

THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF AMERICA'S NEW EVANGELICALS

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INTRODUCTION: "THE ONE WITH THE MOST TOYS AT THE END WINS."

This intentionally cavalier motto of neo-liberal economics has, in many quarters, gone the way of the buggy whip, deemed bygone and unuseful as a way to organize our economies. Since the 2008 financial crises, the conversation has turned to something more like this: if neoliberalism (too much market) yields the Great Recession, if socialist planning (not enough market) produces the languishing economies of the former Soviet bloc, if state-centralized social-market combinations produce the high-cost social programs and slow growth of Western Europe—what are better options? What economic frameworks might promote wealth not for its own sake but for enhancing the rest of our endeavors and relationships?

In an effort to contribute however modestly to an answer, I shall describe the theology and practice of America's "new evangelicals"¹—those who have left the right, so to speak, and who are developing a noteworthy mix of market and a

¹ The term "new evangelicals" is taken from Richard Cizik, former Vice President of the National Association of Evangelicals and current president of the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good.

common good or whole life² ethics. On one hand, “new evangelicals” rely on the seventeenth and eighteenth century individualist principles that fostered market development. On the other, they spend much of their time working through the community of church for the community of humankind. That is, they uphold individual initiative and entrepreneurialism in markets, but this does not commit them to just any market action but rather to those that follow an ethics of resource-distribution and opportunity-restructuring for the flourishing of all. Given the number of Christian groups involved, this effort has significant effect on the circulation of money, resources, and people throughout the world. The material here is taken from field research that I did between 2005 and 2011 among evangelicals, ages nineteen to seventy-four, across denominations, geographic location, and the socio-economic and political demographic span of the US.³

AMERICA’S NEW EVANGELICALS: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

For our present purposes, evangelicalism—new or otherwise—is meant as an approach to faith found across the Protestant denominations. Emerging in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from the “enthusiast” and “free-thinking” Calvinist and Anglican churches and from the pietistic and Moravian movements in Germany, it sought a more personal relationship to Jesus and a less state-oriented/state-run religion than was generally the case in Europe of the time. Its emphases included an inner, individual relationship with Jesus; the mission to bring others to that relationship; the cross as a symbol of both salvation and service; individualist Bible reading by ordinary men and woman; and the priesthood of all believers. More contemporarily, over the last forty years, American evangelicals have been associated with a proto-theocratic effort to use the state to impose their interpretation of Scripture on the body politic. Paradoxical to this heavy use of the state, evangelicals have also been

² A pro-life ethics that opposes not only abortion but all that hobbles a flourishing life, including environmental degradation, poverty, unjust captivity, etc.

³ See, Pally, *The New Evangelicals*.

associated with neo-liberal economics, in which light regulation of the market and "small government" overall are seen as the best approach to society's ills as they leave individual effort unfettered to solve them. In short, recent evangelicalism has looked like a grafting of fundamentalist government and Hayek/Milton-Friedman fundamentalist economics.

"*New evangelicals*," however, are those who differ in self-identification, aims, and means from both of these. They are neither small nor elite, coming to some 19 to 20 percent of the American population,⁴ distributed across denominations and the country. They follow the doctrinal beliefs mentioned above but eschew imposing their views on others. Indeed, in the political arena, they often eschew direct involvement in the state in robust support for church-state separation. This political stand, they hold, emerges readily from evangelical values. Since institutions of force, including government, can never be God's way, "new evangelicals" conclude that church and state should be kept distinct so that the church can pursue a more loving and just world through the sort of service taught in Scripture—something that states, however well-meaning or democratic, do not do.

Thus "new evangelicals" expect laws to be constitutionally based, aimed at the common good, and impartial towards religion so that all may have freedom of conscience and come to their beliefs freely. The church, for its part, should continue the tradition of a "contrast society," demonstrating radical love and care for one's neighbor. *Vis a vis* the state, it should pursue the "prophetic role"—not to *be* government but to "speak truth to power" and to advise government when it is unjust. This requires independence from political parties and sitting governments—a political stance with increasing emphasis. In 2005, *Christianity Today* wrote, "George W. Bush is not Lord... The American flag is not the Cross. The Pledge of Allegiance is not the Creed. 'God Bless America' is not Doxology." The magazine went on to reject the conflation of Biblical truths with

⁴ People of faith not in the religious right come to 24 percent: the "religious left" at 9 percent of the US population (the older evangelical left, the Catholic left, and new, emergent churches); the "red letter Christians," who red-line Biblical passages as a guide to progressive politics, also at 9 percent; and religious centrists (liberal theology, moderate politics) at about 6 percent. The Catholic left, roughly 4-5 percent, must be subtracted from this 24 percent to arrive at a rough figure for the "new evangelicals", see, Pew Forum, "Religious Left".

American or Republican values, and of church with state.⁵ In 2006, Frank Page, president of the conservative Southern Baptist Convention, warned, “I have cautioned our denomination to be very careful not to be seen as in lock step with any political party.”⁶ The 2008 Evangelical Manifesto was even bolder still. It called on evangelicals to distance themselves from party politics, lest “Christians become ‘useful idiots’ for one political party or another and... Christian beliefs are used as weapons for political interests.”⁷

Reluctance to being “the Republican party at prayer” does not mean that white evangelicals no longer vote Republican.⁸ They do: 78 percent voted for George W. Bush in 2004; 74 percent voted Republican in the 2010 midterms. A mass evangelical shift toward the Democratic Party would be unlikely in any case because of opposition to abortion and traditional evangelical preferences for self-responsibility, community, and small government. Yet, in the 2006 midterms 41 percent of white evangelicals were “happy” with Democratic wins; a third (32 percent) approved of the Democratic agenda.⁹ In the 2008 presidential election, a third of white evangelicals under forty voted for Obama; 26 percent of older white evangelicals did (a four-point uptick from 2004), 36 percent of the less observant.¹⁰ Evangelical PACs like the Matthew 25 Network formed to support Obama. Two evangelical ministers, Tony Campolo and Joel Hunter, helped write the 2008 Democratic Party platform. A third, Leah Daughtry, served as CEO of the Democratic National Convention Committee.

If political independence does not lead—as I suspect it will not—to mass defection to the Democrats, the emphasis on the prophetic role has yielded more of issue-by-issue policy assessment—leaning Democrat on environment and immigration reform, Republican on abortion, and independent on economic policy. In 2007, for instance, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)—against the Bush administration—issued An Evangelical Declaration against

⁵ Shriver, “Evangelicals and world affairs,” 4.

⁶ Kirkpatrick, “The Evangelical Crackup.”

⁷ Evangelical Manifesto Steering Committee, “Evangelical Manifesto”.

⁸ African-Americans, including evangelicals, vote overwhelmingly Democrat, over 90 percent in most elections.

⁹ Pew Forum, “2006 Elections”.

¹⁰ Pew Forum, “Much hope”.

Torture.¹¹ In 2009, 2010, and 2011, it repeatedly protested against Republican budget cuts for the needy, writing, "this is the wrong place to cut."¹²

"New evangelicals" have broadened their activism for a number of reasons, the first being generational, as idealistic young evangelicals reject the Prosperity Gospel¹³ and religious-right politics of their parents, finding it materialistic, consumerist, and self-absorbed. Second are the cultural changes among evangelicals since the 1960s. Attitudinal shifts—about the environment, global connectedness, poverty, sexual relations, and migration—have proceeded not at the radical fringe but in Middle America, with an accompanying priorities shift. Still another reason is ethics amid a group that takes ethics seriously. The militarism and torture of the Bush years as well as the consumerism and in-group-ism of the last forty prodded many evangelicals to self-reexamination. In their book, *Unchristian*, David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons bring this sort of questioning with chapters that include, "Hypocritical," "Get Saved!" (an overemphasis on evangelizing), "Antihomosexual," "Sheltered," "Too Political," and "Judgmental."¹⁴ A fourth reason is the de-professionalization of service work. As ordinary Christians began in increasing numbers to live and serve among the poor in the US and out, the focus of their activism shifted towards economic justice and environmental protection, which, they hold, are often linked.

I alluded earlier to the nature of this work: *not only alms-giving but by redistributing resources and restructuring opportunity* for those whom the market has ignored or poorly served. Roughly, it works this way: Capitalist markets rely very basically on capital/credit, resources, skills, information, and their transfer or distribution. "New evangelicals" assess market functioning not according to profits only but according to Scriptural standards of life and the common good—the flourishing of all persons with dignity. Where market functions and/or results violate these standards, "new evangelicals" work to re-organize any and all of these—capital/credit, resources, skills, information, and their transfer—for the sake of those whom the market has failed or ignored.

¹¹ NAE, "Against Torture".

¹² NAE, "Circle," "Christian leaders," and "Aid".

¹³ Where belief in Jesus ostensibly brings not only spiritual uplift but material success.

¹⁴ Kinnaman, Lyons, *Unchristian*.

Thus, *common good or whole life economics does not change market relations (supply and demand, etc.) but changes relations within the market*—prioritizing them and embedding them in common-good standards, and thus it changes the market itself. To explain a bit further, I'll describe first evangelical support for the entrepreneurial market and then their efforts to restructure opportunity by embedding it in a whole life ethics for the common good.

EVANGELICAL SUPPORT FOR THE MARKET

Historically, American evangelical support for the entrepreneurial, capitalist market was nudged along in direct and indirect ways by doctrine, beginning with the Protestant charge to each individual to further his bond with God by maintaining a life of moral conduct—a mandate to self-responsible moral striving. (The idea here echoes but is not identical to the Weberian argument, which emphasizes the Protestant rationalization of life but to which we might add the importance of striving that emerged from Protestant theology and practice.)

“Self-responsible striving” is two things: one, self-responsibility: on the evangelical view, relationship to God and wrestling with his precepts is not the sort of thing others can do for you. No matter how well-trained ecclesiastical leaders may be and no matter how helpful one's church community, living these parts of your life is at bottom not something they can perform. Two, striving: what we do in this meager life is strive asymptotically forward. While this originally meant striving towards the divine, striving became a muscle well-exercised and applied to many arenas of life, emphatically to the economic. The broadening of “striving” follows from one of Protestantism's prime innovations, the extension of the sacred beyond circumscribed arenas like the monastery to all life endeavors. To compress a complex area of the theology, if what we do in the realm of the sacred is to strive towards God, and the sacred is indeed everywhere, then we are to strive everywhere—originally towards God but soon, in emerging Protestant cultures, towards things of value more generally. Moreover, if on the Calvinist view—the ancestor of much American evangelicalism—Jesus meant each Christian to develop his or her “calling” within the church, and the church is now everywhere, then we should develop our callings everywhere—originally to

further God's kingdom but gradually to further things of value more generally. To be sure, the expansion of "striving" may have been more of a socio-cultural than doctrinal development in early modern Northwestern Europe, spurred by Protestantism's interaction with its surroundings—growth in trade and cities; increased legal, physical, and socio-economic mobility; and the breakdown of the commons through enclosure, all of which support self-reliant striving. But that it had a strong cultural component does not mean that it didn't have significant effect or that Protestant ideas weren't a part of it. Do-it-yourself moral uplift served as precedent and model for do-it-yourself uplift across the board.

A second aspect of doctrine that came to undergird self-reliance and depress dependence on authorities is the evangelical understanding of the human and divine realms. As all human governments are fallen, the kingdoms of the world may never be confused with the kingdom of God. Each individual must work out in her own life how to witness it, not follow tradition, sitting authorities, or the status quo. This too became a muscle well exercised and broadly applied, early on in the demands for freedom of conscience. By the mid-sixteenth-century, Sebastian Castellio, after feeling the pinch of Calvin's police powers, deconstructed heresy as a disagreement among reasonable men in which authorities had no special claim to truth.¹⁵ He died, somewhat fortunately, before Calvin could put him on trial, but people who look at the world this way do not take kindly to government regulation, in matters of faith or more generally.

These ideas are available to believers across Protestantism, but *dissenting* Protestants, which evangelicals were, became determinedly self-reliant in response to the oppression and marginalization by states and the state churches that had emerged from the Westphalian territorialization of religion. After 1648, those on whom they might have relied were often their persecutors. Roger Williams, father of the American Baptist movement, was among the most passionate seventeenth-century advocates of self-reliant anti-authoritarianism. In his *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (1644), he argues in nearly full modern voice that government pertained to the defense of individuals, property, and peace; church was concerned with "spirituall and Soul-causes,

¹⁵ Castellio, *Concerning Heretics*, especially 123, 129, 132-135, 222-225, 251-253.

which could never be decided by man.”¹⁶ Pointedly, they could never be decided by authorities political or ecclesiastical but only by individual conscience. *Bloudy Tenent* preceded John Locke’s similarly argued *Two Treatises on Government* by 50 years, though Williams’s efforts went unappreciated by Massachusetts’s state church, which expelled him in 1635-36.

In colonial America, self-responsible striving, the doctrine of two kingdoms, and the dissenter’s suspicion of authorities was soon in synergistic play with the rough nature of American settlement. One could not rely on authorities or the state because there was little of either—and what there was, was resented as British meddling. Survival depended on do-it-yourself individualism and voluntarist associationism. Moreover, it encouraged multi-faithed immigration, as the colonials needed every helping hand regardless of creed. The absence of an authoritative state church and the promise of freedom of religion were advertisements aimed at Europe’s discontented. America’s “perfect equality and freedom among all religious denominations,” Tench Coxe of Pennsylvania declared, would lure Europe’s persecuted dissenters; “they will at once cry out, America is the ‘land of promise’.”¹⁷ Even in colonies with nominal established churches¹⁸ (Massachusetts, Connecticut among others), arguing that doctrine should be policed by authorities became increasingly unproductive in a heterogeneous nation struggling to get on its feet. Maryland passed its Religious Toleration Act, applying to all Trinitarian Christians, in 1649—just a year after the Westphalian Treaty in Europe, which made faith exactly a matter policed by the state. Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Carolina were, since their inceptions, experiments in toleration. The Puritans in the most theocratic colony of Massachusetts Bay by the 1660s created the Half-way Covenant, a form of baptism for those who did not hold to Puritan belief. That state churches and the primacy of authority over the individual fit poorly with colonial development does not mean that they were not tried; it just means that they did not endure.

¹⁶ Williams, *The bloudy tenant*, 153-160, 250, 343.

¹⁷ Jensen, “The documentary history,” Vol. 18, 278-285.

¹⁸ After America’s earliest settlement in Jamestown nearly foundered just three years after its establishment in 1606, London dispatched Sir Thomas Gates to impose martial law and religious observance on the wayward community; non-conformity was a capital offense in seventeenth century Connecticut and Virginia.

American colonials instead turned increasingly to the Commonsense Moral Philosophy of the Scottish Sentimentalists, which emphasized the common man's ability to make moral judgments and thus govern himself in matters religious and political. Though a few of the more orthodox colonial ministers lambasted Commonsense Moral Philosophy, its most ardent defenders were American ministers themselves. For it allowed ministers to believe, as insubordinate sentiment grew, that their flock would nonetheless remain Christian and moral without disciplining authorities, indeed out of their own common sense. Rebellion against the usual guardians of morality—social hierarchies, monarchies, and state churches—would not yield immorality or chaos.

By the early eighteenth century, these elements had come together—the self-responsibility and anti-authoritarianism of evangelical doctrine, the dissenter's suspicion of authority, do-it-yourself survivalism, and Commonsense Moral Reasoning—and left America with a logic somewhat different from that in Europe's territorialized religions. While in Europe there were two terms, church and state, in America there were three: church, state, and experimental, anti-authoritarian civil society, where much of America's religious experience took place.

The results were evident by the First Great Awakening of the 1730s-1740s. Evangelical preachers told people to trust not even their own churches but in "self-examination" and declared the "absolute necessity for every Person to act singly."¹⁹ Moreover, as evangelical preachers attracted adherents away from the mainline churches, it became obvious that people had choices that were not easily restricted by authorities. Indeed, many preachers themselves were spiritual entrepreneurs, working outside established institutions and competing with each other in the marketplace of faiths. The First Great Awakening was a festival of new ideas preached by untutored, self-appointed men and women inspired to try out their beliefs.

They experimented, perhaps most consequently with Arminianism, popularized by the brothers Charles and John Wesley. Arminianism re-imagined the Calvinist emphasis on God's grace to accent man's role in his redemption.

¹⁹ Wood, "American religion," 61.

While free will allows man to sin, prevenient grace (grace in this life) also allows man to choose Jesus' way. That is, if *you* choose Jesus, you are saved. To be sure, European Calvinism had already set the stage for this self-directed emphasis. Pietistic doctrine held that man's fervent feeling and asceticism could bring one to community with God in this world, an idea in substantial contrast with the more traditional salvation *in spe* (hope) but not *in re* (reality). Calvinism offered the doctrine of "eternal security," in which those who believe in Jesus' sacrifice have the gift of perseverance-in-faith until death, which was taken as a sign of salvation. Calvinist doctrine also held that those who act as God wills them to act may take their good deeds as a sign that God works through them.

While Europe's Calvinists worried whether their good acts and "perseverance-in-faith unto death" were indeed signs of salvation, the focus on their own behavior foreshadowed the God-to-man shifts writ large in America. There, the Methodists, for instance, not only followed Arminianism but also included the human acts of repentance and church practices as triggers to salvation. Heirs of the seventeenth century British Laudian tradition included goods works. The strict Calvinists among the colonials thought this had gone too far, and Jonathan Edwards, among America's most influential colonial ministers, preached against this Methodist-Arminian tendency. But in self-reliant America his opposition got somewhat lost in the din. After serving his congregation for decades, he was relieved of his duties in 1749 in a dispute about who counts as a Congregationalist. Edwards held that only full church members—not Half Way covenant-ers or those who had merely been baptized—be allowed full church privileges, including the Lord's Supper. But this was too exclusionary for the people of Northampton and too dependent on God's grace and full conversion experience. Even Edwards's grandfather had held that baptism was sufficient for full church privileges—doctrinal and civil—and Edwards had to step down to make room for greater church flexibility.

Evangelicals—unsurprisingly, given their anti-authoritarian history—were ardent supporters of the new ideas about self-rule: republican tripartite government, checks and balances, and a sovereign body bound by natural law. The Presbyterian Benjamin Rush in 1791 wrote to the Baptist minister Elhanan Winchester saying, "republican forms of government are the best repositories of

the Gospel."²⁰ When the time came, they backed the revolt against the British. One of the most popular if controversial figures in early America, the Baptist John Leland, wrote, "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God."²¹ He inscribed this on a 1,235-pound wheel of cheese and presented it as a gift to Thomas Jefferson. The more reserved Rev. Witherspoon of Princeton University said, "If your cause is just—you may look with confidence to the Lord and entreat him to plead it as his own... At this season, however, it is not only lawful but necessary, and I willingly embrace the opportunity of declaring my opinion without any hesitation, that the cause in which America is now in arms in the cause of justice, of liberty, and of human nature."²²

After the revolution and through the ante-bellum period, evangelicalism grew into America's predominant faith. The number of Methodist churches rose from twenty in 1770 to 19,883 in 1860, a 994.1 multiple of increase, the number of Baptist churches, from 150 in 1770 to 12,150 in 1860, an eighty-one multiple of increase. In the same period, the more traditional Congregationalist churches increased by a factor of 3.6, Anglican by a factor of 6.0, German Reformed by 4.7, Dutch Reformed by 4.4 and Roman Catholics by a factor of 51, owing to the increase in immigrants from Ireland.²³ By the middle of the nineteenth century, during the Second Great Awakening, the evangelical Methodist and Baptist churches alone accounted for two thirds of American Protestants.

Evangelicals created voluntary associations that touched every area of civil and spiritual life. For comparison, the largest U.S. government operation of the era was the postal service, but by mid-century, evangelical associations had double the employees, twice as many facilities, and raised three times as much money.²⁴ They were active in public education, temperance, and overseas liberation movements; they protested sexual trafficking, Chinese foot-binding, and Indian suttee. They argued on both sides of the slavery issue. Though evangelicalism held great sway among educated and middle classes, many

²⁰ Rush, *Letters*, 1:6111.

²¹ Cutler, *Life, Journals*, 2:66-67.

²² Jensen, *The documentary history*, vol. 18, 278-285.

²³ See Carwardine, "Methodist ministers" 134; Smith, *Revivalism*, .22; Goss, *Statistical history*, 106.

²⁴ Noll, *America's God*, 182, 200-201.

churches were radically progressive: anti-Federalist, Jeffersonian, Jacksonian populists, against bankers and landlords, and supportive of women preachers and black churches.²⁵ As before, individualist anti-authoritarianism was a leitmotif. In 1843, the Methodist Quarterly Review boasted about being “unsparing iconoclasts” ready to question any received wisdom.²⁶ Two mid-nineteenth century Kentucky revivalists, Robert Marshall and J. Thompson, had this to say, “We are not personally acquainted with the writings of John Calvin, nor are we certain how nearly we agree with his views of divine truth; neither do we care.”²⁷

After the Civil War, evangelicalism competed with urbanization and industrialization but remained a potent, often radical civil society force and anti-authoritarian critic. Between 1860 and 1900, membership in the major Protestant groups, many evangelical, tripled.²⁸ Investigating the new industrial and urban poor, Dwight L. Moody, the most popular preacher of the day, lambasted business for paying starvation wages and set up schools for young women and men (in that order). Throughout the nation, evangelicals threw their political support behind the populist leader William Jennings Bryan, who ran for president three times on a pro-worker, pro-farmer platform (1896, 1900, 1908). Under the leadership of Walter Rauschenbusch, evangelicals developed the Social Gospel, which both ran programs for the poor and provided an early critique of laissez-faire capitalism at a time when the courts and both federal and many state governments supported the new capitalist classes over labor. “Nations do not die by wealth,” Rauschenbusch noted, “but by injustice.” The church, in its “prophetic role,” was obligated “to act as the tribune of the people.”²⁹ Rauschenbusch’s book, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, is hostile to Jews and Catholics and reflects the self-congratulatory view that Protestantism would bring wealth, health and democracy worldwide. Yet along with Upton

²⁵ see, Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*.

²⁶ Moorhead, “Prophecy, Millennialism,” 297.

²⁷ Hatch, *The Democratization*, 174.

²⁸ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 12.

²⁹ Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 265, 284; the book was re-released in 2007 with commentaries by Cornel West, Jim Wallis, and Richard Rorty, who is Rauschenbusch’s grandson.

Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*, it helped kindle the early twentieth century Progressive Era of economic reform.

EVANGELICAL WHOLE LIFE ECONOMIES FOR THE COMMON GOOD

"New evangelical" activism today draws much from the spiritual and socio-political efforts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most notably its mix of do-it-yourself-ism and common good ethics. In current neo-liberalism, these may appear opposed—with do-it-yourself-ism tending towards doing for only the self (and the sorts of financial practices Greg Smith described in his March 14, 2012 *New York Times* article, "Why I am Leaving Goldman Sachs"³⁰) while common good ethics directs resources to communities, the environment, and the needy. Yet for the evangelicals of America's first 290 years and for "new evangelicals" today, the ethos of self-responsibility doesn't end only with profit-making for the self. Nor is it assumed that individual profit-making necessarily contributes to what benefits those other than oneself. Indeed, this tradition of evangelical thought catches a contradiction in classic liberalism: the inequalities left by procedural neutrality and the notion of liberty as the absence of restraint. One prime tenet of classic liberalism is the ontological primacy, dignity, and value of each person as a completed, separable individual—one whose identity, worth and rights are not dependent on her location in a nexus of relations but are hers on her own. This does not mean that group entities are nothing more than collections of such individuals, but it is often assumed so. Another key tenet is the value of this individual's freedom to pursue life's opportunities as she sees fit with as little interference as possible—either positive interference (being told what she should do) or negative interference (what she should not). These are often taken together—the first as either a description of reality or normative principle that undergirds the second. That is, respecting the fact and value of the individual means blocking persons or institutions that might constrain her choices and actions. Yet this leaps falsely from what is actually or normatively the case to a judgment about policy. The first—the fact, dignity and value of the

³⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/opinion/why-i-am-leaving-goldman-sachs.html?pagewanted=all>

individual—is often not achieved by the second—presenting her with as little interference as possible. In an extreme example, the choice to be a crack-cocaine addict doesn't easily allow one to pursue many of life's opportunities; in a more common example, neither does poverty or the lack of education, health care or friends. If the ideal is for society—government, family, community, and religious, occupational or other traditions—to recede in order to leave the individual with an open field in which to develop herself, she might be left with little opportunity to pursue opportunity.

Rather than end in this classic muddle, “new evangelicals” take self-responsibility as a mandate to form civil-society institutions that in fact intervene so that conditions wrought by the market may be re-wrought when they violate common good/whole life ethics. The fact and value of the individual as a separable person with inalienable rights are retained, but precisely because of this value, the second idea—the consistent policy of the open field and freedom as absence of restraint—is not.

“New evangelicals” come to this also through doctrine. The ideas below are not meant as a review of “new evangelical” theology but rather as commonly-cited points that serve as vision for economic justice and sustenance for the work involved.

One might begin with the reason for reading Scripture in the first place—both to historicize ethics and to resist historicizing them. Reading a text with transcendent authority on one hand places current ethical claims—ideologies, discourses, legal systems, political “realities” and “necessities,” and the assumptions behind them—into historical perspective, reminding us that the principles currently thought right (or best under the circumstances) are the results of historical conditions and contingency. That other men and women of good will have thought quite different principles to be right and true might prod us to reflect on what we take to be our truths. On the other hand, reading a text with transcendent authority allows us—if we take its transcendence seriously—to ponder a vision of a just world that is not a variant of what's found in the historical or contemporary range. “The first task of the church [the community that reads Scripture],” Stanley Hauerwas writes in *A Community of Character*, “is not to supply theories of governmental legitimacy or even to suggest strategies for social betterment. The first task of the church is to exhibit in our common

life the kind of community possible when trust, and not fear, rules our lives...by taking seriously its task to be an alternative polity, the church might well help us to experience what a politics of trust can be like."

A polity of trust is an idea from outside the usual political discourses, based as they are on notions of "naturally" conflicting interests which must be brokered and constrained one way or another for society's survival. The unnervingly undefensive proposal of trust is understood by "new evangelicals" to flow from the doctrine of "life"—in this case not limited to anti-abortion activism but meant in the Deuteronic sense³¹: choose life, the way of God. Choosing the way of God allows one to forge a polity of trust. For the way of God *means* to love each other as God loves each one of us. Here we have the foundation for the link between the individual with inalienable rights and the sort of behavior among men that preserves those rights and furthers opportunities. The idea of such a polity is found in the Pentateuch provisions for the poor, in the Judaic Jubilee principles of debt cancellation and slave manumission, and in the prophetic tradition. It is elaborated in the Mishna and G'marah and continues through the Jewish medieval period where, for instance, the master of Biblical commentary Rashi, reads in Isaiah, "I cannot be God unless you are my witness," and Rashi glosses, "I am the God who will be whenever you bear witness to love and justice in the world."³²

This idea of love among men constituent of loving God is developed in the Christian principles of love/service and justification, where being right or justified with others is constituent of being justified with God. As Jesus explained in his description of the Last Judgment: God will distinguish those who will join him in his kingdom from those who will not. Those who are justified with God are those who loved man—who "when I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was in prison and you visited me."³³ Yet it is not only aiding Jesus while he was on earth that constitutes loving God but rather aiding all in need, for Jesus continues, "whenever they did it to the least of these brothers and sisters, they

³¹ Deut 30:19.

³² See, Rashi, *The Torah*.

³³ Matt 25: 34-36.

did it to me.”³⁴ In a syllogism of sorts: *if, to love God, we are to be to others as God is to us, and Jesus loved and served us, then we must serve others as Jesus served*—the lepers, tax collectors, and prostitutes in life and, in death, accepting crucifixion rather than recant his mission of a just society, rather than use violence, and rather than forego redeeming man’s sins.

This sort of thinking distinguishes itself from traditions that separate aiding the needy from salvation/justification—a split that usually locates the aid emphasis in Jesus and the salvific emphasis in Paul. On the “new evangelical” view, these are twined. Indeed, in Paul, the unity of the God-of-salvation and the God-of-agapic-giving is made a structural aspect of Christianity. While justification may rest on faith,³⁵ salvation rests on love of others: “if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”³⁶ In discussing the three key aspects of the Christian, it is love that Paul prioritizes: “These three abide, faith, hope, love; but the greatest of these is love.”³⁷ There is no conceiving of man’s salvation without man loving his fellow man.

The Pauline synthesis of love-of-God and love-among-men can, like Jubilee and poor laws, be found earlier in the Judaic tradition of *brit* or covenant. Based on faith, trust, and love, the Abrahamic covenant binds man to God in a profound promise of eternal, mutual care, and it is this care that each of us is to extend to others. This foundational *brit* is not constituted by particular conditions or laws—indeed, the Tanachic law had not yet been given in Abraham’s day—but rather by mutual love. It exceeds particulars in the way that “I love you” exceeds “I will take out the garbage twice a week.” One may take out the garbage, but that, along with other particulars, is not what is meant by love. Giorgio Agamben captured this recently by analogizing the bond of love with constitution and the bonds of particulars with modern positive law—or, another analogy in Schmittian language, the bond of love is a *constitutive* power

³⁴ Matt 25: 40.

³⁵ Rom 3:28.

³⁶ I Cor 13: 2-3.

³⁷ I Cor 13:13.

(the founding act that establishes a political entity) while the bonds of particular laws are more like constituted powers (parliaments, judiciary, police, etc.).³⁸

The extraordinary covenant between God and man is made possible by grace, *chesed* or *chen* (Hebrew), *charis* (Greek). On the "new evangelical" view, grace is God's way of relating to us: he gives us the possibility of covenant out of his love. Grace and the covenant that flows from it are free gifts for our sake, and for the sake of the God-man relationship itself. They are given without our asking and even if we abuse them—something like the gift of life that parents give to a child. From them come mutual obligations of love and care—but not only mutual. The covenant that God's grace initiates teaches us not only how to relate to God but also to each other. *God's grace both allows for a covenant/relationship with him and is a template for relationship.* Indeed, in interviews throughout my study, relationship was the idea used most often to explain the basis for economic justice work and to describe the work itself. Relationality is both dyadic and an inclusive loop. As God and Abraham bound themselves to each other so too each of us is bound to God—and to each other. As Jesus loves us, so we are to love Jesus and also each other. From the Father to Son, from Son to us, from us to each other—an idea elaborated in the relationality inherent in the Trinity. The work of the Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar may be useful here. As Jesus opened himself to existence on earth—the kenosis or self-emptying/receptivity to mankind in both his life and crucifixion—so we open ourselves to each other. To close the relational loop, so to speak, our openness to others opens us to God.³⁹

If grace makes faith, love, and covenant possible, it does not make them inevitable. Man must embrace them, accept responsibility for them, and practice them in relationship with others as with God. Richard Kearney sums up this line of thinking, "This is a *deus capax* who in turn calls out to the *homo capax* of history in order to be made flesh, again and again—each moment we confront the face of the other, welcome the stranger... A capacitating God who is capable of all things cannot actually be or become incarnate until we say yes..." (echoes with the medieval Jewish writer Rashi are fairly clear: "I am the God who will be

³⁸ Agamben, *The Time that Remains*.

³⁹ Von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. III, 149-157; see also, *A Theology of history*, 25.

whenever you bear witness to love and justice in the world.”). Kearney continues, “it is a dynamic call to love that possibilizes and enables humans to transform their world by giving itself to the least of these, by empathizing with the disinherited and the dispossessed, by refusing the path of might and violence....”⁴⁰

The covenantal one-ness of love-of-God and love-among-men helps to resolve certain polarities in Paul’s writings. One, between Abraham (man of faith, love, and grace) and Moses (ostensibly the man of Tanachic particulars), seems to give us the polarities of love/law, grace/contract, Abraham-Jesus/Moses, generosity/instrumental calculation, etc. Yet perhaps these are not meant to be eternally split. Rather, they may be re-synthesized in the Judaic and Pauline idea that covenantal love is both the foundation and telos of particulars. In our garbage example, the reason why one takes it out—or brings home the paycheck or surprises a spouse with a gift—is love. One may have a to-do list meant to express love and respect, but the list is not the love itself. Indeed, meticulously following a checklist or giving tit-for-tat makes a relationship brittle, indeed loveless. But neither can one dispense with particulars because humans do not act in general but in particular actions. Covenantal relationships begin in love and show themselves in particular expressions that reach unto the beloved. Thus, it is not faith/faithfulness (*pistis*) and particular laws (*nomos*) that Paul pits against each other. Rather, Paul distinguishes between acts that emerge from faith/love/covenant and those on the checklist. If one acts from covenantal love, one does not calculate one’s giving but gives generously, from agape, to both God and man. This is Paul’s point and God’s way, and in so doing we near God.

(*Contra* tradition, this puts Moses rather than Abraham closer to Paul. At first, Moses and Abraham seem neck-and-neck *vis a vis* Paul: Paul’s experience on the Damascus Road recalls Moses’ at the burning bush just as much as it recalls Abraham’s *brit* with God. God expresses a regard and mutuality with Moses like that which he has with Abraham. God allows Moses, as he allowed Abraham, to argue—when, for instance, Moses persuaded God not to kill all the Israelites after their bash with the Golden Calf. But in the end, Abraham has only covenant/faith while Moses, like Paul, has both covenant and particulars. Paul,

⁴⁰ Kearney, “Paul’s notion of *dunamis*,” 142-157, especially 143, 155.

needless to say, does not say this. But "new evangelical" scholars are beginning to revisit the links between Christianity and the Judaic prophetic tradition begun by Moses.⁴¹)

The twined-ness of salvation (relationship with God) and agapic giving (with others) continues in Paul's view of the Eucharist. Partaking of it binds each person to God—indeed, places her *in* the body of Christ the redeemer. Yet in doing so, community is created. For embedded in this one body, we cannot neglect any part of it, any person. In the traditional formulation that "new evangelicals" often note, no eye can neglect a hand. As Paul speaks to the Corinthians, "The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread".⁴² Being in the body of Christ is being in the communal body. If we fail at one (community, service), we will not succeed at the other (salvation). Indeed, at the celebration of the Eucharist in Corinth, Paul preaches that those who eat while others are hungry "show contempt for the church of God"⁴³ and those who partake of the Eucharist in this "unworthy manner... eat and drink judgment against themselves".⁴⁴ One cannot be justified with God if one does not care for one's neighbors.

In Paul, the resurrection too is linked with the salvific/agapic meld. Jesus' resurrection and his offer of eternal life are ways God shows his love for us, but they are also key in how we should love each other. For the offer of salvation/eternal life scuttles the scarcity-competitive mode of living that comes with fear of death, as Alain Badiou, Bruno Blumenfeld,⁴⁵ Stanley Hauerwas, and John Milbank—from many different perches—all have noted. For if we have the promise of life beyond what we know at present, we need not fear the risks of this life in quite the same way, Badiou writes, "it is [in the] here and now that life takes revenge on death, here and now that we can live affirmatively, according to the spirit, rather than negatively, according to the flesh, which is the thought of

⁴¹ See, for instance, Heltzel, Benson, and Berry, *Prophetic Evangelicals*.

⁴² I Cor. 10: 16-17.

⁴³ I Cor.: 11:22.

⁴⁴ I Cor. 11:27, 29.

⁴⁵ Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul*, 124-139, 248

death.”⁴⁶ Though confined to history and earth, we yet remain in a more enduring life and so we can let go of competitive fear with its eternal return of Hobbesian conflict. We may act towards each other with agape. To quote Milbank, “[Paul] fuses together in the most radical manner achieved hitherto salvific, cosmic and political categories and equates political freedom with psychic and corporeal salvation... Christ’s work of shattering all boundaries between the Creator and the Creation and between life and death has ensured that the cosmic is now effectively one with the psychic and the political...”⁴⁷ Hauerwas echoes in a pragmatic voice: “Christians should thus provide imaginative alternatives for social policy as they are released from the ‘necessities’ of those that would control the world in the name of security... The challenge is always for the church to be a ‘contrast model’... we know that the story of God is the truthful account of our existence, and thus we can be a community formed on trust rather than distrust. The hallmark of such a community, unlike the power of nation states, is its refusal to resort to violence to secure its own existence or to insure internal obedience.”⁴⁸

And so: the *eschaton* changes the *polis*. The eternal life Jesus offers can change our conduct in the present world. Indeed, man conducts himself in this way every time he gives not for profit but for the sake of others and for the sake of the relationship/covenant. In covenantal bonds, there may be expectation of an eventual consequence of the giving. God hopes, for instance, that man will love him by loving all his children as he loves them. Each of us might also hope that a child, spouse, or friend flourishes and keeps up the relationship. Yet the purpose and consequence of giving is not the immediate or instrumental gain of the giver but for the sake of the other and for the sake of the bond itself.

On the “new evangelical” view, man may give in this covenantal, *agapic* way not only in the private sphere but also at the societal level, as a basis for socio-economic networks. Indeed, this was Jesus’ vision of how to build a polity of love and trust. In it, the individual is not subsumed by covenant, community, or polity; indeed, she remains of prime worth on her own. But because of that

⁴⁶ Badiou, *Saint Paul*.

⁴⁷ Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul*, 151, 112-120; Milbank, “Paul against Biopolitics,” 143, 143, 144.

⁴⁸ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 11, 84, 85, 86.

worth, each such person is also responsible for building networks of giving or resource-distribution which, *contra* instrumental transactions, are meant to "possibilize" (Kearney's term), her flourishing, indeed the flourishing of all in the giving-loop. Societal giving-networks or gift-exchange were discussed at the turn of the twentieth century by Marcel Mauss⁴⁹ and more contemporarily by Lewis Hyde,⁵⁰ John Milbank, and others. Milbank summarizes its central features:⁵¹ 1) delay of return (by contrast, an immediate return feels like payment or compensation, not the return of a gift); 2) non-identical repetition (the returned gift is never the same as the initial one); 3) recipient orientation, where the gift aims not at gratifying the giver but is appropriate to the recipient, and 4) asymmetrical reciprocity wherein gift from A generates a gift to B which generates a gift to C etc. and may return to A only much later.

Gift-exchange is one way to describe covenant-based economies. They are not selfless or disinterested; indeed they seek certain results—the sustenance of each individual in the giving-loop and of the giving relationship itself. But they are not merely instrumental and always attend to the other—to the needs of the particular other and to the sustenance of the gift-loop, in Pauline terms, the "one body" in Christ. Gift-exchange is also one way to describe "new evangelical" activism—if we allow that the asymmetrical reciprocity (the chain of relations) reaches to all God's children and to God, if the appropriateness of the gift is measured by God's vision of covenantal care among men, and if gifts are not expected to come back to the donor (delay of return) until Christ comes back to us.

ECONOMIES OF LIFE IN PRACTICE

Linking this theology to practice, "new evangelicals" suggest that, by following Jesus' teachings and Paul's salvific/agapic synthesis, communities of Christians may build communities where individual energy and initiative are

⁴⁹ Mauss, *The Gift*.

⁵⁰ Hyde, *The Gift*.

⁵¹ Milbank, "Can a gift be given?"

embedded in whole life/common good ethics. (To recall an earlier point, this avoids the classic liberal paradox where individuals are valued through the absence of restraint but where it's difficult to find social means to address inequalities, harms, pain, etc. that those individuals may suffer.) John Yoder calls this "revolutionary subordination."⁵² Christians accept their social roles and political rule, and obey positive law.⁵³ But they live in society as a "contrast society," promoting the dignity, freedom, and equality of each person.⁵⁴ "The point is," Tri Robinson, pastor of an Idaho church explained, "if healing the brokenhearted, setting the captives free and ministering to the poor was his [Jesus'] job description [in Isaiah 61] then we believe it is ours as well."⁵⁵

The key to doing this practically as well as theologically, on the "new evangelical" view, is community and relationship—both words of covenant. Writing checks to one's preferred charity is not to be scoffed at, but large institutions risk dispensing the sort of impersonal social service which Terry Eagleton rightly criticizes in *Trouble with Strangers*. The preferred approach is through the relationships one has and "when people fall in love with each other across class lines,"⁵⁶ as Shane Claiborne, founder of The Simple Way community in Philadelphia, has written.

Christians may serve community/relationship in at least three ways, each melding entrepreneurial market energy with whole life/common good ethics (as seen in the quotes below). The first form of community is within the church. Claiborne continues, "We see Christians who are hungry for a consistent ethics of life... some of the older folks [in the religious or conservative right] bought into a pattern of living that hasn't brought them life. It's been consumer driven, radical individualism that has robbed them of community and vitality." By contrast, he describes a group of suburbanites who created community, "'not all of us need a washer and dryer,' they said. 'The Taylors can have one and we'll create a schedule so all of us can use it. We'll share. The Cunninghams will have

⁵² See Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 185-187.

⁵³ Rom 13: 1-7; 1 Peter 2:18; Ephe 5:22.

⁵⁴ I Cor 7:20; John 17:15-16.

⁵⁵ Interview with the author, May 1, 2009, Sept. 25, 2010.

⁵⁶ Claiborne, *Irresistible revolution*, 163, 329.

the lawn equipment, etc.” At a more substantial level but still within the church, Claiborne belongs to a group of over 200,000 Christians who pool money to cover each other’s medical needs—an entrepreneurial Christian alternative to state or corporate agencies that handles over \$12 million in medical expenses a year.⁵⁷

A second way of serving is by using funds from one’s business or job to develop and redistribute resources in less developed regions. Third is altering one’s own business practices in ways that build the common good. In this third scenario, business is not only something one does to have the funds for higher work, but rather, when business is done covenantally, with an eye to the life of the commons, it is a “calling” in itself. The English Reformed (Calvinist) Bishop Joseph Hall wrote in 1607, “The homliest service that we do in an honest calling... if done in obedience and consciousness of God’s commandments, is crowned with an ample reward...”⁵⁸ Or as the British bishop and theologian Lesslie Newbigin more recently put it, “It is in the ordinary secular business of the world that the sacrifices of love and obedience are offered to God.”⁵⁹ One might also recall the Catholic writer, Michael Novak, “The task of lay persons in the economic order...is to build cooperative associations respectful of each other’s full humanity... to be participative and creative.” In *Business as a Calling*, Novak expands on his theme, “From the very beginnings, the modern business economy was designed to become an international system, concerned with raising the ‘wealth of nations,’ all nations, in a systematic, social way. It was by no means focused solely on the wealth of particular individuals.”⁶⁰

The rest of this article will be devoted to a number of examples, the first drawn from those who alter their own workplaces along whole life/common good lines. Cheryl owns a fruit farm in Washington State that does \$60 million per year in business. In addition to selling on the market and re-investing some of her profits, she puts 50 to 75 percent of them into the family’s foundation for development projects in the US and abroad. For her employees, mostly migrant

⁵⁷ Interview with the author, May 6, 2009.

⁵⁸ Hall, “Holy observations,” 11.

⁵⁹ Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 230.

⁶⁰ Novak, *Business as a calling*, 125.

workers, she built a residential community with comfortable and affordable dwellings, and set up ESL, GED and computer courses, parenting training, youth programs, sports, counseling services, women's support groups, pre-school, elementary school, and a college scholarship program for employees' children. These efforts not only provide assistance to her workers but help them get out of migrant work.

In the next few examples, American evangelicals use resources garnered from their businesses and jobs to work with less developed communities. We might begin with the large Christian organizations like World Vision's micro-credit program, which supports over 440,000 projects in forty-six developing countries. And though donations do not create community or relationships between donor and recipients, the thousands of World Vision volunteers on the ground do. Moreover, donations are not entirely devoid of responsibility for the other. Additional evangelical aid agencies include the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organization, the International Justice Mission, The Urban Alternative, Evangelicals for Social Action, Evangelical Environmental Network, Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education, among many others.

Still among the larger Christian organizations, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 2004 released a watershed mission statement, *For the Health of the Nation: An evangelical call to civic responsibility*.⁶¹ It calls for a fair legal and economic system "which does not tolerate perpetual poverty. Though the Bible does not call for economic equality, it condemns gross disparities in opportunity and outcome that cause suffering." The word "outcome" is noteworthy. It would not likely be accepted by economic conservatives or neo-liberals, who, holding to the classic liberal view, take equality of opportunity in procedurally open markets to be sufficient for productive and just economies. Yet, as equality of opportunity may yield significant, long-term inequalities in outcomes, the NAE therefore promotes not only a liberal market system and private property but also *structural* improvements in health care, nutrition, education, job training, and immigration.⁶² In 2010, a new organization, the New

⁶¹ National Association of Evangelicals, *For the Health of the Nation*.

⁶² In 2009, NAE president Leith Anderson and other evangelical leaders issued a statement asking Obama to provide adequate finances to implement immigration laws and reduce the

Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good, was established specifically to advance "new evangelical" ideas. These include not only human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and peacemaking but also a strong emphasis on economic justice, expanding access to health care, strong families, and environmental protection.⁶³

Much of opportunity-restructuring, however, is done by local church communities, which run programs ranging from free medical clinics to prison counseling and substance abuse programs, from environmental protection to programs overseas that reduce disease and run orphanages, schools, and job training. These programs are staffed almost entirely by volunteers, who do much of the fund-raising as well.

One northwestern church is surrounded by trailer parks and communities of immigrants, both legal and undocumented. Though parishioners are largely working and lower-middle class, donations can be significant. The church raised \$66,000 in one offering to build a training center in a Zambian village, \$100,000 for another project. The church provides extensive support for the local Karen community, refugees unwanted by both Thailand and Burma, not only offering emergency aid but teaching such skills as English-language proficiency and job-interviewing, which allow the Karen to enter the U.S. economy. Other church ministries include its extensive environmental protection program; its food distribution program; a Men's Ministry, which hopes to reduce spousal abandonment and divorce; its substance abuse program so successful that even local Catholics asked the church to help with their in-prison program; and the impressive free health clinic, which operates through donations of time, medicines, and funds from church-members and local doctors. It is open to those lacking health insurance, including undocumented immigrants. In all its ministries, relationship with others is stressed. One pastor notes, "We try to break down barriers. We hope they begin to feel that this is a community where they can say, 'I can trust Joe, and maybe I can trust God'... [in the prisons] we

"enormous" waiting time for immigrants applying for legal status; see, Vu, "Evangelicals Make Case".

⁶³ <http://www.newevangelicalpartnership.org/?q=node/1>

try to prepare them for the transition to leave prison. And we build friendships.”⁶⁴

This church also runs extensive overseas programs in Ecuador, the Philippines, Zambia, Chile, and Paraguay. “We tend to everyone—Muslim, Jewish,” the head of overseas missions explained. “The commitment is at least ten years—you can’t do anything with less.”⁶⁵ But in turning to them, one should note that in this controversial area, “new evangelicals” are developing a nuanced critique of the “Bibles for bacon” school of evangelizing, where participation in religious activities was a condition of aid. This is unacceptable to “new evangelicals,” not least because it is un-Jesus-like. Jesus served; he did not ask people “to sign on the bottom line,” as one Colorado pastor put it. Following Pauline universalism, “new evangelicals” note that Abraham’s faith in God—not this tradition or that—made the covenant possible. Neither were differing local religions an issue for Paul—not because he wanted to eradicate them but because such gestures, he felt, have little bearing on faith in God, love of neighbor, and hope, which is the endurance to pursue them both. “Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats... One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind.”⁶⁶ Thus Paul advises Christians, “do not argue about opinions.”⁶⁷

With this in mind, the present “new evangelical” approach abroad is to spend time and develop friendships so that resource-development is appropriate to the recipient community (an emphasis found in the doctrines of covenant and service, and in gift exchange). “We do not tell a community,” a pastor at a southern megachurch, notes, “that we know what their problems are and how to fix them. We try to find out what the perspective of the community is, and we

⁶⁴ Interview with the author, May 1, 2009.

⁶⁵ Interview with the author, May 1, 2009.

⁶⁶ Rom 14:2-5. This idea is repeated in Rom 14:20, “In truth, all things are clean” and in Romans 14: 10-13, “You, why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? ... Then let us no more pass judgment on one another.”

⁶⁷ Romans 14:1; *diakriseis* is also translated as “differences” or “discernment of differences.”

often learn more than they do.”⁶⁸ Or as another pastor, head of overseas missions, said,

In many cases, Christians have made a shambles of mission work. Go back to the Crusades; Christians were killing people in the name of God. Give me a break. In foreign countries, people want to know what we're in it for—the oil, the diamonds? The history has not been good...I can buy all the 'rice Christians' I want. In the third world, people will say anything for rice or money.” But, he adds, if people come to the church, “I want only the ones who are in it heart and soul.” If people want to know why his church is digging a well or building a school, he'll tell them. Perhaps something about his faith will interest them. But he adds, “I've dug thirty foot water wells with guys who didn't believe what I do, and I love those guys. If God wants to use me to change their belief, that's fine. If not, then heck, we dug a well.”⁶⁹

In another example of overseas work, a central Florida church spends \$1.5 million a year directly on social justice projects and works with national and international organizations in Egypt, South Africa, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Argentina, China and the Ukraine. Through its partnership with the Vredlust church in South Africa, parishioners in the Florida and Vredlust churches, in community with each other, serve a small, impoverished area in Swaziland. The effort is run, “by people who instead of taking a vacation at the beach volunteer for Swaziland,” as one pastor, put it. “What started out as two camp fires and a kettle is now several classroom buildings, a medical clinic, and we're doing micro-loans for business start-ups.”⁷⁰

Para-church efforts in restructuring opportunity are illustrated by the Farmer to Farmer program in Nicaragua, set up by Partners Worldwide, a Christian organization specializing in getting businesspeople in the developing world on their feet. The Nicaraguan program's aim is to buy land from absentee landlords and offer it to farmers on lease-to-buy provisions where the Nicaraguans pay for the plot over seven to ten years. US farmers provide the capital and help their Nicaraguan partner to solve agricultural problems, develop markets and business

⁶⁸ Interview with the author, May 11, 2009.

⁶⁹ Interview with the author, May 1, 2009.

⁷⁰ Interview with the author, May 11, 2009.

plans, etc. so that they can move from subsistence farming to agricultural enterprises. Repaid loans go into a Nicaraguan business development fund that purchases new plots for more farmers. Don Esteban applied for his land-loan in 2005; his son, in 2006. They are partnered by Iowa farmers Bonnie and Don Vos. By 2009, the Estebans were current in their loan payments, had five hundred coffee-producing plants, were developing eight hundred more seedlings, and had planted one hundred hardwood trees, which go for \$500 if harvested whole and nearly \$5,000 if cut into lumber. The initial capital investment was \$1,500.

A final example is from Uganda, where the civil war following Idi Amin's dictatorship killed Timothy Jokkene's brother and four uncles and landed him in prison. On release, he saw an opportunity in an abandoned gas station, which a local banker snuck him a loan to buy. Twenty years later, Timothy owned six gas stations in the countryside, two in the capital of Kampala, employing scores of people. He also owned a soda distribution company, which began with sales of five hundred cases a month and in 2008 was up to twenty thousand. He developed his own micro-credit program and cares for forty or so AIDS orphans, paying for their vocational training. To Aloysius, who trained as a tailor, Timothy gave a sewing machine and six month's rent on a small work-space as a graduation present. At twenty-five, Aloysius has eight machines, ten employees, and is sending his siblings to school—an example of a generational snow-ball effect.

But things become more interesting. In 2004 Timothy attended a seminar hosted by Partners Worldwide, where he saw that business and mission can be the same calling. He learned how to re-structure his micro-credit program from a charity to one that charged each credit-recipient a small amount of interest to develop a cache of funds for future loans. This micro-finance program got its initial funding from a Norwegian missionary and then from the president of Bestfresh Foods in California, a Partners Worldwide team leader. In addition to making loans, Timothy's micro-finance program offers to hold savings that loan-recipients can manage. Loan repayments go into a fund that provides more loans; at the end of each year, excess is distributed to members as dividends. Four years after starting up, Timothy's micro-finance programs had helped one thousand micro-businesses, with loans averaging \$150, and two hundred small businesses with loans averaging \$1,000.

Problems do arise with these sorts of efforts, including: structuring loan programs where recipients are not taught or encouraged to save; local violence that incidentally or intentionally destroys emerging businesses and foreign investment; the use of loans for emergencies like illness rather than for business development; lack of business training, which hobbles the transition from aid recipient to entrepreneurial independence; distrust by locals of their well-off, American partners; and failure to build in accountability and support structures.

In addition to recognizing problems, I am suggesting neither that these specific programs are the only productive paths to economic justice nor that any one approach would work equally well in all contexts. The "new evangelicals" I spoke with would be the first to say that a key component in redistributing opportunity is relationship and attention to the particulars of place, culture, and people.

I do want to suggest, however, that "new evangelicals" are developing a few instructive models that employ market relations—from lending and credit practices to lease-to-buy arrangements—within a framework of whole life/common-good values. If one church raises \$100,000 in one effort, another church, \$1.5 million per year, multiply that by the number of faith-based groups engaged in this sort of work and one has some idea of the funds and personnel involved. Against the view that embedding markets in a common-good/whole life ethics is Romantic or useless, the "new evangelical" synthesis might have something to say, especially since it is already on the ground, doing just this sort of linking.

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