THE PLACE OF MONEY, PEOPLE, AND WORSHIP IN VOCATIONAL FORMATION FOR BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

If the greatest idol in business is profit, potentially, what is an alternative vision for business from a Christian perspective in the age of a globalized, free market economy? Moreover, how does such a vision get cultivated and sustained in a society that constantly reinforces the rule of money as the ultimate determination of value and purpose? And what is the role of the church in stirring imagination and longing for embodying a way of doing business in the world that has God's Kingdom and shalom as its *telos*? In this paper, it is argued that, while business ethics are still essential, a Christian understanding of business requires a different theological, anthropological, and even eschatological starting point that forms people *vocationally* in order to form them morally and spiritually. This is especially true given that every business, culture, and economic system has its own kind of built-in "theology" or utopia in view — as well as its own account of what it means to have a vocation or calling.

Thus, the example of the ServiceMaster company and how it prioritized and pursued its four objectives will be considered as an exemplary model for conducting business at the mainstream public level, and in a way that conforms as much as possible to a Christian theology of work. Special attention will be paid to its creation of a culture that placed people before profit. Furthermore, in order for Christians to bring their approach to business under the reign of Christ, nothing short of a transformation of sight and desire itself is needed. Facilitating this transformation is a primary function of worship. In conclusion, then, a brief discussion of several ways that churches can lead in the vocational formation of their members will be explored, emphasizing how worship services themselves can prepare and reorient Christian eyes and hearts for participation in God's restorative mission through business.

Introduction

It has been observed by any number of philosophers, spiritual teachers, and even behavioral economists and psychologists that, despite how the Enlightenment taught us to think, desires rather than concepts are most constitutive of human behavior. Human actions are tied to the wants of the heart more than to the understanding of the mind, and habits determine the direction in which bodies finally move. "Take delight in the Lord," the Psalmist says, "and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). This only works, however, if "delight in the Lord" is greater than delight in everything else. As James K.A. Smith put it, drawing on St. Augustine and echoing Aristotle, "you are what you love."[1] Or, as Dallas Willard has said: "Actions are not impositions on who we are, but are expressions of who we are. They come out of our heart and the inner realities it supervises and interacts with."[2]

Of course, when it comes to faithful business and ethics for Christians, good thinking is certainly important. As Kenman Wong and Scott Rae argue in their excellent business ethics textbook, *Beyond Integrity,* "ethics applied to competitive markets are more complex than simple, often-used platitudes, such as "Do the right thing" or "It all comes down to character.""[3] Yes, wisdom, education, training, mentoring, and critical thinking are crucial; integrity alone is not enough.

According to the Bible and Christian spirituality, though, even wisdom falls short when one's heart is led astray.[4] King Solomon's story bears this out as much as any, in which his wives "turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not devoted to the Lord his God."[5] From a theological standpoint, ethics — and even Christian ethics — are necessary but insufficient for the task of wholesale adoption of God's intentions for business and economics.[6] Indeed, the

greatest threat to Christian faithfulness in business today is neither ignorance nor dishonesty; rather, it is *idolatry*.

Human beings are enticed by all kinds of false gods: power, prestige, sensuality, the approval of others, and so on. Jesus himself faced these idols during his testing in the wilderness, and surely no one is completely immune to any them.[7] Still, there is little question that the most common idol in the marketplace is money or profit.

Money is actually a difficult idol to identify, though. Stanley Hauerwas has remarked that greed is perhaps the most subtle of sins.[8] In advanced industrial economies, we have even turned greed into a virtue of sorts based on the premise of the need for perpetual growth to achieve prosperity. Jesus famously declared that human beings cannot serve both God and money (Matt 6:24), while the classical tradition of virtue ethics might speak of the problem more in terms of the vice of greed or avarice. Either way, that the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil is plain enough (1 Tim 6:10). More challenging is the question of how money so ubiquitously operates today in comparison to the past. This will be examined more closely below.

But if money isn't the appropriate object of desire for a Christian in business, what is? And if the answer instead is God, how does one cultivate a desire for God and seek to do his will through one's work in the private or corporate sector, where capital and profit reign supreme? These are big questions, and a thoroughly satisfactory response is beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, in the space remaining, the case will be made that the proper *means* of Christian moral and spiritual formation for business in a Twenty-first Century, globalized context is in large part that of *vocational* formation, where the idea of vocation has mostly to do with the call to participate in God's plan of restoration and shalom for the world.

It is one thing to obey a commandment, and obedience is certainly a good Christian discipline. Vocation, though, while not merely concerned with the passions, has an "attractional" and aesthetic quality to it that can nonetheless accompany God's commands, making obedience all the more pleasant and satisfying despite whatever difficulty may also be involved. Vocational formation, it will be further argued, depends significantly upon one's location and imbeddedness in a faith community whose worship habits and practices are shaping and equipping its body to resist the pervasive and insidious reach of mammon. More is needed, that is, than simply speaking of the Christian vocation that many may have to the marketplace, as if stressing the fact that God can call people to business will somehow shore up the kind of moral framework needed to guard against the pressures and culture of mammon.

First, however, the nature of moral business itself in a global capitalist society must also be examined from a theological perspective, followed by outlining an alternative vision.
For vocational and moral formation, the god of mammon must be carefully and critically exposed in order to be exorcized from the hearts and minds of Christians who too often unwittingly serve this god. Then, an example of theologically and vocationally-informed ethics in business will be provided by a look at the ServiceMaster company as one paradigmatic case study. Finally, the modern history of the concept of vocation will be very briefly appraised for the purposes of intelligibly and effectively shaping a Christian understanding of it today. This will lead into concluding remarks about the church's worship and discipleship practice as the site for implementing vocational formation for business.

Money and the Spirit of the Global Economy

Surveying the history of economics is a daunting task. Even if limited to the modern period, a litany of great thinkers and movements would have to be reviewed.[9] Nevertheless, no figure would feature more prominently in such a survey than Adam Smith. Smith is clearly most known for his great work, *The Wealth of Nations,* wherein he famously states: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages."[10] This principle of self-interest, along with the concept of free market competition as the "invisible hand" of economic growth, has been firmly cemented for generations in young economic and business minds in colleges and universities across the United States as the fundamental doctrine by which both the economy in general and business in particular function and must be understood.[11]

As many but fewer also know, however, Smith wrote another significant work earlier in his life called *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in which he makes a claim that seemingly competes with the more famous and influential one above: "How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it."[12] This second statement is where one gets a sense of Smith's natural theology. Smith shows an awareness that, though still incentivized to seek self-advantage, human beings are social animals who care about and even enjoy the experience of considering the wishes of their neighbors. And while Smith was not likely writing from an explicitly Christian point of view, this characterization of human nature is surely compatible with a biblical anthropology.

Indeed, because human beings are made in God's image, a divine spark remains that is not entirely extinguished despite our sinfulness.

Thus, and as others have claimed, it can be easily surmised that Smith never imagined capitalism to work without the influence of virtuous and morally sentient beings guiding and correcting it.[13] Nor did Smith envision or advocate for a libertarian state. The role of moral agents and actors that function as checks and balances on the profit motive of companies must be played by consumers, companies, and governments alike.

The trouble is, with some exceptions, Western society has by and large neglected this guiding principle of morally disciplined self-interest — not only in practice, but in theory as well. The second half of the Twentieth Century in particular saw an unapologetic turn toward the god of profit maximization, both academically and in the market itself. The doctrine of Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and the Chicago school prevailed: the social responsibility of a corporation, it was declared, is to increase wealth for shareholders.[14]

The US economy, companies, corporate culture, and business schools alike seem to have chosen what could be called "chrematistics" over "oikonomia."[15] As Herman Daly once pointed out, a distinction between "oikonomia" from "chrematistics" was made long ago by Aristotle: "Oikonomia is the science or art of efficiently producing, distributing, and maintaining concrete use of values for the household and community over the long run. Chrematistics is the art of maximizing the accumulation by individuals of abstract exchange value in the form of money in the short run."[16] Money is now the goal rather than quality goods and services, and any sense of economic virtue has been relegated to an afterthought at best.[17]

The broad adoption of this dogma has been coupled with a dramatic rise in the pace of

globalization fueled by technological advancement and increased liberalization of barriers to trade.[18] Of course, economic globalization has brought about innumerable benefits that should not be discounted, but the combination of outsourcing, automation, and an exponentially growing population — and, therefore, workforce — has continued to put downward pressure on wages despite generating many new jobs and lifting millions out of abject poverty. Add to this the challenges of ecological degradation, the need to regulate transnational corporations, and the geopolitics of clashing powers and cultures, and the negative consequences of such rapid and complex change start to multiply rather quickly. Inevitably, the incentives to prioritize profit over people become even stronger than many previous economic environments would tend to create.

Cultural forces of globalization, along with economic forces, frequently operate in tandem and interchangeably with each other as well. The post-Fordist era still emerging consists of a detachment from any particular space or a visible relationship between production, consumption, and labor conditions.[19] Allegiances become expendable, and one can no longer afford to be emotionally bound or relationally responsible for other human beings in one's work, it would seem.[20]

What is more, goods that are traded internationally in the climate of Post-Fordism have a short shelf-life.[21] The turnover rate for what is demanded gets higher and higher, as consumer desires become more and more ephemeral. The exchange value of things demanded by buyers in the most powerful trading countries has almost completely usurped their use value.[22]

Thus, one of the great ethical and arguably theological challenges of business today is experienced by the way it teaches us to look at the world.[23] There are obviously far-reaching economic forces at play, but the age of globalization also presents the world to us with a particu-

lar culture, aesthetic, and way of seeing. It is not "value neutral" or objective. Value is always being assigned, however implicitly.

This is because human beings can't help but live within a story that has an ultimate reference point or goal in mind. Christian theological anthropology assumes that everyone operates with a utopian outlook of some kind, whether consciously or unconsciously. Such a telos or end functions with a transcendent, worshipful power, even if such a utopian vision is thought to be merely immanent and temporal.[24] Theologians call this eschatology.

Indeed, economic structures and modalities always have an implied anthropology and even theology.[25] The same is true about the universalistic impulse of globalization, as it configures space in such a way that abstracts and fragments human-to-human contact from its particular and local embodiments. Globalization gives the world homogenizing eyes, in other words. Its universalization and fragmentation are two sides of the same coin. Free trade agreements, for instance — again, their benefits notwithstanding — epitomize the spirit of globalization, by detaching from the local and privileging the hypermobility of capital.

Here too it can be seen that the false objectivity or supposed neutrality of business depends upon a certain kind of secular theology that refuses any transcendent reference point. Economics as usual has its own eschatology, even — a built-in utopian vision of sorts — and one that trusts in the promises of ever-increasing development, wealth creation, and market expansion. It is the work of a Christian theology of business, therefore, to shine a light on this eschatology and replace it with a truer, better, and more beautiful one.

An Alternative Vision of Business for Christians

While the above account of the globalizing tendency of business today is a critical one, this is not to suggest that there is anything inherently evil about free market capitalism. Its impact is very mixed, to be sure, but quite arguably more beneficial than harmful. Nor is it the intention here to recommend that "going back" to a less international model or imposing greater controls from a more centralized state is the solution. Globalization in some form or another is here to stay. Its pitfalls and potentially detrimental effects, though, should be identified and appreciated in order for Christians to respond, lead, and carry out business in a manner that contributes to God's will for human flourishing.

What must be articulated, now, is a description of a kind of healing treatment for this poor vision of the nature of business and economics. A distinctly Christian imagination for business is needed to offer an alternative aesthetic. Furthermore, it must be one that promises to construct human subjects and communities in a different order — one that is established in accordance with the goodness of God's intention for them and their divine image-bearing status.

As already stated, such an alternative aesthetic depends not merely on Christian ethics or morals. Even before one can assess the goodness of an exchange or relationship, a certain way of envisaging all of reality is required. It depends first of all on a glimpse of God's beauty and on what could be called a sacramental view of everything, including business.[26]

It has long been perceived that the modern period in the West has experienced a great disenchantment with the transcendent. More than this, there is an accompanying process by which faith moves from finding its source and meaning outside of the self and in the world that God inhabits, to one that is inside and internal — in the mind. Charles Taylor calls this excarnation

and defines it as "the steady disembodying of spiritual life, so that it is less and less carried in deeply meaningful bodily forms, and lies more and more in the head."[27]

Many developments in recent history have to led to this phenomenon, but digital technology, new media, the financialization of capitalism, and international business are preeminent features of the excarnated, post-Industrial era. In earlier time periods, the human agent was seen as porous and open to the outside — vulnerable to all of its effects, whether healing or harming.[28] One goal of a Christian counter-narrative and vision to this, therefore, is to redirect attention and imagination toward embodiment and incarnation — specifically, the incarnation of Christ as the principle medium of human exchange through which all other exchanges are transacted.

In Catholic, Anglican, and many other liturgically-oriented Christian worship services, there is a moment before communion when the offering from the congregation is brought forward as a representation of the fruits of labor to be shared with the whole body. Traditionally, this might have literally been crops, produce, and other various foods and goods to eat during a common meal together as part of worship and Eucharist (literally, "Thanksgiving"). Of course, now we only see money placed in the offering place, if even that, as many people give electronically and digitally. Thus, much of the incarnational meaning of and connection between the offering and communion itself is easily lost.

Part of the problem as well is the difference between the way that money functions today as compared to how something like crops or any other "first fruits" of one's labor would be understood in an ancient social context. The first fruits or tithes of one's work has not merely been replaced by a fiat substitute. Money in the modern economy does far more than simply represent the value of goods and services for the purposes of exchange. For much of society, it has in fact

become something quite transcendent or deified. For, money is now the means by which one is able to purchase every other material thing.

As William Cavanaugh explains, "it is not so much that people actually worship money or accumulate it for its own sake. It is rather that, in modern society, time, attention, and devotion are organized by the social institution of money . . . Money is the one thing that guarantees access to all the benefits and pleasures and goods of modern life. Money is therefore the one thing that unites all the diverse people of the world. Money takes the place that God once held, as the source of the value of values."[29] So it is not that people understand God to be spiritual and money to be material. For money no longer fulfills a conscious, material purpose so much as an unconscious, spiritual one. Money is the currency of a whole system of trust and confidence — a faith tradition of sorts, and one that correspondingly has purchasing power with respect to the past, present, and future. Money becomes the supreme value by which all other values are measured.

The academic study of economics and its professional practice contribute to the ongoing misperception about the role of money. Economists treat their subject like a science, which means everything must be quantifiably measurable on the basis of its exchangeability. Conversely, a major responsibility of Christian theological ethics is to determine what is truly valuable and the nature of value as such, whether that value is exchangeable or not. Furthermore, the Christian standard of this theological evaluation is the character and will of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

For a Christian, what is at stake is the vitality of human beings whose bodies are not only physically but spiritually filled with life. Hence, bodiliness is a central concept for a theology of

money and business — not merely an individual body abstracted from social context, but the bodiliness of the human subject in community with others. Moreover, the body is also what instantiates the human being's relationship with nature. To have a body is to exist in nature, and business always includes the production and distribution of natural necessities of life.[30]

In light of this, what if commerce itself was understood as one of the strongest not only material but also spiritual bonds between people? It has the capacity, as some have noted, to unify humanity — at least symbolically, if not literally. And today, the business of a globalized world, if ordered in accordance with greater economic solidarity, may even be said to serve as a material sign of "the mystical body of Christ," showing forth "the interdependence of all parts of the human body" that "knits the peoples of the world together by the silken threads of a seamless garment."[31] The Eastern Church Father, John Chrysostom, talked about human solidarity this way:

> "First we are taught love in the very manner in which we were created, for God, having created a single human being, decreed that we should all be born from it, so that we might all see ourselves as one and seek to keep the bond of love among ourselves. Second, God wisely, promoted mutual love through our own trade and dealings. Notice that God filled the earth with goods, but gave each region its own peculiar products, so that, moved by need, we would communicate and share among ourselves, giving others that of which we have [in] abundance and receiving that we which lack."[32]

A proper Christian theology of business, then, strives to realize the universality of Christ and his body in every particular exchange. For Christian, it is not an exaggeration to say that Jesus's incarnation, life, death and resurrection, as well as the immanent presence of the Holy Spir-

it, are the means by which the universal Christ is mediated through such particular business exchanges and inter-subjective relationships. These relationships can be patterned after the Trinity itself, in mutuality, cooperation, and exchange based on knowing that comes from differentiated unity.[33] The Trinity and Christ's body as sacramentally holding together the local and the global, the material and the spiritual, the transcendent and the immanent, is a model for Christian community, but it applies preeminently in the age of globalization and free market capitalism to the work, strategy, and envisioning undertaken by Christians in business as well.

The Example of ServiceMaster

As has now been shown, any moral framework that wishes to withstand the forces and pressures that seek to place money in the seat of God as its purpose, must have its sights set by a *telos* that is regularly reinforced and distinguished from competing economic cultures and logics. For Christians, this *telos* comes from nothing short of a biblical eschatology that places the incarnation and rule of Christ, along with the embodiment of the economics of the Kingdom of God, as its organization principle. This is not to suggest that a company should be "Christian" in any explicit sense; rather, it simply means that a Christian approach to business is one that strives to order itself within the larger story of God's good intentions for and activity in creation.

In his book, *The ServiceMaster Story: Navigating Tension Between People and Profit*, Albert Erisman chronicles the history of a major public company wrestling long and hard with the tug-of-war between the two very human poles of self-interest and the concern of others discussed above in reference to the political philosophy and economic vision of Adam Smith. Early on, ServiceMaster identified four pillars, values, or objectives that would govern their operation

and mission for decades: 1) Honor God in all we do, 2) help people to develop, 3) pursue excellence, and 4) grow profitably.[34]

These values can be stated in different ways, and each one requires further unpacking, but a crucial piece of the puzzle is the order in which they are placed. This is also what distinguishes the approach of ServiceMaster from the simple tension held in Adam Smith's thought between self-interest and regard for others. Former CEO of ServiceMaster, Bill Pollard, persistently taught and talked about how the first two values were ends, and the second two were means.[35] That is, honoring God and developing people were the standards by which profit and quality service could be achieved. It was not merely a struggle between the two competing priorities of profit and people, in other words. Honoring God and developing people came first.

Furthermore, Pollard was always quick to clarify that "honoring God" was not used as a basis for excluding those who might lack faith or particular religious adherence.[36] Rather, in Pollard's view, this value gave justification for uncommon inclusivity in many ways. More than this, he contended, it provided grounds for recognizing and protecting the dignity of every person in the company and how God would want him or her to be treated. It offered the transcendent basis, in other words, for putting people before profit while still striving to uphold the company's responsibility to its shareholders.[37]

Now, at no point did ServiceMaster or its leaders claim that seeking to "honor God" had a direct causal relationship with profit.[38] Remarkably, though, and with these values as their compass, ServiceMaster was able to grow profitably year over year for decades.[39] Based on ServiceMaster's own track record — and especially given its publicly traded status — these four values and their right ordering provide one of the most time-tested and outstanding examples

available for applying Christian ethics to business in the life of a firm — however imperfectly.[40]

The exemplary nature of ServiceMaster's story was underscored all the more in an interview with longtime leader and executive at ServiceMaster, Patricia Asp, by several Pollard Research Scholars. Asp reported that the internal service quality at ServiceMaster was underpinned by the intrinsic value it placed on people. Service Master believed in training and development, she said. According to Asp, believing in people achieving their full potential and becoming all that God intended them to become was paramount. Asp further insisted that, "This was the foundation of who they were. Everyone mattered no matter what. People were not the object of work. They were the subject. It wasn't so much about the to-do's as to-be's. We asked, what are you becoming a result of the work itself?"[41] To be clear, she spoke as well of difficult decisions — disciplining, firing, and so on. But the goal was still to work toward letting people become all that God intended them to be.

One notes in these words the strong evidence of persistent leadership that created a culture of care for the wellbeing and even vocational flourishing of employees. More than that, the people that made up the company really were more seen as more valuable than the profit to which their work contributed. Ash attributed this value to its transcendent source and governing purpose of "honoring God," even though the meaning of "God" in this case was left open for interpretation and functioned largely as a stand-in for the inherent dignity of others and something like "God is love" or "love of neighbor."[42] Put differently, the company undoubtedly had a Christian *telos*, however implicit. Its purposes was derived from the conviction that ServiceMaster needed to be part of advancing and pointing people toward greater wellbeing and thriving in the world, precisely by prioritizing wellbeing and thriving for its own people as much as in their cus-

tomers, clients and quality of services.

Much more could be said and has been, by Pollard, Erisman, and others, about how these values and the treatment of people actually worked themselves out in different situations and aspects of the company, but that is not the focus of this paper. Instead, the question raised here is about the way that such a set of values as these might be cultivated, maintained, and shared among Christians and in churches — for application to business, yes, but also beyond. Thus, the following and final section briefly turns toward the notion of vocation itself, a sketch of its history, and how to understand and steward it presently in Christian community and worship.

Vocational Formation and the Role of the Church

On the one hand, the idea that every individual might have a vocation and develop a profession or area of contribution to society is very old and perhaps has its roots in the Stoic philosophers of the Roman Empire.[43] On the other hand, most people throughout history have simply lived their lives where they were born and taken up the same work of the parents and grandparents. Tragically, many others have even had their generational "vocations" taken from them altogether through enslavement, colonialism, or other exploitative means. It is only very recently that the idea of choosing one's career path, or even having a sense of calling to particular work, has become more prevalent. Consider this account from Carl Trueman:

> "If [my grandfather] had been asked if he found satisfaction in his work, there is a distinct possibility that he would not even have understood the question, given that it reflects the concerns of [today's] world, to which he did not belong. But if he did understand, he would probably have answered in terms of whether his work gave him the money to put

food on his family's table and shoes on his children's feet. If it did so, then yes, he would have affirmed that his job satisfied him. His needs were those of his family, and in enabling him to meet them, his work gave him satisfaction."[44]

At the same time, the opportunity to discern and pursue a career, calling, or area of work — even if not for significant compensation — is a joy and a gift that Christians can rightly celebrate, embrace, and steward.[45] The hyper-individualism into which some contemporary discourse around vocation can devolve is avoidable.[46] Further, the history of how the recent secular focus on career came into being is not just a straight line from the Protestant Reformation to the vocational revolution of the informational and technological age of today.

One account of the rise of "vocations" in the modern sense is given by Max Weber. Weber's argument lends credit not only to capitalism but to Puritan Calvinism as well. As Weber writes, "The effect of the Reformation as such was only that, as compared with the Catholic attitude, the moral emphasis on and the religious sanction of organized worldly labour in a calling was mightily increased."[47] Familiar notions such as the "Protestant work ethic" and "worldly asceticism," for Weber, were evidence of a new kinds of works-righteousness that confirmed one's salvation and elect status by God.

But prior to the Industrial Revolution, most folks in England were subsistence farmers, and common land made this possible.[48] Over time, these lands were divided up, taken, or purchased by the wealthy, and larger-scale farming eventually rendered those without land jobless. This forced many to take up wage labor in factories that was considered far less desirable and dignified by most[49] — so much so that, it becomes hard to disagree with Karl Marx's assessment on this particular point: industrial capitalism introduced into the labor and production process a

form of work that caused the proletariat class to accept and endure a level of alienation from their own capacities and sustenance that was previously unknown.[50] This is not because these workers were well off before or had easy jobs. Rather, it is because there was an element of self-sufficiency in farming that was lost in the manufacturing plant. What Martin Luther said about Christians being called to their social stations, which were usually fixed, had finally changed irreversibly for the masses. It just was not always for the better.

Of course, to repeat, in the past century or so, more and more people have certainly come out on top because of capitalism. For an ever-growing number, it seems, career choices proliferate, and social mobility improves. Still, this new context comes with its fair share of trade offs. As Douglass Meeks summarizes it, "the success of the market economy and its tendency to draw everything into commodity exchange relationships has conditioned us to treat ever more dimensions of life as private . . ."[51]

One the one hand, as the need for new and more specialized kinds of work arise, so too can the feeling and experience of disconnection from the good or service that one is actually providing and how it benefits others in some way. What is more, the environment in which people both live and work has become more virtual, compartmentalized, and isolated from others — more privatized. There is a cross pressure of loneliness and fragmentation that touches living conditions as well as workplaces, and the innate value, purpose or outcome of one's labor is further removed from view.

On the other hand, the need for traditional, "blue collar" jobs certainly hasn't gone away. Some of these trades continue to pay well and are in fairly high demand, but so-called unskilled labor, while often deemed "essential," remains a very unstable sector of the economy in terms of

the stagnation of wages and high turnover rates for contractors and their teams. To be sure, isolation, mental health, media consumption, and other kinds of socio-cultural problems that rob people of meaning, purpose, and community in their lives are unique and pressing predicaments today, but the material problems of poverty, food insecurity, debt, and the rising cost of living remain major for many, even in advanced and post-industrial societies.

It is not uncommon to assume that these two planes and challenges are somewhat unrelated — meaning and purpose, on the one side, and basic provision and compensation, on the other — but that is not so in the teachings of Jesus. Take, for instance, the parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:13-21. Upon reaping an abundant harvest, the rich man decides to build extra barns to store up surplus grains for himself in order to "take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry" (NIV). Augustine, in commenting on this story, comments that the farmer was "planning to fill his soul with excessive and unnecessary feasting and was proudly disregarding all those empty bellies of the poor. He did not realize that the bellies of the poor were much safer storerooms than his barns."[52] A few verses later, Jesus states: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom" (v. 32). For Jesus, the warning to the rich and hope for the poor derive from the same reality, namely, the nearness of God's Kingdom, where neither hoarding nor worrying about provisions has a place. While Jesus's message is different to the two audiences, rich and poor, each group's purposes are apparently the same — namely, to seek first the Kingdom, and to trust in the good news of its arrival and ruler.

This Kingdom of God is one that the Bible describes as ruled by peace, or *shalom* in Hebrew and *eirene* in Greek. In his book, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, Cornelius Plantinga describes the biblical concept of shalom this way:

> "The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight – a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be."[53]

The chief vocational question for business, then, begins to surface: how will the work that one does as a Christian in the marketplace bless God by blessing others and bring about more shalom? As Plantiga asks elsewhere:

> "How will it clean a lake instead of polluting one? How will it offer opportunity to marginalized people rather than crowd them still further out to the rim of things? How will it yield an honestly built product or genuinely useful service that will anticipate the new heaven and earth? In other words, how will the knowledge, skills, and values of my [business]….be used to clear some part of the human jungle, or restore some part of the lost loveliness of God's world, or introduce some novel beauty into it? That is, how does my work….make for shalom?"[54]

And if this is the question a Christian asks about work in business, what then is the role of the church to further the vocational formation of its members? Here too it becomes rather clear. In worship and mission, the church aims to heal and direct the *sight* and *desires* of its people to more fully behold, seek, and image the shalom of God's reign. No Christian is exempt from this vocation. In business, therefore, the product or service provided and its impact on all

stakeholders — customers/clients, employees, suppliers, and the community, as well as shareholders — is measured in terms of its capacity and promise to make for more shalom, however partially. In order to make such a measurement, though, one has to have cultivated an *imagination* and *longing* for the shalom of the Kingdom in the first place. This is one of the most important functions of Christian worship.

Some churches leave space in their services for testimonies and stories from not only pastors but parishioners and practitioners — even those in business. Few things can stir the heart and move people toward growth and change like a first-hand account of how shalom is spreading in someone's life or work. These testimonies and stories can easily be woven into sermons and preaching moments or announcements on a regular basis. In the same way, sermons themselves can have vocational elements without necessarily preaching on the topic of "vocation" as such. It may even be more effective not to speak about vocation as a separate topic. After all, the goal is to saturate and weave the value of vocational formation into the whole life of church — to integrate it, that is, so that people encounter it normatively.

At Christ Church in Austin, TX, starting in 2019, the pastoral leadership team planned monthly "vocational commissionings" for a year at the end of their services, in which people from all sectors of the workforce were invited forward to receive prayer, blessing over, and "sending" into their jobs for the week. The intent was to instill in the minds of all congregants that every Christian is a missionary — everyone called, everyone commissioned, in every arena of life, to do good works in Jesus's name.

This same church partnered with others to host monthly faith and business lunches for many years. These lunches were not merely networking gatherings to meet fellow Christians in

the workplace or to form friendships with other Christians in business for encouragement or collaboration, as valuable as that would also be. Rather, there was an intentional effort during each meeting to instruct participants in an understanding that God is in business, and to inspire them to see the intrinsic good, flourishing, and even redemptive purpose that can be part of their own work in business when imagined and carried out with the *telos* of shalom.

Out of these relationships and conversations, communities of moral discourse and vocational discernment bubbled up — about business, yes, but about all areas of life that are connected to it as well. When introducing themselves, each attendant was asked to describe what they do in terms of their most important vocations: to God, church, family, community, and work — and usually in that order. Regular involvement led one participant to form a vocational discernment group with others who had been part of the gathering to prayerfully walk through a major career decision and its implications for his vision of his role in God's mission.

This same parishioner later became a leader in a nine-month faith and work discipleship program offered by the church to take its members on a journey of both spiritual and vocational growth. The two overarching questions asked and answered over the course of this cohort experience were: 1) At this point in your journey, how do you envision your role in God's mission in the world? And 2) what is your plan for living more fully into that vision? A number of spiritual disciplines like the prayer of Examen, silent retreats, and crafting a rule of life, were core components in the content and curriculum of the program.

Finally, and perhaps most essentially, worship itself, through "Word and Table," can and should signal in any church toward the kind of world that God's shalom and coming Kingdom is calling human beings to help build.[55] By modeling the counter-cultural practice of proclaiming

grace and truth, followed by celebrating and serving communion that feeds and nurtures diverse individuals from a common loaf and cup, a new kind of economy and exchange system becomes conceivable and even visible.

Consider this closing prayer at the end of the Holy Eucharist service in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer:

> "Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen."[56]

Once again, in this liturgy as in the teachings of Jesus, the convergence of basic sustenance (the spiritual body and blood with the physical bread and wine) and sending into meaningful work is enacted. The physical is claimed by the transcendent and yet incarnate Lord who redeems it and faithfully takes it up into himself, and human beings with him, without overriding their agency. Allegiance and belonging is called for and redirected away from anything other than "living membership in the body of Christ" and his "eternal kingdom." Worship *gathers* by way of re-enacting this great, mysterious feast and thanksgiving celebration, only to then *scatter* its sacred assembly into the mission of extending that same feast and its benefits into the world through every good work.[57]

When business is seen and discussed as yet another and no less crucial avenue through which this work takes place, the imagination and desire for greater participation in that very

work is kindled and enlivened. This imagination and desire is only further strengthened when it is nurtured among a community of others who find themselves similarly called and commissioned. When this happens, it becomes possible that those otherwise seductive idols like mammon begin to dull and fade. Over time, they may even lose their appeal altogether.

Endnotes:

[1] James K. A. Smith, *You Are What you Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).
[2] Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ, 20th Anniversary Edition* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2021), 35.
[3] Kenman Wong and Scott Rae, *Beyond Integrity: A Judeo-Christian Approach to Business Ethics, Third Edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 22.
[4] See Amy Sherman, "Every Business Decision is a Theological Decision," interview with Eric Stumberg (*Made to Flourish*, Feb. 21, 2017): https://www.madetoflourish.org/resources/every-business-decision-is-a-theological-decision. Accessed Jan. 29, 2023. Stumberg contends in this interview that the question of whether one's business is going to reflect good theology and kingdom values is a hard one. The implication is that good ethics first requires good theology: "I really came to realize that every business decision is a theological one. What you pay people, what your HR policies are, those are theological matters. How do you integrate justice into what you do every day? If you have an employment policy that says you have to have a college degree to get a job, you've just written off all these people that don't have college degrees. If you have a policy that says you can't be an ex-offender, then you've just written off that person from getting a job. And what prices you charge people — that's a theological question . . . As Bruce Baker (from Seattle Pacific University) has taught, there's good theology and there's bad theology — there's no neutral. If your business isn't consciously operating from a good theology; if you're not thinking about God and his laws and his heart, then you're operating from a bad theology. It's binary. Is your business going to reflect kingdom values or not? It's hard. But we've just got to keep trying. And you need people walking alongside you in this, because it is hard."
[5] See 1 Kings 11:4.
[6] Max L. Stackhouse, *Moral Business: Classical and Contemporary Resources for Ethics in Economic Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 32.
[7] See Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.

[8] Stanley Huaerwas, Never Enough: Why Greed is Still so Deadly," ABC's Religion and Ethics, Oct. 2, 2011. https://www.abc.net.au/religion/never-enough-why-greed-is-still-so-deadly/10101102). Accessed Jan 27, 2023. Hauerwas further explains that: "Greed is rightly called a deadly sin because it kills the possibility of a proper human relation to the Creator. Greed presumes and perpetuates a world of scarcity and want — a world where there is never "enough."" Hauerwas goes on to assert that a world in which scarcity reigns is one in which faith in God cannot, for faith requires trust that God has given us all that we need.

[9] See Robert Heilbroner's now classic, *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times And Ideas Of The Great Economic Thinkers, 7th Edition* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999).

[10] Ibid., 55.

[11] See Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (New York: Modern Library, 1985).

[12] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments, I.i.1*. http://knarf.english.upenn.edu/Smith/tms111.html. Accessed Jan 27, 2023.

[13] Paul Sagar, "The Real Adam Smith*," Aeon* (Jan 16, 2018). https://aeon.co/essays/we-should-look-closely-at-what-adam-smith-actually-believed. Accessed Jan. 27, 2023.

[14] Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits," *New York Times Magazine*, 13 Sept. 1970, 32-33.

[15] Wendell Berry, *What Matters? Economics for a Renewed Commonwealth* (Counterpoint Berkeley, 2010), x.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid, 4. Berry identifies such virtues as "honesty, thrift, care, good work, generosity, and (since this is a creaturely and human, not mechanical economy) imagination, from which we have compassion." These virtues, moreover, "depend on resources of culture that also must be kept renewable: accurate local memory, truthful accounting, continuous maintenance, un-wastefulness, and a democratic distribution of now-rare practical arts and skills."

[18] David Held and Anthony McGrew define globalization as "the widening, deepening and speeding up of global interconnectedness through the growing spatial and temporal reach of transnational networks and flows." David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 14-15.

[19] William T. Cavanaugh, "The World in a Wafer: A Geography of the Eucharist as Resistance to Globalization," *Modern Theology* 15, no. 2 (April 1, 1999): 181–96. 184. "Labor is hidden, and the sources of production are constantly shifting location. Unions have consequently lost much of their power. With the loss of geographical stability, family, church, and local community have also given way to global monoculture and 'virtual community.'"

[20] David Held and Anthony McGrew, *Global Transformations: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate, Second Edition* (Malden: Polity Press, 2002). See also Anthony McGrew, "Globalization in Hard Times: Contention in the Academy and Beyond" in George Ritzer, Ed, *The Blackwell Companion to Globalization* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 29.

[21] David Held and Anthony McGrew, *Globalization/Anti-Globalization: Beyond the Great Divide, Second Edition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 52.

[22] Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 188.
[23] M. Douglass Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1989), 181. "Despite its sensational successes in the modern world, modern economistic theory has forgotten that economy must be fundamentally concerned about livelihood. A more humane public household will depend on our learning that human dignity in community is prior in value to economic organization . . . Economy should serve the . . . community, which in turn serves the creation of conditions of human beings finding their calling."
[24] According to Brazilian theologian, Jung Mo Sung, human beings "cannot think and live without a utopian horizon that provides meaning for our journey and measure and norms for interpreting and judging reality and also the recognition that our utopia, however desirable it may be, is not realizable in its fullness . . ." This understanding protects us against the confusion of other transcendent narratives that claim to be merely immanent, all the while attempting carry people "along by… perversions and sacrifices imposed and demanded in the name of … the full realization of [another] utopia" (Míguez, Rieger, and Sung, *Beyond the Spirit of Empire* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 118.
[25] Others have noted that productivity, improved efficiency, and accumulation become virtues, and the value and purpose of human labor is considered solely according to its economic end. See Harvey Cox, "The Market as God" in Roger S. Gottlieb, *Liberating Faith: Religious Voices for Justice, Peace, and Ecological Wisdom* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 274-283.
[26] An example of this approach to theology and all of life can be seen in Alexander Schmemann's *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973). And as the Psalmist declares, "The Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1, NIV). Elsewhere, too: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims the works of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world" (Psalm 19:1-4a, NIV).
[27] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2007), 771. Carl Trueman has described and narrated this major shift in self-understanding in the present cultural moment as well in his book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*: *Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2020): "The ancient Athenian was committed to the assembly [politics], the medieval Christian to his church [religion], and the twentieth-century factory worker to his trade union and working man's club [economics]. All of them found their purpose and well-being by being committed to something outside themselves. In the world of the psychological man, however, the commitment is first and foremost to the self and is inwardly directed. Thus, the order is reversed. Outward institutions become in effect the servants of the individual and her sense of inner well-being," 49.
[28] Taylor, 35-36.

[29] Philip Goodchild, *Theology of Money* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009), 3-4, from Cavanaugh, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Departments of Economics," Mervyn Davies, Oliver Crisp, Gavin D'Costa, Peter Hampson, eds, *Christianity and the Disciplines: The Transformation of the University* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2012). Available at: http://works.bepress.com/william_cavanaugh/138/ Accessed Jan. 28, 2023.
[30] See Franz Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism* (MaryKnoll: Orbis Books, 1986).
[31] Michael Novak, *Business as Calling* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 46-47.
[32] Hom, *de perfecta caritat*e 1, PG. Cf. Hom. In i Cor. xxxiv 7, NPNF, 1st. Ser. Chrysostom continues, "For no other reason neither suffered He all things to be produced in every place, that hence he might compel us to mix with one another . . . And accordingly that we might easily keep up intercourse with distant. countries, he spread the level of the sea between us, and gave us the swiftness o the winds, thereby making our voyages easy."
[33] Meeks, *God the Economist*, 132-4.
[34] Albert Erisman, *The ServiceMaster Story: Navigating Tension Between People and Profit* (Hendrickson Publishers: Peabody, 2020), 5.
[35] Ibid., 114.
[36] William Pollard, "The Virtue of Profit," (Transcript of Lecture given on April 23, 2009). https://www.wheaton.edu/media/migrated-images-amp-files/media/files/centers-and-institutes/fpe/transcripts/The-Virtue-of-Profit.pdf. Accessed Jan 28, 2023.
[37] As Albert Erisman persuasively argues in his book chapter entitled, "Profit Maximization Must Fail," the shareholder value model of profit fails on at least six counts: inadequate motivation for employees, the distorting effect of focusing on money for the leaders, driving to the boundary of the law, narrowing focus to the short term, difficult measurements for decision-making, and lack of professional focus for business. While there are other models such as the stakeholder theory (customers, employees, shareholders, the community, environment), Erisman proposes another set of criteria: business as service through supporting the community and the environment, creating economic value, creating "good" jobs, creating and delivering needed goods and services, and serving the customer. See Albert Erisman and David Gautschi, *The Purpose of Business: Contemporary Perspectives from Different Walks of Life* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 53-83.
[38] Eriseman, *The ServiceMaster Story*, 146.
[39] Ibid., 122-23.
[40] Ibid., 121. Eriseman chronicles a number of instances in which leaders like Pollard made mistakes, received correction, and openly admitted, apologized for, and talked about what was learned. Pollard's friendship with and mentoring by Peter Drucker when expanding the business through a partnership in Japan is one example that stand out. Drucker instructs Pollard at one point: "Bill, you are suffering from hubris. It's time for you to eat some humble pie."
[41] Patricia Asp, Video Conference Call with Seattle Pacific University's Center for Faithful Business, June 30, 2022.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Stackhouse, *Moral Business*, 15.

[44] Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2020), 47.
[45] Many contemporary Christian authors have made this argument, but two of the most notable are Amy Sherman and Steve Garber. See Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), and Steve Garber, *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014).
[46] A good summary of the biblical discussion of vocation is provided by this article from the *Theology of Work Project*, connecting the message of the Christian calling to follow Jesus and obey his commands with how this applies to every are of life — no less our work as individuals. https://www.theologyofwork.org/key-topics/vocation-overview-article, Accessed Jan. 28, 2023.
[47] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcot Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 83.
[48] William Cavanaugh, *Field Hospital: The Church's Engagement with a Wounded World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 2016), 78.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Oliver F. Williams, C.S.C., "A Communitarian Democratic Capitalism for the New World Order," in Patricia Beattie Jung and Shannon Jung, Ed. *Moral Issues & Christian Responses*, *7th Ed* (Belmont: Thompson and Wadsworth, 2003), 407. Reprinted by permission from *The Journal of Business Ethics* 12 (1993): 919-32.
[51] Meeks, *God the Economist*, 182.
[52] Arthur A. Just, *Luke* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 208.
[53] Cornelius Plantiga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 10.
[54] Cornelius Plantiga, "Educating for Shalom: Our Calling as a Christian University." https://calvin.edu/about/who-we-are/our-calling.html, accessed Jan. 29, 2023.
[55] As William Cavanaugh explains it, "worship . . . is the place where God comes to meet us and we become oriented toward the way things really are, shaped into a different kind of social body the nthe one the powers that be would discipline us into." Through preaching and sacrament, for example, God is "breaking into our world and reorienting us toward the kingdom. It is here that we face the truth that all we have is through grace and that grace is all we have . . . [the] liberation from the illusion of our self-sufficiency." from the forward in Kevin Hargaden, *Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age: Confronting the Christian Problem with Wealth, (*Cascade Books: Eugene, 2018).
[56] *The Book of Common Prayer,* 1979 Edition. https://www.bcponline.org/HE/he2.html Accessed Jan. 28, 2023.
[57] see Neil Hudson, *Scattered and Gathered: Equipping Disciples for the Frontline* (London: InterVarsity Press, 2019).