

Homo Economicas

Economic activity is written into the DNA of the *imago Dei* (image of God). *Homo economicas* (man, the economic being) was alive and well in the Garden of Eden. Human beings were created with the capacity for production and consumption. God, the divine economist, provided all that humankind (and nature) required to flourish. Paradise was the nexus of God's presence, peace and prosperity within the divine milieu. In the beginning God's mission was to extend this garden economy throughout the earth through Adam's descendants.

Since the fall, however, the mission of mankind is the recreation and globalization of the divine milieu -- on apostate assumptions. Because of Satan, sin, and God's curse (Gen 3:17-18) all of our economic policy and practice, production and consumption, are skewed and problematic. We sense the link between spirituality and economics, but our economic systems are often tainted by idolatry and corruption. As we extend our economic prowess the result is often empire, conquest, and exploitation. We were designed for relationship and community, but we often create cultures that are abusive, inhumane, and unjust. By necessity and design we must consume, but in today's economy consumption has become a kind of plunder.

Everything we do economically occurs within the context of sin and common grace -- and eschatology. These constraints we cannot escape, yet there are economic opportunities we should embrace for the sake of God's mission in creation. Fortunately, the Bible provides many insights about money that would be useful in our fallen world. What does prosperity really mean? What are the necessary conditions for humanity to flourish east of Eden? What are human beings, anyway? These and many other themes emerge from the critical questions being raised about economics, consumerism, sustainability, and human well-being in postmodernity.



Further, because of common grace, we should not squander the opportunities inherent God's beneficence to this world (Ps 104; Acts 14:17), though fallen. Christians can and should focus upon what is possible for the sake of the gospel. We can and should pursue the common good -- and the glory of God. We can gladly support and applaud worthy ventures of those who disagree with us (social entrepreneurship, for example). We must acknowledge all that is admirable and beautiful in culture that exists "under the sun" (Eccl 1:14). We can praise God for his continuing "witness" in our fallen economy. As stewards of the planet, a sustainable prosperity is highly relevant as both a logistical and moral issue. We must *share* this planet until the Lord returns. If it prospers, we also prosper. If it suffers, we also suffer.

And yet, we must never forget that our cultural aspirations and expectations are conditioned by the eschatological mission of God. That mission remains undaunted. God *will* provide a renewed physical environment in which to tabernacle with his holy people again. He *will* put Humpty Dumpty back together in all his pre-fall glory -- and so much more. One day, God *will* unveil his cosmic empire, a homeland, free of sin and Satan in which human beings can truly flourish. In the "new heavens and new earth" (2 Pet 3:13) *homo economicus* will be alive and active (Isa 60:4-11, 17-21; Rev 21:24). The "dismal science" (economics) will be transformed to yield dignity, abundance, productive work, and meaningful relationships within a secure and sacred environment.

Until that time, we must also *never* forget that anything sinners do is problematic. We will *never* re-create Eden. We will never establish utopia. Everything and everyone in this age are subject to Murphy's Law. This is manifestly true in the economic realm. With regard to commerce and money, we should not forget John Wesley's prophetic observation:

Wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same

proportion. Therefore I do not see how it is possible in the nature of things for any revival of religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches.