

THEOLOGY THAT WORKS



Making Disciples Who Practice Fruitful Work and
Economic Wisdom in Modern America

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What Is This Document?

Theology That Works is a unique product. I first circulated it under the title “Whatever You Do” in early 2010 as a six-page manifesto on reconnecting discipleship to work and the economy. Its initial purpose was to explain why issues related to work and the economy are a necessary part of theological education, and to call for renewed efforts to integrate these issues into the educational priorities of the seminary.

This document grew and changed, however, as I circulated it among theological educators in the Oikonomia Network. I revised the document as I incorporated feedback from theologians across a wide range of traditions and methodologies. This allowed me to account for differences of language, emphasis, and resonance across theological and cultural divides. As I constantly encountered new questions and challenges in this field, I continued to expand the document. In 2011, I circulated a longer paper, titled “Economic *Shalom*,” to carry the dialogue toward more intellectually challenging questions. Feedback and fresh discoveries continued to come in and reshape this newer paper as well. Eventually, the two papers were combined into Theology That Works. The Oikonomia Network published the first edition of this paper in April 2012 and the second in August 2013.

I offer this document as an invitation to dialogue. Although it is intended to reflect the input and feedback generously offered by many people, only I am responsible for its contents. Its only role is to stimulate thought and start conversations. And far from standing as a “once for all” statement, I hope it will continue to grow and change as I continue to hear feedback and discover new insights.

What Is the Oikonomia Network?

The Oikonomia Network (www.oikonomianetwork.org) is a learning community of theological educators and evangelical seminaries. Its mission is to equip pastors to connect biblical wisdom, sound theology, and good stewardship to work and the economy. Its name is derived from the Greek term *oikonomia*, used in the New Testament to refer to discipleship responsibilities (stewardship) and also the management of households and the city’s public treasury (economics). In the early church, the term *oikonomia* was used to describe God’s divine ordering of our cultural activity, and also the activities and institutions by which humanity responds to this ordering. The name Oikonomia Network embodies our conviction that discipleship must be embodied in our daily work and bear witness to the economy at large.

The network was created by The Kern Family Foundation in 2009. Building upon its decade of support for seminary education, the Foundation began making grants to support theological education in the area of work and the economy. The Oikonomia Network brings together educators who are doing work supported by the Foundation, along with other educators and supporters, for mutual edification, cooperative effort, and long-term impact. Contact Greg Forster at gforster@kffd.org for more information about Theology that Works or the Oikonomia Network.

INTRODUCTION

“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened.”

- Matthew 13:33

THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL OF LIFE – INCLUDING THE MODERN ECONOMY.

Integrating theology with work and economics will be central to the task of the American church in the coming generation. As the emergence of the global economy transforms the structures of everyday life, our faith compels us to build new models of godly life for this new context. And as our culture struggles to find a source of cultural integrity, we have the opportunity to offer our fruitful work and economic wisdom as signposts that remind our neighbors of the real purpose and meaning of human life.

Some observers have grown puzzled or even disturbed as the faith and work movement has grown to unprecedented proportions in the past decade. If the claims of the movement’s leading figures and institutions are taken seriously, they demand an ambitious movement of renewal to overturn what the movement sees as an extensive growth of dualistic ideas and practices in the church. These reforms would radically challenge much of the predominant thinking about the purpose of the church, the calling of the pastor, the meaning of discipleship, and the opportunities and challenges presented to the church by today’s culture. This paper defends the claims of the movement, and even presses them further, pointing to the far-reaching implications of its “faith/work integration” for economic systems and the integrity of human civilization itself.

Like the little measure of leaven that leavens the whole lump of flour in Matthew 13:33, the Gospel is for all of life.¹ The transformation of our minds and hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit must work its way outward through every part of our lives. This means Christians must build models of daily life that embody their discipleship as they participate in the systems of human civilization. Ultimately, it also means looking beyond the everyday challenges of faithful living to develop thoughtful perspectives on the larger social and cultural systems that shape daily life.

This is the task that the faith and work movement has begun to undertake for our time. If Christianity is to be a full-time way of life, Christians need to understand and experience their work – the activity that takes up most of human life – as service to God and neighbor. And since God made human beings to live in community and be formed by culture, Christians need to see the social system of work – economic exchange – through the same lens of faithfulness.

¹ This interpretation of the parable is drawn from Herman Bavinck, “Christian Principles and Social Relationships,” in Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science and Society*, ed. John Bolt, Baker, 2008.

The flourishing of the economy in the modern era has brought enormous spiritual and material blessings, as this paper will argue. It also increases the pace of social change, however, and disrupts older patterns of work. Many of our churches have disconnected discipleship from the world of work because older, theological analyses and pastoral practices are no longer adequate to the new situations created by the modern economy. Conversely, society is losing its sense of cultural integrity as the structures of its daily life become more and more distant from sources of belief about meaning and purpose.

Because America is the paradigmatic modern nation, it creates the blessings, challenges, and opportunities of the modern economy more than any other society. American history illustrates the central connection between religious freedom and the modern economy. There can be no turning back from modern life without simultaneously giving up on freedom of religion. The two share a common root – the idea that all people, not just a tiny social elite, are made for stewardship. At the same time, America's current crises illustrate the difficulty of sustaining economic and cultural integrity in modernity. How do we give people stewardship over their own lives without ending up like the Israelites in the time of the judges, with everyone defining right and wrong solely for himself?

At this turning point in history, America's churches point the way to hope. Christians are growing disillusioned with older models of cultural engagement centered on winning elections. Meanwhile, we are catalyzing the meteoric rise of the faith and work movement. Expectations that we can win through voter mobilization are diminishing; at the same time, a more holistic approach to cultural activity centered on work has been gestating. American Christianity is poised to produce something truly amazing.

To meet the challenge of this moment, we must find new ways to apply old truths about the value of fruitful work, and the wisdom of good economic stewardship. Only this will make it possible for Christians to live godly lives in contemporary civilization; only this will make it possible for contemporary civilization to remember the meaning and purpose of its social structures. The Lord does not owe us victory, but he has promised us the presence and power of the Spirit. It's time to get to work.

PART ONE

IN THE WORLD
BUT NOT OF IT

*Why should churches integrate
theology with work and economics?*

I.

“Whatever you do, work heartily . . .
you are serving the Lord Christ.”

- Colossians 3:23-24

**TO MAKE DISCIPLES, THE CHURCH MUST CALL GOD'S PEOPLE
TO FRUITFUL WORK AND ECONOMIC WISDOM.**

In America today, millions of churchgoers are “Christians” for only a few hours a week. For them, Christianity is a leisure-time activity rather than a way of life. The withering of discipleship is one of the gravest threats facing the American church today. We urgently need to recover the calling to whole-life discipleship. Christianity cannot be what it claims to be if it is only a set of special activities we engage in for a few hours a week.

The main cause of the problem is that churches have disconnected discipleship from everyday life. Too often, pastors talk about our “walk with God” and “stewardship” almost exclusively in terms of formally religious activities like worship, small group attendance, Bible study, evangelism, and giving. As crucial as these activities are for every Christian, they will never take up more than a tiny percentage of life for those who are not full-time religious professionals.

Unfortunately, the largest portion of life – our work in our homes, jobs, and communities – is excluded from the understanding of discipleship and stewardship taught in most churches. As a result, these churches have nothing spiritually powerful to offer for the activities that define most of our time during the other six days of the week. This leaves us preaching a faith that is not relevant to the totality of people’s lives. It also risks the rise of a legalism in which discipleship is equated with religious works. By equipping people for lives characterized by fruitful work and economic wisdom, churches can restore a model of discipleship that extends to all of life.

Focusing the attention of the church on work and the economy is not a movement away from evangelism and personal conversion. It is a movement toward them. Conversion to Christ is not a mere transitory act of the will; it is a conversion of *the entire person to an entire life* of repentance and discipleship in the Kingdom. A person has not converted if he has not begun to live a new life, and we do not evangelize if we do not invite people to begin living that life now. Therefore, it is a core function of the church – one that is not in tension with, but a necessary part of evangelism – to equip God’s people to live into whole-life discipleship in economic work.

1. STEWARDSHIP AND CALLING: RECONNECTING OIKONOMIA WITH OIKONOMIA

Stewardship and calling are essential theological concepts if the church seeks to renew whole-life discipleship. Every legitimate human activity responds to a calling from God, and that calling is best understood as a calling to stewardship. God makes every human being responsible for some portion of his creation, and he calls that person to be, in all of life, a good steward over it.

In most churches today, stewardship only means giving and volunteering at church. But in both scripture and historic Christian theology, we find a concept of stewardship that encompasses our whole lives. Stewardship is primarily about who we are, not what we do, and how we cultivate the world in all our activities.² Whatever you do, Paul says in Colossians 3:23-24, work heartily, because *whatever you do*, you are serving the Lord Christ! Our individual discipleship, our church communities, our participation in homes and workplaces, and our witness to society at large must recover a holistic theology of stewardship and calling. We must reintegrate our model of discipleship with the call to cultivate the world.

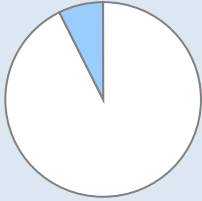
It is no coincidence that “stewardship” comes from the same Greek word (*oikonomia*) as “economics,” which refers to the management of things in the world. Good stewardship *is* good management of things in the world.

Unfortunately, churches usually limit their concept of how we serve God (stewardship) to formally religious activities. This radically separates it from our management of the creation order (economics). A holistic theology of *oikonomia* would reintegrate a God-centered commitment to whole-life discipleship with a God-centered commitment to cultivate the world. Not only would this revitalize our discipleship, it would deepen our theological perspective on the crucial role of work in the Christian life, and on the enormous sphere of activities defined by work (employment, ownership, commerce, finance, entrepreneurship, etc.). It would also help us to incorporate the principles of wise creation management into our church programs, which often lack good stewardship in their finances and other economic aspects.

A restoration of whole-life discipleship through stewardship and calling must not become an excuse to denigrate the value of the church and the clergy, or of religious activities and spiritual disciplines. God forbid! The church is the light of the world (Matthew 5:14) and strong pastors are the backbone of its capacity to impact people for Christ. The foundation of a strong pastor, in turn, is the Gospel call. The Gospel calls all of us, clergy and laypeople alike, not just to church work, but to whole-life discipleship in all settings.

² See *The NIV Stewardship Study Bible*, Zondervan, 2009.

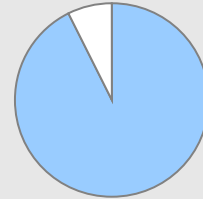
STEWARDSHIP = *Tiny sliver of life*



- ❖ Your calling from God
- ❖ Serve others
- ❖ Generosity
- ❖ Spiritual
- ❖ Church (no world)

ECONOMICS = *Vast majority of life*

- ❖ Your daily work
- ❖ Serve yourself
- ❖ Accomplishment
- ❖ Materialistic
- ❖ World (no church)



OIKONOMIA = *All of life*

- ❖ Daily work as a calling from God
- ❖ Support yourself by serving others
- ❖ Accomplishment and generosity drive and empower one another
- ❖ Spiritual and material integrated
- ❖ Church engaging the world

2. WORK: REDISCOVERING THIS BEAUTIFUL GIFT FROM GOD

When we take stewardship and calling seriously, one of the most important things we discover is the central role of work in human life. All legitimate work is a calling from God to exercise the stewardship he has granted us over the creation order.³

By far, most of people's waking hours are taken up by work both in the home and on the job. Time spent working dwarfs time spent in church and on religious activities, even for those who are especially active in their churches. Work includes any activity, paid or unpaid, whose main purpose is to cultivate blessing out of the created order. Work can be distinguished from other activities such as rest, contemplation, play (or more broadly, enjoyment), disciplines, and formally religious activities such as prayer and worship services. However, the boundaries between work and these other activities are often permeable.

Work is a subject of tremendous theological and pastoral importance:

- It is a mode of human participation in God's creative and redemptive activities.
- It was given to us to manifest the image of God, exercising the stewardship responsibility he made us for (Genesis 2:15) and imitating his attributes (John 5:17).
- It puts to use the talents God gives us.
- It is how we serve our neighbors in our everyday activities.
- It is one of the main ways we reflect the character of Christ (Mark 10:42-45).
- It carries out the cultural mandate, developing the potential of creation.
- It manifests the restorative aspect of Jesus' work, applied to us through the Spirit.
- It obeys God's direct command (e.g. Exodus 20:9; II Thessalonians 3:10).
- It is one of the core elements of discipleship and spiritual formation.
- It provides the "drive power" in human civilization (see Section II below).

Work is a core element of the personal dignity of every individual. It is one of the main purposes God originally created humanity to fulfill – work is central among the purposes of human life identified in the text of Genesis before the fall (Genesis 2:15). And although work is now often painful and difficult, in the fallen world, work itself is not a result of the curse. It is no less beneficial or imperative than it was before the fall – as numerous biblical passages indicate.⁴

Our theology and our churches ought to ground their approach to work in an affirmation of its intrinsic goodness. This is necessary to keep our theology grounded in the dignity and integrity of God's creation order. The falsehoods of the "prosperity gospel" and other entitlement mentalities are largely fueled by the attitude that treats work as a burden and a curse, rather than a glorious opportunity to serve God and our neighbors. The impact of the fall must be given due weight, but creation and the fall are not equally ultimate. It is essential to Christianity that goodness is ultimate while evil is merely derivative or parasitic; creation (the source of goodness) takes theological precedence over the fall (the source of evil). Thus we ought not to treat

³ See Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work*, Wipf & Stock, 2006; Lester DeKoster, *Work: The Meaning of Your Life*, second edition, Christian's Library Press, 2010; Os Guinness, *The Call*, Thomas Nelson, 2003; Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*, Dutton, 2012; Tom Nelson, *Work Matters*, Crossway, 2011; R. Paul Stevens, *Work Matters*, Eerdmans, 2012; and Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work*, Crossway, 2002.

⁴ For example, see Exodus 20:9 and 35:30-35; Psalm 90:17 and 128:2; Proverbs 12:11-14, 16:3, 18:9, 22:29, 24:27, 31:13 and 31:13-31; Ecclesiastes 3:22, 5:6 and 9:10; Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27; John 5:17; Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:23-24; I Thessalonians 4:11; II Thessalonians 3:10-12; I Timothy 5:8; and II Timothy 2:6.

manifestations of sin in our work, or the curse's impact upon it, as equally ultimate with its created goodness. Moreover, since redemption overcomes the fall in Christ by the power of the Spirit, the redeemed blessedness of work as an element of Christian life deserves particular emphasis.⁵

3. THE VIRTUE OF FRUITFULNESS: SUPPORT AND SATISFY YOURSELF BY CREATING VALUE FOR OTHERS

Work is not just an end in itself; that's part of what makes it work. While there is intrinsic value to work, all work is also instrumental – work is not work unless it is intended to bear fruit. We work to accomplish a purpose other than the performance of the task itself. That purpose is to cultivate blessing out of the creation order – to make the world a better place. This is what we mean when we say that someone's work is productive, and productivity or fruitfulness is a key element of work and discipleship.

Work is productive or fruitful if it transforms the creation order to create value – that is, to produce blessing. Productivity means making the world a better place through our work.

Unfortunately, because of our tendency to think about the economy exclusively in terms of quantitative data, phrases like “value creation” or “productivity” are often understood only with reference to money. We sometimes assume value means money, and value creation or productivity means making money (for ourselves or our employers). If we take a broader perspective that accounts for moral and spiritual realities, we can see that this approach is inadequate. Productive work on the job will usually contribute to profitability, but that is not what makes it productive. For example, this becomes clear when we think about what it means when an unpaid stay-at-home parent or volunteer worker says, “I had a really productive day today.” Profit is a side effect of value creation in some contexts, but they are not the same thing.

It is because work is meant to be fruitful that it takes up most of life. God designed human beings to spend most of their time serving one another and taking care of one another's needs. This mainly occurs through economic work, on the job as well as in the home. We were designed by our Creator to support the material needs of ourselves and our households, and to find satisfaction for our spiritual needs by doing work that serves others.

Value creation makes this beautiful system possible. Work can perform these functions (serve our neighbor, support our material needs, satisfy our spiritual needs) only when it is fruitful – that is, when it makes the world a better place. And for the most part, our work is fruitful only to the extent that we strive to make it so; the worker who does not consciously strive for productivity will not be very productive. This is why it is important to teach people to aspire to productivity or fruitfulness.

4. ECONOMIC WISDOM: WORK AS A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITY

Because work is central to human life in God's plan, the economy is central as well. If Christians are called to fruitful work, they need to see and understand the economy in which their work

⁵ On creation as it relates to life in human civilization, see Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, Eerdmans, 1998; and Michael Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, Zondervan, 2004. On redemption, see Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, Crossway, 2012; and Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, Hendrickson, 2006. On the tensions that can arise between them in the life of the church see John Stott, “Mission,” in *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, reissued, InterVarsity, 2008.

takes place. As long as the individual worker sees only his own work, he is trapped in a tiny social world. To be fruitful workers and good neighbors, we need to see the work of everyone around us and understand the vast cultural system of economic exchange through which we all serve one another as interdependent co-stewards.

Like all human activities, work is social and cultural. The meaning of each person's work is partly defined by the sense of identity and motivation that he personally brings to it, but it is also partly defined by presuppositions, institutions, and structures embedded in the social system of economic exchange. Individuals organize and exchange their work and its fruits through the economy, so economic systems are of central importance to our work.

The economy is a vast web of human relationships in which people relate to one another and serve one another's needs. Unfortunately, we usually think about the economy only in terms of numbers on spreadsheets or controversies over public policy. These approaches to economics are each appropriate for their proper purposes, but we also need to develop a theological perspective.

All economic activity – such as owning property, buying and selling, employment, contracts, finance and investment, business, and entrepreneurship – is ultimately grounded in people's work. Just as work was given to us to manifest the image of God, exercising the stewardship responsibility we have from him by imitating his service and care for others, economic activities do the same, exercising our stewardship responsibility by imitating his sovereignty, agency, providence, justice, and love.⁶ The fall affects these systems at both the individual and social levels, but their underlying God-given patterns remain.

THE
ECONOMY IS
NOT
PRIMARILY
ABOUT
MONEY, IT IS
PRIMARILY
ABOUT VALUE.

The economy is a moral system. Cultural structures of economic exchange are built upon presuppositions about what kind of behavior is good and right. What kind of economy we have is going to be based primarily on what kind of people we are – and what kind of people we are will also be shaped, in turn, by what kind of economy we have. An economy that prioritizes productive service and opportunity will help cultivate love, joy, and contentment (Psalm 112:3-5). An economy that prioritizes short-term gratification will tend to produce shallow, selfish people (Luke 12:15-21).

The economy is not primarily about money, it is primarily about value.⁷ Money is not the only, or even necessarily the most important, form of economic value. Important as money is, the economy is primarily about how people serve one another's needs. Human work creates economic value by cultivating blessing from the creation order, and economic systems deliver those blessings. For this reason, work that is paid (such as on the job) and work that is unpaid (such as in the home or volunteering) are all equally part of the economy. Working for pay is blessed (e.g. Luke 10:7) and fulfills a crucial duty for many (e.g. 1 Timothy 5:8). However, pay is not what gives work its primary value, so unpaid work is no less valuable.

⁶ See Victor Claar and Robin Klay, *Economics in Christian Perspective*, InterVarsity, 2007; Wayne Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God*, Crossway, 2003; Austin Hill and Scott Rae, *The Virtues of Capitalism*, Northfield, 2010; Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, Madison, 1982; John Schneider, *The Good of Affluence*, Eerdmans, 2002; and Jeff Van Duzer, *Why Business Matters to God (And What Still Needs to Be Fixed)*, InterVarsity Press, 2010.

⁷ See Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital*, Basic, 2003.

The assumption that value creation means making money rather than making the world a better place is destructive not only in our individual lives, but in the larger economic sphere. It leads people to think that the purpose of business is to make money. This illusion leads to equal and opposite errors among those inclined to like business, and those inclined to dislike business. The former erroneously learn to pursue profits for their own sake without caring whether they make the world a better place. The latter mistakenly learn to view profit-making as fundamentally in tension with, or even inconsistent with, humane treatment of people, ethical integrity, and discipleship.

Businesses do not exist to make money, they exist to serve – to bear fruit for – their customers.⁸ Revenue and profit are constantly necessary in the life of a business, but they are not its purpose – just as we must constantly breathe in order to live, but we don't live to breathe. Economic productivity creates profits for a business, but if profits become the goal of the business, it will cease to be productive. It will learn to extract money and other resources through exploitation and the manipulation of power, rather than by serving its customers to the best of its ability.

Even the interpersonal relationships within the Trinity are reflected in this sphere. Just as the three divine persons freely and voluntarily work the divine will in unison, our economy can manifest free and voluntary coordination of diverse activities for mutual benefit in human society. An economic order appropriate to the image of God should strive to liberate people to use the talents God gives them in work; cultivate systems of economic exchange through which people serve one another with their work; value the larger sphere of economic relationships, structures, and activities that make work and exchange possible; protect people's legitimate interest in receiving and disposing of the fruits of their own work (primarily through wages); and reward individuals (or hold them accountable) as they serve or harm their neighbors. Such an economic order is the best way to reconcile the dignity and freedom of the individual with the needs of the community and the imperative to serve others.⁹

5. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD: AN EVANGELICAL AND PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVE

This understanding of God's calling to daily stewardship through productive work is dormant, if not absent, in much Christian thinking and practice today. However, it was an important distinguishing element of Christianity for most of the last two millennia.¹⁰ And in particular, it has been essential to evangelical and Protestant religion.¹¹ At its deepest level, this view of stewardship and calling is rooted in a fundamental commitment to the direct and personal relationship between God and each individual.

The 16th century Reformers blasted ethical dualism, which makes church work morally or spiritually superior to other kinds of work, as both a primary cause and product of legalistic, self-salvation

⁸ See Kenman Wong and Scott Rae, *Business for the Common Good*, InterVarsity, 2011; and Jeff Van Duzer, *Why Business Matters to God (And What Still Needs to Be Fixed)*, InterVarsity Press, 2010.

⁹ See Victor Claar and Robin Klay, *Economics in Christian Perspective*, InterVarsity, 2007; Austin Hill and Scott Rae, *Virtues of Capitalism*, Northfield, 2010; Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason*, Random House, 2006; Os Guinness, *The Call*, Thomas Nelson, 2003; Samuel Gregg, *The Commercial Society*, Lexington, 2006; and John Schneider, *The Good of Affluence*, Eerdmans, 2002.

¹⁰ See William Platcher, ed., *Callings*, Eerdmans, 2005; Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, Eerdmans, 1998.

¹¹ See Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work*, Crossway, 2002; Os Guinness, *The Call*, Thomas Nelson, 2003; and Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, Wipf and Stock, 1957.

thinking. The elevation of “sacred” activities as more spiritually important than “secular” activities went hand in hand with the elevation of the priest as the mediator between God and the layperson. But when the Bible says Jesus has a direct, personal, saving relationship with every individual Christian, it simultaneously calls every one of us to do all of our work “for the Lord,” and puts his claim on it as service to him. Therefore, the Reformers declared (in very strong language) that the pure, biblical Gospel could not be separated from the affirmation of all legitimate work as equally “called” by God.¹²

This should be a sobering reminder. The widespread practice of emphasizing the crucial spiritual importance of church activities and other religious works while implicitly devaluing (through silence, if not through explicit denigration) our daily work is an open invitation to legalism. Much that we hear from our pulpits is already alarmingly close to the ethical dualism of Eusebius or the legalists of the late 15th century, who treated religious works as morally superior.¹³ If we value the Gospel of free grace, we should remember that all legitimate work is equally service to God and part of our life in his Kingdom.

However, this is also a firm ground of hope. Its perspective on work is the reason evangelical and Protestant religion has historically been distinguished from other Christian traditions by the greater priority it places on making our faith active in world, rather than placing priority (as other traditions do) on what goes on inside the church. Evangelical and Protestant Christians are uniquely positioned to rediscover this perspective on stewardship and calling that serves as the foundation of their commitment to making faith active in the world.

¹² See William Platcher, ed., *Callings*, Eerdmans, 2005.

¹³ See William Platcher, ed., *Callings*, Eerdmans, 2005.

These shepherds do not run away into the desert, they do not don monk's garb, they do not shave their heads, neither do they change their clothing, schedule, food, drink, nor any external work. They return to their place in the fields and serve God there!...Against this liberty the pope and the spiritual estate fight with their laws and their choice of clothing, food, prayers, localities, and persons.

- Martin Luther, Sermon on Luke 2:15-20

The Lord bids each one of us in all life's actions to look to his calling. ...The Lord's calling is in everything the beginning and foundation of well-doing...It will be no slight relief from cares, labors, troubles, and other burdens for a man to know that God is his guide in all these things.

- John Calvin, *Institutes* III.10.6

Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go
My daily labor to pursue,
Thee, only thee resolved to know
In all I think, or speak, or do.
The task thy wisdom has assigned
Oh, let me cheerfully fulfill,
In all my works thy presence find
And prove thy acceptable will.
Thee may I set at my right hand
Whose eyes my inmost substance see
And labor on at thy command
And offer all my works to thee.

- Charles Wesley, "Forth in Thy Name, O Lord, I Go"

II.

“Seek the *shalom* of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its *shalom* you will find your *shalom*.”

- Jeremiah 29:7

FRUITFUL WORK AND ECONOMIC WISDOM HELP OUR CIVILIZATION CULTIVATE INTEGRITY AND HUMAN FLOURISHING.

The gap between discipleship and everyday life is not only a threat to the church. It is also a major cause of the public crises that are now confronting human civilization. Economic systems are becoming dysfunctional because social structures have grown further out of alignment with God’s design for image-bearing humanity. History rarely offers such a clear illustration of how the *shalom* of the church and the *shalom* of the city grow from the same source.

Because work takes up most of human life, it is not only central to discipleship, but also to the functioning of human civilization. Thus work and the economy are critical connection points between the church and the world. When Christians manifest their faith in the life of civilization through their fruitful work and economic wisdom, they cannot help but have a profound impact on the making of human civilization. But when discipleship is disconnected from work and the economy, as it too often is now, civilization develops in other directions.

1. THE HUMAN PERSON: SOCIAL MEMBERSHIP AND INDIVIDUAL DIGNITY

Christians are citizens of heaven, but that does not negate our responsibilities to the human community here on earth. Human beings are social creatures as well as individual creatures, and human life means life lived as members and participants in society. Each individual possesses an irreducible personal dignity that must always be respected. However, our relationships with others in the home, workplace, and civil community are a fundamental part of our personal identity as human beings. We are formed by all these relationships as we grow to maturity, and their influence is forever a constitutive part of who we are.¹⁴

Moreover, all our relationships are themselves structured by the broad social order of the civilization within which they exist. Each society defines the boundaries and structures the interactions between different kinds of relationships in distinct spheres of social activity (family, economic, religious, political, etc.) in its own unique way. This stamps a unique character upon each of these relationships both within and across these spheres. Thus our membership in our civilization

¹⁴ See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, Anchor, 1967; Greg Forster, *Joy for the World*, Crossway, 2014 (forthcoming); James Davison Hunter, *The Death of Character*, Basic, 2000; James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*, Oxford, 2010; and Christian Smith, *What Is a Person?*, University Of Chicago Press, 2011.

is as much a fundamental part of our personal identity, forming and constituting our personhood, as our other social relationships.

Because these social structures are so important and influential, the tendency to define concepts such as “culture” too narrowly ought to be resisted. “The culture” is not a separate sphere of activity standing apart from other spheres such as politics, economics, religion, etc. The complexities involved in defining such notoriously difficult concepts as “culture,” “civilization,” and “society” are beyond the scope of this paper. The important point for the present is to become aware of the ubiquitous influence of these social structures on our thinking and action, and the ways in which they structure both our opportunities and our responsibilities.

Recognizing the importance of social structures must not detract from the irreducible dignity of every individual person. The affirmation of our social nature should never become an excuse for collectivism that treats the individual as a mere instrument of aggregate ends, or otherwise dehumanizes the individual. The sovereignty of the individual conscience is a bedrock commitment of Christianity, and is of particular importance to evangelical and Protestant religion. The example of Martin Luther standing on “scripture and plain reason” against the commands of all human social systems should remain an inspiration for us. The sovereignty of the individual conscience is also a bedrock commitment of modern civilization. The rights to marry the spouse of our choice, do the economic work that we discern we are called to, to worship in the church that aligns with our conscience, and be ruled by laws and officeholders who are accountable to us is a precious treasure – a very rare one in human history – that we should never take for granted.¹⁵

Yet the dignity of the individual must not, in turn, be permitted to crowd out our social membership. Our relationships are never merely the product of individual choice, but are always constituted in part by social structures that transcend the individual. As a result, our neighbors and society will always have some legitimate claim on our identities, our roles, and our calling to stewardship.

2. VIRTUOUS CITIZENSHIP: BUILDING GODLY MODELS OF LIFE IN CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATION

Our responsibility to participate actively in our social membership can be fulfilled through virtuous citizenship. While many people associate citizenship only with voting, historically the concept of citizenship has been much more comprehensive. Virtuous citizenship means participating in social structures such as the home, workplace and community in a way that puts the good of our neighbors first, rather than using these structures as tools to serve our individual desires. Just as discipleship means more than doing religious works, but is a calling for all of life, virtuous citizenship means more than doing a special set of “citizenship works” such as voting, but is a calling that reshapes all of our participation in social structures.

Citizenship is an identity in addition to a practice. Our identities as citizens should not create a sense of entitlement; they should grow from the everyday practice of good citizenship. We are citizens because we *live* as citizens by serving others in daily life.

¹⁵ See Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason*, Random House, 2006; Os Guinness, *The Call*, Thomas Nelson, 2003; and Samuel Gregg, *The Commercial Society*, Lexington, 2006.

In the Old Testament era, God's people were called to be a distinct civilization. Accordingly, they were given a detailed blueprint for how that civilization should be structured. But in the New Testament era, God's people are called to be members of every civilization. Accordingly, the Lord lays down general moral principles but does not provide a single blueprint for social structures. He calls us to be good citizens in the context of diverse social structures in many particular civilizations. Our calling is to figure out what it means to live out biblical principles in the context of our own society.

The themes of mission and exile are both important to the New Testament ordering of the church. The church is present within every civilization both because it is commissioned to the nations (Matthew 28:16-20) and because it is in exile (1 Peter 1:1, 1:17 and 2:11). Thus the church has a mission to every human civilization, but it cannot identify itself with those civilizations; it must seek to enact and embody godliness within its cultural context, but it cannot reduce its mission simply to promoting the flourishing of cultural life.¹⁶

Virtuous citizenship is a central component of discipleship. You can't escape the sins of human civilization by retreating within the church. Christians are still human beings, and human beings are extensively shaped by their civilizations. Retreat from the problems of civilization outside the church and you only find the same problems inside it – not because they invaded it from without, but because they were always there. The only hope to resist the sins of a civilization is to develop godly models of citizenship within that civilization.¹⁷

CITIZENSHIP IS
A CENTRAL
COMPONENT
OF
DISCIPLESHIP.

On a higher level, creation comes before redemption – God made Adam and Eve because he wanted image-bearers to manage and cultivate the world as his stewards (Genesis 1:26-28). The fall did not render this mandate irrelevant to human life, and redemption provides a renewed way of fulfilling it through Christ. The church, with its origin in God's redemptive work and its mission to connect people to that redemption, does not stand outside the created social system of human civilizational activity, but the consequent distinction between the church and the world need to be fully accounted for; our redeemed stewardship does not itself redeem others. But the created goodness and redeemed blessedness of stewardship are (in their different ways) more ultimate than its fallenness, and must be given due priority.

Calling Christians to virtuous citizenship integrates the individual and social imperatives of human nature. The calling to citizenship ensures that we don't fall back into a merely individual model of personal holiness that neglects our commission to the nations. The calling to make our citizenship virtuous ensures that it avoids the twin dangers of a social collectivism that violates the dignity of the individual and an isolation of the individual that tends to produce over-accommodation to the prevailing culture.

We should be careful to affirm virtuous citizenship in ways that do not marginalize people who live cross-cultural lives and may not clearly belong to any particular civilization. Such individuals can find ways to be "good citizens" in a more complex sense, participating virtuously in society

¹⁶ See H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, Harper and Row, 1951; and James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*, Oxford, 2010.

¹⁷ See James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*, Oxford, 2010; and Greg Forster, *Joy for the World*, Crossway, 2014 (forthcoming).

however they are culturally situated. However, the large majority of Christians do have a clear cultural membership, and the church must have a teaching that leads them to virtuous citizenship in those contexts.

3. INTEGRATING AFFIRMATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Virtuous citizenship requires an integration of two imperatives that are often in tension. On the one hand, citizenship means participating in the social structures of our civilization rather than withdrawing. On the other hand, it requires us to participate critically rather than merely accommodating ourselves to social structures as we find them.

Our citizenship should be grounded first and foremost in an affirmation of the created goodness of social structures. The theological basis of this imperative is the doctrine that God sustains these structures by grace. This grace is conceptualized differently in different theological traditions (“common grace,” “prevenient grace,” etc.) but is affirmed in some form by all.¹⁸ Creation is more ultimate than the fall, and God’s creative activity did not stop after the initial generation of the universe. Redemption overcomes the fall, restoring human life through Christ applied by the Spirit. God is constantly exercising his creative and redemptive power in and through the creation order, including through human social structures. God uses the family, the economy and the civil community – which is another way of saying he uses us as we work in these spheres – to accomplish his purposes.¹⁹

In addition to particular structures like the family, workplace and civil community, citizenship also requires us to personally “own” our membership in our civilization as a whole. This membership is part of our identities, playing a formative role in constituting us as social creatures. We are Americans (or whatever else we are) and we remain Americans when we are converted to Christ by the Spirit (Acts 22:28, Revelation 5:9-10). Conversion to Christ does not transfer us from one culture or civilization to another. At the social level, this means there are not two cultures in a society, a secular culture and a Christian culture; there can only ever be one culture, which contains both kinds of people within it. We should embrace our civilizational membership as part of God’s good plan for human life. Otherwise we will be unable to embrace God’s continuing work through the social structures within our civilization.²⁰

But if citizenship is to be virtuous, we must not conform uncritically to the structures and systems we find in our civilization. The impact of the fall is pervasive, and there is no aspect of human civilization that is fully pleasing to God simply as it is. Without compromising our fundamental basis in affirming God’s continuing grace through social structures, we must integrate into all our social participation the imperative to change these structures. Our work in our homes, workplaces and communities should bring the relationships and institutions in these spheres more into conformity with God’s intentions for them. Otherwise we will end up simply accommodating ourselves to the fallenness of the surrounding culture.

¹⁸ See Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, Eerdmans, 1998; and Abraham Kuyper, *Wisdom and Wonder*, new translation, Christian’s Library Press, 2011.

¹⁹ To select a few from numerous references: family, economy and civil community are all affirmed in I Peter 2:13-3:7; on the family see also Ephesians 3:14-15; on the economy see also Colossians 3:23-24; on the civil community see also Romans 13:1-7.

²⁰ See Greg Forster, *Joy for the World*, Crossway, 2014 (forthcoming).

Our calling to challenge and change existing conditions in our homes, workplaces, and communities does not imply that we should rule our unbelieving neighbors or try to plan what everything in the world should look like. We have neither the wisdom, the power nor the right to undertake such ambitions. This is not a mission we undertake in our own strength.

Rather, we join ourselves and our labors to the restorative work God is doing in the world through both his creative and redemptive activities. Practically, this means finding opportunities to create positive change that are within the scope of our wisdom, power and responsibility. Without this transformative aspect, the calling to discipleship becomes a call to conformity.

Moreover, we are called to produce blessing, not merely to alleviate curse. The imperative to participate critically does not simply mean that we resist or alleviate sins, problems and burdens. The transformation that the world needs from us is primarily constructive, not negative or subversive. The Lord gave the world to humanity full of potential blessing, and it remains our role to cultivate more and more and more blessing out of it. This is why one of the key moral virtues we need to recover is productivity.

WE JOIN OURSELVES TO THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN THE WORLD.

While all human beings are called to virtue, the burden to participate critically is especially urgent for the church due to the unique work of the Spirit within us. In addition to the creation being more ultimate than the fall, our redemption also overcomes the fall, and Christians live out that redemption. Our discipleship cannot be complete unless our social membership and participation embody the change that the Holy Spirit is working within us. This is why a church practicing whole-life discipleship cannot help but have a transformative impact within whatever sphere of stewardship belongs to its members.

We should be mindful of the limits of our callings and not become “busybodies” (II Thessalonians 3:7, I Timothy 5:13). The church should not attempt to seize control of institutions and remake them at its will. But insofar as relationships and institutions legitimately come under our stewardship responsibility, we are called to make them more like the way they should be. And if we discern a calling, we should not be shy about following God into spaces we might not otherwise enter. While God doesn’t like busybodies, he does bless entrepreneurial thinking and enterprising, adaptive responses to challenges (Genesis 14:1-16 and 44:1-34, Ruth 4:1-6, I Samuel 17:31-50, Esther 4:1-9:19, Proverbs 31, Isaiah 43:19, Matthew 25:14-30, Acts 10:28-29 and 47-48, Acts 23:6-10 and 16-31, II Corinthians 11:32-33, II Timothy 1:7).

In short, an imperative of affirmation needs to be integrated with an imperative of transformation. Indeed, neither of these two imperatives can function well without the other. Our criticisms of existing social structures will not be accurate, credible or effective if they are not grounded upon a deeper affirmation of the legitimacy of those structures. And our affirmation will not be theologically or pastorally credible if it is not critical of existing social structures and (therefore) transformative. While the affirmation of sustaining grace comes first, the need for transformation is pervasive and must be present and accounted for in all our affirmation.

CONTEMPORARY LEADERS ON HOW THE GOSPEL SHAPES LIFE IN CIVILIZATION

Tim Keller: We can't not be involved in shaping culture.

"I am often asked: 'Should Christians be involved in shaping culture?' My answer is that we can't not be involved in shaping culture. To illustrate this, I offer a very sad example. In the years leading up to the Civil War many southerners resented the interference of the abolitionists, who were calling on Christians to stamp out the sin of slavery. In response, some churches began to assert that it was not the church's (nor Christians') job to try to "change culture" but only to preach the Gospel and see souls saved. The tragic irony was that these churches were shaping culture. Their very insistence that Christians should not be changing culture meant that those churches were supporting the social status quo. They were de facto endorsing the cultural arrangements of the Old South." ("Work and Cultural Renewal," Redeemer Report, January 2010)

Dallas Willard: Knowing Christ places you in the public square.

"Knowledge and the will to know, by their very nature, place one in the common arena of human life, in the "public square," as is now said. . . . Thinking of Christian faith as grounded in knowledge, and in some parts to be knowledge, is to . . . threaten the foundations of a painfully achieved compromise in social order, one that excludes religion from the domain of knowledge in order to exclude it in other respects. . . . The results of this radical shift with respect to the status of morality in life are abundantly seen in individual choices and lives. . . . But the most substantive manifestation of this shift in status – most revealing of its impact on life – is the fact that social and governmental policy decisions can no longer be reached, justified, and sustained on the basis of publicly recognized moral values and principles or rules." (Knowing Christ Today, p. 8, 32, 68-69)

Andy Crouch: We do our cultural work in the life and power of our God.

"What happens after youth ministry? What does it mean to be not just culturally aware but culturally responsible? Not just culture consumers or even just culture critics, but culture makers? Our newly regained cultural awareness means that we are not satisfied, as earlier generations might have been, with separating our faith from "worldly" activities. We want our lives – our whole lives – to matter for the Gospel. But what exactly does that mean? . . . We talk about "engaging," "impacting" and "transforming the culture" when in fact the people who most carefully study culture tend to stress instead how much we are transformed by it. . . . The worst thing we could do is follow that familiar advice to "pray as if it all depended on God, and work as if it all depended on you." Rather, we need to become people who work as if it all depends on God – because it does, and because that is the best possible news. We work for, indeed work in the life and power of, a gracious and infinitely resourceful Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer." (Culture Making, p. 10, 12)

Brett Johnson: Don't "balance" compartments; life should be an integrated whole.

"At a time when we are supposed to do it all, 24x7, and advances in technology such as social networking tend to blur the lines between personal and business, people are asking how to balance work and the rest of life. Our view: balance is bogus. It is a futile pursuit, an elusive dream. Integration, on the other hand, is the philosophy that wins at the end of the day. Life should not be constrained by balancing the compartments of "work" and "home" and "social life" and "fitness." Life is designed as an integrated whole and convergence – how to integrate your career, community, creativity and calling – presupposes integration. Bottom line: as tough as it may be, forget balance, embrace integration." ("Work-Life Integration," www.inst.net/challenges/integrate.html)

Wayne Grudem: Transformed lives produce transformed families, businesses, societies.

"Forgiveness of sins is not the only message of the Gospel. That is because Jesus is looking for transformed lives and through them a transformed world. . . . The good news of the Gospel will result in changed lives, but Jesus wants that to result in changed families as well. And when the Gospel changes lives, it should also result in changed neighborhoods. And changed schools. And changed businesses. And changed societies. . . . What parts of the Bible are left out of your preaching by the idea that you're going to "just preach the Gospel"? . . . The great freedoms that citizens have in the United States came only as a result of great sacrifice on the part of millions of others. . . . Is it right that we simply enjoy these freedoms while giving back to our nation nothing in return?" (Politics According to the Bible, p. 47, 74-75)

4. CULTURAL MANIFESTATION: THE CHURCH INFUSES *shalom* INTO CIVILIZATION

God intends the church to be distinct from the world (I John 2:15-17). But he also intends that the church have a transformative impact on the societies in which it is embedded – and not exclusively through evangelism (Matthew 5:13-16). If the work of the Spirit in us produces whole-life discipleship, if that discipleship incorporates virtuous citizenship, and if our virtuous citizenship integrates affirmation and transformation, the end result will be a cultural manifestation of the Spirit's work in us.

Cultural manifestation of the Spirit takes place within human civilization rather than outside it, because there is nowhere else for it to take place; that's why it needs to be grounded in an affirmation of God's grace at work within human civilization. It is part of the church's job to participate in civilization, not withdraw. However, cultural manifestation does not accommodate itself to the fallenness of its civilization. It exercises a distinctive transformational influence that reorients social structures to their proper purposes. And yet, because the church respects the God-given integrity of the creation order outside the church, this transformative agenda is not imposed on an unwilling society, nor is it pursued with hostility toward cultural activity outside the church. Rather, it is exercised through cooperative participation in the social structures that we already share with our unbelieving neighbors.

Cultural manifestation can be understood as infusing *shalom* into civilization. *Shalom* in its strictest meaning represents the full flourishing of human life in all aspects, as God intended it to be. Obviously the fallen world cannot achieve *shalom* in this sense apart from redemptive grace. But although the fall redirected the world against *shalom*, God's redeeming work transforms people in a way that reorients them toward *shalom*. This redirection will be fully realized only at the end of history. However, in the present life we experience a foretaste of the perfect eschatological *shalom*, and this foretaste is also (by metonymy or association) called *shalom*.

This transformation of the heart in believers always results in active service to others in civilizational activities (Matthew 25:14-46). As a result, wherever redeemed and redirected people are present, human civilization will be impacted by their redirection. When Christians engage in civilizational activities, they use these activities as vehicles for sharing their *shalom* with the world by reorienting its social processes toward *shalom*. In this way, even those who are not directly transformed by the Holy Spirit benefit from, and are influenced by, the *shalom* of those who are. This indirect experience of *shalom* does not create a redeeming relationship with Jesus Christ, but its impact bears a likeness to the impact of that redeeming relationship, and is therefore (again by metonymy or association) also called *shalom*.²¹

It is not for nothing that the Old Testament exilic community is told that its *shalom* is dependent upon its efforts to infuse *shalom* into the life of the civilization within which it has been exiled

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²¹ For discussion of *shalom* in these three different but related senses, see Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, Crossway, 2012; and Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, Crossway, 2011. Sherman emphasizes the continuity of the three senses while DeYoung and Gilbert emphasize their discontinuity, but both books acknowledge both aspects and the inevitable tension between them.

(Jeremiah 29:7). We in the New Testament exilic church face an analogous situation. We are called to whole-life discipleship rather than only to religious works; our discipleship will not be whole-life unless it incorporates virtuous citizenship; and our citizenship will not be virtuous unless it integrates affirmation and transformation; and if it does, the resulting cultural manifestation of the Spirit's work will infuse *shalom* into civilization.

These three different senses of the word *shalom* – the perfect eschatological fulfillment, the foretaste experienced in the church, and the secondary impact of that foretaste created in the world by the participation of Christians in civilizational activities – must be carefully distinguished to avoid confusing or conflating them. In particular, the first two types are works of God's special grace to his people in Christ, while the third involves Christians cooperating with God's grace outside the redeemed community in the church.

Yet the continuity between all three senses of *shalom* must also be acknowledged. Creating the third type of *shalom* – infusing *shalom* into civilization – is an integral part of the church's job, for the reasons outlined above.

The work of the Spirit in us has sometimes been compared, by a limited analogy, to the joining of human and divine in the Incarnation. We don't join the divine nature in the same way as Christ, but we do become "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4). God takes up permanent residence inside us (II Corinthians 13:5). We are his priests (Revelation 5:10), his temples (I Corinthians 6:19) and his altars (Hebrews 13:10), offering ourselves up as living sacrifices throughout our daily lives (Romans 12:1). Because we are social creatures, this limited analogy can be applied to civilizational life as well. Eternal and immaterial divinity joins with temporal and material humanity in the Incarnation; in an analogous way, the work of the Holy Spirit in our minds, hearts and lives joins with the life of our civilization. This happens not through some narrowly defined "cultural agenda" in the church, but simply through our daily discipleship as participants in civilization.²²

The imperative of cultural manifestation creates challenges that are complex and often misunderstood. Efforts to live out the calling of God in human civilization that are based on inadequate approaches to these problems can do great damage. To shrink from these challenges, however, is equally damaging – and inconsistent with whole-life discipleship.

5. CULTURAL MANIFESTATION IN INDIVIDUALS, THE CHURCH GATHERED, AND THE CHURCH SCATTERED

Since we are social creatures, achieving virtuous citizenship for isolated individuals is insufficient. The calling to virtuous citizenship must be lived out by every individual in his or her own life; cooperative efforts will fail if the individuals involved do not personally "own" this calling. However, the church as a community must also practice virtuous citizenship. The imperative of cultural manifestation requires the church to understand how it relates itself as a body to the social order of civilization.

The church as a community exists in two forms, and these forms have different roles to play in achieving virtuous citizenship for the church as a body. The "church gathered" is the organizational church – clergy, Sunday worship, small study groups, etc. The "church scattered" is the organic

²² See Greg Thompson, "The Church in Our Time," New City Commons Foundation, 2012.

church – the dynamic and informal interplay of all the ways in which Christians relate to one another and support one another in building up godly lives together. The boundaries between the two can sometimes be ambiguous in practice, but the distinction matters because the two forms of the church relate differently to cultural manifestation.

The church gathered does not normally create cultural manifestation in a direct way. That would require the church gathered to take control of functions that properly belong to other institutions in human civilization such as families, businesses and government. The role of the church gathered in cultural manifestation, particularly for pastors, is to call Christians to virtuous citizenship and guide them in discerning how to live out that call. Issuing God’s Gospel call to whole-life discipleship is one of the central tasks of the church gathered, and no other institution could replace its unique role. Carrying out that job requires the church gathered to call congregants to virtuous citizenship and train them to discern how best to steward that call.²³

Actually creating cultural manifestation in response to God’s call is the role of the church scattered. As they participate in the structures of civilization, Christians should work together in intentional, systematic ways to help one another answer the call to virtuous citizenship. While every individual can practice virtuous citizenship in his or her personal context, only a deliberate cooperative effort in the church scattered can create highly distinct social embodiments of virtuous citizenship and demonstrate to the surrounding culture the transformative power of the Spirit in social life. The church scattered can also call attention back to the church gathered; if our neighbors ask us how and why we have the power to live the way we do, we can not only engage in personal evangelism, but invite them to come to church and find out.²⁴

6. ECONOMIC FLOURISHING: WORK AND THE MAKING OF CIVILIZATION

Economic work is the engine of human civilization. Obviously civilization involves much more than just economics, yet nothing in civilization happens without economic work – just as a car is much more than an engine, but does nothing without one.

This makes the economy one of the most important places where the life of the church meets the life of human civilization. Because economic work makes civilization run and Christians spend most of their lives doing economic work, the workplace is one of the most important places for the church to build cultural manifestation. When Christians integrate their economic work with their discipleship, they not only live more fully into the calling of God in their own lives, but their potential for transformative impact on civilization becomes enormous. By contrast, when the church is ineffective in creating cultural manifestation in the workplace, not only do Christians wander from whole-life discipleship, but civilization loses its grounding in the call to serve others with our work.

Individuals become leaders in their workplaces when they do their work to cultivate blessing for their neighbors. Regardless of their formal position or rank, everyone in the workplace becomes aware of those special people who prioritize doing the job well and serving customers, coworkers, the business, and the community. These individuals are looked to as leaders and examples by their peers, trusted by their clients, relied upon by their superiors, and willingly

²³ See Greg Thompson, “The Church in Our Time,” New City Commons Foundation, 2012.

²⁴ See Abraham Kuyper, *Wisdom and Wonder*, new translation, Christian’s Library Press, 2011; and Abraham Kuyper, “Rooted and Grounded,” Christian’s Library Press, 2013.

followed as leaders by those who report to them. This is what it looks like when virtuous citizenship creates cultural manifestation, and it makes these individuals cultural influencers.

But the church scattered can greatly magnify this effect by working together to edify and empower one another. “Lone Ranger Christians” tend not to make much progress in discipleship, and are unlikely to become the kind of virtuous citizens they ought to be. Moreover, a single Christian may have a large sphere of responsibility or a small one, but however large it is it will be limited. His or her power to work transformation will be equally limited. Networks of Christians working together toward shared goals can coordinate their work in their various spheres of responsibility, bringing a much greater number of social structures under the influence of virtuous citizenship. This leads to more effective transformation and thus to purer and better cultural manifestation of the Spirit’s work.²⁵

The church gathered also has an indispensable role. God has appointed the church gathered to issue his calling to his people and to teach them to discern how to answer it (Hebrews 10:23-25). Full and wise discernment of how to create virtuous citizenship requires not only the economic and cultural knowledge of the laity, but also the deep theological knowledge of the clergy. In places where the church gathered is not yet doing its job on this point, the church scattered need not wait for permission to act; but neither should the church scattered think that it can carry out this task with full effectiveness in isolation from the church gathered.

While this calling applies to all, it weighs heavier on those who exercise more power and responsibility (Luke 12:48). Business leaders have a greater stewardship in workplaces due to their special gift for organizing and directing the civilization-building work of many people at once. This puts them in a position to control the conditions and structures of economic work. They are called to use this stewardship to create cultural manifestation in the workplace, not by formally “Christianizing” business but by bringing the workplace into conformity with God’s standards.

Answering this call will require partnership between clergy and laity. Unfortunately, the decline of whole-life discipleship in our time has often driven a wedge between these groups, and this alienation gets worse as one travels further up the scale of power and influence. (The most comprehensive study to date found that almost two-thirds of Christians in elite social positions were not active in local churches.)²⁶ The Christians whose full-time job is to preach the word of God and the Christians whose full-time job is to produce civilization typically don’t talk much to one other, don’t understand one other, and even have difficulty trusting one other. And we wonder why the church has so little impact on civilization! It will be a tough but exciting challenge for the church to examine how to pursue cultural manifestation in these areas.

²⁵ See Greg Thompson, “The Church in Our Time,” New City Commons Foundation, 2012.

²⁶ D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, Oxford, 2007, p. 10.

Part Two

BEARING WITNESS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

*How can churches integrate
theology with work and economics?*

III.

“He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered.”

- Psalm 111:4

THE HISTORY OF THEOLOGY AND ECONOMICS REVEALS OUR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES.

In addition to making us social creatures, God made us historical creatures. You cannot get to know a person except by knowing that person’s actions – that is to say, the person’s history. The same is true of societies; to know them, you must know their history.

This shouldn’t be surprising to us, since Christianity distinctly teaches us to learn from history and live within it. The other world religions either negate the world of history by denying its reality or its full dignity, or else seek to transcend history through myths, rituals, philosophies and/or traditions that cultivate an illusion of timelessness. Christianity, by contrast, locates its message, including the accomplishment of redemption itself and our calling to live in response to it, within history. The great answer to the mysteries of human life is not, for us, an escape from history into contemplation of eternal truths, obedience to an eternal code, or reenactments of eternally recurring rituals. It is a set of unique historical events – creation, fall, redemption, glorification – and a call to respond to them through our own participation in history.

Just as the historical narrative of the Bible is essential to the Gospel, the history of the church and human civilization is essential to the task of integrating theology with work and the economy. The meaning and content of virtuous citizenship in our particular society is shaped by its particular history. Abstract ethical principles and general admonitions to “be good” are insufficient. Christians are called to become students of history and society, in order to discern what God is calling us to be and do within them.

1. THE ECONOMY BEFORE CHRISTIANITY: THE DUALISTIC MINDSET

Before the spread of Christianity, civilizations in general – including the one from which ours traces its ancient history – mostly embraced a dualistic mindset that separated the world of meaning from the world of material things. This statement is admittedly a broad generalization; it is not a universal assertion, still less a deductive filter through which all history should be interpreted. However, it does appear that without the revelation of God in Christ, most human thinking seems to naturally gravitate toward such dualism.²⁷

This had far-reaching consequences for economic life. The economy was viewed and practiced as a material system, distinct from systems of meaning such as religion, philosophy, art, politics, etc. The economy was concerned with the sustaining and flourishing of humanity’s material life; it provided no direct connection to the higher plane in which meaning resides.

²⁷ See Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, Eerdmans, 1998

This dualistic mindset presupposed, and reinforced, a dehumanizing understanding of human dignity. On the one hand, it made merely material ends the natural purpose of life for the great majority of people. On the other hand, it implied that higher human fulfillments could only be produced in isolation from economic work – so society developed aristocratic classes of rulers, priests, artists, etc. who claimed to need lives of “leisure” and were thus entitled to live off the labor of others.²⁸

The result was a social system in which human dignity was unequally distributed. Those we might call “meaning workers,” the rulers and priests and so forth, defined the meaning of life and controlled the socially accepted boundaries of behavior within which the “material workers” had to live.

THIS DUALISTIC MINDSET PRESUPPOSED, AND REINFORCED, A DEHUMANIZING UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN DIGNITY.

As a further consequence, in such societies dignity was not intrinsic to the human person. Rather, people only acquired dignity insofar as they participated in systems of meaning. Each person’s dignity was therefore associated not with human personhood, but with fulfilling the social role assigned to that person. The individual human being was merely a cog in the social machine.

One practical result was oppression. People were radically less free to follow the calling of God for their lives because they were neither free to control their work (which was assigned to them) nor the fruits of their work (which were extracted by the aristocratic classes of meaning workers). In comparing the personal liberties of the modern world with the dehumanizing restraints of the ancient world, we often focus on the freedom to marry whom we choose, worship in churches that align with

our consciences and be ruled by laws and officeholders accountable to us. But the freedom to discern what work we are called to do is equally fundamental to human dignity.

Another practical result was extreme poverty for all but a tiny few. Examining the first century Roman Empire, for example, a typical scholarly estimate finds that 68% of the population lived at or below the very minimum economic level to sustain human life, and another 22% lived close to that level.²⁹ This extreme poverty was typical of ancient societies generally around the world.³⁰ Under all the burdens created by the dualistic mindset, the potential of economic work to create blessing and well-being was radically truncated. Thus the spiritual poverty of humanity without Christ universally resulted in material poverty as well.

²⁸ For the most classic statement of this view, see Aristotle, *Politics*, especially Book VIII, Section 3. Aristotle explicitly connects the superiority of the life of leisure to a dualistic anthropology, dividing the care of the body (work) from the care of the soul (leisure) – e.g. Book I, Section 1 and Book VII, Section 15.

²⁹ Peter Oaks, “Using Economic Evidence in Interpretation of Early Christian Texts,” in *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception*, ed. Bruce Longenecker and Kelly Liebengood, Eerdmans, 2009, p. 30.

³⁰ See Joyce Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution*, Norton, 2011, p. 5-6; and Angus Maddison, *Contours of the World Economy*, Oxford, 2007.

2. PRODUCTIVITY AND OPPORTUNITY: CHRISTIANITY HELPED CATALYZE THE GROWING ECONOMY

Christianity, with its doctrines of the image of God and the intrinsic dignity of the person, challenged this whole system at its roots. In addition to the Gospel of redemption, Christianity carried to all nations an alternative mindset that God had been building up among the Israelites for centuries. Although the New Testament church is not a distinct civilization as the Israelites were, it embodies and proclaims a distinct approach to civilization that grows out of the Old Testament and the community shaped by it. The theology, anthropology, ethics and sociology of the Old Testament – especially in the goodness of creation, the central role of work in the purpose of human life, the integration of body and soul in human personhood, and the integration of the material and spiritual in social life – equipped Christianity to challenge dualism comprehensively.

Even more radically, Christianity challenged dualism through the doctrine of the Incarnation. God not only became a man, but actually arranges his relationship to the whole human race and the entire created order through actions he accomplished within time/space history. This compels a total reorganization of our conceptions of how time and eternity, being and becoming, matter and meaning relate to one another. Dualism is challenged in its deepest roots.³¹

As people came to adopt Christian thought and practice as the basis of social behavior, the oppressive social structures of the ancient world gave way – over time, very slowly – before this transformed understanding of human dignity. People were gradually given more and more opportunity to define and own their work, and dispose of the fruits of that work themselves.

Other causes were important to these social changes as well, of course. New knowledge, new technical accomplishments, continued reform of oppressive social structures, and many other developments contributed. But Christianity was one of the central factors; it contributed the coherent mindset that made these social changes intelligible and legitimate.

The greater opportunity for productive work created by the influence of Christianity helped catalyze something new in the world: an economy that grows over time. Economic workers began to produce substantially more wealth than they consumed – a phenomenon unprecedented in the history of civilization. After so many centuries mired in stagnant poverty, God's world began to grow economically.

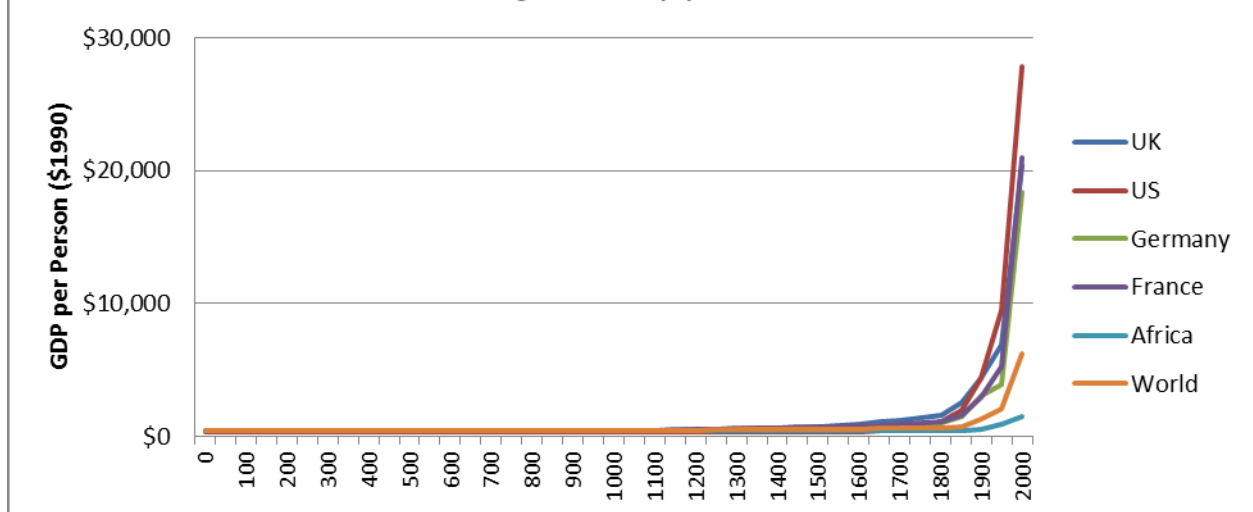
Britain was the first country to begin sustained growth, starting in the 16th century; British per-capita wealth increased by about ten times between 1500 and 1950, and then tripled again between 1950 and 2003 (for a total increase of 30 times between 1500 and 2003). A very similar pattern of sudden, sustained, rapid growth spread to America in the 18th century, Germany and France in the 19th century, and then to nations around the world.³²

³¹ See Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, Eerdmans, 1998.

³² Angus Maddison, *Contours of the World Economy*, Oxford, 2007, Table A.7, p. 382.

The Modern Economy

Stewardship Mindset Creates Growth - New Challenges & Opportunities



Data from Angus Maddison, *Contours of the World Economy*, Oxford, 2007, Table A.7, p. 382.

Institutions specifically organized to facilitate economic flourishing (such as businesses and banks) emerged for the first time during the Middle Ages, starting in 12th century Italy and then spreading across Europe. Christianity's teaching on the dignity of the human person and the transcendence of the moral law helped give these institutions freedom to thrive.³³

After the Reformation, Protestant doctrine dramatically accelerated economic growth. In particular, the doctrine of calling – that we are all individually called to serve God in everything we do, as against the view (represented by such figures as Bernard of Clairvaux) that only religious activities truly respond to God's call – made transformational economic flourishing possible.³⁴ In countless ways, from the breaking of the strict secular/sacred divide to the general lifting of moral standards to the freedom of each individual to choose his or her own profession, the explosion of economic growth in the modern world was facilitated by social conditions galvanized by the Reformation.

The blessings of this transformation are so enormous as to be almost beyond reckoning. Most obviously, the curse of economic poverty is being dramatically rolled back around the world. Globally, the number of people living on a dollar per day or less dropped 80% between 1970 and 2006; measurements of living standards have more than doubled in the same period.³⁵ As for the developed world, the average American lives far better than even the wealthy did in biblical times. Thanks to economic growth, in developed nations the general population is "the

³³ See Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason*, Random House, 2006.

³⁴ See William Platcher, ed., *Callings*, Eerdmans, 2005.

³⁵ Maxim Pinkovskiy and Xavier Sala-i-Martin, "Parametric Estimations of the World Distribution of Income," National Bureau of Economic Research, October 2009; other researchers' estimates yield different numbers, but all estimates agree that the drop in global poverty was very large.

wealthy,” in biblical terms. This wealth entails great responsibility, and is the occasion of many sins and failures, but in itself it is a great blessing.

However, the spiritual benefits of economic growth far outweigh the merely material benefits. As the economy grows, people have more and more freedom and opportunity to follow the calling of God in their lives, and are more and more empowered to serve their neighbors more and more effectively. In a primitive economy, the range of opportunities to create blessing for others with our work is drastically limited. As the economy flourishes, a greater variety of opportunities for work and service becomes available; thus the effectiveness of our service to others becomes ever larger, and we can ever more fully and deeply find the particular calling of God for our lives.

Christianity also challenged the distinction between meaning workers and material workers. Because the human person is intrinsically dignified, all work is meaningful because it is done by human beings and serves human needs. All workers can participate directly in the system of meaning if they set their minds and hearts on the true meaning of their work; no workers will truly participate in meaning if they do not do so.

The explosive emerging of economic growth has also created unique spiritual challenges, temptations, and occasions of sin. All blessings are double-edged when they fall into the hands of sinful humanity. There is no form of flourishing, not even religious flourishing, that we do not abuse to some extent. Sinful abuses of economic growth have always been present and have often been heinous. But these abuses must be understood within a framework that acknowledges economic growth for what it is: a form of human flourishing. When we abuse it, it is a blessing we are abusing, not a curse.

3. THE STEWARDSHIP MINDSET: A KEY CONNECTION BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND THE ECONOMY

The theological force that contributed to this new and unique phenomenon of economic flourishing can be summarized as the emergence of a “stewardship mindset.” For a civilization influenced by Christianity, the fundamental economic fact is not that people have material needs, but that they have talents – and a calling to serve others with those talents (Matthew 25:14-46, Luke 19:1-27, Ephesians 2:10).

The concept of stewardship, grounded in the calling to fruitful cultivation of the creation order in service, harmonizes the biblical and theological principles relevant to economics.³⁶ God owns and has dominion over the entire created order, and he has appointed human beings to serve as his managers in trust, calling them to use this responsibility to cultivate the creation by blessing one another. All are therefore responsible to God for the productive cultivation of whatever portion of creation comes under their care. This responsibility should be central to each person’s identity and the structure of all life activities.

The calling to fruitfully serve other people’s needs makes work intrinsically meaningful and breaks down the division between meaning and materiality. The fact that work is something human beings do is not nearly so important as the fact that it is something they do *for one another*. Economic workers participate directly in the system of meaning as they strive to do their jobs well and productively serve the needs of others – provided that service to others is their motivation.

³⁶ See *The NIV Stewardship Study Bible*, Zondervan, 2009.

In the stewardship mindset, the meaningfulness of work no longer arises from what kind of work it is, such as the extent to which it involves intellect or the manipulation of symbols, but from why and how well we do it. A professor who writes a groundbreaking book about the meaning of life merely to satisfy a private interest in the meaning of life (and perhaps get tenure) actually has less meaning in his or her work than the plumber who comes to his or her house and fixes the faucet in order to make a productive contribution to the good of others.

Indeed, because the calling of God implies that serving others is the proper focus of social and civilizational life, and because human beings are inescapably social and civilizational creatures, the stewardship mindset means we cannot strictly divide contemplative life from practical life. Contemplation is of course important and necessary, but our contemplations will be spiritually spoiled if we disconnect them from the calling to active service that is constitutive for the meaning of our lives as social creatures.

It was the stewardship mindset that first led economic workers to produce more than they consume. The secret miracle behind the flourishing economy is that human beings are capable of *creating* wealth, not just moving it around from one person to another. When people are consciously motivated to serve the needs of others, and make that the focus of their economic lives, the total amount of wealth gets larger.

This wealth creation, and therefore economic growth, only occurs when people are understood as, and are treated as, beings who are both capable of and responsible for creating value by serving others. Although this anthropological conception has now spread to a wide variety of cultural contexts, Christianity – with its doctrine that human beings are designed in the image of a God who creates and who calls us to serve – was its most important historical source. Christianity teaches us to view every individual not merely as a consumer of wealth but as someone God has gifted with civilization-making abilities and called to use those abilities to serve and bless others. So the stewardship mindset created cultural structures oriented toward productive service to human needs.

4. THE MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE OF THEOLOGY AND ECONOMICS

How then do we explain the widespread disconnect between faith and work, theology and economics, in our own time? It didn't come from nowhere. It has been driven by the reemergence of the dualistic mindset in our civilization. Since we are social creatures, the thinking and practice of the church is impacted when the surrounding culture changes. The church often doesn't become aware of this impact until it has created serious dysfunctions – as is now the case. In educational institutions, the divide between our understanding of faith and our understanding of work is expressed by a radical separation of the discipline of theology from the economic disciplines, including economics proper but also business schools, professional schools generally and other disciplines.

At first, theology and economics were seamlessly integrated. It was theologians who first seriously analyzed economic phenomena in a new way, laying the foundations of modern economics. In the 13th century, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas noticed signs of the new economic flourishing occurring in Italy and began to wrestle with its theological implications. They wrote at length on the issues economists now analyze: price theory, monetary theory and so forth. Albertus developed the insight, which was picked up and magnified by Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*,

that prices reflect the subjective valuation of buyers and sellers rather than the costs of production. This insight remains a cornerstone of modern price theory, and is one of the key premises of economic systems that sustain growth.³⁷ Other theologians, including Duns Scotus, Marsilius of Padua, William of Ockham, John Wycliffe, Gabriel Biel and (perhaps most importantly) the Salamanca school, also wrote what would now be recognized as economic analysis.³⁸ This analysis continued in the Reformation era; most of the major reformers wrestled with economics, most notably Heinrich Bullinger and Richard Baxter.

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Theologians undertook the study of economics because they wanted to help Christians figure out the most effective ways to serve the needs of others and create human flourishing for all. By integrating their theological knowledge base with the emerging economic knowledge base being produced by new institutions, they provided a unique perspective that businesses and investors couldn't have produced on their own. And as they observed changing economic practices whose results didn't seem to square with the established theological consensus, they rethought that consensus, often leading to fruitful progress in theology.

However, after the Enlightenment, the economic disciplines – like other fields of inquiry that had their origins in theology – were largely separated from theology. The Enlightenment's new emphasis on empirical investigation was good and very much needed. However, the decline of interaction between theology and economics diminished both fields. Economics (like the other sciences) eventually lost its metaphysical grounding and adopted materialistic and utilitarian assumptions. Theology lost its traditional commitment to a robust doctrine of creation, and its understanding of God's purposes and activities in the world beyond the scope of redemption and the church.

As a result, the reductive idea that the economy is primarily about money, rather than about people serving each other's needs, was uncritically accepted on both sides of the divide. An easy division of labor was adopted. Theologians would worry about the care of the soul, and economists (along with the other scientists) would worry about the care of the body. The effects of this reductionism are equally on display in the economic crises of our civilization and the spiritual crises of our churches.

5. ECONOMICS WITHOUT THEOLOGY: MATERIALISM RETURNS

After the Enlightenment, materialism began to regain ground in economics. One key turning point was the work of Adam Smith. He borrowed numerous important insights from earlier, theologically grounded economic thought, and by translating this older wisdom into the new idiom of Enlightenment science he did a great deal to promote its influence and increase human flourishing in the economy. On the other hand, mixed in with these traditional insights in his work were a number of reductionist assumptions about human nature that the older theologians would have rejected. His ethics overemphasized enlightened self-interest, and he held a mechanistic view of

³⁷ Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason*, Random House, 2006, p. 65; see also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part, Question 77, Article 1.

³⁸ See John Mueller, *Redeeming Economics*, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2010; and Stephen Grabill, "Introduction," in *Sourcebook in Late-Scholastic Monetary Theory*, ed. Stephen Grabill, Rowman and Littlefield, 2007.

history in which material conditions drive human behavior. As a result, just as the new social system of economic growth was really coming into its own, it incorporated materialistic intellectual tendencies that reduced its potential and sowed the seeds of future crises.³⁹

These flaws would reach their full flower in Marx. The economic theories of Marx are dehumanizing because they take Adam Smith's materialistic tendencies and develop them to their fullest expression, while jettisoning the deeper metaphysical wisdom Smith had inherited (however imperfectly) from his theologically informed forebears. Marxist economics does not dehumanize and enslave because of any particular argument it makes or conclusion it reaches; the dehumanization is intrinsic to its most basic intellectual categories.⁴⁰

Marx's strict dichotomy between "labor" and "capital" is false and pernicious. It breeds class resentment and fuels conflict in the economy, especially when it leads to public policy that forces employers and employees into artificially created confrontations. Business owners who exercise stewardship over their businesses are laborers; their work contributes to the success of the company in essentially the same way as their employees'. Investment is itself a form of labor – an active use of talents in service to others. It is true that absentee stockholders are not contributing their labor to the flourishing of the business, and their role in the economy can create important challenges. Businesses need to have some freedom to look beyond the quarterly earnings reports so cherished by absentee stockholders, and steward their long-term flourishing. But the relevant divide is between those who do and don't contribute their labor to the business, not between employers and employees.

In the 20th century, materialism regained dominance in the field of economics even where Marx was rejected. This was especially due to the transformative impact of John Maynard Keynes. Reductionist anthropology and Benthamite utilitarianism came to dominate the field. Keynes, directly reversing the older wisdom, taught that economic growth is driven by increases in consumption (i.e. satisfaction of desires) rather than increases in production (i.e. service to others). Society's leaders should therefore strive to encourage ever greater consumption. By consuming more, you benefit not only yourself but others. So shopping sprees were transformed from an indulgence into a social duty, and unlimited consumer desire came to be seen as the behavioral basis of the system. Saving money and avoiding debt – key virtues in the old order – were rejected as the superstitious idols of a backward religion. Even more important, businesses were seen as motivated not by a desire to serve others and create human flourishing that finds deep roots in human nature, but by essentially irrational and inexplicable "animal spirits."⁴¹

The dominance of Keynes did not last, but the triumph of materialism did. The major alternative to Keynesianism, the neo-classical school led by Milton Friedman, actually shares most of Keynes's worst assumptions. Starting from the same set of reductionist anthropological premises and adopting the same utilitarian ethical goals, it argues that those goals are better served by free market policy rather than the interventionist, managerial policy favored by Keynes. Friedman is not so much a rival to Keynes as his rebellious son.⁴²

³⁹ For discussions of the historical issues and further citations see John Mueller, *Redeeming Economics*, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2010; and Stephen Grabill, "Introduction," in *Sourcebook in Late-Scholastic Monetary Theory*, ed. Stephen Grabill, Rowman and Littlefield, 2007.

⁴⁰ See Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, Madison, 1982.

⁴¹ See Victor Claar and Robin Klay, *Economics in Christian Perspective*, InterVarsity, 2007, p. 126-142.

⁴² See Martin Calkins and Jonathan Wight, "The Ethical Lacunae in Friedman's Concept of the Manager," *Journal of Markets and Morality*, Fall 2008; Daniel Rush Finn, "On the Choice of Method in Economics," *Journal of Markets and*

The Austrian school of economics also has not freed itself from materialism. The Austrian school has begun to reconstruct some of the older, more robust grounds of economic anthropology – most noticeably in its insistence that all human behavior is teleological. Yet most Austrian economic analysis assumes a radically individualistic anthropology that ignores the role of social relationships in constituting the human person. And other influences, especially the explicitly anti-theistic metaphysics of several of its most important intellectual leaders, leave the Austrian school in need of critical dialogue with theology.⁴³

6. THEOLOGY WITHOUT ECONOMICS: CREATION DIMINISHED

Meanwhile, theology became less concerned with the world of natural human life outside the church. As the study of nature – creation – migrated to the sciences, the doctrine of creation became less and less important to theology.⁴⁴ In the 20th century its presence shrank until it was probably less noticed than in any other age of the church.⁴⁵

The decline of the doctrine of creation brought with it a decline of the idea that God sustains and works through social structures by grace. Theology lost its knowledge of, and interest in, the theological significance of human life and civilization – except in a few cases where these were seen to intersect with redemptive activity within the church. God's continuing creative activity in social structures outside the church went mostly unacknowledged.⁴⁶

This collapse of the doctrine of creation explains why the church has been unable, for at least a century, to find its *shalom* by seeking the *shalom* of the city. In particular, American evangelicals have sometimes tended toward social isolationism because doctrinal ignorance about creation has left them with no basis for explaining why God might want the church to have an impact on what happens in the larger culture outside it, other than to evangelize (in the narrowest sense of that term).

Evangelicals always knew something was wrong with isolationism, as Carl Henry observed when he wrote of their “uneasy conscience” about it. However, efforts to overcome isolationism in the 20th century were inadequate. Most major attempts to “change the world” have not sufficiently avoided the pitfalls we outlined in the earlier section on virtuous citizenship. Some evangelicals conceive of the church's role in civilization in terms of a struggle for control in a war to defeat and capture unbelievers. Others have over-accommodated to cultural norms outside the church, uncritically identifying the *shalom* of civilization with some preexisting political or social agenda – including agendas from both progressive and conservative sources.⁴⁷

Morality, Fall 2000; and Normal Barry and Dennis McCann, “Controversy: Do Corporations Have Any Responsibility Beyond Making a Profit?” *Journal of Markets and Morality*, Spring 2000 (includes four articles).

⁴³ See Robert Garnett, Jr., “Philanthropy, Markets and Commercial Society,” *Journal of Markets and Morality*, Fall 2008; and Scott Beaulier and David Prychitko, “Does Morality Hamper the Market Process?” *Journal of Markets and Morality*, Spring 2001; and Daniel Rush Finn, “On the Choice of Method in Economics,” *Journal of Markets and Morality*, Fall 2000.

⁴⁴ See Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, Eerdmans, 1998.

⁴⁵ See Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing*, Baker, 2004.

⁴⁶ See Os Guinness, *The Call*, Thomas Nelson, 2003.

⁴⁷ See James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World*, Oxford, 2010; and Greg Thompson, “The Church in Our Time,” New City Commons Foundation, 2012.

Both errors originate from the same source as the isolationism they seek to overcome: an inadequate doctrinal grasp of creation. Isolationism fails to grasp that the church is always already inside the created social system of civilization, not outside it. Approaches based on a struggle for control of civilization fail to respect the integrity of human civilization apart from God's redemptive activity – an integrity it possesses as a result of God's creative activity. Over-accommodation, meanwhile, fails to distinguish adequately between creative and redemptive activity, assuming that we have done our job to promote the *shalom* of the city when we find the right preexisting agendas (usually defined either by progressive or conservative ideology) and support them.

7. THE AMERICAN CONTEXT: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE ENTERPRISE SOCIETY

American civilization poses unique opportunities and challenges. More than any other nation, America was founded upon a commitment to freedom of religion. No approach to relating theology and civilization in the American context can succeed without taking this unique situation into account.

Religious freedom is not just a single law or policy; it is a comprehensive new model of society in which civic solidarity is decoupled from religious solidarity. George Washington wrote to the Hebrew Congregation at Newport that America was distinguished from Europe most fundamentally by the social ethic that went beyond legal “toleration” of religious differences to require the active cultivation of a shared public “good will” among all those who “demean themselves as good citizens.”⁴⁸ This vision of a society in which civic social bonds are not dependent upon religious bonds has a formative influence on the structure of the entire social order.

Freedom of religion finds its roots in the 16th and 17th century wars of religion. When it first grew to prominence, Christianity had become an official, state-endorsed religion. All societies until that time had maintained social consensus on public morality through an official community religion; early Christianity adopted this model because no alternative had ever existed, and there was not yet any felt need to change it. But then the Reformation created persistent social disagreement about what “Christianity” was. Due to the interdependence of church and state, this theological dispute caused an ongoing series of violent political crises. Freedom of religion was an attempt to maintain social consensus on public morality while disentangling the state from confessional theological commitments. This social model found its most distinct and profound expression in the American founding.

Freedom of religion is not based upon a morally neutral state. Social systems cannot be morally neutral since they are composed of human relationships, and relationships among human beings can never be morally neutral. Freedom of religion seeks to base the social order on a moral consensus that is shared across religious groups. Moral rules governing civic behavior (e.g. don't kill, don't steal, keep your promises, help your neighbor) are agreed upon and embodied in the social order, but the metaphysical and spiritual basis of those rules is not.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ George Washington, “Reply to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island,” August 17, 1790.

⁴⁹ See Greg Forster, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus*, Cambridge, 2005.

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This social order is sometimes depicted as a product of Christian thinking and sometimes as a product of anti-Christian thinking. In fact, it was both simultaneously. There are biblical grounds for this approach to the social order in the doctrines of creation and continuing grace. There are also naturalistic grounds for it in many strands of Enlightenment thought that attribute an autonomous integrity to nature, including human nature. These Christian and anti-Christian lines of thought both culminate in the conclusion that social consensus on public morality can be maintained in a society without a shared religion. And, in fact, both lines of thought were strongly influential in the American founding.

Because freedom of religion respects the individual conscience, the establishment of a civilization fundamentally dedicated to religious freedom nurtured the growth of many other freedoms as well. It was in the American context that the freedom to marry whom we choose, the freedom to pursue the work we are called to do rather than the work assigned to us, the freedom to be ruled by laws and officeholders accountable to us, and many other personal liberties reached their fruition. All these freedoms had precedents before America, but it was America that first developed a social order incorporating them as its basis.

The social order that emerged in the American context has sometimes been called “the enterprise society” because it rests its hope for success not on a body of laws, class of rulers, authoritarian institutions, or some other set of permanent social structures, but upon the genius of the citizens at large in creating good lives for themselves and their neighbors. It empowers its citizens with personal liberties and then calls upon them to use their freedom responsibly for good moral ends. And it balances a spirit of discovery and advancement that seeks adaptability and openness to change (because there are many great blessings still to be discovered in the world) with a spirit of lawfulness and virtue that restrains the pace of change to minimize injustice and recklessness.

This enterprise society presents many unique blessings and opportunities to the church. We enjoy the liberty to worship and live out our faith equally free from the twin oppressions of state persecution and state sponsorship of the church. Moreover, the many other freedoms we enjoy – to marry, to work, and to hold our rulers accountable – are opportunities for virtuous citizenship. The enterprise society gives us more freedom to create cultural manifestation of the Spirit’s work than any other social order.

On the other hand, the enterprise society poses uniquely difficult challenges. The moral consensus upon which it rests is proving fragile. Modern society has not succeeded in reconciling the competing imperatives of religious freedom and the need for social consensus on the moral basis of the social order. Both imperatives are legitimate, yet it is difficult to know how to satisfy both simultaneously. In the absence of a shared metaphysic, the meanings of key moral terms are becoming more contested, and at the same time we are less able to conduct civil debate on their meaning. We all agree that murder and theft are wrong, but what actions count as murder or theft?

Another challenge arises from the central role of personal liberties in the social order. This creates a continual temptation to idolize individual choice. Relationships and responsibilities are seen as less legitimate or even nonexistent if they are not deliberately chosen. This leads to a cultural disintegration that threatens the social order.

Although these challenges threaten all Americans alike, Christians are uniquely equipped to serve their neighbors by pointing the way to solutions. We are liberated from the dominion of selfishness and empowered by the Spirit for virtuous citizenship. By building cultural manifestations of the Spirit's work, we can demonstrate better models of life in the context of contemporary American civilization. Doing so, however, will require the church itself to engage in a period of critical dialogue between the estranged worlds of theology and economics.

IV.

“There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.”

- Ephesians 4:4-6

RELIGIOUS AND ECONOMIC LEADERS MUST OVERCOME ESTRANGEMENT TO WORK TOGETHER.

The challenges described above can be met, and there is good reason for hope. The faith and work movement has led to a growing awareness of these problems among Christian leaders, and a serious commitment to finding solutions is emerging. The challenge of helping people see the existence of these problems is giving way to the challenge of sorting out the right and wrong ways to address them.

The church can answer these challenges in part by creating respectful dialogue and cooperation in local churches between pastors and economic professionals, and in educational institutions between theologians and Christians in the economic disciplines. Only through this kind of cross-disciplinary dialogue can the church restore discipleship within its own household and create better cultural manifestation of the Spirit’s work within our civilization.

1. THEOLOGY AND THE ECONOMY: INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE FOR RESPONSIBLE ACTION

Dialogue must take seriously the boundary between the church and the world, and hence between theology and the economy. Neither side should be subordinated to the other. Yet that boundary must not be drawn so sharply as to imply that only what happens inside the church is spiritual, while natural and civilizational life occurs only outside.

Economic knowledge discerns spiritual realities as well as material, just as theological knowledge discerns material realities as well as spiritual. A good business owner knows what motivates his employees as well as how much his materials cost; a good pastor knows what the right application of a doctrine looks like in practice as well as the doctrine’s propositional content. Thus, each of these fields knows things that the other needs to know. The economic disciplines need theology in order to adequately understand all the conditions of human action (ontological, anthropological, ethical, etc.) that shape economic behavior. Theology needs the economic disciplines in order to adequately understand the actual functioning of human life and civilization, into which theology desires to speak.

Unfortunately, people on both sides of the divide too often seek to re-integrate theology and the economic disciplines without engaging in dialogue. Some assume that because they know an economic discipline, they have a monopoly of knowledge on “how the world really works,” and

thus feel entitled to dictate unilaterally on that subject. Others likewise feel that theology is entitled to dictate unilaterally from a monopoly of knowledge on “moral and spiritual things.” In both cases the failure to perceive a need for dialogue arises from the dualistic error that sees the economy as being about money and theology as being about the soul – whereas the disciplines on both sides actually study the whole human being, viewed through two different methodological lenses.

These approaches are destructive. Critical acquisition of knowledge from fields on both sides is necessary before we can think and act responsibly about matters of mutual concern. When we don’t do this, we end up advocating counterproductive solutions. And, of course, the dualism on each side is only reinforced by its reaction against the dualism it perceives on the other side.

Creating real dialogue begins with getting people on each side of the divide to accept people on the other side as sources of knowledge. This is a challenge because different types of institutions tend to privilege different types of knowledge. People on both sides must acknowledge the equal value of the knowledge possessed on both sides – and the incompleteness of each type without the other.

The respective knowledge bases of theology and the economic disciplines divide along two lines. On one level, economics specializes in natural knowledge, while theology specializes in theological knowledge. Economic people thus tend to discount theology as a source of knowledge because it comes from people who don’t “know how the world works,” while theological people tend to discount economics as a source of knowledge because it lacks deep engagement with scripture. On another level, economic institutions run primarily on practical knowledge – knowledge that is difficult to articulate and intellectually systematize because it is embedded in relationships and social systems, and is oriented toward action. Institutions of learning, such as seminaries and theology departments, run primarily on cognitive knowledge, which is defined by its capacity for systematic articulation and analysis. Thus, economic professionals tend not to recognize theologians as sources of knowledge because it’s difficult to see how they contribute to concrete accomplishment of goals, which is the standard for what counts as knowledge in economic institutions. Theologians tend not to recognize economic professionals as sources of knowledge because they don’t articulate an intellectually systematic knowledge base, which is the standard for what counts as knowledge in institutions of learning.

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The benefits of dialogue and the destructiveness of failing to practice it will be best understood from looking at specific examples.

2. “YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”: DIALOGUE ON THE CHURCH

For critical dialogue between the theological and economic worlds to take place in the church, the church itself must be a community where such dialogue is welcomed. Unfortunately, there is now a substantial level of estrangement between religious and economic leaders in the church. One of our tasks must therefore be to convene dialogue about what kind of community the church must be (in both its gathered and scattered forms) in order for pastors and Christians in economic vocations to work together to advance God’s purposes in the world.⁵⁰

Many Christians in economic professions feel like pastors view them as second-class citizens in the kingdom of God, and this perception seems to get stronger as we look higher up the ladder of leadership on both sides. Business leaders often feel like they are looked upon merely as checkbooks; pastors feel entitled to receive funding because they treat the church as spiritually superior to the economy. The value God places on the work of economic professionals, which creates so much blessing for so many, is neglected or denigrated. As has already been noted, research finds large numbers of Christian economic leaders are not attending churches. By and large, they seem to feel the church has pushed them away. At the conferences where they gather to discuss how God is present in their working lives, it is typical to hear them complain that “pastors don’t get it,” and sometimes that “pastors will never get it.”⁵¹

On the other side, many pastors feel abandoned by these economic leaders. It is all too common for Christians in positions of power and influence to live more or less the same way their unbelieving peers do. They wear a tie or necklace with a cross on it, but it’s hard for outside observers to see how their lives are any different because of Christ. Most pastors don’t feel that they have pushed business leaders away, and so view their absence from church in a different light. And there is no denying that levels of giving among American Christians, while higher than the charitable giving of unbelievers, are still low by biblical standards.⁵²

Both sides have a point. Each is seeing in the other the impact of what was described above as “the divorce of theology and economics.” It is true that too many pulpits lack a fully rounded message about discipleship in the world of work, and that attitudes toward business leaders are often shaped by this gap. This is the result of the collapse of creation in the discipline of theology over the last century. And it is also true that Christian economic leaders all too often fail to recognize their need for the church gathered, and that their attitudes toward the use of their wealth are often shaped by this gap. This is the result of the reemergence of materialism in the economic and business world.

However, both sides also frequently overreact against one another. Things are not as bad on either side of the divide as the loudest complaints of the other side would paint them. And there is likely to be a lot of deep desire for healthier dialogue on both sides that is currently going unacknowledged or unexpressed. To a large extent, the complaints on each side seem to be masking feelings of intimidation. Each side perceives the people on the other side to be behaving in unreasonable, unapproachable ways because they themselves feel intimidated about approaching them and opening the dialogue.

⁵⁰ See Greg Thompson, “The Church in Our Time,” New City Commons Foundation, 2012.

⁵¹ While these tensions rarely come all the way out into the open, they rise close to the surface repeatedly in Michael Lindsay’s pathbreaking research on Christians in elite social positions (see D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, Oxford, 2007).

⁵² See Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, InterVarsity, 2012, p. 15-23 and 64-76.

Christians are one body with Christ at the head (Ephesians 4:15-16). We have the Holy Spirit working in our hearts to draw us together and teach us to be teachable, so that the church can achieve the unity Christ desires for it (John 17:20-23). And we will realize that we need each other when we recognize both the unique role of the church gathered (Hebrews 10:23-25) and the unique role of the church scattered (Acts 1:8). Healthy dialogue should begin with a firm commitment on both sides to the unity of the church, the integral and indispensable role of the work done by both sides, and the ways in which each side can do its work better through dialogue with the other.

Developing a theology of work and economics requires consideration of numerous topics on which theologians disagree. Eschatology and ecclesiology are two obvious examples, but there are many others. Sound approaches are possible across the full spectrum of positions on these topics. Each theological school or tradition ought to develop approaches to the theology of work and economics that are integrated with its larger doctrinal commitments. At the same time, dialogue ought to proceed across these boundaries in a spirit of spiritual brotherhood and mutual edification.

3. “HE RAISES UP THE POOR FROM THE DUST”: DIALOGUE ON POVERTY

Generous help for the poor is a fundamental duty of the church and integral to the mission of God. Jesus closely associates the church’s care for the poor with the church’s communion with himself (Matthew 25:14-46). The church obviously cannot do everything, nor should it try to. The role of the institutional church and the clergy in caring for the poor is more limited than the role of Christians generally. And the church has a special responsibility to the poor within the household of faith that it does not have to the entire human race. Nonetheless, it is God’s intention that Christians should be leaders in caring for the poor.

Today, however, the church has abdicated this role and faded into the background. For a century, the state has taken the lead in caring for the poor. This radical change in social arrangements was a direct result of the wall of separation between economics and theology. The older view saw that people in poverty need multiple types of help. Relief of immediate needs must be strongly integrated with long-term ministry to the whole person, so that the underlying causes of need could be addressed. The entire process was designed, in every part, to remove the need for help – to raise up the poor, not keep them trapped in poverty.

Creating long-term dependence on relief was viewed as being little better than refusal to help at all. To facilitate dependence in a person who could be made capable of self-support through productive work is radically dehumanizing. It not only sends a message to the individual recipient that “you have nothing to contribute” – a message that is usually internalized on a deep level, with grievous results – it also undercuts relationships, families and communities. Evangelical ministries such as the urban missions movement of the 19th century were consciously responding not only to the “social Darwinism” that didn’t want to help the poor at all, but also to the destructive dependence created by handout-based models of help.⁵³

In the 20th century, materialism in economics and the eclipse of creation in theology undermined this model from both ends. Economic thinking proceeded on the assumption that what the poor

⁵³ See Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, reissued, Crossway, 2008.

primarily need is more money. Theology emphasized preaching the Gospel and saving souls as the mission of the church, neglecting the care of the body. Both these perspectives made it seem not just reasonable but inevitable that responsibility for poverty care should shift from the church to the state.

On the economic side, the result has been a model of help for the poor that has often debilitated them, keeping them trapped in dependence and actively discouraging them from developing their abilities to work and become self-supporting by serving others.⁵⁴ On the theological side, the result has been a church that fails to live up to the mission of God. Even when the church does try to help the poor, it usually does so according to a materialistic model of what the poor need – which is why our efforts usually don't help the poor any more than the state's do. (This is probably one big reason wealthy Christians don't donate more to anti-poverty ministries; they see that these ministries are ineffective and create dependency.)

Care for the poor cannot be left to “the market.” Economic flourishing depends on the presence of certain conditions, both in the human person and in the community, that the economic system itself does not and cannot create. Above all, it depends on civilization embodying the stewardship mindset.

CARE FOR THE POOR CANNOT BE LEFT TO THE MARKET OR THE STATE.

Nor can care for the poor be left to the state. Government is a good part of God's plan and has an important role to play. There are many things government can and should do that would be of special benefit to the poor: impartial and effective enforcement of civil laws, removal of unnecessary barriers to economic activity, reform of the education system, etc. However, government programs by their nature have little ability to transition people from dependency to economic flourishing through productive work. Government can and should provide some of the preconditions for economic flourishing, but it is not able to create it directly.

The church must take the lead in caring for the poor. The church gathered and the church scattered, in their different modes, must accept this leadership responsibility. The cycle of poverty and dependency won't be broken until this happens. But the church's help will only be effective if the church frees itself from its century-long captivity to the materialistic model of how to help the poor. We must restore the older model of integrated care for the whole person, aimed at lifting up the poor and ending dependency by restoring fruitful work. More generosity, simply as such, will also be needed – but this will be easier to generate once the church can demonstrate to potential donors that resources invested in fighting poverty through the church will be used effectively rather than squandered on materialistic approaches.

And if we are to take that challenge seriously, dialogue between theology and the economic disciplines will be key. Christian economists and business leaders will need to be part of the process as much as pastors and church programs. Religious and non-profit ministries are uniquely able to provide many of the conditions for economic flourishing. But once this is done, the economic activity itself must occur. Someone must organize productive work into businesses. And these businesses must be profitable or the jobs will disappear and no one will be helped in the

⁵⁴ See Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, Moody, 2009; Robert Lupton, *Toxic Charity*, Harper, 2012; and Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, reissued, Crossway, 2008.

long run. This requires the special gifts God has given to Christian business leaders. In dialogue and partnership with pastors and theologians, economically minded Christians must be allowed, encouraged and expected to take the lead in applying their economic knowledge and talent to solving economic problems.

4. “COMMIT YOUR WORK TO THE LORD”: DIALOGUE ON GREED AND MATERIALISM

Greed has always been a prominent part of the life of fallen humanity. However, in a civilization dominated by materialistic economics and lacking a strong influence from the church, greed is becoming an ever more urgent problem. Likewise, the habits and personality traits commonly referenced as “materialism” or “consumerism” are becoming a threat to the functioning of civilization. The stewardship mindset is no longer being consistently formed in rising generations, yet we still possess all the wealth that has been produced by the centuries during which the stewardship mindset dominated. Materialism emerges as a result of this combination. Over time, the loss of the stewardship mindset must eventually mean the end of economic flourishing and the loss of our wealth; but for a time we will continue to possess wealth without possessing the mindset we need to use it wisely.

There can be no solution to these problems without re-integration of theology and the economic disciplines. Materialistic economic thinking obviously cannot develop an adequate response to greed and materialism. But theological thinking characterized by the eclipse of creation is equally unable to respond effectively. Theological responses to greed and materialism are typically focused on denying the value of consumption as such, and of economic activity generally. We are only admonished to do less, have less, be less – to care less about the world of economic things. It is good to reduce frivolous, wasteful or vain consumption, but this negative aspect of the question cannot serve as the central organizing framework of a positive response. We were designed to spend most of our lives in economic activity; very few people are called to be full-time ascetics.

A more effective response to greed and materialism is not abstinence and asceticism, but service and stewardship. A more effective response to consumerism is the value of productivity – teaching people to take satisfaction in accomplishments that serve others rather than taking satisfaction in what they can extract for themselves from their economic activity. If we begin by teaching people to view economic work as stewardship and service to neighbor, rather than as a way of getting paid, this will transform not only the way people do their jobs but also the way they view their paychecks, because it will change their locus of satisfaction. With this mindset, work itself becomes a formative and disciple-making experience – the hours that we spend working train us to focus on how we serve others. This will change our motive for working and also transform how we use the money we earn.

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The same applies at a larger social level. Just as the individual solution starts with seeing economic work as stewardship and service to others, the social solution starts with seeing that businesses do not exist to make money, but to serve customers. We cannot effectively address greed at the social level until we free ourselves from the dualistic illusion that making money is the purpose of business, rather than a by-product of serving customers. Profit is necessary to the life of a business, and that fact has ethical implications. Businesses have a stewardship responsibility to stay profitable, within the boundaries of other ethical responsibilities. But making money is not the purpose of business, and that fact also has ethical implications. Businesses must ground all their activity in the stewardship mindset.

Large businesses and financial institutions face these challenges in an especially acute form. Large salaries and bonuses extracted without a productive contribution to serve the needs of others are an increasingly visible evil – evil not because they are large, but because they don't arise from serving others. It is the one who works – that is, the one who serves his or her neighbor – who is “worthy of his wages” (Luke 10:7).

Yet if we don't knowledgeably discern which activities really do and don't make a productive contribution to serve human needs – a discernment that requires economic knowledge – there is a risk of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. For example, the work of financial institutions, when rightly ordered, serves people and creates flourishing in ways that are not always obvious to the casual observer, but are critical to everyone's well being. Financial institutions are vitally necessary to organize investment, which in turn is necessary to facilitate economic flourishing throughout society. Making financial institutions smaller and more localized, as some now demand, would undermine economic flourishing by artificially restricting access to credit. It would also undo centuries of progress in liberating communities from the disproportionate power of local financiers.

Moreover, we must avoid the trap of thinking that the amount of compensation a person should receive for his or her contribution to others can be objectively calculated. Since Albertus in the 13th century, it has been recognized that no such calculation can be made. Wages and prices depend on unquantifiable subjective valuations.⁵⁵ The test is not whether a person makes “too much,” since that can't be measured. It is whether the income derives from legitimate economic activity serving human needs, and whether it is used rightly after it is earned.

The stewardship mindset provides a sound basis for ethical guidance to individuals and institutions responsible for managing and directing wealth. Scripture warns against the equal and opposite sins of squandering wealth, spending it in selfish and transitory ways (Luke 15:11-32) and hoarding wealth, removing it from use entirely (Luke 12:13-21). By contrast, scripture commends caring for the needs of our own households and other close relations (I Timothy 5:8) and after that, generous giving for relief of others' needs (James 2:15-17) and productive investment to provide economic flourishing to the community (Psalm 112:3-5).

⁵⁵ For reflections on the implications of this fact for Christian ethics, see Victor Claar and Robin Klay, *Economics in Christian Perspective*, InterVarsity, 2007, p. 28-48.

5. “FILL THE EARTH AND SUBDUE IT”: DIALOGUE ON TECHNOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

One of the major effects of economic flourishing is the advance of technology. As human ingenuity is more and more effectively directed at serving our neighbors, we invent better and better ways of meeting human needs. The material conditions under which human civilization operates have been radically transformed by this advance.

But while the blessings of technology are obvious, the challenges it poses are equally obvious. While it creates more opportunity to accomplish good, it also creates more opportunity for evil, ranging from irresponsible despoiling of the environment to the facilitation of sexual immorality and everything in between. And while the advance of technology makes our work more effective in serving our neighbors' needs, it also makes some people's work less fulfilling as an immediate personal experience – as the division of labor develops, some people's jobs come to exercise a narrower range of human capacities and thus become less intrinsically interesting. This effect is often exaggerated, and advances in technology actually make work more rather than less intrinsically interesting for many people. But not everyone experiences this.

A response to this challenge must begin by situating technological advancement within a theological account of God's purpose for creation in general and humanity in particular. The earth began as an uncultivated wilderness (Genesis 2:5-7) and God's original purpose for humanity was to set us to work cultivating the wilderness, developing it for God's glory (Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15). God created a world that is full to overflowing with potential blessing, and the function he assigned the human race at creation was to transform potential blessing into actual blessing through our work. This is one reason it's important to give priority to the created goodness and redeemed blessedness of our economic work. Cultivating the world is what we were made to do, and are still called to do.

Thus technological advancement and human impact on the environment, simply as such, are good – however disordered they may become under the influence of sin. We must respect the intrinsic God-glorifying integrity of the non-human creation (Psalm 19). Taking good care of the earth is an important responsibility. However, there is no way to accomplish anything useful without consuming natural resources. You can't build a church or a hospital or a school or a home or a business without “destroying” trees (for lumber), mountains (for ore), fields (for space), etc. Given the Genesis account, this is not surprising; God intended that human life would have an impact on the environment. Thus it is inadequate to say that we should never “destroy” natural resources. All human activity consumes natural resources, because that's the way God made us (and nature). Our goal should not be to have no impact on the environment, but to make use of natural resources responsibly, in a way that balances respect for nature's intrinsic integrity with the imperative to meet human needs.

Thankfully, in the Lord's providence, the advance of technology makes this balance easier and easier to strike over time – provided we use it in the right way. Technological advancement allows us to meet human needs better and better while also using up fewer and fewer natural resources. Empirical research has produced a broad consensus that environmental disruption caused by economic development forms an inverse-U shaped curve: at first the disruption gets worse as the economy develops, but beyond a certain point this disruption is reduced and then actively

remedied by economic advancement.⁵⁶ So unless we plan to keep the world in a state of perpetual poverty, the best thing we can do for the environment is *accelerate* economic growth and technological advancement. The general pattern that seems to be emerging is this: when the economy is free to select technologies that perform better, over time it gradually tends to select technologies that harm the environment less. By contrast, political favoritism for selected technologies facilitates corruption while also harming both humans and the environment. The destructive case of ethanol is a powerful illustration of this danger.⁵⁷

Likewise, the problem of technologically narrowed work must be understood within the context of God's plan for human civilization. The tradeoff of narrower work for the broader civilizational advancement caused by economic growth is, on the whole, a great blessing. Returning to traditional forms of agriculture, for example, would leave millions of people starving. By contrast, equipping people to understand how they serve their neighbors by bearing the burden of narrowed work helps alleviate the burden itself, as workers see the wider impact and the deeper meaningfulness of the work they're doing.

We must avoid the materialistic determinism that attributes to technology an autonomous power to cause sin or to drive social change independent of human choice. Technology sets the conditions within which civilization is made, but it is people, not technology, who make civilization. Human action depends on material conditions, and this should be given due weight as a constitutive part of human personhood, but not at the expense of moral responsibility.

6. "THIS MYSTERY IS PROFOUND": DIALOGUE ON THE FAMILY

The separation of theology and the economy has an impact far beyond the issues that are obviously "economic." The economic aspect of life is so extensive, serving as the crucial support for all civilizational activity, that dualistic thinking about the economy ends up affecting all of human life.

The family is perhaps the most important example of this. A great deal of family life consists of work, and in addition to being familial this work is also economic – it meets economic needs. Attitudes about economic work are therefore one of the most important drivers of attitudes about the family. In turn, family life is one of the most important drivers of the economy, since a sound economy requires people equipped with certain virtues, habits, personality traits, etc., and it is in the family that these are largely acquired.

All of family life responds to a calling from God, and the concept of God's call provides an integrated framework for explaining the Christian approach to marriage. Without an objective grounding, family structures come to be seen as arbitrary. The eclipse of the concept of calling as the basis of the Christian life also explains why Christians are not sufficiently distinct from the world in their own family lives.

Economic dysfunction, in turn, disrupts the family. While this occurs at all levels of society, it may be most clearly and visibly illustrated in the way economic dependence is strongly correlated with the disappearance of marriage as an institution. The family presupposes an economic interdependence of its members through work for mutual support. Where work has been removed

⁵⁶ See Stephen Hayward, *Mere Environmentalism*, AEI Press, 2010.

⁵⁷ See Michael Grunwald, "The Clean Energy Scam," *TIME Magazine*, March 27, 2008.

from the economic picture entirely, the economic structure of marriage has been removed. Marriage, like other civilizational institutions, is more than economics, but cannot survive where its economic basis has been removed.⁵⁸

7. “I AM A CITIZEN BY BIRTH”: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE CONUNDRUM OF POLITICS

For American Christians to achieve virtuous citizenship in their context, they must embrace membership in American civilization and citizenship in the American civil community. Given the extraordinary blessings we enjoy in the enterprise society – the freedom to marry whom we choose, to do the work we’re called to, to worship in churches that align with our consciences and to be ruled by laws and officeholders accountable to us – we ought to feel called to active citizenship in the society that delivers those blessings. We do this both by affirming their intrinsic goodness and by working to combat the influence of injustice and other effects of the fall in society.

However, embracing citizenship may well be harder today for Christians than it has ever been. It has always posed a challenge, since it requires us to navigate tension between our loyalty to our civilization and our loyalty to God and the church. Today, however, the increasing tendency of all public issues to become subordinated to political disputes often makes citizenship seem radioactive. The boundary between politics and other aspects of life has always been unstable, but never more so than today.

This challenge arises from freedom of religion as a social model, as was noted above. As social consensus about religion and morality has broken down, people do not share a common language for working out their differences about what is right or fair. Society has increasingly turned to the coercive power of the state to resolve its disputes. Because society lacks a common language of moral concepts, there is little shared basis for understanding what actions are good or legitimate, and so more and more social conflicts come to be settled through political power struggles.

The solution does not lie in a withdrawal from politics. That approach is typically advocated by those who conceive of politics as merely a competition for coercive power. However, the idea that politics is primarily about coercive power is as reductionist and mechanistic as the idea that economics is primarily about money, or that discipleship is primarily about religious works.

Politics is primarily about justice (Romans 13:1-7, I Peter 2:13-17, I Timothy 2:1-2). Politics does involve coercive power as a necessary element of the administration of justice. It therefore attracts those seeking coercive power for their own ends – just as business attracts those seeking money, and the church attracts those seeking to affirm their self-righteousness through religious works. However, coercion is not the purpose of politics any more than making money is the purpose of business or doing religious works is the purpose of the church.

The conundrum of politics is especially acute in the economy, since the economy is an important subject of public policy. One aspect of dialogue between the theological and economic worlds is the reconstruction of economic conceptions that are not beholden to political conflicts. Theology in particular must avoid becoming subservient to political disputes.

⁵⁸ See Jennifer Roback Morse, *Love and Economics*, updated, Ruth Institute, 2008.

However, the imperative to avoid subordination to politics makes it more important, not less important, to think about the proper role of the state. We cannot avoid political agendas by refusing to think and talk about politics. This would only increase the likelihood of uncritically assimilating a political agenda through our unexamined assumptions about how the world works.

Similarly, we cannot refuse dialogue with people on grounds that they have “a political agenda.” Given the breakdown of shared language, what one person sees as a political agenda may not seem that way to another. Even if the agenda really is political, the best response is not to shun the topic (still less to shun the people talking about it) but to engage with critical thinking. Isolationism works no better here than anywhere else.

The breakdown of shared language poses a challenge to the way we speak as well as the way we listen. Many central economic terms – “capitalism” and “socialism” for example – no longer have socially agreed-upon meanings. To some, capitalism is a system that creates human flourishing by freeing people from dehumanizing constraints so they can serve one another’s needs; to others, capitalism is a system of runaway greed and materialism that undermines human flourishing because it opposes the stewardship mindset. Because of the breakdown of language, neither meaning is right or wrong. Burdensome as it can be to do so, we are responsible to carefully navigate these ambiguities in order to create understanding across different perspectives.

8. “WHAT IS TRUTH?”: MORAL CONSENSUS AND THE CONUNDRUM OF JUSTICE

We may trust that a solution to the conundrum of politics is possible, since God did not create a chaotic universe. Such a solution would center on building moral consensus across religious boundaries about the civil enforcement of justice. The only way to restrain the politicization of all aspects of life is to rebuild social agreement on the shared moral basis of the political system. This means not a majority vote in favor of one view but a deep and broad consensus across religious and cultural divisions.

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This lesson is dramatically illustrated in Pilate’s acquiescence to Christ’s death. Pilate chose expedience over principle because he lacked conviction that the coercive power of the state was rooted in moral certainties: “What is truth?” (John 18:38) Likewise, in our time people will use the state as a mere tool of coercive power unless we figure out how to teach them to view politics as a moral phenomenon – just as they will use the economy as a mere tool of wealth unless we figure out how to teach them to view economics as a moral phenomenon.

However, this task presents an especially complex and difficult challenge for the church, because scripture discusses “justice” in an ultimate theological sense that must be kept carefully distinct from the subset of “justice” that can be enforced through coercive state power. Only the redeeming work of Christ applied by the power of the Holy Spirit can make a person just in the ultimate theological sense. And only people who have been *made just* in this sense can *do justice* in this sense.

The state does not create and cannot enforce this ultimate theological justice. The primary calling of the state is to enforce what might be called natural or civil justice, primarily in its retributive aspect (Romans 12:9-13:7). This natural justice is always informed by a broad philosophical framework for “giving each his due,” as the classic Aristotelian formulation puts it. However, the main work of the state is normally retributive. With other aspects of justice the state’s calling is at most limited and secondary.

There are important connections between ultimate theological justice and the natural justice that is enforceable by the state. Natural justice is one element of ultimate theological justice. The theologically just person will inevitably become a more naturally just person as a result of the Spirit’s work. These connections should be given due weight, lest we fall into the error of denying that there is any overlap between the moral conceptions of believers and their unbelieving neighbors. The doctrine that God sustains social systems by grace teaches us otherwise.

However, a failure to keep the distinction clear would be a disaster. It would invite unlimited use of state power to enforce theological orthodoxy. The natural end result would be a direct (probably violent) political conflict between Christians and non-Christians. However that conflict came out, one way or the other religious freedom would be at an end.

Misunderstanding of this issue is especially exacerbated when people use political phrases like “social justice” and “free markets” to describe *theological* imperatives. These phrases have radically different meanings for different audiences and are closely identified in the minds of many with a specific political agenda. While there is no problem with political discourse using political language, it would be wise for theological discourse to avoid these strongly politicized phrases. There is no effective way to use such phrases without subordinating theology to politics. New language is needed to effectively communicate a perspective in which politics is accounted for but not given priority over the theological.

9. “NATHAN SAID TO DAVID, ‘YOU ARE THE MAN!’ ”: THE RULE OF LAW

Although there are natural points of connection between politics and the economy, the two must be kept distinct. We must resist the tendency of modern life to politicize everything. A flourishing society needs both a well-ordered civil community and a well-ordered economy, but those are different things subject to different sets of imperatives.

In economics, the primary (though not exclusive) role of the state is to provide the conditions of natural justice necessary for human flourishing in the economic context. These are aptly summed up in the phrase “the rule of law.” Economies cannot flourish unless all members of society are protected by laws that are fair, impartial and relatively stable. Only this ensures that members of society are politically subject only to the law, not to the mere will of powerful people.⁵⁹ (The rule of law does not exclude mercy; legal authorities can show mercy in particular cases without undermining the rule of law. What the rule of law requires is impartiality and systematic regularity in legal and regulatory action, not absolute uniformity.)

The rule of law is of course important for many other reasons besides economics, since it grounds the political system in the dignity of the human person. The equal subjection of all human beings – rulers and ruled alike – to the law is an important moral presupposition in scripture (Deuteronomy

⁵⁹ See Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital*, Basic, 2003

17:18-20, II Samuel 12:1-15, Acts 4:18-20 and 5:27-29, Galatians 2:11-14) and Christianity made vital contributions to its development as a social phenomenon.

But the critical importance of the rule of law to the economy is easily overlooked. The calling of God in each person's life is the central basis of human flourishing in the economic sphere, and only the rule of law can provide each person with freedom and opportunity to follow the calling of God.

Approaches to the economy that do not incorporate a central commitment to the rule of law invite political exploitation and enslavement. Moreover, because of the overwhelming importance of economic work to human life, corruption of the rule of law in this sphere quickly extends to all other spheres.

Government can, as has been noted, act out of concern for the poor. There is much that the state can do for the poor without compromising the rule of law. The imperatives to preserve human life and to prevent the disintegration of society make it legitimate for the state to maintain a "safety net" for the truly indigent and take other actions aimed at poverty. The challenge of dependency makes this problematic, but that challenge is surmountable.

On the other hand, the rule of law limits the extent to which government can control economic action more broadly. In particular, there is no possibility, consistent with the rule of law, for government to control the economy sufficiently to plan economic outcomes. The very idea of a planned economy repudiates the impartiality of the law, since it requires rulers to arbitrarily enrich some while impoverishing others. It also gives rulers unaccountable control over people's work, which in practice means unaccountable control of their whole lives. Planning of economic outcomes can only be accomplished if rulers order people, under threat of force, to work one job rather than another. This is intrinsically inconsistent with the freedom to follow the calling of God. Neither the doctrine that our work responds to God's call nor the rule of law can be reconciled with state economic planning.

It is no coincidence that theologies influenced by Marxism typically deny the calling of God in human work. People must be separated from God's call in their lives before they can be subordinated to the control of human power. The total opposition between Marxism and the biblical witness is revealed when theologies influenced by Marx elevate the role of sin and the curse in our economic work to equal ultimacy with its goodness and blessedness. By doing so, they make the fall equally ultimate with creation and redemption. Thus, theologies that assimilate these Marxist thought categories are practicing a dualism that borders on Gnosticism.

The exact boundaries of what can be done consistent with the rule of law is a complex question involving prudential judgments on which reasonable people can disagree. The important thing is that a concern for the rule of law should be a central element of any attempt to wrestle with the intersection of economics and politics. Otherwise we risk abandoning all the progress our civilization has made, catalyzed by Christian teaching, in preserving the dignity of the human person in society.

The rule of law is an appropriate subject upon which to conclude these introductory glimpses of dialogue between the theological and economic worlds. Concern and care for the good of our neighbors – which should be our bedrock concern in all the areas canvassed above – begins with respect for their irreducible dignity as persons. That respect is most basically expressed in our

refusal to treat human beings as property. This is why the rule of law is fundamental to virtuous citizenship; arbitrary exercise of coercive power is almost the definition of what it means to treat people as property. As we carry out the challenge of achieving virtuous citizenship, let us look first to the dignity of all our neighbors, and thus affirm that the rule of law must structure the state's coercive power, shunning the use of its power for any end outside those bounds. This will not only keep our cultural engagement humane, it will also reassure those outside the church that our desire to impact the culture does not come at the expense of their rights, and will in fact be a blessing to them and not a threat.

CONCLUSION

“He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...”

- Ephesians 4:11-12

AN EXCITING MOVEMENT OF REDISCOVERY HAS ALREADY BEGUN.

Large as these challenges may be, our great God has not abandoned us to face them alone. We should be realistic about the size of the problem and the limitations each of us face; however, we should also be encouraged by the extraordinary assets and opportunities with which the Lord has equipped the church. Hope is not for the *eschaton*; when the *eschaton* comes, hope will no longer be necessary. Hope is for today.

The Spirit is already moving, calling the church to knead the leaven of the Gospel into the dough of daily life in the modern economy. We are blessed by an enormous and still-growing body of Christian movements that acknowledge the need to reconnect theology to work and the economy. Increasingly, they are doing more than simply bringing religious works (like evangelism and accountability groups) into the workplace; they are recovering a biblical perspective on work itself, and even finding new applications of biblical wisdom to contemporary economic systems.

I applaud these efforts and pray for their success. However, I also wish to challenge the faith and work movement to broaden and deepen its work. Three areas in particular stand out as places where growth is needed:

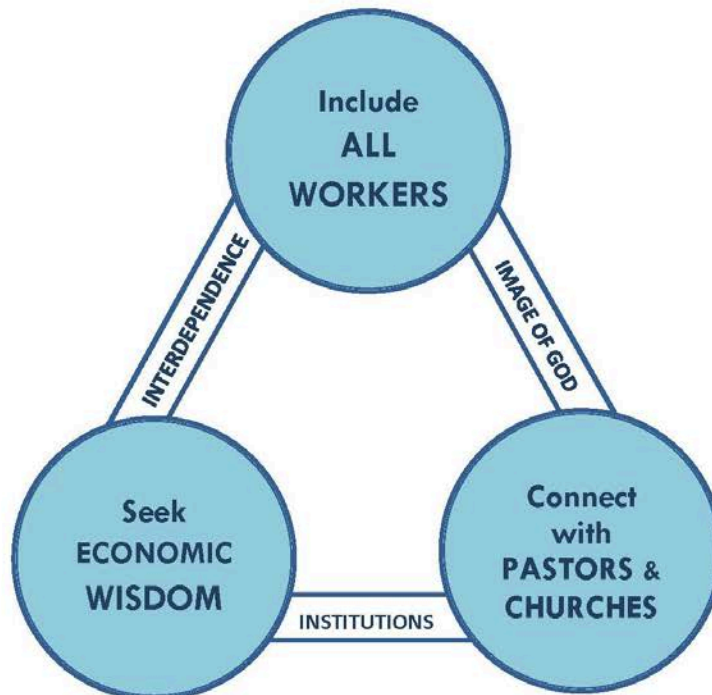
- **Include All Workers:** Although in principle the movement affirms all honest work, in practice it has connected mostly with Christians in so-called “marketplace” professions, especially those in leadership. More could be done to connect with Christians who do not have leadership roles, and those who may not currently view their work as part of the marketplace (full-time parents, teachers, nurses, etc.). Affirming the importance of work done by people who are socially marginalized, as well as affirming the dignity of *types of work* that are socially marginalized, would be an important aspect of this broadened reach.
- **Economic Wisdom:** Currently, most leaders and organizations in the movement discuss work primarily as an individual activity. The social and cultural dimension of work – the economy – receives much less deliberate attention. This does not mean that economic ideas play no role in our theology of work; it means our theology of work relies upon unconscious and unexamined assumptions about the economy. The movement is at risk of assimilating self-oriented presuppositions about the meaning and purpose of work that

are at odds with the movement's desire to prioritize service to others. These presuppositions would also prevent the movement from helping the church act as a force for renewal of cultural integrity. A sustained effort to connect biblical wisdom to the culture and systems of economic exchange will be necessary for the movement to achieve its potential.

- **Pastors and Local Churches:** With some noteworthy exceptions, the movement has grown in isolation from pastors and local church life. While all Christians are in full-time service to Christ on spiritually equal terms, the role of the pastor and the institutional church cannot be ignored or replaced in God's design for the Kingdom. If we truly have one body and one Spirit, with *one hope that belongs to our call*, this estrangement must be overcome. Clergy and laity must work together to find effective strategies that help local churches equip Christians for fruitful work and economic wisdom.

These three needs are interrelated, and solutions to them will be interdependent. Including all workers and cultivating economic wisdom are necessary because human beings are made to be **interdependent** upon one another. Cultivating economic wisdom and connecting with pastors and local churches are necessary because human beings are formed by cultural **institutions**. Perhaps most important, helping local churches equip and empower the entire laity in their work is necessary because the church must affirm the **image of God** in all humanity, and help everyone discover how to "put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

GROWTH NEEDS OF THE FAITH & WORK MOVEMENT



These growth needs should be viewed as opportunities, not threats. Today's faith and work movement is the starting point for a new and more successful response to the challenges and opportunities created by modern culture. To be part of that movement and contribute to its full flourishing is a great challenge, but it is also a high honor and an exciting adventure.

These three concerns come together in an initiative called the Economic Wisdom Project (EWP). The EWP was created in 2012 as The Kern Family Foundation greatly increased its investments in helping pastors and seminaries connect faith to work and economics through the Oikonomia Network and the Kern Pastors Network. Although a large body of theological reflection already existed on the topic of work, we discovered little prior development on the topic of economics. The EWP provides a focal point for reflection that we hope will foster a deeper understanding of our mission.⁶⁰

The EWP relies on the biblical category of wisdom in order to avoid a simplistic, artificial merging of theology and economics. The Bible does not give us explicit insight into modern economic questions, because the biblical authors did not face such questions in their time. However, the Bible constantly admonishes us to develop wisdom so we can make right choices in the face of complex and ambiguous challenges. Like Solomon in II Chronicles 1, we must ask God for the wisdom and knowledge to live up to the stewardship responsibilities he has given us.

Wisdom applies the eternal truths of general and special revelation to the exigencies of a particular time and place. These applications do not have the status of biblical revelation. Yet prayerfully living out such applications as best we can is the only way to be faithful to the Bible in the face of contingent and culturally conditioned challenges.

The EWP proposes four central themes that help us see the connections between theology and economics:

- **STEWARDSHIP AND FLOURISHING:** We were given stewardship over the world so our work would make it flourish for God's glory.
- **VALUE CREATION:** Through economic exchange, we work together and create value for one another.
- **PRODUCTIVITY AND OPPORTUNITY:** Economic systems should be grounded in human dignity and moral character.
- **RESPONSIBLE ACTION:** Economic systems should practice and encourage a hopeful realism.

At the core of the EWP are 12 elements of economic wisdom. We have designed them in the form of proverbial declarations, or "wisdom statements." They are broadly applicable generalizations, rather than absolute laws for all cases. Communities rely upon broadly formed statements of this kind to teach their shared moral wisdom – a practice modeled throughout Scripture, especially in the book of Proverbs. The Economic Wisdom Elements in the EWP apply biblical wisdom to the modern economy.

⁶⁰ See "What Is the Oikonomia Network?" for background on the network; see also www.oikonomianetwork.org. For information on the Kern Pastors Network, see www.kernpastorsnetwork.org.

THE ELEMENTS

of Economic Wisdom

1 *We have a stewardship responsibility to flourish in our own lives, to help our neighbors flourish as fellow stewards, and to pass on a flourishing economy to future generations.*

2 *Economies flourish when people have integrity and trust each other.*

3 *In general, people flourish when they take responsibility for their own economic success by doing work that serves others and makes the world better.*

4 *Real economic success is about how much value you create, not how much money you make.*

5 *A productive economy comes from the value-creating work of free and virtuous people.*

6 *Economies generally flourish when policies and practices reward value creation.*

7 *Households, businesses, communities, and nations should support themselves by producing more than they consume.*

8 *A productive economy lifts people out of poverty and generally helps people flourish.*

9 *The most effective way to turn around poverty, economic distress, and injustice is expanding opportunity for people to develop and deploy their God-given productive potential in communities of exchange, especially through entrepreneurship.*

10 *Programs aimed at economic problems need a fully rounded understanding of how people flourish.*

11 *Economic thinking must account for long-term effects and unintended consequences.*

12 *In general, economies flourish when goodwill is universal and global but control is local and personal knowledge guides decisions.*

Finally, the EWP identifies five “pathways to pastoral application.” These pathways show how the integration of theology with work and economics is centrally important to the role of the pastor, and can help churches become places where all workers are equipped for fruitful work and economic wisdom:

- **THEOLOGY:** Preaching the Trinity, incarnation, *imago Dei*, biblical narrative, and more illuminates work and economics.
- **PASTORAL CARE:** Pastors need to be equipped to console and counsel those affected by economic change.
- **COMPASSION:** Our ministry to those in need should cultivate hope, dignity, and growth instead of dependency.
- **COMMON GOOD:** Churches that understand the economy will be equipped to help their communities flourish.
- **YOUTH AND FAMILY:** A flourishing life starts in early childhood with a culture of vocation and responsibility.

The economic sphere of human life derives its nature from the Trinity – from the eternal love that God is. The free and voluntary coordination of diverse activities for mutual benefit that God intends for human economics is an image of the loving way in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit freely and voluntarily work the divine will in unison. When Christianity helped our civilization see this aspect of God’s image more clearly, it laid the groundwork for the modern economy. If Christians recover a theology of work and economics, they can once again offer this clarity to our civilization through fruitful work and economic wisdom. Only this can restore both whole-life discipleship in the church and the deepest foundation of flourishing in civilization. What a thrilling time in history God has called us to live in!

RECOMMENDED READING

FROM THE ECONOMIC WISDOM PROJECT

STEWARDSHIP AND FLOURISHING

Recommended Resources:

- Stewardship Study Bible
- Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work*
- Tom Nelson, *Work Matters*
- Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*
- Charlie Self, *Flourishing Churches & Communities*
- Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work*
- Michael Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*

PRODUCTIVITY AND OPPORTUNITY

Recommended Resources:

- Chad Brand, *Flourishing Faith*
- Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital*
- Samuel Gregg, *The Commercial Society*
- Austin Hill and Scott Rae, *The Virtues of Capitalism*
- Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*
- Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason*
- Peter Wehner and Arthur Brooks, *Wealth and Justice*

VALUE CREATION

Recommended Resources:

- Wayne Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God*
- Lester DeKoster, *Work: The Meaning of Your Life*
- Jeff Van Duzer, *Why Business Matters to God*
- Edd Noell, Stephen Smith and Bruce Webb, *Economic Growth*
- John Schneider, *The Good of Affluence*
- Kenman Wong and Scott Rae, *Business for the Common Good*
- David Wright, *How God Makes the World a Better Place*

RESPONSIBLE ACTION

Recommended Resources:

- David Baker, *Tight Fists or Open Hands?*
- Victor Claar and Robin Klay, *Economics in Christian Perspective*
- Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*
- Robert Lupton, *Toxic Charity*
- Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*
- Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*
- John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*

FOR MORE PLEASE VISIT
WWW.OIKONOMIANETWORK.ORG

