

“She Flies On”: The discussion pointed out a lack of trinitarian reference, and also the unwillingness of some congregations to buy a hymnbook which includes this song”. (minutes, page 5)

Those present at that meeting recall a clear consensus of reservation having developed concerning this particular hymn. This fact had been conveyed to the Task Force on the Revision of the Book of Praise. At a further consultation during the 122nd General Assembly between the Special Committee and those members of the Church Doctrine Committee who were present at Assembly similar reservations were expressed.

As a Committee, we sincerely hope that more widespread consultation will take place across the Church when future projects of this nature are undertaken. The process by which the recent Book of Common Worship was derived could serve as a model for this kind of consultation.

FAITH AND ECONOMICS

Church Doctrine, Recommendation No. 3 (A&P 1994, p. [249](#), [25](#)); Recommendation No. 1 (A&P 1995, p. [225](#), [24](#)); Report (A&P 1996, p. [239](#)-240).

The 120th General Assembly gave the Church Doctrine Committee permission to pursue a dialogue with the courts and agencies of the Church on the subject of “Faith and Economics”. This matter was made more specific by the 121st General Assembly which accepted the Committee’s suggestion that this dialogue focus on the dimension of our recently adopted Mission Statement which states: “Our mission in a world of limited resources, is to use God’s gifts wisely and fairly for the good of all”. In last year’s report the Committee presented a brief statement indicating the direction in which this dialogue would proceed. Accordingly the following discussion paper is presented for consideration and comment by all courts, agencies and committees of the Church.

THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL AND THE MARKET ECONOMY

Neutrality of the Church in Regard to Economics

Historically the Christian churches have tended to remain neutral in regard to economic systems. Christians, along with other people, adjust to whatever economic arrangements prevail in their time and place. The churches have existed alongside the state-directed economy of Imperial Rome, the feudalism of medieval Europe, the capitalism of the modern West, the Marxism of the former Soviet Union, to name some of the major systems.

The two seminal texts for this neutral posture regarding economics and, for that matter, the much broader area of politics, would be:

When the scribes and chief priests tried to trap Jesus by evoking from him an incriminating statement in regard to the payment of taxes, “Rabbi ... is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” Jesus answered: “Show me a coin. Whose likeness and inscription has it?” They said, “Caesar’s.” He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Lk. 20:21-25) And Jesus’ answer to Pontius Pilate: “My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world”. (Jn. 18:36)

Those two teachings of Jesus are often interpreted as distinguishing between the task of the church and the task of the state. The churches have for the most part adopted what is a self-limiting, conservative role in regard to economic-political systems.

The downside of such a conservative stance might be that in certain instances the churches have, through their inaction, become almost silent partners with unjust regimes. In being quiet and respectful citizens, the prophetic role of God’s people has sometimes been lost. Obvious examples would be both Czarist Russia and Marxist Russia as well as Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. On the other hand, taking such an essentially compliant position has often allowed Christian people to live in a relatively peaceful environment of co-existence within quite unchristian societies.

Christians are more or less comfortable with this historic stance and the debate about its validity will no doubt be continued among the faithful in each generation.

Under Certain Conditions, the Churches Cannot Remain Neutral

The churches' neutral stance can no longer be taken when claims are made regarding an economic system in vogue which go beyond the confines of what is practical and beneficial to human beings. When the claim is made that a particular economic program is the meaning of all effort and the answer to the human predicament, the Christian churches cannot help but be alarmed.

Such, for example, was the situation in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe during the recent reign of Marxism. Marxist philosophy made extraordinary claims concerning the whole of human existence. As it operated in those areas, the idea was that a socialist economy is scientifically correct and must therefore be rigidly adhered to or the whole system would fall apart. Other aspects of human affairs: the family, religion, the arts, for example, were all subject to the demands of economics. The value of religion, for instance, was judged strictly on the basis of its positive or negative contribution to economic-social life.

Such all encompassing claims could not be accepted by the churches. Both in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe, the Christian churches were, for the most part, actively anti-Marxist. Christian people played a major role in the peaceful overthrow of Marxist regimes.

The Claims of Market Economics in the West Today

Capitalism or market economics, in various forms, has been the dominant economic system in Western Europe and North America for at least three hundred years. During much of this period, for better or worse, the Christian churches of the West have adopted their traditional conservative stance of coexistence, in this case, with capitalism. At times, as in the period of the industrial revolution, many churches including the Church of Scotland became almost promoters of an expanding, unregulated capitalism.¹

On the other hand, the churches have been at times quite critical of the system. For example, the social gospel movement played a major part in bringing about certain checks and restraints on the system. What resulted from Christian and secular efforts were the various social programs which are in place today: social insurance, health care, welfare programs, aid to the disabled, minimum wage, etc..

Until recent times in the West, capitalist economics has been tempered by particular humanising elements which are to a large extent the result of Christian influence.

During the last few decades, however, a new capitalism has emerged. Perhaps with the downfall of Marxist communism in the West, there was a perception that capitalism had proven it could be universally applied. Or, is it possible that in the long struggle with communism, the capitalist West unwittingly adopted some of the tenets of its Marxist adversary?

Whatever the timing or the cause, European and North American societies are now seeing a more confident capitalism being promoted by powerful forces as a system which claims control over the whole of life.

In a philosophical sense, the new capitalism has been promoted by the anti-Keynesian economics of Friedrich von Hayek and later by Milton Friedman and the Chicago School. Essentially the idea is that the economy as a whole and life in general prospers when a free market system prevails. The less the market is regulated by governments, the better the system works and the more beneficial to all concerned.²

In terms of practical application we see the ascendancy of the new capitalism in political decisions being made every day. Free trade, the diminishing of social welfare programs, the downgrading of public-health care, the downsizing of government, the deregulation of business, the loosening of ecological regulations and the privatization of many formerly public institutions are all being promoted as economic necessities of the 'real world'.³

The impetus for many of these political decisions has been the alarm over the public debt. The enormity of the debts incurred by national and other governmental bodies have become a matter of legitimate concern to all parties. The proponents of an unrestrained capitalism, however, have argued that the very quantity of the public debt leaves society with no choice but to cut social programs to the bone. The typical argument in Canada would be: “Of course we know we have the best health care system in the world, but we can’t afford it”. Or, “Of course, we would like to be more generous with the disabled and the disadvantaged but we can’t afford it”. The argument is that our society, because of its reckless overspending, now has before it only the course of necessity. In the ‘Real World’, an unfettered capitalism is the only hope. “We must; we have to; we have no choice”.⁴

The positive side of the argument for “Real World” economics, is that “if the reins are removed from capitalism: overtaxation, government regulation, control of the environment, etc., then the economy will benefit the society as a whole. Market forces will bring about prosperity; the tide will come in and all boats will rise. Or, at least, all worthy boats will rise”.

What we have in the new capitalism is another form of economic determinism. It would seem that our capitalism has unwittingly followed the lead of Karl Marx in believing that economics is a science like natural science and that economics is the answer to the whole of life. Capitalism, which had once been defended as a good practical method of doing business, is now being promoted as an essential way of life.⁵

Why the Churches Cannot Remain Neutral in Regard to the Market System

The First Commandment

The claim that any philosophy, social science or economic system provides the answer to human life must be challenged by a people who obey the first commandment: “You shall have no other gods besides me” (Ex. 20:3).

For example, the claim that an ‘Invisible Hand’ controls the economic welfare of a society and, finally, in a beneficial way bestows blessings on deserving people, is in itself an idolatrous claim.⁶ And though the more modern term, ‘micro-order’, has generally replaced the ‘Invisible Hand’, it means essentially the same thing, that Free Market economics brings order to an otherwise chaotic world.⁷

Those who believe that Almighty God alone broods over the face of the deep and alone can separate the light from the darkness cannot accept the claims of infallibility in regard to any human being or system.

When the claim is made that the market economy is essential for our own country and for the whole world (it is a global economy after all, the new capitalists argue), then for Christian people the system itself must be brought under the scrutiny of the Word of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Capitalism, as a philosophy, claims to be based on a scientific understanding of human nature. Human nature, so the argument goes, is selfish and acquisitive. Each person is primarily concerned with his/her own welfare first. To base an economy on any other understanding, the argument goes, is unrealistic and even utopian.

On first consideration, it would seem that capitalism and Christianity share a common world view. In various Christian confessions, the faithful also hold that humanity is selfish. Presbyterians, for example, go even further in a negative assessment of human life:

All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.⁸

Christians, however, believe that humanity has also been redeemed from that dismal situation. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (Jn. 3:16) This redemption also is reflected in the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.

Both the New Testament and the Catechism are referring, of course, to Christ's effective grace at work within the Elect. The scriptural and confessional words, however, both have something to say about human nature, do they not? Do they not imply that human nature, through the grace of God is redeemable?

The truth about our human situation was expressed by Martin Luther as *simul justus et peccator*, "justified but yet in sin". Human nature is both damned and redeemed. Evidence of this dialectic is all around us.

In light of this realistic understanding of humanity, Christian people would be satisfied only with economic and political systems which see our human situation as profoundly limited by sin, but at the same time wonderfully liberated by grace.

Any system based on the individual need to acquire and disregarding or even contemptuous of the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount cannot be left unchallenged by Jesus' followers.

Karl Marx said: "Accumulate! Accumulate! That is Moses and the Prophets".¹⁰ Do Christians have to leave it to Karl Marx to notice the striking discrepancy between Biblical religion and unfettered capitalism?

Capitalism, with its roots in the Enlightenment, is perhaps the purest expression of individualism. The individual as the basic unit of humanity, is within capitalism the object and purpose of the system. As such, within a pure capitalism, the proper relationship between individuals is that of competition. A Canadian Presbyterian of an earlier era found this trait of capitalism, in itself, to be antithetical to the Gospel:

The sober fact is that nothing has ever appeared among men which has been more cynically regardless (sic) of any ethic worth the name than the ruthless, competitive economic system which is known as capitalism ...¹¹

Certainly an unbridled competition while materially beneficial to the winners can be devastating to the losers. Any system which is disdainful of those who cannot or do not prosper in the system would be quite contrary to the teachings of Jesus. From the first sermon at Nazareth, (Lk. 4:18,19) to his words to the thief on the cross, (Lk. 23:43) our Lord's concern was for those men and women who were losing the battle of life. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12:32).

The "little flock", the poor, the sick, the disabled, the uneducated, the criminals, the 'losers' were the principal recipients of his promises and blessings.

An unfettered capitalism, according to its advocates, rewards the right people: the hard workers, the intelligent, the risk-takers, the creative, etc.. Without going into some obvious discrepancies in the system, the idea of rewarding only the meritorious with the benefits of life is, in itself, incompatible with the Christian faith. "God makes his rain to fall on the just and the unjust ...". (Mt. 5:45) And, of course, it is the duty of a Biblical people to emulate the justice of God. "What does the Lord require of you, o man, but to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with the Lord your God." (Mic. 6:8)

It could be that the most frightening fruit of a new unrestrained market economy is the prevalent attitude toward the poor it has engendered. While the rich get richer and the poor become poorer, abuse is heaped on the poor. The single mother, the welfare recipient, the homeless are being excoriated for their immoral, trifling ways. The losers are not only seen as material losers in the competition; they are spiritual losers who brought their misfortune on themselves. Does Jesus' curse on those who saw the "hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or (those) in prison and did not take care of (them)" apply to our society? (Mt. 25:44) If so, and if the churches do not warn the society, will not Christians be damned along with all the others? (Ezek. 33:1-9)

Biblical and Historic Background

What can the churches say by way of positive advice for believers of Jesus Christ and members of his church? What can our Church say to political leaders? If the traditional neutrality must be broken and the churches must speak, what can be said? What do the scriptures and our Reformed heritage have to teach us on these questions?

First, it must be recognized that the Bible is profoundly concerned with the issue we call economics. The human tendency to desire things in life beyond the necessities of life is taken for granted. Never does the Bible regard us as angels or forget that we are human beings. (Heb. 2:5ff)

The scriptures, however, place serious limitations on the human drive to accumulate.

Old Testament

In the law, not only are the children of Israel forbidden to steal the possessions of another, but also they are forbidden to want what belongs to another. The only thing which can legitimately be desired is that which does not already belong to someone else. (Dt. 5:19,21)

The commandment that on the Sabbath Day there shall be no labour -- not for "you, or your son or you daughter, or you male and female slave, or your ox or you donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien within your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you" (Dt. 5:12) -- is all a severe restriction on accumulation. As most business people could tell us and some provincial premiers, who have overturned the Lord's Day Act or Day of Rest Act in favour of Sunday shopping, more money can be made when we work seven days a week than when we work six.

Another time restriction involved laws concerning the sabbatical year: "Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts". (Dt. 15:1) If one owns a slave who works for you six years, "in the seventh year you shall set that person free ... and you shall not send him out empty-handed. Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the Lord has blessed you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt ...". (Dt. 15:12-17)

Also there is the year of jubilee. At the end of every forty-nine years (seven times seven years) will be a whole year of Sabbath, announced by a cornet, a ram's horn (jobel in Hebrew). "That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; you shall not sow or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces". (Lev. 25:8-12)

Also, in the jubilee year, farmland is returned to its original owner; every family has the opportunity to have its own house and vineyard. Indentured servants are to be released. In general, the people in economic misfortune are given a break. (Lev. 25:13-55)

The Old Testament certainly does provide for a welfare system:

"If there is among you anyone in need ... do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbour. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be". And such a system is not optional. "Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land.'" (Dt. 15:7-11)

There is also the regulation concerning needy relatives: "If any of your kin fall into difficulty -- and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens." (Lev. 25:35) (That is, unfortunate relatives are not to be treated as slaves, but as people with certain rights and privileges.)

There is the practical law regarding the gleaning of crops which plays such a prominent role in the story of Ruth. "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God." (Lev. 19:9,10; Dt. 24:19-22)

Obviously, the Lord God is not promoting efficiency in this law. The command is to be a bit inefficient for the sake of humanity.

Ownership of land and of everything else is limited: “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants.” (Lev. 25:23) The whole concept of the tithe and other offerings is to remind Israel that possessions do not belong to a person because of hard work or skillful transactions but because of the unmerited grace of God. When the offering is presented, the accompanying confession will be made:

A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.’ You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house. (Dt. 26:5-11)

All of these passages are but examples of an overwhelming weight of evidence that the Latin American liberation theologians are correct in finding in the Bible, a “preferential option for the poor”.¹² In these issues of fair play, sharing of wealth, redistribution of resources, Yahweh does seem, consistently, to be on the side of the needy. Perhaps this is because Yahweh knows that all the forces in the world favour the rich and the powerful. The God of Israel is the God who helps “those who have no helper”. (Ps. 72:12) As for the Old Testament admonition for the affluent, certainly it is about the opposite of ‘accumulate, accumulate’.

New Testament

The New Testament provides, if possible, even more radical economic strictures than does the Old Testament. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Jesus and his followers offer a strict, radical interpretation of Jewish law in regard to economic matters. The primary concern in Jesus’ teachings on this matter would seem to be in regard to the first commandment. Jesus tells the disciples categorically that: “You cannot serve God and mammon”. When the pursuit of economic gain becomes more than the seeking of livelihood and reasonable benefits for oneself and one’s family and becomes a service, a calling, then Jesus labels it idolatry. How can a person be committed to two masters? (Lk. 6:13)

This warning from Jesus against idolatrous greed and, at the same time promising a better way, is a recurring theme throughout the gospels.

The first example might be Mary’s poem (the Magnificat) praising God for the promised gift of the Christ child:

For the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name ...
 He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
 And lifted up the lowly;
 He has filled the hungry with good things,
 and sent the rich away empty.

(Lk. 1:46-55)

As has often been noticed, Mary’s song announces a great reversal of fortunes. The world will be turned upside down.

Jesus’ birth itself, when Mary “wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (Lk. 2:7), is highly symbolic of Yahweh’s preference. His Son, the Messiah, will take his place among the disadvantaged, among those for whom there is no room. Jesus’ life follows this pattern. His chosen disciples are, for the

most part, fishing folk, working-class people! He himself has “no place to lay his head.” (Mt. 8:20) Jesus seems to have no visible means of support. He and his disciples live sometimes, literally, hand to mouth. (Mk. 2:23-28) At other times, they are completely dependent on the generosity of well-wishers. (Lk. 10:1-12)

Jesus’ teachings, of course, often identify the poor and the wretched as God’s special people.

In the Beatitudes:

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.”

On the other hand,

“Woe to you who are rich,

for you have received your consolation,

Woe to you who are full now,

for you will be hungry.”

(Lk. 6:20-26)

Jesus admonition to share worldly goods has nothing to do with the merit of the recipient: “Give to everyone who begs from you ...”. (Lk. 6:30)

The point is to emulate God who “is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful”. (Lk. 6:35,36)

Mercy rather than merit is a recurring theme as in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 20:29-37) and of the Prodigal Son. (Lk. 15:22-32)

In the Parable of the Rich Fool, (Lk. 12:13) there is a warning against the sinful drive to ‘accumulate, accumulate’. And the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31) has an even more frightening message for the affluent.

The miracles of Jesus whether calming a storm at sea (Mk. 4:35-41) or feeding the five thousand (Mk. 4:35-41) overcome the cruel reign of necessity. From now on his followers are to know that “with God all things are possible” (Mt. 19:26) and that “In the world, you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (Jn. 14:33) Another dimension has been added to our view of the human predicament.

At the end of his life, Jesus is revealed as the ultimate outcast. He is, himself, one who is ridiculed (Mt. 27:39), a forsaken one (Mt. 27:46), one who thirsts (Mt. 27:46), and he dies alongside two bandits (Mt. 27:38).

Out of the life, teachings, miracles, death and above all the resurrection of Christ, comes a clear understanding of our humanity. Not only do all men and women share a common heritage of sin (Rm. 1:18-2:1) but also we have solidarity in a common redeemer. (Rm. 3:21-28) The fact that some do not know or will not recognize Christ as redeemer does not in the least alter the reality that “he is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.” (Heb. 1:3)

That God’s glory is reflected in precisely this person forces every Christian to examine seriously the prevailing understanding of human glory. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.” (Is. 55:8) That declaration is a warning as well as a promise.

The incarnation of Jesus, God assuming human flesh (Jn. 1:14) demands that every human being be treated with respect. In the words of Colin Gunton: “That the Word became flesh speaks volumes for the value to God, and therefore the eternal value and importance, of human life in its temporality. It forbids the mistreatment of any member of the human family or any attempt to escape from human relationships in the various ways that have been, and are always being invented by our fertility in evil.”¹³

The weight of the New Testament message is, unmistakably, that no person or group in the society can be treated as if he, she or they do not matter. Followers of the incarnate Lord

cannot accept a system which accepts as normal a structure in which there are winners and losers and the losers do not count.

The Reformed Tradition

What does our particular tradition have to tell us on the question of economics? This question especially requires an answer from Canadian Presbyterians because our most prominent founding theologian, John Calvin, has often been associated with capitalism and his followers either touted or taunted as being the founders of capitalism.¹⁴

There is, indeed, a complicated connection between the Protestant Reformation and the ascendancy of capitalism.¹⁵ It is generally conceded that Martin Luther was hostile to the new economy of capitalism. Commenting on the Seventh Commandment, the great reformer wrote:

A person steals not only when he robs a man's strong box or his pocket, but also when he takes advantage of his neighbour at the market, in a grocery shop, butcher stall, wine and beer cellar, workshop and, in short, wherever business is transacted and money is exchanged for goods or labour ... Daily the poor are being defrauded. New burdens and high prices are imposed. Everyone misuses the market in his own willful, conceited, arrogant way as if it were his right and privilege to sell his goods as dearly as he pleases without a word of criticism.¹⁶

According to Paul Lehmann, the principal Reformers were agreed in regarding economics as a major area of ethical concern for Christians: "During the interim (the period between the resurrection of Jesus and the final judgement), the justified strive to make their calling and election sure and to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. One of the distinguishing marks of this endeavour is the way they possess and use what they own."¹⁷

John Calvin, especially as he concerned himself with the ordering of life in Geneva, did seem to endorse certain aspects of the new, developing capitalism of the times. Unlike the medieval church and unlike Luther, he did not oppose the loaning of money for interest: "it is abundantly clear that the ancient people were prohibited from usury, but we must need confess that this was a part of their political constitution. Hence it follows that usury is not now unlawful, except in so far as it contravenes equity and brotherly union."¹⁸ Calvin thought that in the particular case of Geneva during his period, interest should not exceed five per cent.

If Calvin and his followers are accused of being the authors of the Protestant work ethic, the verdict would have to be: guilty. Calvin certainly believed that every able-bodied person should be hard at work. "Men were created for activity", he wrote; they are not to "sink into laziness". According to our founding theologian, we are not "born to shop", we are born to work. God does not intend us to be lazy when we are living in the world, for he has given man hands and feet, he has given them industry. There is for Calvin: "Nothing more disgraceful than a lazy, good-for-nothing who is of no use either to himself or to others but seems to have been born only to eat and drink."¹⁹

Though these barbs seem to have been thrown not at the trifling poor but at the idle aristocracy, Calvin's views on work can certainly be regarded as an incentive to keep the wheels of capitalism whirring.

Calvin, along with Medieval Catholicism and Luther endorsed the concept of private property. Only the radical Anabaptists, with their literalistic adherence to the Acts of the Apostles (Chp. 4,5) would advocate the abolition of private ownership. Calvin, in opposing the radicals, argued that private property is essential to social order: "It pertains to the maintenance of human society, that each person should possess what is his own; that some should acquire property by purchase, to others it should come by hereditary right, to others by title of gift; that each should increase his means by ingenuity or physical strength or other gifts. In short, political order requires that each should hold what is his own." Without private ownership, Calvin held there would be anarchy. It would "turn all the world into a forest of brigands where, without reckoning or paying, each takes for himself what he can get".²⁰ Again Calvin comes across here as not only an ardent supporter of the capitalist system but also of the propertied class.

Having noted these seemingly positive endorsements of the system, however, it must also be said that Calvin has many reservations about the economic arrangements of his own time and place. Far from being the 'father of capitalism' as some would have it, he was one of the first critics of modern capitalism.²¹

Interest on loans, for example, was acceptable to Calvin only when subject to severe restrictions. Absolutely no interest could be collected from the poor.²² According to W. Stanford Reid's understanding of Calvin: "... if one borrowed money to make money, the lender had a right to share in profit which his money brought. Yet the lender should not charge exorbitant rates The lender must follow the Golden Rule at all times ... one should lend to the poor and needy without expecting to receive any return on the money Rather than extracting the last penny from the poor, men should look to God for riches rather than 'to rapine and fraud!'"²³

Even the 'Work Ethic' had its limits, "... men torment and weaken themselves in vain when they busy themselves more than their calling permits or requires ... a great many people are their own executioners through working constantly and without measure."²⁴ There is no advocacy here for the 'workaholic'. And for Calvin, of course, the reason for work was not at all to support the system or to enhance the self but to glorify God by fulfilling one's vocation. Under no circumstances should work be driven by anxiety, by the 'unhappy desire of becoming great'²⁵ or even less by the ungodly desire of becoming rich. The anxious, Calvin wrote, "do not concede the care of the world to God". Their "audacious impiety" is in vain because "God, by a look, overcomes all the undertakings or preparations of the world".²⁶

The holding of private property is by no means an endorsement of *laissez faire*. For Calvin, ownership of property carried with it tight restrictions and heavy obligations.²⁷ Again, Paul Lehmann: "The Reformers believed in private property. But ownership, as they understood it, is never the exclusive right of possession. This is what differentiates the Reformers conception of private property from the capitalistic view of it According to the Reformation, the right to use determines the right to possess; whereas the capitalist doctrine is that the right to possess determines the right to use." For Calvin as for Luther, "Goods are to be owned *Soli Deo Gloria*."²⁸

Calvin, like Luther, placed much weight on the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal".²⁹

We will duly obey this command, then, if, content with our lot, we are zealous to make only honest and lawful gain; if we do not seek to become wealthy through injustice, nor attempt to deprive our neighbour of his goods to increase our own; if we do not strive to heap up riches cruelly wrung from the blood of others; if we do not madly scrape together from everywhere, by fair means or foul, whatever will feed our avarice or satisfy our prodigality. On the other hand, let this be our constant aim: faithfully to help all men by our counsel and aid to keep what is theirs, in so far as we can; but if we have to deal with faithless and deceitful men, let us be prepared to give up something of our own rather than to contend with them. And not this alone: but let us share the necessity of those whom we see pressed by the difficulty of affairs, assisting them in their need with our abundance.³⁰

If this commentary on the commandment represents an endorsement of capitalism, it is quite a different capitalism from that described by R. H. Tawney as: "The temper of single-minded concentration on pecuniary gain".³¹

There was, of course, such single-minded concentration in Calvin's day and he deplored it. Such greed is not only corrupting for the greedy, its social consequences are monstrous. Calvin held it to be "a major plague ruling the world that men have a mad and insatiable lust for possessions". The rich, he wrote, "are almost grieved if the sun shines on the poor".³²

Homelessness is not a new problem either. In Calvin's Geneva, the great influx of refugees had led to a major housing shortage. Calvin's assessment:

If someone with a large household uses a large house, he cannot be blamed; but when men, swollen with ambition, make superfluous addition to their houses so that they may live more comfortably, and when one person alone occupies a habitation that would be enough for

several families, this would be empty display and must be condemned. Such people act as if they should be able to eject others and alone enjoy a house or home, and as if others should live in the open air or go elsewhere to find a place to live.³³

Precisely because greed leads to all sorts of abuse and results in untold suffering of the poor, Calvin was quite insistent that the economy be regulated by the state. The guiding principle of such regulations would be that the needs of the community supersede the rights of the individual. Put in a more positive way, the rights of the individual are held in balance by his obligations to the community.³⁴ Calvin's concept of community is derived from his doctrine of the church. The Reformed doctrine of the church, of course, insists that as members of the Body of Christ, we are all responsible for one another. No one is allowed to turn his back on sisters and brothers because as we belong to Christ, we also belong to one another. Paul Lehmann's observation is that the Reformation ecclesiology, "preserves individualism from the perils of autonomy, [and] economic processes from the perils of idolatry ...".³⁵ Calvin's doctrine of the church provides the necessary vision for the ordering of a sensible government.

In the *Institutes*, Calvin stated that: "equity alone must be the goal and rule and limit of all laws".³⁶ Equity for Calvin is "the perpetual rule of love". Calvin, for example, deals with the tenth commandment in terms of equity: "No thought should steal upon us to move our hearts to a harmful covetousness that tends to our neighbour's loss." William Klempa points out that, for Calvin, "the word 'neighbour' includes even 'the most remote person'; We ought to embrace the whole human race without exception in a single feeling of love; here there is no distinction between barbarian and Greek, worthy and unworthy, friend and enemy, since all should be contemplated in God, not in themselves." Occasionally one wonders whether Calvin did not, like Augustine before him, read the principle of love back from the end of history instead of up from a truncated nature within history. Love represents itself as true nature in the eschaton.

Love also involves subjection to one another. "God has so bound us to each other", Calvin says, "that no one ought to avoid subjection. And where love reigns there is a mutual servitude." Calvin will not even exempt kings and governors, "for they rule that they may serve".³⁷

Those who advocate less and less government will find no friend in Calvin. In Bouwsma's picture of Calvin: "The administration of 'justice' means, in addition to punishment, protecting the weak and helpless (especially widows, orphans and strangers,) and ensuring that all receive their due."³⁸

In practical terms, Calvin's Geneva provided relief for the poor. In its day, this Reformed centre was exemplary in caring for refugees and other unfortunate people. According to W. Stanford Reid: "In practical terms, Calvinism in Geneva was more an attack upon poverty than an advocacy of capital accumulation".³⁹ Nor was there to be a stigma attached to poverty. The charge often made against Calvin that his doctrine of election led him to regard poverty as a sign of God's disfavour, is simply a fabrication. In Calvin's reading of the scriptures, God's elect often had to suffer the worst difficulties and deprivations. Again, Reid reminds us that had Calvin held poverty to be "a sign of reprobation, he would have had to include himself and other Genevan pastors in that category", for they had very little.⁴⁰

In Geneva there was also protection for the labouring class. "Nothing could be more cruel", Calvin wrote, "than to deprive the poor of the fruit of their labour, who from their labour derive their daily support." The owner or manager who cheats his workers may be worse than a murderer, for he "sucks so to speak, his blood, and afterwards sends him away naked and needy". The wealthy cannot be left to their own devices on these matters, because: "men seldom err in general principles and therefore confess that every man ought to receive what is his due; but as soon as they descend to their own affairs, perverse self-love blinds them ... that they are carried in an opposite course ... Therefore, for the purpose of cherishing concord, firm contracts are necessary which may prevent injustice on one side or the other".⁴¹ Whereas these may not sound like the sentiments of a trade unionist, as Reid exclaims: "This is hardly an advocacy of exploitive capitalism!"⁴²

If Calvin did not say, exactly, that ‘small is beautiful’, he did express an unequivocal opposition to world empires and to all concentrations of worldly power. He agreed with Augustine that “almost all large kingdoms” are “great robberies”.⁴³ Would the global market fit in that category? If the global market is interpreted as having sovereign authority over the affairs of human beings, almost certainly it would meet with his disapproval.

In all these matters the state, the magistrates, local government play a critical role. The magistrate is to defend, protect, regulate and provide. Were government performing a small, perfunctory role, Calvin would not have held the office of magistrate in such high esteem. As it was, for our great Reformer, civil authority is “a calling, not only holy and lawful before God, but also the most sacred and by far the most honourable of all callings in the whole life of mortal man.”⁴⁴ We might note, not the clergy or the capitalist but the politician has the highest calling.

John Knox carried many of Calvin’s social teachings to Scotland. Reid reminds us that, “Knox had a very deep concern for the poor as indicated in the first *Book of Discipline*, in which a plan for poor relief was set up on the presumption that the Reformed church would obtain control of the endowments of the old church. The nobility and the lairds, however, succeeded in preventing that.”⁴⁵

The Westminster Confession of Faith is not quite so clear in regard to social policy. Concerning the duties of the Civil Magistrate (Chapter XXIII), the “power of the sword” is given them, “for the defense and encouragement of them that are good and for the punishment of evildoers”. They are also enjoined “to maintain piety, justice and peace”.⁴⁶ In the section on “Communion of Saints” (Chapter XXVI), the Westminster Divines were careful to distinguish themselves from the radical wing of the Reformation by asserting that the Communion of Saints in no way would, “take away, or infringe the title or property which each man hath in his goods and possessions”. In the same chapter, however, there are clear obligations among the people of God.

Saints, by profession, are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion, in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

We cannot help but note that such relief is offered only to the faithful.

In the *Second Book of Discipline* (1578), we are told that the functions of general order and relief outside the Church are to be the responsibility of the magistrate.

The magistrate commands external things for external peace and quietness among the subjects: The minister handles external things only for conscience cause. The magistrate handles external things only, and actions done before men. But the spiritual ruler judges both inward affections and external actions, in respect of conscience, by the Word of God.

In making such distinctions between civil and ecclesiastical power, the tasks of the civil authorities is quite broad and unspecific.

Presbyterians might wish that our Confession had been as explicitly Calvinistic as the Second Helvetic Confession when it said of the Magistracy: “let him exercise judgement by judging uprightly. Let him not respect any man’s person or accept bribes. Let him protect widows, orphans and the afflicted.”⁴⁷

As we have indicated, the social teaching and actions of the Reformed Church during the eighteenth and for much of the nineteenth century were for the most part disgraceful. The Weber hypothesis, though not entirely accurate, was given much credence by the behaviour of Calvin’s spiritual descendants in Scotland, North America and elsewhere. Much of this has been documented in the excellent study by our own Professor Donald Smith.⁴⁸

In more recent times, however, the social conscience of Reformed people has been reawakened.

“The Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation” adopted as a subordinate standard of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1954 attempted to describe and delimit the functions of the Church and the magistrate (the state) in the Twentieth Century. In setting forth the obligation of political and social power, the Declaration states that: “Every organ of power in the Nation, whether cultural, political, or *economic*, is a stewardship under Christ, and can properly function only by obedience to His revealed word.”⁴⁹ In other words, there can be no appeal to a higher law, to other determinants, certainly not to “an invisible hand”. Christ, as revealed in Holy Scripture, is the final authority.

The Declaration goes so far as to say that: “It is high treason against the Lord Jesus, and deadly both for the Church and for the Nation, to attribute to any man, group, or institution, the total power that belongs to Him...demands that we obey Him against all authorities ... whenever they claim absolute power, especially the power to control men’s thinking on right and wrong.”⁵⁰ Can this serious charge be brought against those who would claim that economic decisions are beyond the realm of ethics, that reality dictates, that the bottom line demands, and even that we have no choice?

The Declaration states that, “It is the Church’s duty to denounce and resist every form of tyranny, political, *economic*, or ecclesiastical, especially when it becomes totalitarian.”⁵¹ Even more critical than resistance, the Church must be certain it does “not merge or confuse its gospel with any political, *economic*, cultural, or nationalistic creed.”⁵²

These strictures of the Declaration of Faith are general, of course, and would apply to any economic system operating from any creed. Given our time and place, however, can anyone doubt which system prevails or which system claims a creed?

The Living Faith, document of 1984, states in a positive way some of the requirements of a just society:

God is always calling the church
to seek that justice in the world
which reflects the divine righteousness
revealed in the Bible.

Living Faith 8.4.1

Justice involves protecting the rights of others.
It protests against everything that destroys human dignity.

Living Faith 8.4.3

Justice requires concern for the poor of the world.
It seeks the best way to create
well-being in every society.
It is concerned about employment, education and health,
as well as rights and responsibilities.

Living Faith 8.4.4

Justice stands with our neighbours
in their struggle for dignity and respect
and demands the exercise of power for the common good.

Living Faith 8.4.6

Since the Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation (1954), The Presbyterian Church in Canada has spoken on several occasions in regard to economics and related subjects. Generally, our Church’s recommendations have followed the historic Reformed positions initiated by Calvin. There has been an attempt to be at once faithful to the teachings of scripture and sensitive to the issues of the day.

In 1961, for example, the 87th General Assembly was concerned about unemployment citing “the fact that the level of unemployment is now, and has been amongst the highest of any western country. As a Church, we are most conscious of the anxiety and frustration it brings to many fine people.” The General Assembly went on to ask the Government of Canada to “bring

all its power to bear upon this issue that the rights of gainful employment and the development of man's God-given talents to the well-being of this vast and rich land may be preserved."

The very next year, the 88th General Assembly (1962), in approaching the same problem, unemployment, attempted to make a more balanced (conservative?) statement:

"The General Assembly while appreciative of all that has been done by business, industry, the provincial legislatures and the Federal Government to alleviate the unemployment situation, nevertheless records its intense dissatisfaction with the present employment situation in our Dominion, and

1. Calls upon its unemployed people to resist the temptation to rely upon unemployment insurance, and in honesty to seek employment;
2. Calls upon all employers in business and industry to renew their efforts to engage the maximum number of employees;
3. Calls upon legislative assemblies to act with vigour and imagination to create new jobs within the provinces; and
4. Calls upon labour and management along with governments at all levels, municipal, provincial and national, to co-operate in every possible way so that the Canadian economy may be strengthened rather than continually driven by conflicts between employer and employee; for only by co-operation in a Christian spirit can a country grow and provide a satisfactory standard of living for its citizens."

Here there seemed to be a recognition that the unemployed bore some responsibilities for not trying hard enough to find employment and for relying too heavily on unemployment insurance. Also there is the implication that labour unions might be slowing down the growth of the Canadian economy by lack of co-operation.

In 1981, the subject of unemployment was broadened. The 108th General Assembly spoke of an "Economic Crisis":

In the present economic crisis in our nation, many people are suffering through lay-off, joblessness, dislocations of family, loss of homes due to high interest rates, loss of small business through bankruptcy and accompanying stress that damages family relationships. Social problems resulting from these pressures are touching every region of our country. With government cut-backs in funding for social programs at all levels, many of the agencies we have depended on for help are no longer able to provide services on a scale to meet increased need.

The church has always been at the forefront of efforts to alleviate suffering. Many of the social agencies had their origins in the church or under the auspices of the church. Once more it falls to the ministry of the church to relieve human suffering wherever it may be found. In the present situation, we call upon all of our congregations through the presbyteries to join with other churches and community organizations to make every possible effort to see that the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, the sick tended, the homeless housed and the pain of stress and deprivation relieved. Through co-operative efforts, sensitivity to need, creative use of available planning, we can and must minister to the needs of our fellow citizens in the name of Jesus Christ.

In addition to the Church pledging its own resources to help alleviate the crisis, the same General Assembly sent the following statement to the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Finance, the leaders of the Opposition Parties and the Premiers of each Province:

We are deeply concerned that the present Federal government and many of the Provincial Governments are attempting to deal with the present economic crisis by stimulating economic development at the expense of social objectives and needs of the people of this land. ... the government is attempting to reduce its equalization payments to the provinces which affect social programs that touch the daily lives of most of our people through unemployment programs, environmental protection, native people's concerns, housing assistance, health care, education and programs for children, the disabled and the

elderly. This shift will force the provinces to cutback on their programs and pass on the burden to already hard-pressed municipalities. Throughout the nation, a further shift is being precipitated by clearly signalling to all that any new social programs will have to be at the expense of already curtailed existing programs. This is particularly true of job-training programs and education aimed at meeting the technological needs of the new economic priorities. This means that social programs for the disadvantaged will be further curtailed to meet the demands of the economic shift in priorities. If these new economic projects involve environmental disruptions, personal and family stress, labour problems and community crises, there will be additional strain on the shrinking funds for social programs.

In its budgetary measures, the Government appears to be saying that social programs are the culprit in the current crisis and that cuts will have to be made here to reduce the deficit while shifting spending priorities to the economic sector. This shift says in fact, that human resources and the well-being of all our people are of no direct economic value; that the proper functioning of persons, families and communities are not essential to the smooth running of our industrial complex. Yet these very social welfare programs have been developed to deal with the human casualties of economic and technological change. In short, social welfare and economic development and progress, rather than being competing elements are intimately related and inter-dependent. Nations which seek economic revival at the expense of cutbacks in social programs have invariably failed.

While we realize the tremendously complex nature of the budgetary responsibilities of government and understand the severe pressures faced by our elected representatives, we urge the Government not to try to realize the good life of recovery entirely through material progress to the neglect of those very citizens and communities for whom the Government exists. In the present crisis, we believe that both priorities must go hand in hand if we are to achieve renewed national health and unity.

Now, over a decade and a half later, all of these concerns still seem to be crucial items. The problems have not been alleviated, some have worsened. Perhaps we have learned to live with them or consider them to be necessary consequences of the economic system.

On the closely related topic of poverty, the 91st General Assembly (1965) commended: "the Government of Canada for its 'policy to intensify and broaden the programs directed against poverty' in Canada;" the Assembly also urged the Provincial Governments "to undertake a study of the needs in their respective provinces with regard to housing and education where it affects the poor."

Two years later on the same subject, the 93rd General Assembly alerted:

sessions and congregations to the insidious affects of poverty in Canada today, and urge[d] them to do all within their powers at the congregational, community, provincial and national levels to eradicate this evil that is blighting the lives of so many individuals and families, and is robbing them of the opportunity and possibility of fulfillment and of making effective use of their lives and gifts in the service of God and man.

Obviously, for Presbyterians, who believe in the 'work ethic', the issue of able workers being left out of the society's efforts and unable to enjoy its rewards is not to be taken lightly.

The next year, the 94th (1968) General Assembly engaged the Church in studying the material from the Montreal Conference on Poverty. And the 95th Assembly (1969) along with several practical suggestions such as the helpful use of church buildings and other properties, called upon,

the courts and congregations of our Church to take more seriously the social implications of the gospel, and alert them to the fact that poverty is not only a great destroyer of human rights, but also one of the greatest problems and causes of tensions in Canada and the world today.

Year after year, each Assembly took up the cause:

The 96th General Assembly (1970):

That our membership, particularly those of them who are landlords, employers, union leaders be encouraged to be cognizant of their duties as Christians and the rights of their fellow citizens.

That we endeavour to understand and have empathy with the poor and assist them to solve their problems where possible.

That the General Assembly ask the Government of Canada to mount a program of education designed to eliminate a condescending, sneering attitude to the poor, with radio and T.V. programs, National Film Board releases, Government publications, and the facts with regard to the varying standards of living obtaining in Canada be publicized to arouse the concern of all.

That the General Assembly commend the Government of Canada for seeking improvement in the Canadian Welfare system and that it be urged to base any changes on the following principles:

1. The method, whether it be the guaranteed annual income or some other, should have for its objective, giving people necessary support without the dehumanizing effect and the stigma associated with "welfare" as at present understood.
2. The level of support should be adequate, perhaps necessitating an increase in the minimum wage, and it should include the opportunity for self-improvement so that people might be encouraged to increase the degree of their self-reliance through training, and part or full-time work without penalty.
3. The scheme should be integrated with health departments in ways which would help the emotionally disturbed, mentally incompetent and those otherwise unemployable because of physical handicaps.

In more recent times, the welfare system has been seriously altered, but not along the lines recommended in 1970.

The 97th General Assembly (1971) aligned The Presbyterian Church in Canada with the Canadian Coalition for Development so as to co-ordinate and "make more effective our Church's concern for the poor of Canada and the world".

And the 98th General Assembly (1973) encouraged "sessions and congregations to give what assistance they can to low-income, self-help groups in their communities ...".

Several General Assemblies (96th, 97th, 98th, 104th, 107th, 110th) all dealt with The Presbyterian Church in Canada's own investment policies. Of particular concern were such issues as:

- Pollution control and abatement
- Pursuit of justice in world development
- Just and equitable national development
- Equality of opportunity for minority and oppressed groups
- Reduction of offensive armament production
- Provision of adequate housing, health and welfare

Near the end of this extensive debate, the 107th Assembly concluded:

New Spiritual Insights: The Presbyterian Church in Canada has acknowledged that its life and ministry must remain open to the reforming guidance of the Holy Spirit, witnessing to the living Word, Jesus Christ, and speaking through the fellowship of the Church universal. In recent years, our brothers and sisters in Christ in the Third World have confronted us with the brutal reality of their everyday lives and the role that we in North America play in maintaining the structures of exploitation, injustice and oppression under which so many of them suffer.

New Economic Powers: The Presbyterian Church in Canada, in examining and exercising its social responsibility, has become aware that modern corporations, particularly transnational corporations, represent a new form of economic power and possible domination. The increasing concentration of economic power and the means of production in the hands of a small number of large corporations represents a possible threat to the common good of peoples and nations. As the Declaration of Faith Concerning Church and Nation states:

It is the Church's duty to denounce and resist every form of tyranny, political, economic or ecclesiastical, especially when it becomes totalitarian.

Today, a relatively small number of large corporations have an enormous impact in determining the conditions under which people live.

In recent times, four General Assemblies have considered the question of Taxation (87th, 98th, 113th, 115th). Each Assembly, in its own way, was dealing with the issue of fairness.

The 98th General Assembly (1972) recalled our Calvinist tradition:

Calvin followed the same stance as Luther, but called more clearly for official church scrutiny of all government. Revenue is useful for the acquisition of the 'force' basic to proper government in order to restrain sinful human proclivity for disorder. (This is a theory of the state that differs from the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Zwinglian theories of the state.) The church has a theological duty to teach the rulers the proper extent of taxing rights. The church, therefore, becomes involved when the taxing privilege is abused and becomes oppressive. Knox spoke on the uses of revenue raised and the effects of heavy taxation on the poor. He objected to the practice of the rich passing their taxes along in the form of higher rents or fees. The Westminster Confession noted that it is the duty of people to pay tribute and other dues and thus affirmed the practice and functions of taxation. The Reformers considered payment of taxes a continuation of the New Testament mandate to pay tribute to government.

The 113th General Assembly recommended among other things that:

That General Assembly communicate to the Federal Minister of Finance its concern that the government ensure a fair and equitable system of taxation so that all sectors of our society bear their share of the cost of fulfilling this social responsibility.

That General Assembly communicate to the Federal Minister of Finance that a national standard for federal sales tax relief be established taking into consideration regional disparities in income and living conditions.

The 116th General Assembly (1989) in regard to the proposed Goods and Service Tax recommended:

1. That an expression of concern be sent to the Minister of Finance over the effects of returning to regressive taxation with the Goods and Service Tax.
2. That the Minister of Finance be requested to initiate a thorough review of the Canadian tax system, including substantive discussion of a wealth tax, a capital gains tax, restoration of progressivity to personal income tax, effective collection of corporate tax, reform of the existing manufacturer's tax, reducing loopholes, preferences and special arrangements in the income tax system.

And the 122nd General Assembly (1996) referring to a broadly based study on Social Policy conducted by Justice Ministers adopted the following recommendation:

That General Assemblies and Presbyteries be urged to express to the federal government and their respective provincial governments their concern about public policies that threaten to undermine the basic values and principles of community and urge governments to explore alternatives that are both compassionate and fiscally responsible.

Again, there would seem to be a historic trajectory of justice from scripture through the Reformed tradition to our present situation. What, in light of this heritage can we say in the present situation?

What can the churches say to demands for an unregulated Capitalism?

1. When the claim is made that any economic or political system provides the answer to the complexities of the human predicament, the churches may and must say no.
2. When, within the economic and political arena, the argument is made that society has no choice, that human beings must be governed by necessity, the churches may and must say no.
3. When a new capitalism makes the claim that competition and greed are the only significant motivations for human endeavours, the churches may and must say no.
4. When the victims of the society: the unemployed, the sick, the single parents, the disabled, the aged are blamed for their situation, the churches may and must say no.
5. When the assertion is made that due to changes in the economy, the society no longer has the same obligations to the poor, sick, disabled, aged and children, the churches may and must say no.
6. When a social theory claims that respect for human beings should be based on merit rather than on the unmerited rights and dignity of all guaranteed by the incarnation and the grace of God, the churches may and must say no.

What can The Presbyterian Church in Canada say to its individual members?

1. That we, as believers in Jesus Christ and members of his Church will base our lives and our hope on no worldly system, but rather on the saving life and work of Jesus Christ.
2. That we, as believers in Jesus Christ and members of his Church, will be open to all economic and political choices which do not deny or diminish the truths we have been taught in Christ.
3. That we, as believers in Jesus Christ and members of his Church, will pray for and work at the overcoming of greed in our own lives. That we will realize that there are limits to what we should own and consume. That we will use our strengths, talents and will not merely for personal gain but for the welfare of the community.
4. That, we, as believers in Jesus Christ and members of his Church, in thanksgiving for the blessings we have received, will do what we can to bring help to the victims within our society: the unemployed, the sick, single parents, the aged and others in any sort of trouble.
5. That we, as believers in Jesus Christ and members of his Church, in appreciation for Christ's love for us, will speak up for disadvantaged sisters and brothers. That we will join our Lord in becoming advocates of those who have no other helper.
6. That we, as believers in Jesus Christ and members of his Church confessing the incarnation of our Lord, his having taken on our human flesh, will pray and strive to find dignity in every human being based on Christ's merit. That we will no longer in a worldly way, divide human beings into the worthy and the unworthy.

What can the churches say to our political leaders?

1. That many economic systems, including capitalism, may be useful and helpful in providing for the needs of our people. That all human systems are sinful, imperfect and therefore subject to revision and regulation.
2. That, because no economic system is beyond criticism and correction, the representatives of the people need to apply a wide range of criteria to any political decision. Economics

would be one consideration along with humanitarian, ecological, moral, artistic and religious needs of the society.

3. That in considering what motivates the human society, along with the human drive to survive and to acquire goods for the self and the family, there is also, the desire to work together, to be healthy, to feel secure, to be in harmony with nature, to develop reliable relationships and to achieve goals which will outlast our brief lifespan.
4. That no one should be left out of our human community. That to receive the blessing of lasting peace and prosperity, the last and the least must be taken into account along with the first and the foremost. Native people, welfare recipients, the mentally ill, prisoners and other people on the margin belong to our family. Therefore, they matter.
5. That plans must be made to break down the enormous disparities between the advantaged and disadvantaged. That, precisely because of changes in the economy, work must be provided and hope restored to those who feel excluded from the vital life of this 'vast and prosperous land'.
6. That those who have been given authority over the affairs of women and men, be reminded that they are responsible for all the people. That their obligation is to recognize the dignity of every person and to bring all segments of the community together rather than, for political advantage, turning one group against another.

End Notes:

- ¹ See Donald Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest; Social Criticism in the Scottish Church, 1830-1945*.
- ² Heilbroner, Robert *Twenty-First Century Capitalism* - p. 103 ff.
- ³ Saul, John Ralston *The Unconscious Civilization*, p. 20, p. 105.
- ⁴ John Ralston Saul, p.21-23; 45-46, 64, 107
- ⁵ Robert Heilbroner, *Twenty-First Century Capitalism*, p. 74.
- ⁶ Heilbroner, Robert - *Twenty-First Century Capitalism*, p. 74.
- ⁷ Heilbroner, Robert - *Twenty-First Century Capitalism*, p. 76 ff.
- ⁸ Westminster Shorter Catechism, Answer to Question 19.
- ⁹ Westminster Shorter Catechism, Answer to Question 35.
- ¹⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital*, p. 595.
- ¹¹ Bryden, W. W., *The Christian's Knowledge of God*, p. 244.
- ¹² 1979 Latin American Catholic Bishops Conference officially adopting a teaching of the Bishops held in Medellin, Columbia in 1968.
- ¹³ Colin Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology*, p. 182.
- ¹⁴ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*.
- ¹⁵ Weber, himself, in his brilliant analysis of the period, made no simple connections.
- ¹⁶ Quoted in Paul Lehmann *The Decalogue and a Human Future*, p. 179 from *The Large Catechism of Martin 67 Luther*, p. 39, 41. Lehmann comments that today such activity is called 'cost effectiveness'.
- ¹⁷ Paul Lehmann, p. 182.
- ¹⁸ *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, William J. Bouwsma, p. 198.
- ¹⁹ Bouwsma, p. 198, 199.
- ²⁰ Bouwsma, p. 197.
- ²¹ See two articles by W. Stanford Reid: "Jean Calvin: the Father of Capitalism?!" and "Jean Calvin, Early Critic of Capitalism".
- ²² See article: "Calvin and the Social Order" by C. Gregg Singer.
- ²³ "John Calvin, Early Critic of Capitalism" p. 164.
- ²⁴ Bouwsma, p. 199.
- ²⁵ Book of Common Prayer.
- ²⁶ Bouwsma, p. 39.
- ²⁷ W. Stanford Reid, "John Calvin, Early Critic", p. 162.
- ²⁸ Lehmann, p. 192, 193.
- ²⁹ Lehmann, p. 195.
- ³⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.8.46, Quoted in Lehmann, p. 195, 6.

- ³¹ Quoted in Lehmann, p. 184.
- ³² Quoted in Bouwsma, p. 52.
- ³³ Quoted in Bouwsma, p. 200.
- ³⁴ See Lehmann, p. 190.
- ³⁵ Lehmann, p. 190.
- ³⁶ Institutes 4: 20.15.
- ³⁷ Klempa, William, “Calvin on Natural Law”, p. 87.
- ³⁸ Bouwsma, p. 210.
- ³⁹ “John Calvin, Early Critic of Capitalism”, W. Stanford Reid, p. 79.
- ⁴⁰ W. Stanford Reid, pp 78, 79.
- ⁴¹ Quotations in this paragraph from W. Stanford Reid, “John Calvin, Early Critic of Capitalism”.
- ⁴² *ibid*, p. 79.
- ⁴³ Bouwsma, p. 208.
- ⁴⁴ Bouwsma, p. 205.
- ⁴⁵ W. Stanford Reid, John Calvin, Early Critic of Capitalism, p. 9.
- ⁴⁶ Chapter XXIII: 1, 2.
- ⁴⁷ The Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter XXX, p. 3.
- ⁴⁸ Donald Smith, Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest: Social Criticism in the Scottish Church, 1830 - 1945.
- ⁴⁹ Declaration, 4 (italics mine).
- ⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 5.
- ⁵¹ *ibid*, p. 6 (italics mine).
- ⁵² *ibid*, p. 8 (italics mine).

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Recommendation No. 9 (reworded and adopted, p. 38)

That the discussion paper entitled "The Christian Gospel and the Market Economy" be sent to the courts, agencies, and committees of the Church for study and response to the Church Doctrine Committee by April 30, 1998, with a view to the possible formulation of a future interim statement.

APPRECIATION TO RETIRING MEMBERS

We wish to express our appreciation to all those retiring from our Committee for the contributions they have made to our work. A very special "thank you" is due Dr. Nancy Cocks who, over the past six years, has "gone the extra mile" in doing more than her fair share of Committee tasks. She will be missed.

Paul A. Brown
Convener

Everett Briard
Secretary

CLERKS OF ASSEMBLY

To the Venerable, the 123rd General Assembly:

The report of the Clerks of Assembly to the 1996 General Assembly noted that the Clerks of Assembly are most visible during General Assembly, when we are seen keeping the minutes of the proceedings, and advising the Moderator and Assembly on points of order. During the year, the ministry of the Clerks of Assembly brings us into a variety of situations. Many requests for advice come through the Clerks' office from presbyteries, sessions, synods and individual members. We are called upon to act as consultants to Special Commissions and Committees of General Assembly. As our society becomes more litigious, the Clerks consult with the Church's lawyers on lawsuits and give advice to lower courts which have been sued or are being threatened with lawsuits.

The Clerks report a disturbing trend in which from time to time bias is alleged on the part of one Clerk or another when functioning as a Consultant to a Special Committee or Special Commission of General Assembly. We would point out that whenever one or other of the Clerks of Assembly serves as a Consultant in such cases, she or he does so representing all the Clerks. The role of the Clerks, when acting as Consultants, is not to form an opinion in the substantive matter at hand, but to provide guidance to the Committee or Commission in matters of Church law and procedure.

The Clerks meet twice yearly to consider and recommend responses to overtures and other referrals from Assembly, to answer correspondence and deal with any other business that is presented to us. We have also been meeting two or three times each year by conference call. As well, we often give advice to agencies and committees of the denomination.