

A theological critique of capitalism in relation to the practice of the early church in Acts 2 and 4

By Ellie Shakespeare

Abstract

This article examines how the practice of the early Church, as described in Acts 2 and 4, can illuminate and critically evaluate capitalism. It explores how we might live abundant and full lives in a socio-economic, political and cultural milieu where scarcity and competition are central tenets.

This article will seek to demonstrate how the practice of the early church, as described in Acts 2 and 4, can be employed to illuminate and critically evaluate capitalism. Whilst capitalism was first conceived as an economy theory which champions private ownership and profit efficiency, it is arguable to suggest that it now dominates every aspect of social and political life across much of the globe. In consequence, capitalism has become fundamental to human existence (Percy 201: 232). Recognising that “values shape economics” (Mott and Sider 2000:50), this article will seek to determine, analyse and compare the values or principles that underpin both capitalism and what is outlined in Acts. The crux of the economic theological debate is summarised by Finger, “because the texts are descriptive, rather than prescriptive, it has not been clear whether they should be considered normative” (2004:235). It is necessary to determine the purpose of these texts, how they can be understood within the whole canon and how they relate to modern economic and socio-political systems to determine how we might live.

The historical distance between the contemporary landscape and those found within Scripture requires consideration in order to inform how the text is used. Brueggemann helpfully asserts that “the bible...does not address problems of modern economic theory” (2016:260). Capitalism, emerging from enclosure in the fourteenth century and formally conceived by the beginning of the modern age, is not the economic system of the biblical era. Consequently, Waters suggests that much of the biblical moral teaching on wealth and social order cannot be simplistically

applied or is indeed irrelevant to capitalism (2016:p.x). Whilst he is correct to warn about naïve anachronisms, to dismiss biblical narratives as culturally irrelevant is to deny their timeless prophecy to all eras. The metanarrative of scripture is to “articulate an alternative to commonly accepted presuppositions and widely practiced usages”, an alternative that is “at least strange and perhaps peculiar; sometimes it is scandalous if not absurd” (Brueggemann 1975:354). This alternative must be discerned from descriptive texts and narratives, in concert with the whole canon, in order to explore the biblical moral teaching on wealth and the common life. The preoccupation of scripture with the material of humanity indicates to us how the physical and spiritual are inextricably intertwined. This means that the bible bears significant relevance to contemporary economics.

The primary controversy regarding the early practices of the church in relation to capitalism is the communalism described as “no one claimed private ownership of private possessions, but everything they owned was held in common” (Acts 4:32). Owing to the lack of specification surrounding this utopian arrangement, some question the veracity of these passages. Zeller argues that these passages constitute an “unhistorical account...founded on lofty concepts” (1854:214). The Greek *topos* of *panta koina*, “friends hold all things in common”, was a popular ideal used by philosophers such as Plato to describe model societies (1955:131). Luke employs this concept to describe how in “vivid fashion that the gift of the Spirit brought about a community which realised the highest aspirations of human longing; unity, peace, joy, and the praise of God” (Johnson 1992:62). For some this undermines the historical plausibility. They suggest that the example of Barnabas who willingly sells his property is recorded because his act of generosity was extraordinary rather than commonplace (Haenchen in Finger 2004:260). However, the value of the text is not determined by its historical verisimilitude. Texts offer an insight into the social conditions, desires and aspirations of the early church. However, the idealism is tempered by the account of Ananias and Sapphira and the accusation of neglect of the widows (Acts 5:1-11; Acts 6:1-7). Luke undoubtedly uses an idealised notion as a literary device, but it is “not over-idealized” (Bruce 1988: 104).

Longenecker believes that these instances of communalism were a response to the particular context of the early church in Jerusalem, responding to specific needs for a specific period, and as such are “not meant to be normative for the church” (1981:311). This perspective neglects to take account of the author’s use of imperfect verbs to denote a regular pattern of behaviour (Johnson 1992:15), indicating that the author of Acts is seeking to establish a continuous narrative where the communal life is central to the practice of the early church. These radical practices are an outworking of the Spirit and were “programmatically for the early church in Acts” (Brueggemann 2016:211). Furthermore, this pattern of living is described in other communities elsewhere in the New Testament (Gal 2:10, 2 Cor 8-9, Rom 15:25-31). Communalism is perhaps preceded in the “common purse and the pooling of property” (Bruce 1988:74) that Jesus and his apostles, and devout Jewish communities such as Qumran practiced. However, these may have been uncommon as economic practices within the wider context of first century Palestine where inequality was prevalent. The economy was based on the practice of extraction. Blomberg describes how a tiny number of people derived much wealth from indebtedness, land confiscation and taxation which made life “more desperate for the already vulnerable” (2012:270). There was a belief that there was a finite amount of resources and that by becoming rich it would be at someone else’s expense (Blomberg, 2012:208). Inevitably this would contribute to human suffering. However, the dominant power within this economy, the Roman Empire, relied on the collaboration of the Jewish elite to extract goods and wealth from its subjugated communities (Finger, 2004:270).

In considering this historical context, the question arises of how Jesus and the early church operated within the system: Were their practices submissive or subversive? Troeltsch asserts that it was not a programme of social reformation but rather a spiritual summons which is “to take place quietly within the framework of the present world-order, in a purely religious fellowship of love” (1931:61). This may draw superficially on verses such as Matthew 22.21 “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s”. However, this reading seems to ignore the context of this passage in which there is rising tension between Jesus and the religious and social elite to the extent that they plot to entrap him by initiating this conversation about taxes (v15). This conflict is paralleled in Acts where the apostles face rebukes

from the same elite (Acts 4, 7, 8). These regular confrontations can only lead to the conclusion that the alternative way of life inaugurated in Jesus and embodied by his church subverted the dominant social, economic and political structures of the empire, recognising that Jesus was a “radical interferer within the social order” (Percy 2015: 220). His way of life was not merely a religious reorientation but a radical revolution of the Spirit that addressed every dimension of human life.

Therefore, the praxis of the early church, which included breaking bread and shared meals, can be understood as counter-imperial. Streett observes the power of the equality of the common meal which confounded Rome’s “assumptions of rigid societal stratification” (2013: 204). The practices of the early church within the totalising Roman system may serve as a didactic narrative for the contemporary church and its response to the predatory capitalist economy and socio-political climate. The deeply relational nature of the communal life practiced by early church undermines the competitive foundation of modern capitalism as it “eschews predatory practices” (Brueggemann 2016: 207).

The early church seems to recapitulate the theme of God’s people being a covenanted community in right relationship with God and one another. Scripture does not make explicit ideological claims concerning property. Instead, it describes a way of covenantal living that emphasises the implications and importance of right relationships between neighbours so that the “well-being of each is intimately tied to that of others” (Brueggemann 1975:359). Therefore, wealth becomes a moral responsibility and property is in service of holy vision. This vision is typified by the practices such as Jubilee described in Leviticus 25 where property was redistributed, debts forgiven, bonded-workers released and systemic poverty undone. Houston emphasises that this text does “not describe the society of Israel as it really was, but challenges a reality which in many respects failed to meet their standards” (2015:9). Jubilee drew on the image of the nation as a family emphasising the strong implicit relations that would be necessary to support such practices. This familial or neighbourly emphasis is re-contextualised in Luke’s use of the Greek *topos* where friendship binds people to one another to the extent that private property is employed to ensure the well-being of the whole community.

Johnson acknowledges the potential for communities of good to emphasize unity at the expense of diversity (1977:221). However, when the individual's right to acquire wealth or property is cherished above the common good this can also lead to the violation of individuality. An example of this is seen in 1 Kings 21. Were King Ahab permitted to acquire Naboth's land, the latter would have been destitute. However, the curtailing of Ahab's rights enables Naboth to continue to have a viable life. God's order for human life binds the "haves" and the "have-nots" to one another; the "rights of the "haves" are defined in relation to the rights of the "have-nots" (Brueggemann 1975: 355). As Blomberg summarises; "as long as some people have too little, there is such a thing of having too much" (2012: 215).

This is not to say that property and wealth are inherently immoral and therefore forbidden. In Acts the stories of Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira are juxtaposed to demonstrate the tension between individual possessiveness and communalism. Their collusion to hold back some of the profit was a "mockery" (Johnson 1992:89) of the united heart and soul (Acts 2:32) of the early church. Johnson suggests that throughout Luke-Acts the author uses possessions to represent power and an indication of a person's heart. This passage does not suggest that ownership of property in and of itself is unacceptable. Rather, in withholding some of the money Ananias and Sapphira demonstrate a refusal to fully submit to both the authority of the apostles and the covenantal order in which the community of the early church was organised.

This covenantal order may be used to critically evaluate the tenet of capitalism understood as self-interest. The community of the early church depended on a network of covenantal relationships whereas capitalism is dependent on impersonal contractual arrangements. Tanner argues that, in fact, capitalism constructs beneficial dependencies between a wide network of people: "One needs the people one does not love" (2010:624). She asserts that the specialization of production means that markets "presume our dependence on one another" (2010:622). One is no longer involved in the production of much of what is consumed but is dependent on another for their participation. This is an exchange of goods and so is a contractual arrangement that may be understood as creating a relationship. Pollitt

affirms this in recognising the “inherent interdependence of human economic activity” (2015:30).

However, this network of dependency is far from the deep relationships that constituted the covenantal commitments of the early church, which. extended beyond the fulfilment of an impersonal contractual obligation to a desire to see each person within the network flourish.

This is not to simplify self-interest to selfishness. Hartropp explains that within capitalism rational self-interest is used as a tool of prediction and “is *not* an assertion about actual human beings and their behaviour” (2015:16). Similarly, Novak states that “self-interest is not myopic selfishness” (1985:63) but is merely that which interests participants, whatever their goals may be. An associated risk is that this structure of self-interest, depends upon individuals conceiving of “themselves as agents responsible for altering their own futures and that of the world” (Novak 1985:60) rather than collaborating to establish a common good. Self-interest, however, does not exclude commitments to a common good as a goal that individuals choose to pursue.

Tanner summarizes this when she states that “self-interested action becomes equivalent to selfishness only if one cares only about oneself” (2010:621) and conversely it moves away from selfishness when one cares about others. There are instances of self-interested action that are based on empathetic responses to individuals that are unknown to the actor. However, these can only occur when in some way the two become related – through an advert, campaign or piece of information. Capitalism can be a network of anonymous relationships, thus greatly falling short of the network of known relationships that supported the early church. Actions that might be criticised as selfishness are “often a symptom of a failure of human connection” (Gerhardt in Percy 2015:231). This has been popularly expounded by the Fairtrade movement which has highlighted the long-term consequences for employees who are pressured by a competitive market to keep production costs as low as possible in an effort to secure business. This is in stark contrast to a mutually regarding network of authentic relationships that is enacted in the early church. This network seems to embody the principle that “flourishing for the whole depends on the flourishing of all its parts” (Tanner 2010:628).

This suggests the need for an exploration of how the poor, as a part of this whole, are treated within capitalism. Acts tells us that there was “not a needy person amongst them” (4:34) which makes reference to Deuteronomy 15:4 and the fulfilment of Israel being recognised by the ending of poverty for all members of the community. Bizarrely, Stokes argues that the sharing of goods that was necessary for the eradication of poverty within the community was a mistake, even an ‘evil spirit’, that is included as ‘a significant warning for the mission field to encourage churches to strive after a healthy independence amongst their members’ (in Fingers 2004:61). His assertion implies that this independence will serve by encouraging them to be self-reliant and industrious so that their situation may be improved. This is not dissimilar to other justifications of capitalism that claim the poor are best served within this economic system. There can be a reactionary distaste to capitalism’s treatment of the poor, something that Waters contends is “naive anticapitalism [that] thereby effectively opt[s] against the poor and diminishes human flourishing” (2016:ix).

Sympathetic scholars claim that capitalism is an unbiased system that facilitates economic mobility and allows individuals to be mindful of more than just the material. Novak asserts this lack of bias when he states that money is “cold, impersonal, insensitive to station, class, creed, race or person” (1985:59). When this superficial claim of being fair is considered alongside the tenet of the early church of “each according to their need” the injustice is quickly exposed. Following Novak’s commitment to capitalism’s benefit for the poor Pollitt contends that the market’s effect on the poor has been to raise their standard of living. He claims that capitalism has resulted in the “complete elimination of abject poverty in the UK” (2015:33), and goes on to suggest that because individuals are able to earn high wages they are likely to become more interested in ethics as they are no longer concerned with the satisfaction of “certain material needs” (2015:29).

Nonetheless, issues embroiled within capitalism contradict this perceived benefit to the poor. Tawney states “not only impoverishes the mass of mankind but that it makes riches a god, and treats common men less than man” (in Novak 1985:53). This concentration of wealth has been well-documented in reports, for example Oxfam revealed that just eight people own the same amount of wealth as half of the

global population (2017). Even Adam Smith conceded that no society can be flourishing if the vast majority of its population are “poor and miserable” (in Tanner 2010:630) which seems to be the result, globally, of capitalism. This may be because there seems to be no “inherent mechanism” (Blomberg 2012:211) for preventing poverty and helping those that are struggling. In a competitive economy there must be losers. In many states this brutality is ameliorated to differing degrees by some means of redistribution, but these often seem ineffective against the power of capitalism which tends to “enable the enrichment of the capitalist through the impoverishment of those who provide labour to the enterprise” (Houston 2015:7).

This, again, is counter to what is found in Biblical narratives where the responsibility for the poor is given not only to the ruling classes, but the community as a whole are to strive for a just social order. Justice is often problematic within market efficiency because it is inherently inefficient. Pollitt recognises this when he observes that justice “often has such a negative efficiency consequence” (2015:33). Biblical practices of justice are often fundamentally inefficient. Gleaning (Leviticus 23:22) is a profoundly inefficient means of harvesting a crop and yet it is desired as the ideal of justice is more highly desired than economic efficiency.

It is apparent that capitalism is no longer a component of a socio-economic order that works in concert with other philosophies and beliefs: it has become a cultural phenomenon, pervading every possible aspect of human existence. Tanner astutely describes it as “no longer an amoral technical apparatus for allocating resources...the market constitutes a certain manner of living that displaces and uproots others, often through a great deal of social disruption” (2010:618). It has overpowered other metanarratives to take pre-eminence as a totalising cultural system that Pope Francis describes as “idolatry” (in O’Gorman 2016:438) that places profit before all else. The result is that humankind has displaced the means by which it knows itself; the *imago Dei*, by which humans may find meaning and depth, has been discarded and replaced with measures of material accumulation.

Beyond individuals, whole populations have become measured by their economic output. GDP has become a prime value of a state. The “criterion by which our economic behaviour is assessed is a purely materialistic criterion. Any other evaluation – such as some kind of moral or spiritual evaluation of our economic life –

is rarely put forward or heeded” (Hartropp 2015:23). This singular measure of a society’s welfare has transformed the values by which societies operate. Pollitt states that “profit maximisation is a guide to morally correct behaviour” (2015:30), thus many immoral behaviours may be justified in service of an economic *greater good*. Jenkins seeks to retrieve a more substantial and constructive means by which to know ourselves: “the market has taken a wrong turn into applied ideology which has descended into idolatry...I believe that possibilities of human freedom are rooted in something deeper and more realistic than the trading activities of human beings” (in Pollitt 2015:39).

The balance that Jenkins seeks is demonstrated within the Biblical market where “the laws of the market were not to be the be-all and end-all of human existence” (Blomberg 2012:210). Similarly, the example Luke provides of the early church is one of a community that is measured by greater criteria than their wealth. As a consequence, they are released from “the unbounded self-seeking [that] brings death” and so no longer experience the “anxiety and restlessness” (Brueggemann 1975:359) to compete for resources but find abundance within their covenantal community. Sandal describes the displacement succinctly when he says that “we have drifted from *having* a market economy to *being* a market economy” (in Percy 2015:233) and so Luke-Acts serves as a call not merely to establish communities of generosity, but to repent and return to a condition where the market is in its rightful place. Instead of settling for the markets “simulacrum that replace the slow, patient business of building relationships and developing reticulation with something that is quick and instantly gratifying” (Percy 2015:233), communities must rediscover that the things that are of value may not be immediate or able to be consumed or accumulated. The practice of the early church describes perseverance that is required to build a covenantal community as “they were constant in their attention to the teaching of the apostles, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). As in the early church, this process requires an acceptance that “money can’t buy love, and it can’t buy true friendship either’ (Percy 2015:233).

The communal praxis of the early church has arguably provided a foundation for the development of contemporary economic theories, primarily that of communism and socialism. There is a parallel between Acts 2:45 which describes how the early

church community would sell their possession and goods so that they could be distributed “as any had need” and the popular socialist notion, which was used by Marx, that “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need”. This has meant that these passages have been interpreted in the light of contemporary political polarization between capitalism and communism. The passage described something similar to Engel’s social ideal of “a society without class differences, private property, and a state authority” (1956:72). Kautsky, who shared Engel’s political worldview, drew parallels between the social status of the early church and that of the proletariat leading him to equate his concept of the Kingdom of God with that of communism: The church “should aim to achieve a communist organisation” (Kautsky in Finger 2004:251). Finger observes that commentators who sympathise with Engels tend to commit to an overly literal understanding of the texts as prescriptive for a social order. They fail to distinguish between the early church’s communalism in consumption and Communism in production. There must also be a distinction between a social order that is imposed and the willing communalism in Acts 2 and 4 which is a result of the Spirit’s movement and their discipleship. Luke does not describe a process of redistribution, rather these passages outline a “sharing of possessions as a spontaneous outgrowth of the Spirit, rather than as an institution” (Johnson 1992:59).

Equally, the interpretation of these passages has been influenced by strongly capitalist worldviews resulting in the neutering of the text’s significance and the intention for the material. Brueggemann describes how the passage has been read through a “privatized, otherworldly lens that has transposed the story into an individualised, spiritualised account” (2016:185). Scholars who were suspicious of Communism, such as Bonhoeffer and Barth, understood these passages as describing a primarily spiritual community rather than a social order (Fingers 2004:269). This reading under-utilizes the materiality of the practices of the early church so as to place no immediate demands on the reader and in doing so “the literal becomes figurative. Actual, physical actions of sharing are replaced by theoretical ideals and vague feelings of generosity, instead of grasping the integral relationship between the two” (Finger 2004:267). There is a risk in interpreting this passage through contemporary or historical political frameworks as this would be a gross anachronism. The early church was not, as Walton suggest, a “bold

experiment in communism” (2008:100), instead it is describing an alternative to human created socio-economic orders and in doing so prophetically critiques them whilst revealing glimpses of the Kingdom.

Herein is a key issue concerning theological analysis of socio-economic systems; that the systems themselves are not the issue, but rather the disruption of God’s order that tarnishes human life. Novak suggests that, owing to the sinful nature of human beings, a capitalist economy is more suitable, positing that within capitalism “greed and selfishness, when they occur, are made to have their costs” (1985:61). This is reliant on the belief that a free market will identify and extend the qualities that society appreciates, such as generosity and benevolence, and will reduce undesirable qualities as they are unappreciated. Novak proposes that the sin that corrupts human life is beyond the reach of any socio-economic system and defends capitalism as being “designed for sinners. That is, for humans as they are” (1985:55). The logic of Novak’s argument is convincing. There are no social orders imagined or designed by humans that might contend with the disruption of God’s will for humanity, nor are there any that will embody entirely the Kingdom of God. Whilst for Novak this commends capitalism, it seems to invite a criticism of capitalism along with other economic theories.

Doherty addresses this issue as he discusses how the kingdom cannot be realised through human effort and that any misplaced faith in human systems is an “idolatrous pretention” (2015:145). This pretention is founded upon a lie that finds its origin in Genesis with humanity’s attempt to be equal with God; “that we, not God, are the masters of our existence” (Hauerwas 1993:142). In constructing social orders, even those believed to echo the Kingdom, we are displacing God as the source of human order.

This is not to say that our actions now have no impact. The resignation to wholesale participation in contemporary socio-economic systems is indicative of seriously under-realised eschatology (Doherty 2015:145). Capitalism is so deeply engrained in the social imagination and experience of much of the world that they tacitly accept the doctrine of *there is no alternative*. However, there are instances of authentic movement towards the reality that God wills, that will disrupt this totalisation. These interventions “may be momentary and partial..., piecemeal and inadequate...,

neither complete nor permanent” (Doherty 2015:152) because of the “now and not yet” (Ladd in Doherty 2015:149) nature of the Kingdom of God. However, their incompleteness does not detract from the authenticity. Human action can be conformed to this motion and to furthering the “life of the kingdom here and now” (Doherty 2015:153). Immediate action in the very early Christian tradition, in response to the Kingdom’s inauguration, was that members of the community give up work or committed to celibacy in the expectation of Jesus’ pending return (Percy 2015:220). This imminent eschatology contrasts with the focus of under-realised eschatology and its resignation to socio-economic orders, and therefore poses a valuable question for contemporary Christianity. It demonstrates an alternative way to live, drawn from Scripture, that critiques not only capitalism, but any constructed social order. The church must be cautious of both capitulating to the prevailing system because of an under-realised eschatology and failing to discern where God is already at work. Christian commitment must be to serve as a prophetic voice to any established or emerging system.

Another potential risk is that Christians are preoccupied with searching for a new order, rather than following God’s call to repent and return to the original order. Donovan insists that the “resurrection of Christ directs our attention back to the creation that it vindicates” (in Henley 2015:116-7). The alternative socio-economic order in Acts, that was profoundly shaped by this returning, was not merely vague moral guidelines that could maximise utility, but a divine order wherein the entirety of creation fulfils its original purpose.

To call on the original purpose of humanity is to ask the question, how should we live? If participation in capitalism feels like resignation to non-ideals, what should our ethic be? There is a temptation to “sacrifice our radicalism on the altar of what is actually achievable in our broken and messy world” (Doherty 2015:195). Hay suggests an approach of accepting “a *second-best* in a fallen world, while continuing to affirm God’s first best” (in Doherty 2015:145). This is problematic as it threatens the integrity of the church. Whilst there are practices and injustices that the church would seek to condemn within capitalism, its resignation to operate within it may undermines any prophetic criticism it may offer. The Church of England’s condemnation of payday loans in 2014 was greatly weakened by the revelation that

it had an indirect exposure to Wonga within its investment portfolio (2014). This demonstrates how capitalism is entangled in the lives of individual Christians and the church establishment. How can the church truly stand in solidarity with the poor whilst participating in the systematic social and economic persecution of the poor that occurs in capitalism? These values are far from the ideals articulate in Luke-Acts and the Kingdom of God. As Hauerwas asserts, such an ideal cannot be “abandoned, even though anything we are able to accomplish will necessarily fall short of it as an ideal” (1983:140).

Our ethic to seek and maintain the ideal must then be implemented through a programme of reformation, replacement or retreat. The dialogue between theologians and economists has at times been strained (Pollitt 2015:39). Hartropp assigns this to their “different languages” (2015:15) where theologians tend towards broad narrative trends in society and economists concentrate on specifics functional systems. This is seen in Hartropp’s insistence that theologians “fail to offer any specifics about how Christian socialism or a particular third way would actually work” (2015:20). Nevertheless, a “dialectical conversation” (Swinton and Mowat 2006:77) between these two disciplines that draws on the insights of both is required for a fuller critique of any social order and ultimately if we are to conform to God’s purpose of building a more economically just society. Scholars such as Hann argue that “we don’t have to change the system” before we can start to improve it” (in Blomberg 2012:224). This intention to reform capitalism, to achieve a “moral market” (Blond in Ulrich 2015:179) depends upon a belief that nothing is beyond redemption. Nevertheless, there are those who contend that a more just economy may only be realised by replacing capitalism. Such thinkers may cite Ezekiel 13:10; “They are like workers who think they can fix a shaky wall by covering it with paint” in criticism of any effort to reform a system that is built on values that contradict much of the church’s teaching on the common good. The exploration of alternatives must feature within the implementation of any meaningful program; however, it is not necessarily to the exclusion of earnest attempts at reform. Finally, this program may include retreat as exemplified by Israel’s exodus of Pharoah’s system and by monastic communities and their non-participation within socio-economic constructions. Gonzalez notes that the passages in Acts inspired monastic communities to be “counsels of perfection” (in Finger 2004:237). These three approaches, whilst

contrary in some ways, may be held in tension to provide the church with a meaningful, prophetic voice to implement an ethic of ideals.

The practices of the early church not only critique capitalism, but provide a model of how the church today might embody a viable alternative within a totalising system. The key to this alternative is “desiring the things that are not in short supply” (Wells 2004:19). In doing so, one relinquishes the false narrative of scarcity that there is “not enough life, not enough food, not enough entertainment, not enough happiness” (Wells 2004:19).

Bibliography

All Scripture quotations are taken from the NRSV unless otherwise stated *The Green Bible* (2008) London, Collins.

BBC (2014) Church of England ends Wonga investment. *BBC News*, [Internet], 11 July 2014. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-28257351> [Accessed 1 July 2017].

Blomberg, C.L. (2012) Neither Capitalism nor Socialism: A Biblical Theology of Economics. *Journal of Markets & Morality*, vol. 15.1, pp.207-225.

Bruce, F. F. (1988) *The Book of the Acts*, Grand Rapids, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing.

Brueggemann, W. (1975) Reflections on Biblical Understandings of Property. *International Review of Mission*, vol. 64.256, pp. 354-361.

Brueggemann, W. (2016) *Money and Possessions*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press.

Doherty, S. (2015) The Kingdom of God and the Economic System: An Economics of Hope, in Kidwell, J. and Doherty (eds.) *Theology and Economics: A Christian Vision of the Common Good*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 143-156.

Engels, F. (1956) *The Peasants' War in Germany*, Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House.

Finger, R. (2004) Cultural Attitudes in Western Christianity Toward the Community of Goods in Acts 2 and 4, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, vol. 78, pp. 235-270.

- Hartropp, A. (2015) Why is Engagement between Christian Economists and Theologians Difficult? in Kidwell, J. and Doherty, S. (eds) *Theology and Economics: A Christian Vision of the Common Good*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 11-26.
- Hauerwas, S. (1983) *The Peaceable Kingdom*, London, SCM Press.
- Henley, A. (2015) Economics and Virtue Ethics: Reflections from a Christian Perspective, in Kidwell, J. and Doherty, S. (eds.) *Theology and Economics: A Christian Vision of the Common Good*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 109-126.
- Houston, W. (2015) 'Justice and Right': Biblical Ethics and the Regulation of Capitalism, *De Ethica*, vol. 2.3, pp. 7-21.
- Johnson, L. T. (1977) *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*, Montana, Scholars Press.
- Johnson, L. T. (1992) *Sacra Pagina: The Acts of the Apostles*, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press.
- Longenecker, R. (1981) *The Gospel of John and the Acts of the Apostles: Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan.
- Mott, S. and Sider, R. J. (2000) Economic Justice: A Biblical Paradigm. *Transformation*, vol. 17.2, pp. 50-63.
- Novak, M. (1985) The Ideal of Democratic Capitalism, in Schaeffer, F. (ed.) *Is Capitalism Christian?* Westchester, Good News Publishers, pp.51-68.
- O'Gorman, Robert T (2016) Imagination Embodied: The Sacraments Reappropriated. *Religious Education*, 111(4), pp430-446.
- Oxfam GB (2017) *An Economy for the 99%*. Oxford, Oxfam International.
- Percy, Martin (2015) Christianity and Social Flourishing: Theology, Politics, and Economics, in Kidwell, J. and Doherty, S. (eds.) *Theology and Economics: A Christian Vision of the Common Good*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 219-238.
- Plato (1955) *The Republic*. 2nd Ed. London, Penguin.

- Pollitt, Michael G (2015) What Do Theologians Need to Know about Economics? in Kidwell, J. and Doherty, S. (eds.) *Theology and Economics: A Christian Vision of the Common Good*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 27-46.
- Streett, R Alan (2013) *Subversive Meals: An Analysis of the Lord's Supper under Roman Domination during the First Century*, Oregon, Pickwick Publications.
- Swinton, J. and Mowatt, H. (2006) *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, London, SCM Press.
- Tanner, K. (2010) Is Capitalism a Belief System? *Anglican Theological Review*, vol. 92.4, pp. 617-635.
- Troeltsch, E. (1931) *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Trans. Wyon, O. London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Ulrich, H. G. (2015) Theological Perspectives for a Human Economy at Its Limits and within Its Limits, in Kidwell, J. and Doherty, (eds.) *Theology and Economics: A Christian Vision of the Common Good*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 165-182.
- Walton, S. (2008) Primitive Communism in Acts? *Evangelical Quarterly*, vol. 80.2, pp. 99-111.
- Waters, B. (2016) *Just Capitalism*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press.
- Wells, S. (2004) More than Enough, *Christian Century*, vol. 121, p19.
- Zeller, E. (1854) *The Content and Origin of the Acts of the Apostles Critically Investigated*, Trans. Dare, J., Edinburgh, Williams and Norgate.