Christian Perspectives on Globalisation: A World United or a World Exploited?

When I think about discussions of 'wellbeing', in either the objective or subjective senses, I wonder what notion of 'being' is presupposed. I think the idea of 'wellbeing' calls for ontological clarification. On the other hand, 'globalisation' is often lauded for promoting the good of all or bewildered for its failures. Globalisation has some connection with 'wellbeing' or its discontents. These two lines of thought lead me to expect a connection between 'globalisation' and 'being'. 'Globalisation' also calls for ontological clarification. This paper is a sketch of such a clarification.

Of course discussions of wellbeing and globalization without this clarification are very valuable. I am interested, however, in the further value of bringing to light what ontological presuppositions are carried by these discussions. I know that not everyone will see

1. A similar distinction between 'prosperity' and 'happiness' is used in Tim Jackson, Prosperity Without Growth, Economics for a Finite Planet (London, Earthscan, 2011), 36.
2. In brief, an 'ontology' is a theory of what there is. The clarification I am interested in concerns the assumptions about what kind of world it is in which we live that are present in discussions of wellbeing and globalisation.
the need for such a clarification. I have therefore chosen to discuss a very widely read and very well received 2011 essay, 'The Happy Life', by David Malouf. I show how the essay allows us to see clearly the need for an 'ontological clarification', though the term is not mentioned nor the clarification provided in that essay. I also initiate the desired clarification from two angles—one through what I glean from Malouf and one from a Christian standpoint.

**David Malouf on the Happy Life**

David Malouf is an internationally renowned Australian author. Malouf's essay on the 'Happy Life' begins by drawing our attention to Solzhenitsyn's, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, to the prisoner Shukhov on a day when he goes off to sleep completely content because the 'day had gone by without a single cloud—almost a happy day' (2).

For most of history only an elite have had favourable social and material conditions providing the luxury of going beyond rare momentary happiness to considering what happiness of a more settled kind might be (2). The classical tradition from Seneca to Aristotle and Plato affirmed self-containment and self-reliance, and this is still echoed in the seventeenth century poem by Sir Henry Wotton, 'Character of a Happy Life'. This presents the image of man who holds together the active and contemplative poles of life, who amidst all temptations without and within, remains, 'Lord of himself, though not of lands, and having nothing, he hath all' (4). Happiness for such a man is in retiring to his own quiet room alone (5).

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5. David Malouf won the inaugural Australia-Asia Literary Award in 2008 and was awarded the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 2000. His 1993 novel *Remembering Babylon* won the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 1996 and he was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1994. In 1998 David Malouf was invited to deliver the Boyer Lectures on ABC Radio. These six lectures '...explore how living in one hemisphere and inheriting our culture from another affects who we are and the sort of world we make for ourselves in Australia.' The Boyer Lectures are delivered each year by a prominent Australian who is invited '...to present their ideas, and the results of his or her work and thinking on major social, scientific or cultural issues.'


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The contrast to our own time in developed societies is that happiness is something we all aspire to whatever our position in society and this as a right. Malouf offers the sharpest contrast between us and all previous history with the following comment.

The question that arises is not so much, 'How shall we live if we want to be happy?' but how is it, when the chief sources of human unhappiness, of misery and wretchedness, have largely been removed from our lives—large scale social injustice, famine, plague and other diseases, the near-certainty of an early death—that happiness still eludes so many of us? What is it in us or in the world we have created that continues to hold us back? (8).

Malouf thinks of this dissatisfaction as the 'latest version of what Plato's Protagoras identifies as "restless"' (41), the distinctive character of human beings created by Erimetheus and equipped with gifts stolen by Prometheus from the gods. Since humankind is naturally restless it undermines any possibility of finding happiness as a settled state of being.

Malouf identifies numerous factors informing our natural 'restlessness'. We have a new vision of the earth seen from the moon, a planet, fragile, complex, and unique. From that vantage point we are invisible even inconsequential (44). If our planet is dying it will be disastrous for us but only another 'moment' in the history of the planet. Life on the planet is an accident and so are we (43).

The various schools of the classical tradition were in no doubt as to the 'importance of the Self as the purest agency of being and its need to be protected from the distractions, the temptations and dispersive busyness of things' (45). We are not so sure. We tell a different story about life in which the Self of the classical tradition 'does not quite fit' (45). We speak about DNA, evolution, and the brain described by neuroscience.

While our awareness has expanded beyond the scale and reach of our physical bodies—in the direction of the infinitely large and the infinitely small—we have become more aware of our bodies (45). We are even obsessed with our bodies as our basic sense of self and with the care of our bodies using all of the resources...
provided by science and the market. Freed from guilt about sensual pleasure we know our bodies are for enjoyment and for display, an advertisement to ourselves and for others, of an ‘otherwise vague and unimaginable self’ (46). And this vague sense of self is ‘validated’ by being attractive, and its presence and vigour is reaffirmed in a healthy orgasm. Though the sin of sensuality is gone, the new shame is failure of either performance or presentation. We may not be afraid of the ‘finality and nothingness of death’ but we are afraid of the trials of extended longevity, where we lack control of our bodies and minds (46).

‘One consequence of the Epimetheus version of our condition history is unfinished, forever in process; endless because our needs are endless’ (48). Technology has helped meet those needs and the problems it creates, but will it continue to do so? Technology has a life of its own and our brains are not evolving fast enough to keep up with the accelerating rate of innovation (48). We feel that our life is not safely in hand, that the future we are facing is possibly darker (41) than all the optimists have believed, following the Marquis de Condorcet (d 1794), who relatively recently turned our attention away from the once authoritative past to the progressive, unprecedented and unlimited future. ‘Time had a new shape’ (27). So did authority.

Within the expanded scales of space and time, energy and matter we have acquired a new sensibility in which the small and large, the local and global are interconnected in:

... global Environment ... global Security, global Culture, and in an age of large-scale management, the global Economy with its Market Forces, its International Trading Agreements, the IMF, the World Bank—a global power with its own mystique and the authority to demand instant obedience and absolute belief (44).

As for this economy keeping us all connected, in its mysterious way, by laws that do exist, the experts assure us, though they cannot agree on what they are—it is too impersonal, too implacable for us to live comfortably with, or even to catch hold of and defy. (49).

It is this want of the personal, the dominance of the impersonal that Malouf several times (48, 49, 51, 55) refers to as the root of what unsettles us.

What most alarms us in our contemporary world, what unsettles us and scares us, is the extent to which the forces that shape our lives are no longer personal—they no longer know us; and to the extent that we know nothing of them—cannot put a face to them, cannot find in them anything we recognise as human—we cannot deal with them. We feel we are in the coils of an invisible monster, that cannot be grasped or wrestled with (55).

At the end of the essay Malouf returns to Shukov, who can deal with his situation, which is within the limits of his grasp, if not his control. Not a settled state of being of contentment and rest but as 'a kind of happiness he can make do with from one day to the next' (55).

I have only given a glimpse of this very engaging essay. It is clear that Malouf offers an account of wellbeing both in an objective sense as the good life which is free of many of the causes of human misery and unhappiness and in the subjective sense of the aspiration to a personal contentment and happiness as the right of all human beings, even if in the modest form of momentary happiness day by day. Malouf traces these two senses of wellbeing to the American Declaration of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness as the inherent rights of every human being given by their creator (9). While he places no weight on the reference to the Creator, he sees these rights as addressing the natural, social and personal levels of existence (10).

By way of the intended clarification, what ontology does Malouf espouse in this account of wellbeing and globalisation? Two answers can be obtained from the essay. One is a naturalism based on the natural sciences and technology. This is shown in Malouf’s privileging the story we now tell about the evolution of life, DNA, and neuroscience in which there is no place for the 'Self’—that pure agency of being - of the classical tradition. We see it also in his entertaining the prospect

7. This is ontological naturalism as distinct from epistemic and methodological
of the evolution of the brain as we adapt to the new conditions brought about by technological innovations and their accelerated entrance into our lives. Malouf sees here the possibility of a 'new form of "being"' in which the Ego is bypassed through an overload that is the equivalent of intense physical activity, with the release of endorphins producing euphoria (23). There we experience the 'rush of wellbeing . . . an awareness of intense personal presence' (24).

On the other hand the second answer is suggested in his clear view that what is so disturbing for 'us' is the impersonal and implacable character of the world in which we now live. In this perspective technology has a life of its own and the 'agency' in us (24) that has allowed us to adapt to it is now not keeping up with the rate of innovation. Whereas the classical tradition prescribed philosophy as the cure for 'uneasiness' (21), the latter is now the cure for 'something quite opposite but equally close and pervasive: the fear of inactivity, of stillness . . . in an extended and unendurable silence' (22). For Malouf it is as if Pascal's terror at the 'eternal silence of infinite space' has found a new form. The 'uneasiness' of hyper connectivity is our cure. Sitting still, alone in a room is impossible—whereas once it was thought to be the source of happiness.

What is surprising is that the suggestive second answer does not motivate a question about the impersonal construal of reality (the naturalism and technological innovation of the first answer) that forms the now taken for granted world in which we live so restlessly, which Malouf believes serves as a 'fix' for handling the fear of an unendurable silence. No critique is pursued, despite the repeated reference to the alienating and 'impersonal' character of the world we have fashioned for ourselves. This second answer offers Malouf no starting point or route to explore an alternative ontology. For Malouf and presumably for the many people who have appreciated and applauded his essay, the 'Self' as the pure agency of being in the classical tradition is not a starting point. But is there no alternative?

Malouf's view is that the restless character of human beings is due to some fundamental lack, which we live with even as we use the 'gifts' fabulously stolen by Prometheus from the gods. These are the 'interior and godlike qualities' of imagination and invention, which human beings will have to develop in themselves, along with other prior qualities such as curiosity . . . and a flair for observation, for seeing below the surface and beyond the recording of singular phenomena' (18, 19). Malouf doesn't examine these 'gifts' to see whether they point to a richer ontology. This is surprising firstly given that Prometheus steals the gifts from the gods. Secondly, Malouf's remarks on the 'best known proposition from classical Greek thought' which is Protagoras' 'Man is the measure of all things'. According to Malouf Protagoras was declaring:

that humanity is at the centre of the system we call Creation, and that Man, with his particular qualities of reason, the power of speech, the capacity to name and make and remake, is the point from which we must start in any inquiry into the laws of the system, any exploration we might set out upon into the nature of knowing and being. But he was also pointing out the importance to our investigations—of how one thing is related to another—of measure, or as we are more likely to call it, proportion (51).

I entirely approve of this exploration and its starting point. It seems obvious that Malouf does follow Protagoras' advice with regard to the starting point—'Man'. But he does not follow Protagoras with regard to the focus of the exploration, which for Malouf is not the nature of 'knowing and being' but of human happiness. There is another surprise here. The classical tradition prescribed philosophy as the cure for 'uneasiness'. Philosophy was expected to help the individual, who by learning to distinguish between real and unreal desires and fears, frees himself from the 'busyness' of a world that is endlessly pushing for the new, the more; from engagement, attachment, dependency, from what, as we have seen in Montaigne, in being external takes us away from the sufficiency of the self (21).

8. See Bernard Lonergan, Insight (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1958) for an example of such an inquiry.
The tradition offers a critical stance, which appeals to a certain understanding of the 'Self'. Remove that understanding of the Self and what approach is available for the distinguishing between real and unreal desires and fears? One possible answer is via the construal of what is 'Man' in the wake of innovative technology with a life of its own, with most of us struggling to evolve quickly enough to keep up, especially with digital technology and all its chafing within the fundamentally impersonal global economy. Adaptations to this construal of reality are 'real' and what is not is 'unreal'. We could even take this version of 'Man' as the starting point for Protagoras' inquiry into 'knowing and being'. But that would be superficial. After all, even Malouf points to something deeper in what I have identified as the suggestion of a second answer to the question about the ontology he espouses in his account of wellbeing and globalisation.

This achieves one aim of this essay, which is to show how Malouf helps us see the need for an 'ontological clarification' of the impersonal world we have created in which we live so restlessly, of the different story we now tell about ourselves in which the old account of the Self does not fit, and of momentary, unsettled happiness for which it seems we must settle. The starting point and impetus for this ontological clarification has something to do with our sense being persons. But what? Malouf does not say.

A Christian view of Wellbeing and Globalisation

I turn now to sketch an ontological clarification of 'wellbeing' and 'globalisation' from a Christian standpoint. I begin with two well-known biblical themes. One is the assertion that humankind was created in the image and likeness of God. The other concerns the worship of idols. According to Psalm 115, idols have eyes but cannot see, feet but cannot walk, and those who worship them become

9. This may be thought to overlook my stated approval of Protagoras' project of making 'Man' the starting point for an inquiry into knowing and being. If it is not confusion surely it sets up a conflict between faith and reason. But this would be premature. For Christians both faith and reason come from God. Ultimately there cannot be any conflict between the two and there will only seem to be conflict if one or both is distorted.

10. For an impressive and for some a contentious exposition of these matters see the 2009 Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate.


like them. They degrade their humanity. They acquire a way of being human in the image of a lesser god. From these two themes it follows that enjoying well being depends on the extent to which our way of being human goes with or against the grain of our being created in the image of God. On this basis, the crucial element for enjoying wellbeing is to do with what we worship. This is a second order understanding of well being. It becomes specific depending on what we say about the God who created human kind and what follows from this as the corresponding way of being human 'in the image of God', which is then properly called 'well being'.

Christ, the image of the invisible God

The Christian understanding of God came from the church's extended reflection on the 'new reality' that had come into the world through Jesus, to which the whole Bible gives inspired testimony. The God so revealed was recognised by Christians as the God who had spoken in many and various ways through the Law and the Prophets of Israel, whose reality was intimated in ordinary experience. This 'new reality' is the foretaste and anticipation of the coming of the reign of God in glory, the only future that is coming—fullness of imperishable life which will flood the whole universe. It shone through the Spirit-empowered person of the Son incarnate in Jesus, his teaching, his mighty works, his forgiving sins, and his fellowship.

12. Other examples of this theme are Ps 135, Jeremiah 24.

13. Let this last point seem a too narrowly religious focus for the well being of human kind, collectively and individually, the Old Testament makes clear that there is no authentic worship without justice being done to widows, orphans, the poor and strangers. The point is intrinsic to worship, since righteousness and justice are the foundations of God's reign (Psalm 89:14; Isaiah 58). Our actions and attitudes manifest what has worth for us. It is shown in how we spend time, money and energy. This is our daily 'worth' ship. We shall see even from the first chapter of Genesis how wide is the ambit of divine justice. This is not too narrow a focus for 'well being'.


16. For example, Psalm 19; Romans 1:19-20; Acts 17:28.

17. You may remember the story in the Gospel of Mark of the woman who breaks a flask of pure nard to wash Jesus' feet before he dies. The whole house was filled with the perfume from the broken flask. John 12:1-7. For Christians it is a sign of what is to come.
with the spiritually outcast and marginalised. It shone through his being raised from the dead and was only then seen in his crucifixion. It was received in the new experience of the Spirit among his disciples following his death and resurrection. The heart of this new reality was indicated in Jesus’ words, ‘No one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.’

The divine economy
This new revelation of God in Christ brought to light the ‘mysteries of God’, the divine plan (oikonomia, economy) for the whole world, which God is everywhere at work to bring to its consummation, when all things in heaven and earth will be transformed by being united ‘in Christ’, when ‘God will be all in all’ when the whole creation is drawn into the life of the Triune God. This is the end to which human history is heading, through all the resonances and dissonances between this divine economy and human beings’ exploring and exploiting all the creative powers of the ‘original blessing.’ These creative powers are being discovered, in and through all the distortions due to idolatry, and just there the grace of God continues to meet us to bring us on our way in a turbulent history.

The trinitarian understanding of God
The distinctively Christian understanding of God is expressed in the two dogmas of the Incarnation and the Trinity. A crucial matter in each dogma concerns the understanding of the term ‘person’. It was Christian theologians who made a historically original and extended exploration of the meaning of this term.

In the early centuries of our common era Christian theologians turned to Greek thought to help articulate the gospel of Jesus the

Messiah in ways that could make sense to their Hellenistic audience. Platonism and neo-Platonism initially seemed a most promising resource. Everyone involved was aware that various aspects of Christian belief were at risk of distortion by this medium. Charles Taylor identifies a number of points of tension.

1. In the pagan view the body was ruled by the soul, but in Palestine of Jesus’ time this view, if present, was secondary to the question of the state and direction of the heart. (2) This leads to a new significance for history. ‘The relation of the human heart to God was a story of falling away and returning.’ This was the central narrative of human history, which had an end. For Christians the end was a gathering of the whole story, of all the stories, not just the arrival at an end state. (3) The stories gathered into God’s eternity entail the significance of individuals ‘whose identities are worked out in these stories.’ By contrast the different ways of access to the eternal for Plotinus and Aristotle means loss of individuality. (4) The stories that are the central narrative of the history give a new place to contingency. This includes responding to the neighbour who accidently crosses my path. History is not the implementation of the rigidly scripted divine plan of the Stoics but a resourceful responsiveness on God’s part, come what may, to bring history to its end—a telos not a terminus. (5) With all these factors there is also the place of the emotions. For Christianity, rather than the highest human condition being purged of emotion, they are part of our relation to the highest being. Taylor quotes Martha Nussbaum’ discussion of Augustine:

We hear sighs of longing and groans of profound desolation. We hear love songs composed in anguish, as the singers’ heart strains upward in desire. We hear of a hunger that cannot be satisfied, of a thirst that torments, of the taste of a lover’s body that kindles inexpressible longing. We hear of an opening that longs for penetration, of a burning fire that ignites the body

20. 1 Corinthians 15:28.
and the heart. All of these are images of profound erotic passion and all of them are images of Christian love.27

The problem was that the educated elite of Hellenism conceived of God as 'apatheia', beyond emotion. But this was in tension with the Christian identification of Christ with God and with the pain-filled death of Christ.28 According to Taylor all these factors only make sense in the context of the Christian belief that God is a personal being, not just as agency, but also as capable of communion. The theological struggle was to make sense of the Scriptural witness to the Father, the Son and the Spirit and its equally powerful witness that God is one. What follows is an impossibly brief summary of some key themes in the development of this understanding of God.

At its core the Arian controversy was about the understanding of God to be used in interpreting the Bible. Arius (256–336), a Christian presbyter from Alexandria in Egypt took the understanding of the being (ousia) of God from Greek thinking. This guided his interpretation of the Bible. God had no contact with creation and so Jesus could not be God incarnate. There had to be a difference in being between Jesus and God. Athanasius (298–373), the bishop of Alexandria, allowed the Bible to inform his understanding of God, which led to a new understanding of being. The Father and the Son have the same being (homousios). Likewise the Spirit was of the same being as the Father and the Son.

Following Athanasius a crucial step was taken by the Cappadocian theologians.29 Whereas ousia and hypostasis were synonyms in Greek philosophy for 'substance', 'essence', these theologians distinguished between ousia and hypostasis. 'God is one ousia, ("substance", "essence", or "being") equally and fully expressed in three hypostases, the Father, Son and Spirit'.30 This innovation initiated Christianity's distinctive elaboration of the meaning of hypostasis, still an ontological term, to refer to 'person' (rather than 'prosopon' from the mask used in the theatre) and as an entirely new thought, was irreducible to ousia. The divine substance has no reality 'prior' to or apart from the distinctions between the three persons. These distinctions are eternal, and are ontologically primary.

While each hypostasis has 'common qualities, like infinity, being uncreated ... each hypostasis can also be distinguished by origin, relatedness, and how it is known by creatures'.31 The three persons are mutually defined in their uniqueness and otherness; they ontologically co-inhere in their dynamic unity, their perichoresis ('dance'), their communion. These themes mark out the distinctively Christian understanding of being: to be is to be in communion.32 Lastly, the sovereignty or 'monarche' of God is to be thought of as belonging not just to the Father (contra the Cappadocians) but also to the triune God (following Athanasius).33

The biblical revolution—the fundamental order is personal

Taylor places this theological achievement in a context of a struggle, the whole package (1) – (6), arose out of a struggle, that of Patristic theology with earlier ideas of an impersonal order, be it that which identified the highest with an idea ... or with Plotinus' One or with a God whose defining characteristic was apatheia. Now in the modern era we see this package challenged by new understandings of order, running at one end of the spectrum from Deism, to modern atheist materialism at the other.34

Taylor explains that the 'pull towards the impersonal pole of this continuum'35 from the eighteenth century on, was due to the ways the human condition was understood in terms of an impersonal order that ultimately has its roots in the rise of modern science, both for

28. See the discussion of this contested theme in recent theology by Christiana Mestert, 'God's Transcendence and Compassion', in Pacifica, 24/2 (June 2011):172–189.
30. Bakst, Person, Grace and God, 18.
34. Taylor, A Secular Age, 279.
35. Taylor, A Secular Age, 280.
deism and for modern atheistic materialism. This move was further understood as superseding the earlier idea of the fundamental personal order, which was then seen as belonging to a bygone era.

Colin Gunton points out the further move towards the impersonal in Descartes defining the human person in terms of an individual non-spatial mind and a spatial body which 'is very difficult, even for God, we might say, to join together' Cambridge Platonists were anxious about Descartes' philosophy which included reducing animals to machines. Given all that animals could do it seemed to open the way to treating human beings as machines. This fear was fulfilled by de La Mettrie's (1709-1751) book, *Machine Man*, and more latterly with evolution, cognitive sciences, and neuroscience proposing a completely naturalistic account of the human mind.

For Gunton, the Cartesian tradition, even in its naturalistic form is the dominant modern tradition about persons. However he also points to a minor tradition represented by the Scottish philosopher John MacMurray's second volume of his 1953/4 Gifford Lectures, with a crucial link to this later development of the relational view of persons, possibly being nineteenth century Scottish philosopher Sir William Hamilton influenced by Calvin in the sixteenth century. What is also of interest is the parallel between MacMurray and the writings of Richard of St Victor in the eleventh century, who continues the Christian trinitarian reflection on the understanding of 'person'. Gunton observes that here the idea of God does not fit Feuerbach's maxim: theology is really anthropology in disguise.

Cartesian influences on theologians meant that the distinctly Christian view of 'person', both divine and human receded. The recovery of Trinitarian understanding of God initiated in twentieth century in Protestant (Karl Barth) and Catholic theology (Karl Rahner), and massively developed subsequently, is a prerequisite for a Christian view of 'wellbeing.' This is also the recovery of the Patristic struggle for a fundamentally personal order rather than the prevailing view of a fundamentally impersonal order. The challenge for theology is to show how this fundamentally personal order, theologically understood, can robustly and convincingly incorporate the large impersonal scientific story of the universe, including the evolution of life and human life in particular.

**Created in the 'image of God'**

Christian theology asserts that the whole universe has been freely created by God *ex nihilo* for a purpose, as a free sovereign act, which God is everywhere at work to fulfill. Humankind is created in the image and likeness of God. This 'original blessing' has been understood in three ways: ontologically, relationally and functionally. The 'ontological' concerns who we are—persons—and what we are—the human nature we all share. In a Christian account of the being of human beings the person is ontologically

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60. Gunton, *The Promise of the Trinity*, 93.
62. This is a classic site for the principle holding together of faith and reason in the form of the natural sciences. Galileo's 'two books' principle offers a path to holding together the theological assertions and the scientific discoveries in cosmology and in the evolution of life on earth. See for example, Brendan Purcell, *From Big Bang to Big Mystery: Human Origins in the Light of Creation and Evolution* (Dublin: Veritas, 2011); Rolston Holmes III, *The Three Big Bangs: Matter-Energy, Life, Mind* (New York: Columbia University, 2010); Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption and Special Divine Action* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2010); Stephen Ames, *Why Would God Use Evolution?*, in *Darwin and Interfaith Perspectives*, edited by Jacques Arnauld OP (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2010), 105–128. On the other hand the application of the principle is popularly trivialized by 'stretching' the biblical text over the latest piece of science; for example the claim that vegetation and animals appear in Genesis 1 in the same order as they do according to evolution.
prior. We are each unique, embodied persons ontologically oriented for communion with God and with one another. This orientation is the basis for the claim made famous by Augustine, that our hearts are restless until they rest in God.

The communion with one another may take many forms but of special importance is the assertion that humankind is created in the image of God as ‘male and female.’ Together men and women share the ‘original blessing.’ This is a remarkable counter-cultural assertion.

The ‘relational’ concerns our being drawn and called into personal communion with God and with one another, and into an analogous relationship with the earth by which we are dynamically embodied. Thus our relationship with each other is to be in the ‘image of God’ marked by otherness, equality and dynamic unity. This relational aspect of the ‘original blessing’ is being discovered in a long unfinished, historically contested process from early evolutionary post hominid ancestors right up to today.

The ‘functional’ concerns humankind being given ‘dominion,’ sovereign power to be used together as good stewards of the earth for all humankind now and into the future. By this power we are to do justice to our being embodied persons, to our utter dependence on the life-giving earth and to the fair share in the blessings of the good earth God has given, which is thus the right of all people. This is the wide ambit of divine justice for created life and human life in particular. Genesis is already a prophetic vision of the life of humankind and so of life in what we would call ‘global’ terms.

Given what has just been noted about ‘male and female’ as the form in which humankind is created in the ‘image of God,’ the actual relations between men and women should be characterized by otherness, equality, unity—especially in marriage but also in all aspects of their relating. This is a radical Biblical position not least because of the shared dignity of men and women and because of the shared exercise of ‘dominion.’

44. This embodiment is different from the idea of the person as an immortal soul imprisoned in the body, also from any idea of the body as secondary to the person, and from the idea of the person reduced to being wholly a function of the body. In addition to the references before the previous one, some other useful discussions of these matters are in In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind Body Problem, edited by Joel Green and Stuart Palmer (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003); and Nancy Murphy, Bodies and Souls or Spirited Bodies? (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1978), 178-187.

45. For some Christians this entails defining same sex relationships as unnatural and against the God given purpose of gender and sexuality. This includes denying biology as having any contribution to the idea of what is natural. For example Max Champion, ‘Nihilism and Nature, Bonhoeffer’s “Theology of the Body” and the Homosexuality Debate,’ in Bonhoeffer, Dawn, Under, edited by Gordon Pearce and Ian Parcket (Adelaide: ATP Press, 2012), 105-126. I recognise the force but not the finality of these considerations, which I cannot discuss here. I want to acknowledge that same sex, exclusive, life-long relationships are truly loving relationships and deserve to be honoured as such. Indeed the failure to give this honour is not theologically innocent.

46. This is a radical theme since such power was attributed only to rulers, whether in Egypt or in Babylon or the other nations, which Israel eventually wanted to emulate (1 Samuel). It is also radical in that land does not belong by right to the ‘crowd’ but to the people as God’s stewards of the land. This is a stewardship that is not an exclusive ownership of land but a trust in which all have a share, exercised in particular communities. In the ordinary exchanges between communities and individuals the stewardship ought not to be merely sold (see the story of Naboth’s vineyard), nor redefined by force of arms or legal fiction of declaring a different kind of sovereignty as was done by Governor Philip on the 26th of January 1788 at Sydney Cove in the name of George III, King of England. This has many implications for a theological view of indigenous communities in their relation to the land.

47. This is not to invoke our global economy, which is not strictly speaking an ‘economy’ (see below) and does not intend a fair share of God’s gift of the earth in order that all may live a good life. Hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty by the expansion of a global economy over the last forty years. But that is hardly the main purpose of the economy.

48. This is in some tension with St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, which denies that women are created in the image of God and the ‘shame’ in 1 Corinthians 14:35 should a woman speak in church. The latter may be thought to also be in tension with Galatians 3:28 where ‘in Christ’ there is no ‘male and female.’ The distinction is hardly denied as indicated in Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 6. But rather the way of living out the distinctions is now set free for the new humanity inaugurated in Christ. What will this be? Surely it is not the continuation of the old cultural practices of placing the man over the woman. Surely the guide should be that in Christ God’s intention from the beginning should now be enacted in the world as was the parallel overcoming in Christ of the distinction between Jew and Gentile. The further parallel is Jesus’ discussion of divorce and marriage, quoting from Genesis, where the latter has the truly countercultural note that it is the man who would leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. Kevin Giles has brought out the way the understanding of the relation between men and women as involving the submission of a woman to men under the doctrine of ‘headship’ is so important that it can inform the (mis)understanding of the Trinity. Kevin Giles, The Trinity
This threefold 'original blessing' of humankind is God's gift to the whole creation since it is through the incarnation of the divine Son as a human being that the divine purpose for the whole creation will be realized.

The unconditional worth of created life
Creation and its promised consummation, through the incarnation of the Son, the image of the invisible God, deepens the meaning of human kind being created in the 'image of God'. The incarnation shows us the true image of God in whose 'image' we are created. It shows human nature was and is always oriented to the incarnation of God and more importantly that God was always oriented to the incarnation. This demonstrates the God-given worth and dignity of creation and of human beings in particular.

Human dignity and worth is also indicated by the 'sovereign' powers (dominium) entrusted to human kind to ensure that the earth can go on being life-producing now and into the future, and, as we shall see, within this trust to ensure that the earth's abundant good is wisely distributed for the common good of humankind to whom it is given.

The deepest demonstration of the worth to God of the whole creation and of humankind in particular is the costly means God has used to redeem us from all idolatrous ways of being human, which together represent a path that has no future, because it has no place in the future that is finally coming from God. Through the incarnation Son the 'new reality' of the reign of God has come into the world. The

—and Subordinationism.

49. I stand in the tradition that takes the incarnation as the inner meaning of creation rather than being a consequence of the fall. A history of this theological tradition in the church has been given by Brooke Westcott, 'The Gospel of Creation', in, The Epistles of St John (London: Macmillan, 1883), 273–315. The Rev Dr Barry Marshall first introduced me to this idea when I arrived as an Anglican ordinand at Trinity College in Melbourne in 1952. I had little idea of what it meant except that the idea evoked in me a sense of standing on the edge of a large, but strange space I had never known before. Drawing on Karl Rahner, Dennis Edwards has recently deployed this incarnational theme to speak about the one divine action in Christ from creation to consummation. Dennis Edwards, Resurrection and the Costs of Evolution: A Dialogue with Rahner on Noninterventionist Theology in From Resurrection to Return: Perspectives from Theology and Science on Christian Eschatology, edited by James Haire, Chris Ledger, and Stephen Pickard (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2007), 120.

world could not bear this 'new reality' so it rejected Jesus, even to the point of crucifying him. But this was not the last word. Just when we had thereby seemingly slammed shut the door that God had opened, the 'new reality' triumphed. Jesus remained open to his Father even in the extremity of his violent death. By the Spirit the Father raised Jesus to glory, to vindicate him and so to keep open the possibility of everyone sharing the divine life, indeed the whole created universe. This opening of the divine life to the whole creation is the costly love of the triune God, a cost felt to the uttermost depths of God.

This is good news because we were created in the image of God, who came in human form, at such a cost, to open entrance into the life of God for which we were created and to do so from within our world. This is what we are worth to God. We might use the words of the old marriage service, to imagine hearing the incarnate God saying to us: 'with my body I thee worship'. For the 'new reality' that has come into the world through Jesus is a foretaste of the ultimate marriage of heaven and earth. This is the love of God for each and all of God's creatures, which God always intended for the whole creation. One way of summing up this good news of the vulnerable and invincible God is provided by this prayer.

Father, our Saviour, you sent Jesus your Son into the world of sin and delivered him up to death for us. Kindle in our hearts the same love with which he loved his own until the end, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

Rulers and the divinely given power to humankind
From Genesis this 'sovereign' power is to be exercised by human beings over the earth but not over each other. There is no inherent hierarchy among human beings. Where 'sovereign' power is exercised by kings or other leaders, it is in no way to weaken or deprive people of this shared dignity of having God-given power and responsibility for the ongoing life of humankind. It is to be exercised in a creative and likeness of the triune God who created this life-producing universe, not in the image of a death-dealing monstrous idol.

50. Revelation 21.

51. Based on the prayer after the psalms in Evening Prayer for Thursdays, from A Prayer Book for Australia (Broughton Books, 1995), 441.
The image of 'monstrous' rule is shown in Daniel 7 in the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and in Revelation 17 and 18, against Rome, especially the merchants who trade in every kind of commodity including human beings. There are many other historical examples. This monstrous rule is contrasted to the coming of the humane reign of the living God.

The Bible has a continuing caution about human 'kings' compared to the reign of God, a caution present all the way from Samuel to Jesus. It finds powerful expression in the conversation between Pilate and Jesus in John's Gospel, and in Jesus' words in the Synoptic Gospels about the 'great men', the so-called benefactors of the world, whose leadership is not to be followed by Jesus' disciples. The caution is maintained by remembering Jesus' word to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's; by holding together Romans 13 and the recollection that contra St Paul's words it was those who were a terror to good, who wielded the 'sword' that put Jesus to death; by recalling the judgment against 'Babylon' and its rulers in the Book of Revelation and the fact that there are good rulers—David, Josiah, Cyrus, the king in Psalm 72—which presumably is why Revelation 21:26 can envisage the kings of the earth with all their glory entering the New Jerusalem.

The priority of personal relationships
To speak of being created in the image of the triune God is to emphasize the priority of personal relationships, in which the dignity and worth of human beings is acknowledged, which are therefore trustworthy, whether one to one or in community, and this evokes the vision of a trustworthy community of communities of all human beings. Elsewhere Scripture says we now see as in a 'glass darkly', but then we will see 'face to face'. Even now the embodied, face-to-face character of human life, which God is everywhere at work to strengthen, is to be a sign of the glory that is coming.52 Of course it must be said that humankind is on a long, contested historical journey towards embodying 'globally' the reality of being created in the image of this God.

52. The more obvious implications of this have to do with the way we handle our politics, the way the institution makes decisions about individuals, the way we handle conflicts between individuals and groups, the ways we can be more accountable to one another that are constructive, even life giving, the quality of our speaking to and about one another, especially when the 'other' is absent.

The more abstract ordering of society, in the division of labour, in the state and other institutions and organisations, which we establish, may still be in the 'image of God' by serving not subverting the good of persons in relationships. The principles of participation and subsidiarity made central to Catholic social teaching help ensure people are not deprived of the exercise of this God-given power to take responsibility for themselves and their families, to help define and promote the common good of humankind and to hold accountable those who exercise this power on their behalf.

The priority of the personal is vulnerable to the enormous scope of 'dominion'—sovereign power—as these God-given human powers continue to be discovered and their discovery drives human history. Yet such power is only one aspect of being created in the image of God. Our being created as persons has ontological priority. This does not mean the disavowal of power.53 It does mean we will all need to grow as persons, which means as persons in relation to God, to ourselves, to each other and to the world God gives us, in order not to be taken over by the fruits of these powers gaining a life of their own and we ending up being the narcissistic slaves of 'the works of our hands.' According to the Bible this is idolatry—again—the undermining of our true worth and our true interests.

The ambiguity of human life
As already noted the distortion of the 'original blessing' comes from the worship of idols and the effect of this worship is to dehumanize—we acquire a false way of being human in the image of a lesser god. We are caught in degrading ways of being human. We live a lie. But note, as far as the Bible is concerned the 'original blessing' has not been withdrawn by God. The created being of human beings is in tension with our acquired way of being human. Our living is therefore ambiguous, both drawing out and drawing on God's gift and so manifesting much that is good, that even 'feels good' to us, yet is refracted in the humbly created medium of living 'with and against the grain.'

53. This must be affirmed against the uncritical interpretation of Jesus as weak and powerless and the supposed disavowal of power by various post-modern lines of thought. Jesus never relinquished his authority and his integrity even in the extremity of his suffering and death. I would like to see all that Foucault said about power and knowledge applied to his own writings.
By contrast to the worship of idols, we are addressed by the two great commandments: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself.' God commands and so authorizes us to have access to our full humanity in relation to God, to our neighbor and to ourselves. This stands with the 'original blessing' but stands against the many distortions that deny one or more aspects of the 'original blessing', as these distortions are pursued in the name of a lesser god or gods or 'higher principles'.

These distortions are the various negations of the original blessing, understood ontologically, relationally and functionally. The distortions therefore include: espousing an impoverished ontology that cannot do justice to the reality of being created as persons who are the image of God on earth; blocking the development or worse promoting the degradation of the personal and interpersonal realities of human life; and the many abuses of power, especially depriving people of their God-given power and responsibility. The worship of lesser gods always entails the degradation, the loss, and therefore the sacrifice of human life, whether or not 'human sacrifices' are offered.

Thank God this oppression cannot utterly exclude the possibility of an uprising by those who are oppressed. This is because, according to Scripture, God has not removed the 'original blessing' from humankind. This ontology ensures the contradictions carried by the distortions will eventually be felt, understood and challenged, albeit under particular historical conditions, in different ways and with various results, including the possibility of a reversal of the process of oppression not just the replacement of one form by another.

The point is that we only know how and how far we have fallen short of the mark, when the mark has been revealed. We only know how and how much we have adjusted to our lack of health (wellbeing) when we meet a truly healthy person. There are and have been many contenders for the standpoint from which this knowledge is gained. They are at risk of installing another round of oppression because

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55. See Jeremiah 19:4–6; 2 Kings 17:17; Leviticus 18:21.
the large scientific story that requires it to be incorporated into any larger story. One place I would point to is the above claim that human inquiry, especially scientific inquiry, resists being completely naturalised.

Another way to test these two ontologies draws on what Malouf says about how Christianity views human happiness and human 'unrest'. Let us consider how these are illuminated by the Christian standpoint presented above.

Is Christian 'happiness' only post-mortem?
Malouf says that when Christianity offered its adherents happiness it was a reward either for good works or faith, in the next world (14).61 He contrasts this to the American Declaration of Independence which declares the pursuit of happiness to be one of the natural rights of human beings intended by their Creator 'in the New World here and now' (14). Rather than placing any weight on this 'religious rhetoric', Malouf says the outward political, administrative and architectural form of the new Republic were based on 'pagan' Rome (14). Of course pagan Rome had its own religious rhetoric. Christian rhetoric was quite different, with notable effect, as we shall see below.

I disagree with Malouf's claim that Christianity offered only happiness in the next world, not in the here and now of this world, especially in the context of the Roman Empire. As discussed above Christian eschatology is about a present and future reality. The reign of God announced and enacted by Jesus is a foretaste of the still greater good that is coming.

The disturbing reality of the reign of God is shown in many ways, for example in the Beatitudes and parables of Jesus as well as the fact of his being crucified and raised from the dead, followed by the new experience of God's Spirit poured into the hearts of all who received the good news of Christ. Was this a private 'spiritual' matter for the early church? Hardly, since Jesus was publicly crucified by the Roman governor and Christians were persecuted as 'atheists' indicated in Ames, 'Why would God use Evolution?' in Darwin and Evolution, Interfaith Perspectives, edited by Jacques Arnold (Adelaide: ATP Press, 2010).

61. To be fair, Malouf was not aiming to give an exposition of the Christian view of wellbeing. But the one-liner represents a common view, which hardly does justice to Christianity for all its historical ambiguities.

who did not worship the imperial gods. This new, disturbing reality had other effects as Eastern Orthodox theologian, Dr David B Hart comments.

Occasional attempts have been made by scholars in recent years to suggest that the paganism of the late Roman empire was marked by a kind of 'philanthropy' comparable in kind, or even in scope, to the charity practiced by the Christians, but nothing could be further from the truth. Pagan cult was never more tolerant than its tolerance—without any qualms of conscience—of poverty, disease, starvation, and homelessness; of gladiatorial spectacle, crucifixion, the exposure of unwanted infants, or the public slaughter of war captives or criminals on festive occasions; of indeed almost every imaginable form of tyranny, injustice, depravity or cruelty. The sects of the Roman world simply made no connection between religious piety and anything resembling a developed social morality. . . [nothing] like a religious obligation to care for the suffering, feed the hungry, or visit prisoners . . . The old and new faiths represented two essentially different incompatible visions of the sacred order and of the human good. . . The old gods did not—and by their nature could not inspire the building of hospitals and alms-houses, or make feeding the hungry and clothing the naked a path to spiritual enlightenment or foster any coherent concept of a dignity intrinsic to every human soul; they could never have taught their human charges to think of charity as the highest virtues or as the way to union with the divine.63

In the light of the kind of God revealed in Christ, Christianity pursued an ontological clarification of the understanding of God and of the kind of world in which we live and the new way of being human to which we are called by the triune God. It also must be said that due to its many compromises with 'the spirit of the age' it took Christianity a long time to realise the radical implications of this clarification with regard to slavery and with regard to women and therefore, still be realised, with regard to men.

The theological significance of our unrest
For a Christian view of 'unrest' Malouf cites two poems, 'The Pulley' and the 'Collar' from George Herbert, a seventeenth century Anglican priest and poet. Together they show us God creating humankind with many gifts (including all the so-called 'gifts' Prometheus had to steal from the gods) save 'rest', in order that we all may find our rest in God, rather than in nature. This 'rest' is attained by giving full consent to God as Lord. Malouf comments on this human consent to God: 'the soul is caught by surprise, a sudden flash of illumination, in a spontaneous yielding of individual consciousness to the finality of Faith' (22). Malouf proceeds to contrast this view of 'unrest' with his own view that our hyper activity today is the cure for the fear of stillness and silence. Whence this fear? For Malouf it is as if Pascal's terror at the 'eternal silence of infinite space' has found a new form. The 'eternal silence' means that contra Psalm 19, the heavens never had declared the glory of God. Pascal's terror was from being alone, not in a room but in an infinite universe.

The Christian standpoint says we are restless until we find our rest in God.64 In what way is our restlessness to do with our not finding God? We may answer this by again considering idolatry, which in a secularist society is largely unrecognised. I would say that every culture has its cult, even a secularist culture. The cult defines (supposedly) what is ultimately real and of value and it tells us how we may live in touch with that ultimate. What is the 'ultimate' that our culture inculcates in each of us? On a daily basis in our culture it is the techno-sciences that tell us what is real and it is the market that tells us what is of value, that is, what is of value to the market.


64. I would be careful how I generalized on this point. In conversation with Buddhist friends I have found much agreement about how to live each day. They had no fear of silence and stillness. Compassion is central. One point of difference arises with regard to silence and the sense of life as a mystery that is beyond all thought, all distinctions. The difference was whether it is possible for us to be addressed by the mystery beyond all distinctions. For a Christian, even if the answer received in conversation is 'no', might not this mystery be an intimation of God incognito?
finds its most powerful expression two and half thousand years later in the so-called global economy. The golden rule is essentially a demand for an increased return on capital invested and this can be achieved by increasing productivity and the amount returned in the financial cycle by variously reducing the introduction of these cycles and of course having the dominant measure of time. Hence life seems to accelerate. There is no rest.

The cultural core for God's rule.

As modern also recognizes the golden rule and that God's rule is not just a matter of right and wrong, but also a matter of human flourishing and well-being. The golden rule is essentially a demand for an increased return on capital invested and this can be achieved by increasing productivity and the amount returned in the financial cycle by variously reducing the introduction of these cycles and of course having the dominant measure of time. Hence life seems to accelerate. There is no rest.

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rewards the faithful with ‘infinite possibilities’ for self-transcendence, which ironically are always tied to most people being producers and consumers. It provides an encompassing purpose, a surrogate for the objective lack of purpose, a purpose that in the context of this economy is ‘self-evident’, both limitless and measureable. It is an idol worshipped every day. Its voice is heard in those who proclaim its supposedly unquestionable value in the midst of bringing about the conditional and expendable value of everything else drawn into the market.

These effects are reinforced by the way public life is ever intruding into our private lives through the massive effects of high-tech communications bombarding and forming us as restless, hyper autonomous persons, who have only conditional value to the economy. Alas, this is in tension with the claim that privately, family and friends are most important, and also that publically the ‘fair go’ for all is our key Australian value. These private and public values are held as if they were unconditional. We do see that value come to life especially under the shock of national emergencies, as in the fires in Victoria and the floods in Queensland. Many commentators expressed the wish this could be how we lived all the time. It seems we revert to an older ethic under the shock of disaster, where people can see ‘we are all in it together’. It is an unrecognised remnant of cultural formation continuing from an earlier period in our society more informed by Christianity. The task is to renew our culture by inculcating this value in all aspects of our life.

As work demands expand and the pace of living increases, we have to stay more and more on the surface of relationships— you can not go too deep if you are always on the move. And we are all being moved faster and faster to keep up with the demands of an ever growing economy. We are more and more being drawn into an abstract form of relationship, mediated by our technology to an absent other, so that these relationships become predominant compared to bodily face-to-face relationships. The expanding market helps promote this shift and offers ‘therapeutic’ consumption as a surrogate for the loss this shift entails. By these means the personal is being slowly degraded.

All this is the cult at the heart of our culture. This is what our culture insinuates into our lives. It drives the operation of a virulent social form that takes over and makes over more and more of life in its terms, including forming us as unencumbered, individual consumers. To borrow a term from political science, it operates as if it was ‘sovereign power’—that power of which there is none greater. This is a monstrous self-caricature of the ‘dominium’ given to humankind for the common good. The caricature concentrates more and more wealth in the hands of minorities within and between nations. The UN Millennium Goals languish, as does the Doha round of negotiations71. The ‘Occupy’ movement is the latest initiative to highlight the effect of the increasing discrepancy between rich and poor, within and between nations, under the prevailing economic order.

Going with ‘the grain’ or living a lie
From a Christian standpoint, human well being arises as our way of living goes with the grain of our being created in the image of the triune God. This is a way of being that gives priority to persons in relation to other persons rather than their being degraded. Enacting this is the work of cultural renewal at the level of its presuppositions about what is real and of value: valuing human persons and our growing as human persons as a distinct mode of being expressed in a range of individual and social practices that ensure we are not overtaken by the hugely powerful impersonal order of our own making, with the threat to the earth on which we depend.

It may be true that the poor have never had it so good. However if you pick a standard low enough anything can look good. A different standard is being offered in this paper. It is given in the Genesis vision of humankind created in the image of God and together given sovereign power over the earth. We are in this together. A glimpse of what this might mean is available in the comparison of nations with a high and low degree of inequality on a range of measures having a high or low degree of social and personal disorders.72

70. I am here briefly drawing on aspects of the position developed by people at ARENA over many years. For an introduction to these views see, Sharp, G. ‘Sufficient for the Day’, in Arena Magazine, 115, (December 2011–January 2012).

71. The Economist, the 6th of October 2012, letter from six Ambassadors to the WTO.

Yet another glimpse is available by noticing that in the first chapter of Genesis at the point where humankind is created in God’s image, all that is said about God is that God has spoken. To go with the grain of being created in the image of this God will mean that every person must find their voice, which is expected to be creative and productive, and must not be silenced. The caricature of the sovereign power given by God to humankind is evident in the way the voices of so many people are unheard or are ignored.

From the Christian standpoint, this account of human beings, of our supposed wellbeing and of the kind of world in which we live, points to a profound mistake. We are living a lie. The mistake involves the ambiguity already noted. The reality of human life in relation to God is being massively contradicted by the vast, idolatrous, construal of reality. Yet this construal takes place by our drawing out and drawing on God-given human power and all the other powers and intricacies of the created world. The scope of these powers is still being discovered as all this proceeds and consequently this manifests much that is good, even ‘feels good’ to us, yet is refracted in the humanly created medium of living ‘with and against the grain’. This ‘feel good’ factor helps make the contradiction almost invisible.

The Christian standpoint, however, leads to an expectation that the contradiction will become manifest. One form of the contradiction is the denial of the finitude of created life, in the chrematistic aspiration to no-limits and all its effects. The contradiction begins to be felt with the recognition of things going wrong with our way of life and yet resisted because of the proud sense of something good and powerful being enacted and confirmed in all the successes of our technologically empowered way of life.

The contradiction is felt through the threat of climate change, where the no-limits of global chrematistics is undermining the natural ecology and economy that sustains life. But there is a deep and widespread resistance to this recognition because it indicates a threat to the roots of the construal of reality and value, and the consequent ways of living, which we have pursued for over 400 years, to which we are so proudly attached. We resist the thought that somehow we have gone astray. It is also manifested in the various forms of slavery which abound in the global economy.73

73. Roscoe Howell, Australia and Modern Slavery (Sydney: NSW, Slavery Links

The contradiction is also manifested in the global financial crisis, at the centre of our global chrematistics. The crisis was brought about by the fantasy of the limitless growth of an asset bubble feeding on itself, as if it truly had a life of its own. The fantasy of this false transcendence escalated as the financial processes became more and more abstracted from the daily life of people it was supposed to serve. Overall the trust between people and society’s institutions was even further degraded. The contradiction is also manifested in the prospect of wars fought over limited natural resources as more and more nations and more and more people within nations desire to live like the West. Warfare was Aristotle’s third way of gaining wealth. Despite the dominance and the power of this encompassing construal of reality in the so-called global ‘economy’, its contradictions to the life-sustaining planet and to human life are being recognised, from a variety of standpoints including the one presented here. As a result there are many explorations of what might become an alternative path for living together—proposals for a carbon free economy, the Tobin tax on financial transactions, the rise of Transitional Towns, the moves to make a rich and robust notion of wellbeing direct economic, social and environmental policies,74 and proposals for a true global ‘economy’ not driven by ever increasing growth.75

The divine economy is a truly human economy

The Christian standpoint promotes this exploration of an alternative, though Christians also have to face up to their attachments to the way things are and their resistance to change. The good news of Christ reveals the divine economy for the whole creation and this means the whole creation is to be thought of as a ‘household’ or an ‘ecology’. One indication of this is that the whole physical universe is needed for life even on one planet, without prejudice to whether there is life on other planets. On this planet the divine economy, which includes the possibility of its idolatrous caricature, also includes its redemption, so that the divine purpose for creation will not be thwarted. This is

74. A main theme of Rio + 20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.
75. For example, Jackson, T, Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet (London: Earthscan, 2009).
being worked out historically through the incarnation of the Son, the image of the invisible God, whose Spirit empowered gospel is able to set us free from the power of the vast cultural idol, especially as more people see the effects of worshipping this idol. This will allow the ‘original blessing’ to emerge more clearly so that human beings may become unambiguously the carriers of the true image of the living God not the degrading image of the idol. Thus we may hope that all the contours of wellbeing and globalization that were elaborated above as implicated in our being created in God’s image can be realised.

The effects of the excesses of the idolatrous construal of reality and the resistance provoked by the hidden ‘original blessing’, conspire together to bring into public awareness a version of the Genesis vision, albeit named in a variety of other ways, but still a sign of the times. The divine economy calls us to ways of living in a community of communities, where the personal has priority, where participation and subsidiarity mark all the exercise of power, whether technological, economic, political, where different economies, both local and global, (not a global chorematistics!) sustain finite needs, where the earth is truly honoured, where all can now explore the ‘height, length, breadth and depth’ of the good of the ‘original blessing’, especially since through Christ this has been opened up to a foretaste of the ‘final blessing’, the still greater good that is coming, the dynamic life of the triune God who will be ‘all in all’. This is a ‘telos’ not a terminus. This is the life of exquisite movement, with being still as one restful act in the movement, in which everything partial has gone, but paradoxically faith, hope and love abide, since the divine economy introduces us into the inexhaustible, infinite mystery of the living God.

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76. Ephesians 3:18.
77. 1 Corinthians 13:13.

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Globalisation and the Moral Crisis in Economics

Bruce Duncan

Introduction

The Global Financial Crisis has rocked the international economy to its foundations and unleashed a series of crises that continue to churn destructively through markets and national economies. We are in an unprecedented period of economic upheaval which is even more unsettling because the consequences are still unfolding unpredictably. The crisis has exposed the collapse of moral standards which allowed the corruption in markets to become systemic and to spread internationally with astonishing speed. In considering the need for renewed moral standards to rebuild global markets, we need to bear in mind also the urgent threats to the environment and from climate change.

This chapter argues that the current economic crisis stems from philosophical flaws in much economic theory, particularly as exemplified in recent neoliberal writers, who thought they had discovered the Midas touch of ever-expanding financial wealth. This ideology was purloined by financial and other special interest groups to free themselves from normal moral constraints in order to maximise wealth for shareholders and themselves. They believed that the market absolved them from moral responsibility about the consequences of their activities. These special interests threw hundreds of millions of dollars a year into reshaping social and political views through their right-wing think tanks and media channels.

There has been much soul-searching among thoughtful economic actors, distressed at the rapid collapse of finance and markets, with