

THE ECCR OPEN DEBATE

What a magnificent evening yesterday. I was deeply impressed by the four speakers and their open exploratory examination of their own fine agencies.

It takes nothing away from the rich vein of their combined approach, each so pithily and movingly described, to say there is another level of theological reflection, interpretation and faithful application that was not stated. I hope it was not impertinent, or misunderstood, that I broached it my contribution, which though not posed as a question offered the implication of an immense and urgent deeper question.

Without attention to that deeper level also, we are in danger of enormous effort in developing magnificent palliatives, that still do little to stem the insidious path of exploitation and exponential growth that are leading, in the eyes of many people and much evidence, towards omnicide.

If there is any wish to explore this in any vehicle of ECCR, I'd be delighted to join/evoke a discussion around that challenge.

You might find some ideas on how to present this matter to the virtual team of members you know well and I know only a few, in this reflection made in preparation for a 4 hour seminar with 9 MA students of Pastoral Theology.

DISCERNING AND RESPONDING TO THEOLOGICAL RESONANCE IN SECULAR LANGUAGE

I speak with some com-passion about a deeply founded fear that the underlying driving forces, which are a fundamental issue in consideration of the Recession, are almost entirely ignored in the consideration of Recovery - I mean the long term, embedded evils of our complicity in a long embedded system that has made Land, Labour [people] and Money into commodities. Unless we all also face the insidious economic divisiveness that this commodification process has built deeply into global human society with ecological destructiveness we are doomed.

I take **EXPLOITATION** and **EXPONENTIAL GROWTH** as the key words for philosophical and theological audit. Both contravene in profound and complex ways the fundamental injunction to love God and our neighbour, the basic premise on which all the great faith traditions found their paths in search of faithfulness.

In an auditing process with those two EX-keys, which should be a constant in our discipleship - our submission to God's ceaseless creativity in Natural Law - we see that any pastoral care for people and planet must also be clear about the prophetic judgement upon us all for a way of life that we have taken centuries to evolve in our imperial economic theories and rapacious practices. The power of denial around this is formidable. [I have a paper by Prof. Ian Christie of RESOLVE - Surrey University - outlining some 12 or more, often interweaving, forms of denial extant in western society.] We are called in our time to a humble societal loss of face in acknowledging human hubris embedded in self- and vested-interest, which has us all in its powerful grip. ['Mortgage' derives from 'grip of death'!!]

I fear that almost all the economic ways devised and built up under the imperial, violent, non-ecological ways of the west are grounded in those two aberrations of Natural Law [Exploitation and Exponential growth] and of the inclusive righteous justice of which the biblical scriptures speak in thousands of references. Our calling

today is to work for a critical mass of people who seek and offer principled and pragmatic proposals for structural change to a way of global housekeeping [economy!!!] that is non-violent, counter-imperial and founded in an ecology of love expressed in inclusive justice. It is almost certain to co-operate, not competitive.

There is urgent need to learn to recognise and respond to theological resonance in secular language, without which we confine our insights to an institution and to individuals; and fail to speak of truth to power. We have a responsibility in the mission of the kin[g]dom of God to introduce first principles of a 'universal basic income', 'radical monetary reform' and 'the collection of location development value for the community'. These fundamentals interweave in an economy designed as if people and planet matter. [The Covenant of God with humanity for 'everything under the rainbow'].

Facing that everything in mainstream is now Orwellian, 'financial capitalism is the most efficient way of creating wealth and spreading it' actually means 'financial capitalism is grossly inefficient and creates no real wealth at all, but concentrates imaginary wealth (and insensitive power) in the hands of a few'. It fails to understand the natural hierarchy of capital resource in which the ordinate resource of natural capital allows the developments of subsets in this order - human capital - served by social capital - enhanced by manufactured capital - enabled by financial capital to be equitably pre-distributed.

You might see how to make a start, in order to grow greater understanding of how, beyond individual efforts, we [the people[s] of God] contribute to a critical mass capable of challenging the great monopolistic power that threaten so much destruction. That challenge must be both pastorally and prophetically interwoven.

I would be happy if you share this with others in assessing its value or otherwise in ECCR's significant educational explorations.

The author of the newly published 'Prosperity without Growth' ended the launch by saying. 'This book challenges you to move on 'with Curiosity, with Rage and with Hope.' And he, an atheist, described what he meant by each of the three words with what I heard as rich theological insight.

Thanks to all the team for a significant evening.

Go well in the blessings of ECCR's strong open congregation,

Peter Challen

"Financially, the World is living on drafts upon the future:
Economically, it is living on the Products of the past." unknown