unfolding events in Abbottabad, Pakistan on 2 May 2011. President Obama, Secretary of State Clinton, Defence Secretary Gates, and a host of others with responsibility for authorising the raid on the suspected hideout of Osama bin Laden, are captured in a moment of astonishment. Something has happened, whether good news or bad, we can't be sure, as they sit facing us watching a monitor beaming direct to Washington the actions of the US Navy SEALs consummating the pursuit of the Al Qaeda leader.

What they are witnessing unfold is dramatically recreated for the movie-going public in *Zero Dark Thirty*, a mesmerising account of the ten-year hunt, post 9/11, for the mastermind of the destruction of the World Trade Centre Twin Towers in 2001.

Director Kathryn Bigelow and screenwriter Mark Boal have produced a follow up to their Oscar winning Second Gulf War film *The Hurt Locker*, continuing their interrogation of America's twenty-first century conflicts.

Bigelow and Boal deliver a suspenseful, successful film full of sharp dialogue and complex politics, despite our likely familiarity with events surrounding bin Laden's death.

A documentary-like opening presenting the frantic voices of those trapped in the twin towers on 11 September 2001, and the vain efforts of rescuers, is played out on a black screen. Within a few minutes of this sobering reminder of the physical, mental and emotional toll of the attack, we cut to a cell in an unspecified country where a detainee is subjected to the full panoply of enhanced interrogation techniques that we have either imagined or read about over the past decade. A seemingly speedy revenge is exacted for both characters and audience alike. Watching the torture unfold is new CIA operative Maya (Jessica Chastain) whose single-eyed devotion to the hunt for bin Laden forms the core of the film. The last half hour of *Zero Dark Thirty* follows in close to real time the raid by the US Navy SEALs conducted at thirty minutes after midnight, zero hour.

The film has invited serious controversy, being subjected to intense criticism from both sides of politics for the connection it draws between torture and success in finding bin Laden. This reaction has seemed to me to be a case of either disbelief that certain torture techniques were used by Americans, or a refusal to believe that they proved efficacious. A too-literal reading of the film including extracting the torture scenes from their context, would neglect the fuller story on offer. Chastain's performance is rich with the nuance more familiar to us from the European film scene. Her eyes are full of deep meaning and her facial expressions speak a thousand words. Maya's closest colleagues, including Dan (Jason Clarke, one of three Australians in the cast) and Jessica (Jennifer Ehle) convey all the longing, resignation and commitment that work against any simplistic conclusions that the film supports the practice of torture.

Unfortunately, we know that torture was used by the CIA, we know that it was authorised for a time via the extraordinary Presidential and legislative responses to 9/11, and we know from a number of sources that the leads to bin Laden were confirmed by detainees subjected to torture. All this is illustrated in the film. CNN Journalist Peter Bergen's book *Manhunt* is the most detailed rendering of these leads, both false and helpful, that emerged through the work of the CIA. The gradual confirmation of the identity of bin Laden's courier and his

habits, added to a wealth of other information, constructs the eventual level of confidence America's leaders demanded before clearing the fateful strike in May 2011. This revelation is unsettling, and *Zero Dark Thirty's* stark portrayal of the brutality and moral ambivalence at the heart of the 'War on Terror' does not diminish our discomfort.

*Zero Dark Thirty* portrays the everyday ordinariness of intelligence gathering – long hours at desks, screens, files, and waiting, punctuated by bursts of unheroic action. Dan, in a Rumsfeldian moment, comments that 'we don't know what we don't know', a reminder of how the world of spying is enveloped by uncertainty. Even Joel Edgerton's Navy SEALs leader describes his own confidence in undertaking the mission as based not on the evidence but on Maya's air of confidence.

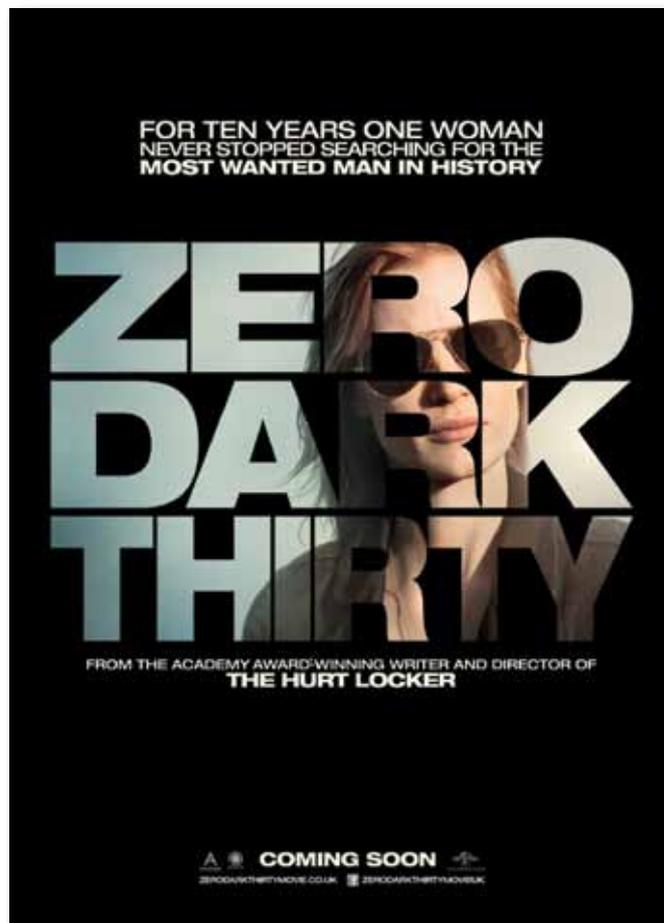
An important exchange in an embassy kitchen highlights the dilemma for today's spies in the conflict with non-national enemies. Mentioning greed as a likely motivator to entice co-operation, Jessica is criticised by Maya for her naivety about Muslim jihadists for whom the Cold War tropes of money, women, materialist aspiration or blackmail just don't wash anymore, thus signifying the necessary turn to torture.

Bigelow and Boal also telegraph that the film is 'based on first-hand accounts of actual events'. We should be careful not to confuse this statement with truth. Retelling an event via witnesses is a way of filling out a story. One person on the ground cannot possibly have the full story, especially when much of what we are dealing with by its very nature will remain secret – a situation already illustrated by the differing accounts provided by Navy SEALs of how bin Laden actually died.

Leaders today are often themselves experiencing the war through images – the White House inner sanctum photo reveals a lot about how war is conducted in the twenty-first century.

Long before the internet, TV, moving pictures and photos, war had become a spectacle – the battlefield was elsewhere and knowledge was dependent on reports, be they from officials, journalists, or participants. As early as Napoleon's time, the advent of newspapers enabled those safely at home to follow the prosecution of war in distant places, and to therefore also pass opinion on what they were reading or hearing through the 'official' channels.

Vicarious 'battlefield' experience is yet



*Zero Dark Thirty*

another example of the opening up of our local world to global concerns. Courtesy of Bigelow and Boal we view the events of the last decade through a movie, much as our wartime leaders watch through a monitor.

*Zero Dark Thirty* is a war film for our age, when wars are fought without battlefields. The hunt for Osama bin Laden may be over but there is no satisfaction for Maya, nor the viewer. Maya, who has been throughout the film single-minded, tough, always ready with an answer, has no answer to the last question posed to her, the final words of the film. We are left with no answer to the challenge of fighting against unseen enemies. The frank display of torture and its part in America's twenty-first century wars has marked out Bigelow and Boal for criticism and acclaim. However, *Zero Dark Thirty* doesn't provide answers either, leaving us with Maya, confused and discomforted in a conflict without a foreseeable end.

**Darren Mitchell** is a senior public servant, member of St. Barnabas Broadway and Zadok film reviewer.

**the blackbirds**

*didn't nest  
in the fernery  
this year*

*no sparrows  
came to drink  
at the pool*

*honeyeaters  
haven't sipped  
for nectar*

*a neighbour's  
three cats came  
instead*

*I miss the light  
cheerful agility  
of birds*

*still I suppose  
furry things  
like feathered things  
need water*

Marina Scott

**Weight**

*When I saw you  
the feeling  
went straight to my muscle,  
embedded there.*

*Every time I move  
you become more pronounced.*

*I exercise your memory  
when I walk, turn my head,  
stretch out my fingers to grasp  
the pepper shaker,*

*your gravity  
moves with me.*

Elizabeth Lewis



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## 'We are now dead'. Thatcherism and the loss of true Pluralism (*cont'd*)

to seek work in the booming south) betrayed massive class blindness and callous insensitivity to the family and community networks, and the impossibility of selling devalued housing that Liverpoolians faced. It was similar to today's industrial ghost-town Detroit and other abandoned places of empire, where, like the Franciscans, the church should stay.

Mrs Thatcher should be judged by her 'own' words, citing St Francis, from 10 Dowling St on her election in 1979: 'Where there is discord may we bring harmony'. These words are noted even by supporters now for their massive irony. And perhaps primarily intended mainly as an intro to the following 'Where there is error may we bring truth. Where there is doubt may we bring faith, where there is despair, hope'. All are important, but tempered with Francis' famous humility, not her infallibility. Compare a later Francis wiping and kissing the feet of juvenile prisoners on Maundy Thursday.

Thatcher's Wesleyan standards 'Make all you can, save all you can,

give all you can' are fine, but she forgot Wesley's fear that as Methodists prospered into middle class privilege, like Israel they would forget the God who had liberated and prospered them and their fellow slaves.

4. Pioneer females and macho managerialism. My former lecturer, feminist Judy Wajcman, published a book on female managers becoming like males, only worse. Thatcher prided herself on breaking the stereotype of the talking woman, being a fembot action woman. 'Men talk, women do' was her mantra. But it fitted the macho and manic economic style that gave us the Greed is Good 80s, and the GFC of the noughties. The respective first female prime ministers of their respective countries, Thatcher and Gillard should not be judged more harshly because they fail to live up to our more exalted ethical standards for women, especially 'first women' in any sphere. As Mrs Thatcher's funeral reminded us, we all have finitude, fallibility, and death in common. *We* all face God's judgment as sinners, whether male or female,

whether Prime Ministers or paupers; *we* together, believers like Mrs Thatcher, or non-believers like Julia Gillard, stand in need of grace and a sense of human solidarity. This bridges class and gender divides. It recognises the plurality of classes, genders and mediating institutions like families, neighbourhoods, unions, business and sporting bodies that stand between the State and individuals, buffering their power imbalance. For all the need for enterprise and excellence that Thatcher espoused, at the end of her era, we need a restoration of the ideal of equality. As the masterly recent book *Spirit Level* shows, relative equality is good not only for the poor, but for the rich who can inhabit a healthier, more civil, less criminal, less dangerous society. Inequality that tears apart any sense of *we*, is the path to catastrophe, to Babylon, as the rest of the essays in this edition show in their distinctive ways.

### GORDON PREECE

Director of Ethos, Commissioning Editor of *Zadok*.



“ [T]HREE OF OUR MAJOR PROBLEMS [ARE]: A RISING GLOBAL INDEBTEDNESS; A DEEPENING CRISIS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION; AND THE REMARKABLE FACT, PROBLEMATIC IN ITSELF, THAT MOST SOLUTIONS ARE OBVIOUSLY NOT WORKING WELL, PARTICULARLY AT A NATIONAL LEVEL. ”

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