

## Study 7: Are there jobs Christians should not do?

Key idea:

We have great freedoms as Christians. However, we are not free to do anything. We should seek to do good. We should not harm other people and we should care for God's creation (which includes other people).

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1. Why do you think we may need to ask if there are jobs Christians should not do? [Answers would flow from our theology of work and the study of working well. Jobs that work against the principle of caring for God's creation, and loving God and neighbour, may be problematic.]
2. Should we only do jobs we can expect to be able to do well? Why/why not?
3. Quickly, which jobs do you think Christians should not do? Why?
4. Read: 1 Corinthians 10:23-33. What principles for work can we take out of this passage?
  - (a) Do we really have the right to do anything? [no, we must seek the good of others]
  - (b) Do we seek the most 'good', or will any 'good' do?
  - (c) What level of separation from harm does the analogy with 'food offered to idols' afford us? Can we work for a bank that lends money to businesses we would not want to work for? Can we put our money in a bank but not own shares?
  - (d) What level of knowledge of the good/harm our employer does do we need to have? What level of engagement?
  - (e) Can I say that 'thankfulnesses' (and prayerfulness) allow us to avoid doing the most good in our work? Can our private lives mask what we do at work?
  - (f) In what ways does your work glorify God? Are you serving society or other people?
  - (g) Are there any parts of your work that are incompatible with Christ?
  - (h) What are the 'idols' of your workplace? What are the fears and the hopes?

- (i) Does your work cause others to stumble?
- (j) 'Salvation' was a particular concern for those concerned about idol worship. Must we seek the salvation of others to do 'good'?
5. In what circumstances, if any, do you think Christians can work in:
- the armed forces [e.g. Australia, ISIS, the Kurds]
  - the tobacco industry (e.g. growing tobacco, working for cigarette manufacturers, selling tobacco products (e.g. specialist shops, or petrol stations, or convenience stores))
  - the sex industry (e.g. prostitution, pornography)
  - gambling (is there a difference between a casino and a club or pub that has pokies; can you work selling drinks or as a cleaner?; what happens if it's the only job you can get?; can you work in a newsagency and sell Lotto tickets?)
  - munitions manufacturers (is there a difference between companies that only provide arms to legitimate governments, and companies that provide arms to anyone?)
  - oil/coal/gas companies
  - companies that are major polluters
  - professional services firms (e.g. law or accountancy firms, management consultancies, banks, insurance companies, PR firms, lobbyists, etc) that provide services to tobacco companies, major polluters, etc
  - hospitals or clinics that perform abortions or euthanasia
  - Sydney Theatre Company
6. Can you work for a company that does some good and some bad, if you try to only do the good stuff?
7. How do you respond to the suggestion that Christians should not 'climb the greasy poll to success'? [Personally, I object to this very strongly! Most companies do not have a 'greasy poll'. You do not have to compromise your principles to get to the top. We want Christians in positions of power and influence. We want Christian prime minister, premiers, CEOs, partners in professional firms, entrepreneurs, etc. The only way Christians can get to the top is by working very hard and very well. This may mean they cannot always make it to growth group or church, and they may not have time to run the children's program. But they need our support, not our condemnation, if we want to see our fellow Christians make this world a better place.]
8. What principles can you distill from your discussion of this subject?
9. How can we help each other with our job choices?

These are not easy issues to discuss, as our work is very personal to us. Spend some time praying for each other.

## **End of Study**

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### **Study notes**

Choosing our first job (or taking what we can get), and changing jobs, raise the important question of whether there are jobs Christians should not do, and the related question, for those fortunate enough to have a choice of jobs, how should we decide the best job to do?

The world has changed greatly since the days of early church. There are of course still doctors (cf Luke), tent makers (cf Paul), farmers, fishers, builders, labourers, teachers, soldiers, financiers, church workers etc, but the complexity and variety of paid employment has grown greatly in the last 200 years.

In the Bible there are not lists of permitted jobs, but lists of vices (which should not be seen as comprehensive) e.g. Romans 1:24-32, Galatians 5:19-21. Perhaps one way to think about jobs we should not do is jobs which lead or force us into prohibited behaviour.

One area where Christians disagree is whether Christians can or should serve in the military. Some people from pacifist or Baptist backgrounds say they should not. In what ways are bombing places, or killing people, love? Other people follow the long line of Christians, going back at least to Augustine, in holding to the doctrine of 'just war'. Augustine argued that a Christian could be a soldier and serve God and country honourably. He claimed that, while individuals should not resort immediately to violence, God has given the sword to government for good reason (based upon Romans 13:4). Christians as part of government should not be ashamed to protect peace and punish wickedness. My view is that there is unlikely to be peace on earth until Jesus returns. For so long as there is war, or the threat of war, there will be military forces (whether or not you think that there are more wars because there are armies). I would prefer there to be Christians in our military forces so they can bring Christian love and ethics to these workplaces.

One of the key issues in this area is 'moral responsibility'. The following is an article I wrote on the question, 'Can a corporation be good? How could Christians make a corporation better?'. It may provide you with some useful ideas, but it is not essential reading for this study.

Based on a biblical understanding of 'good', personhood and moral responsibility, it will be argued that a corporation can be neither good nor bad. As this view runs so counter to a number of waves of popular thought, one stressing the major contribution corporations make to economic progress and another demonising them, the biblical base for this view will be argued first. This will take the form of a principled deconstruction or demystification of the corporation.<sup>37</sup> However, having said 'no' to the common view that corporations are either good or bad, we must recognise that they are so integral to our societies that Christian ethics needs to look for a 'yes' to corporations.<sup>38</sup> This will take the form of some pragmatic suggestions on how corporations can be better.<sup>39</sup> Again these will be based on this deconstruction of the corporation, as otherwise we will not get beyond the aspirational altruism of books such as David Batstone's, *Saving the Corporate Soul*.<sup>40</sup> It will be shown that corporations can be good only as conduits or instruments of humans fulfilling their God given purposes, and corporations can be better primarily as a result of humans striving to achieve those purposes.

There are a number of claims for a preferred concept of 'good'. Two widely accepted options proposed by secular ethics are the maximisation of happiness and the maximisation of choice.<sup>41</sup> The corporation plays a significant role in achieving both these 'goods'.

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<sup>37</sup> This may be seen as part of the 'demystification' of the reified economy, advocated by Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgement*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 64. It has parallels with Brian Brock's argument that we need to 'desacralize' technological rationality which he links to the 'rationality of the boardroom', *Christian Ethics in a Technological Age*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 22-23, 225.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew J.B. Cameron, 'How to Say YES to the World: Towards a New Way Forward in Evangelical Social Ethics', *Reformed Theological Review* 66:1 (April, 2007), 23-36.

<sup>39</sup> The focus will be narrowed below to 'large corporations', but the principles discussed apply equally to governments, large trading trusts, large schools and hospitals, large professional partnerships (e.g. transnational law and accounting firms) and large unincorporated associations. The essential features are large size and a fragmentation of interest, risk, responsibility and task which result in abstracted relationships.

<sup>40</sup> David Batstone, *Saving the Corporate Soul: And (Who Knows) Maybe Your Own*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Jeremy Bentham and the Utilitarians are the champions of 'happiness' while Peter Singer is a leading champion of 'choice'.

The corporation's ability to combine and manage capital, manage risk, employ large numbers of workers and develop and reach new markets, has played a substantial role in raising the living standards of all developed and developing economies. If 'good' is equated with living standards, the contribution of the corporation is ubiquitous. Equally, the same features of the corporation have provided a huge range of products, services, employment opportunities and investment structures. So, if 'good' is equated with choice, the contribution of the corporation is again both large and apparently essential.

There is no doubt that 'abundance' features in a biblical sense of 'good' (Isaiah 66:11; Joel 2:26; Matthew 8:11 and Luke 15:23), but the biblical portrait of 'good' is far more comprehensive. 'Good' is what God recognises as good (Genesis 1:3-31).<sup>42</sup> 'Good' seems to exist when God sees something of his own character in creation. 'Good' is linked with wisdom, which may be seen as people living appropriately before the holy and perfect God. Andrew Cameron suggests 'good' includes godlike characteristics like truth, honest labour, building others up, compassion and forgiveness.<sup>43</sup> We can see examples of these characteristics in some corporations, particularly charities.<sup>44</sup> Yet to follow this path is to too quickly look for instances of 'good' without going to its essence.<sup>45</sup> The essence of 'good' appears to be linked to God's purposes. Something or someone is 'good' if it realises God's purpose for it. Humans are designed to do good (Psalm 37:3) and are to do 'good' (Gal 6:9, Romans 12:21, 1 Peter 2:12-15). In the Bible, doing good is synonymous with loving. Hence, the purpose, or telos, of humans is to love God and to love neighbour (Matthew 22:37-39).<sup>46</sup>

There is not time here to explore the depth of the biblical picture of love. However, based on John 3:16, it can be seen as passionate

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<sup>42</sup> Andrew J.B. Cameron, *Joined-up Life: A Christian Account of How Ethics Works*, (Nottingham: IVP, 2001), 152.

<sup>43</sup> Cameron, *Joined*, 144.

<sup>44</sup> Most charities are now corporations, e.g. Church Missionary Society - Australia Limited.

<sup>45</sup> This could lead down the path trodden by consequentialists, who seek to balance benefits and harms, without looking to ultimate purpose, see Brock, *Christian*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Hill, sees it as the total commitment to the good of another, and includes graciousness and humility. *The How and Why of Love: An Introduction to Evangelical Ethics*, (Kingsford, NSW: Mathias Media, 2002), 121-138.

and sacrificial commitment and action for the benefit on another person.<sup>47</sup> We will need to explore whether a corporation can be wise and love to see if a corporation can be 'good'.

Before that a little definitional work is necessary. First, I will use 'good' in its biblical sense, and refer to secular concepts of 'good' as the 'common good'.<sup>48</sup> Second, with a teleological understanding of 'good', there is not much difference between 'being' good (as in the first part of the question) and 'doing' good. For humans, and other moral agents (if they exist), to 'be' good means to fulfil God's purpose, which is to 'do' good.

Now to the nature of corporations.<sup>49</sup> A corporation is a human construct. It is a legal fiction.<sup>50</sup> Without human laws that confer legal personality, a corporation would not exist.<sup>51</sup> It would not have standing before a court, or be able to assert any legal right. It would be, and could do, nothing. Corporations are distinct from their shareholders, directors, managers, employees, agents, customers and suppliers. The law recognises corporations as 'legal persons', and requires them to pay taxes and conform with a large number of legal standards that we associate with the common good. With this legal framework, it is no surprise that there is a widespread view that corporations should be 'good corporate citizens'.<sup>52</sup>

When we overlay the concepts of moral agency and moral responsibility on this understanding of a corporation we see that a corporation is not a person in the eyes of God, and cannot be 'good'.<sup>53</sup> A corporation can do nothing unless its human agents do something to or for it. It can acquire property, assert a right, make

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<sup>47</sup> Hill, *How*, 80, 129.

<sup>48</sup> They are obviously not mutually exclusive!

<sup>49</sup> The approach here builds on the work of Brian Brock, who advocates an approach to Christian ethics that is 'ontologically realist, antireductionist and epistemologically antifoundational' and looks for gospel based ways of life that are full of hope: *Christian*, 4-5

<sup>50</sup> Stewart W. Herman refers to it as 'an instrument or artifice for coordinating human action', 'The Modern Business Corporation and an Ethics of Trust', *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 2001, 111-148, at 115.

<sup>51</sup> Corporations Act 2001 (Cmth.), particularly Division 7. mention more collier 331?

<sup>52</sup> See the bibliography at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate\\_citizenship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_citizenship), also Forbes Corporate Citizenship Awards [http://www.forbes.com/fdc/welcome\\_mjx.shtml](http://www.forbes.com/fdc/welcome_mjx.shtml) and Simon Longstaff, 'Good Corporate Citizenship?' at <http://www.ethics.org.au/living-ethics/good-corporate-citizenship>

<sup>53</sup> Brock correctly notes that, 'the political norm in Christian theology is a person', by which he means 'human person' not a convenient fiction, *Christian*, 147.

something and provide a service only if humans act.<sup>54</sup> A corporation cannot think. It cannot be wise, because it does not live, and to be wise is to live appropriately before God. A corporation cannot suffer as humans suffer. If a corporation was to give its annual profit to the poor, its human stakeholders would suffer the loss, not the corporation. As a corporation cannot experience suffering, it cannot make a sacrifice. Liquidation is not death in a biblical sense, because there is life after death (1 Corinthians 15:42) but not after liquidation.

Therefore, fundamentally, outside the thoughts and actions of its human agents, a corporation cannot love. It can only be the context in which humans love other humans and God, or the conduit through which humans love. Those loving humans may be shareholders who are happy to see their corporation act philanthropically, or directors who foster honest labour and compassion in the corporation's workplaces, or humans who procure supplies ethically and for reasonable prices, or the human sales team that acts honestly towards customers, or the 'human resources' department that treats humans as image bearers of God and not as 'resources'. However, none of these acts or love are anything but the acts of the humans that conceive and implement them. It is dangerous and false to attribute these human acts to the corporation because this type of attribution shifts the responsibility for loving from human persons to non-human persons who cannot love.

This process of deconstruction or demystification needs to go further. If we are to understand 'good' only in relation with God, then moral responsibility (e.g. for 'good' or 'bad') must also be understood from God's perspective. We see in the Bible that God judges humans, and there will be a day of judgement when all humans will be judged (Matthew 12:36; Revelation 20:11-15). Sin will be judged, but only humans' sin (Matthew 18:19). On this basis, Union Carbide,<sup>55</sup> BHP Billiton<sup>56</sup> and BP<sup>57</sup> have the same moral

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<sup>54</sup> Even with the rapid advance of computers, automation and so-called 'intelligent machines', all machines and their actions can be traced back to humans.

<sup>55</sup> Infamous for its association with the deaths of thousands of people in a pesticide factory disaster in Bhopal, India in 1984,

<sup>56</sup> A large mining company.

<sup>57</sup> An energy company associated with the Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

responsibility as Mickey Mouse. None! They will not be judged on judgement day. They are not known by God in the way humans are known, nor can they know God as Lord and Saviour, because they can neither know nor enjoy eschatological salvation.<sup>58</sup>

There is a substantial, but quite different, debate in legal, business and philosophical circles about whether corporations are moral agents. While the arguments of Velasquez against corporate moral agency are generally sound,<sup>59</sup> and those of French and his followers seriously flawed because they confuse metaphysical, moral and legal personhood,<sup>60</sup> both schools are based on logic and social need. A large part of the debate is directed at establishing a basis for attributing legal liability to corporations as part of the redistributive justice system. However, getting access to the deep pockets of corporations can be achieved without needing to attribute moral agency to corporations and still punish the stakeholders who benefit from culpable behaviour (even if indirectly and often inadequately<sup>61</sup>). Therefore, we need not be distracted by these issues and can proceed on the basis that moral agency is best understood from God's perspective. God judges only human agents. He sets the test of 'good' and judges everything.<sup>62</sup>

It could be argued that, as a corporation is part of creation, and, as creation is purposed by God, *the corporation* must in some way be

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<sup>58</sup> Cameron argues that to know 'connotes experiential knowledge', *Joined*, 152. A corporation cannot experience anything itself, and the experience of its agents is only ever the experience of those agents.

<sup>59</sup> Velasquez's argument adopts the methodological individualism I have advocated above, and includes that a corporation cannot perform acts itself, and is reliant on its agents to perform acts, M.G. Velasquez, 'Why Corporations are Not Morally Responsible for Anything They Do' in J.R. Desjardine and J.J. McCall, *Contemporary Issues in Business Ethics*, (Wadsworth, California: Nova, 1985), at 114-25.

<sup>60</sup> For example, J. Collier argues that, 'legal personhood must imply metaphysical personhood, since it is impossible to create anything in law which does not exist in some prior sense: 'The Virtuous Organisation', *Business Ethics - A European Review* 4(3), 1995, 143-149, at 146, quoted in Geoff More, 'Corporate Moral Agency: Review and Implications', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 21, 329-343, 199. However, the reason for corporations law is precisely because, without it, a corporation would not exist. The *idea* that it would be good to have something like a corporation is not a prior person. The arguments of French are summarised in this article by More.

<sup>61</sup> For example, the people who benefitted most from James Hardie's manufacture of asbestos products from 1910 were the shareholders, directors, suppliers and employees (or, at least those who did not die of asbestosis!) before asbestos products were stopped in the mid 1980s. They got dividends, capital gains, salaries, fees etc as a result of the production of deadly products. Yet all compensation is ultimately a cost of shareholders who held shares post the 1980s, who, ironically, held shares in companies that themselves did not produce asbestos products.

<sup>62</sup> No alternative judge is compelling: see G.J. Clarke, Andrew J.B. Cameron and Michael P. Jensen, 'Towards a Christian Understanding of the concept of human "Community", with special reference to the praxis of a non-governmental human services delivery organisation', *ERSP* 3.2(2009), 22-40 at 32.

capable of 'good'. Yet its capacity for good is like that of a spade: that is, solely as an instrument of humans. The fact that a corporation is not a moral agent is determinative. It follows that a corporation cannot itself be 'better', if that is understood as being a moral agent that better achieves its telos. Yet it can be used better by humans, and it is in that context that I will explore the shape of a Christian 'yes' to corporations.

As we switch from principle to pragmatics, the target must be refined. I will focus on large corporations. Of the approximately 1,200,000 corporations in Australia,<sup>63</sup> only a few thousand are 'large'.<sup>64</sup> By defining a 'large' corporation we will see where many of the problems lie. A large corporation will be taken to be a corporation which is listed, or large enough to be listed, the majority of whose board is not involved in the day to day business of the corporation and which typically operates in a number of different places. Typically in such a corporation, a large number of shareholders will not know the directors, employees or customers, and will have no real power individually over the corporation's activities. The directors will not know most of the employees, or the corporation's customers. There will be extensive management, very specific jobs and generally very limited communication, understanding, relationship or empathy between the humans involved with and within the corporation. Often shareholders will be institutional investors, and the ultimate beneficial owner of a share may be several steps away (e.g. through multiple investment vehicles like pension funds) and have a very small stake (e.g. a few hundred dollars in a corporation with assets over \$100 billion). It is noteworthy that many of the corporations lauded by Batstone do not satisfy this test of 'large corporation' primarily because one person owns or effectively controls it and can therefore ameliorate some of the problems of large corporations.<sup>65</sup> This refinement of our target is

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<sup>63</sup> The Australian Securities and Investments Commission records 1,251,927 current corporations <http://www.asic.gov.au/asic/asic.nsf/byheadline/New+company+registrations+statistics?openDocument> sourced on 21/3/2103.

<sup>64</sup> Over 2,000 corporations are listed on the ASX <http://www.asx.com.au/professionals/companies.htm> sourced on 21/3/2103. A company with one shareholder, one director and a bank account as its only assets raises very different ethical issues (e.g. tax laws) than a large corporation.

<sup>65</sup> For example, 'Cliff's Bar', Timberland, Hanna Andersson, Dorset Capital. Further, where reference is made to large corporations, often the target of his acclaim is very small, and the overall corporation is substantially unchanged, e.g. the community investment initiatives of General Motors, *Saving*, 88.

essential. Christian social ethics will be most effective if it avoids generalisations (e.g. about all corporations) which can be quickly ridiculed as 'other worldly'.

My approach to the pragmatics of improving corporations is based in part on my experience of working as a corporate lawyer for and against international and Australian banks and large corporations for 27 years, from middle management right the way up to the boards of directors. This experience makes me skeptical about legislative or policy based change, such as changing management structures, being 'transparent', improving 'communication', changing remuneration structures etc.<sup>66</sup> Sometimes they work, and I am not opposed to them. However, they don't often change the way people think and behave towards each other. They can paper over the underlying dysfunction caused by greed, selfishness, relational abstraction and a lack of comprehension of our God-given purpose in life.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, in my view the best way to make corporations better is for Christians to show what 'good' looks and feels like. This will influence 'outputs' such as products and services, but also the working environment.

Using 'love' to make a corporation better needs to start with people ceasing to see 'the Corporation' as an entity, and rather seeing it as an endless opportunity for mutual love relationships. Just as O'Donovan criticises the dehumanising phrase, 'this is a purely commercial transaction',<sup>68</sup> we can use a paradigm of love to subvert statements like, 'I am just a passive investor', or 'I am only doing my job' or 'it's company policy', as if any of these excuse us of moral responsibility, or is an acceptable expression of love. It is a remarkable irony of the present age, that so much emphasis is placed on individual rights, and self determination, but when it comes to accepting personal responsibility we hide behind the anonymity of corporations. We claim we are following company policy, as if that absolves us from personal responsibility. Love uncovers this conceit.

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<sup>66</sup> Batstone advocates many of these legislative and policy initiatives in his 'eight principles for preserving integrity and profitability', *Saving*.

<sup>67</sup> It is for similar reasons that I think the 'ethics of trust' advocated by Herman, 'Modern', building on the work of H. Richard Niebhuur, is too idealistic and will not work.

<sup>68</sup> O'Donovan, *Ways*, 248.

Therefore, a significant way that Christians can express their love and thereby make corporations better is to cease referring to them as if they were moral agents. Misleading anthropomorphisms like corporations having ‘souls’ should be both avoided and criticised.<sup>69</sup> Whatever a ‘soul’ is,<sup>70</sup> only humans have them (Jeremiah 6:16, Matthew 11:29, James 1:21 and 1 Peter 1:9). Christians should focus attention on human acts. For example, rather than fulminate against ‘Big Tobacco’, criticism should be made of the directors and shareholders of each tobacco company who profit from the death and suffering of tobacco addicts.<sup>71</sup> This may be similar to the approach advocated by Oliver O’Donovan. Just as the church dealt with slavery by replacing the master-slave relationship with fraternity, we could insist on giving a true description of a corporation, so that the ‘legal construct’ can ‘lose its credibility’, in our case as a substitute moral agent.<sup>72</sup> Just as ‘the fundamental social reality’ of the market is not exchange ‘but the sharing of common space to move around in, a neighbourhood’, so, likewise, a corporation is a set of relationships between neighbours who need to love and be loved.

Accepting responsibility for our actions involves sacrifice. When I was a corporate lawyer, if one of the solicitors working for me made a mistake, I would accept it as my mistake. I would deal with the unhappy client, or compensate the loss. For, either I had given the solicitor a task that was beyond him/her, or I had not supervised him/her sufficiently. Similarly, for moral reasons I turned down work from tobacco companies and companies associated with Kerry Packer.<sup>73</sup> I refused to do the legal work on retail collateralised debt obligations (CDOs), because I believed that understanding the risk

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<sup>69</sup> Batstone says, ‘I will show that a corporation has the potential to act with soul when it puts its resources at the service of people it employs and the public it serves’, 4.

<sup>70</sup> On the subject of the ‘soul’ I find attractive the writings of Wendell Berry, *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2002) and Walter Brueggeman, *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> E.g. British America Tobacco, Philip Morris, R.J. Reynolds, Imperial Tobacco. This obfuscation and misdirection of criticism applies equally with ‘the Banks’, the ‘Mining Companies’, ‘the Pharmaceutical Companies’, the ‘Oil Industry’, the ‘Liquor Industry’, the ‘Arms Industry’ and many others.

<sup>72</sup> O’Donovan, *Ways*, 248

<sup>73</sup> At various times the wealthiest man in Australia, and a person I had observed at first hand brutalise people.

inherent in such structured finance products was beyond the comprehension of retail investors. Each of these actions is love.

Yet it is better for these sort of actions to be seen as 'Christian' or even just 'the right thing to do', than to try to legislate or otherwise infuse the Christian concept of 'love' into the formal and informal workings of corporations. This is in part because we have already seen the concepts of 'vision' and 'values' devalued by corporate strategists and marketing people exploiting and misusing them. For the Christian in the workforce it is better to 'do' love than to talk about 'love' as an abstract concept.

In my experience, many senior executives oscillate between hubris and paralysing fear. Both are manifestations of excessive self regard, which is the opposite of love. Hubris and fear take a devastating toll on the people who work around these people, not to mention the people themselves and their families. Yet love, being totally outward looking, is the cure to both. In these circumstances love can take many forms, such as accepting and laughing at one's own mistakes, accepting that others make mistakes, not claiming responsibility for success that is attributable to others, supporting colleagues when they are struggling personally, etc.

It is not easy to accept responsibility given the abstraction achieved in large corporations by the assignment of very specific technical tasks, which may be apparently harmless, but essential in avoiding tax, misleading customers, compromising health or contributing to some other wrong.<sup>74</sup> The expression of love in three specific ways may ameliorate this. First, Christians need to acquire positions of power and influence (as directors, and heads of finance, marketing, sales etc) so that good objectives are sought and they can model love. Second, Christian workers need to express love in their curiosity about how the larger organisation works.<sup>75</sup> Third, churches need to understand the challenges leaders and workers face, and hold them accountable to love within, and from, the corporation. I will now explore some of the implications of these suggestions.

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<sup>74</sup> Brock explores the effect of common management techniques *Christian*, 133-45, particularly in relations to the armaments industry.

<sup>75</sup> Like Karl Barth's views on work generally, work within corporations must be communally attuned and reflective, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, (trans. G. W. Bromely and others, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 522-6.

Christians do not make corporations better by withdrawing from them.<sup>76</sup> We need Christians to be in positions in corporations where they can exercise the judgement that Jesus did with the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11).<sup>77</sup> We must encourage Christians to not see full-time vocational Christian work as the best or only way to fulfil their purpose.<sup>78</sup> Struggling to be a Christian in the workforce, and to assume and exercise power, thereby making corporations better, are God-like actions.

It follows that corporations would be better if the church understood them better, and ministers directed some of their teaching towards the type of problems people face at work. To start with, ministers could visit their members' workplaces, and spend many days in factories, offices, trading floors etc, meeting and talking with Christians and non-Christians alike about the ethical and relational issues that confront them daily.<sup>79</sup> Given that the parish/local church model has largely broken down because of urbanisation and better transport, 'local' churches could focus more of their energies to serving the businesses in their neighbourhood.<sup>80</sup>

Large corporations are often criticised for being impersonal and de-humanising.<sup>81</sup> Fundamentally Christians will make these corporations better if each day when interacting with a corporation, in whatever capacity, they ask themselves, 'what does love look like here?' This question 'includes ongoing and repentant self-criticism that is simultaneously and by definition cultural criticism'.<sup>82</sup> It can find expression in the question, "How can I be responsible for what I

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<sup>76</sup> There is not space here to explore the ethical implications of Christian aid and activity in the form of missionary work, micro finance, fair trade, environmentalism etc. There may be 'good' in each of them, but they alone will not make all large corporations better, while Christians loving will.

<sup>77</sup> O'Donovan, *Ways*, 19.

<sup>78</sup> The development of theologies of work in the following works suggest a good way forward: V.A. Cosden, V, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation*, (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2004), Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>79</sup> One can imagine other workers looking on and saying, 'I wish someone looked after me like your pastor looks after you'.

<sup>80</sup> For example, they could adapt the practices of the City Bible Forum with the finance industry in Sydney and other capitals, and apply it to the large businesses in their parishes.

<sup>81</sup> Brock, *Christian*, 307.

<sup>82</sup> Brock, *Christian*, 22.

know?”<sup>83</sup> Can a director use his/her power and influence to shape the attitudes and decisions of the other directors? Can an employee make a boring, frustrating job marginally better for another employee? Can a marketing executive sell products without using sex as the bait? Can someone in middle management shape those with more power than themselves to make the operations of the corporation more environmentally sustainable?

Batstone has suggested a number of ways to improve the workings of corporations, including more communication, transparency and better remuneration policies. The approaches I have suggested may compliment some of these, but are fundamentally different for a number of reasons. Batstone does not account for the finitude of humans, or sin. ‘More communication’ may be helpful, but does not recognise that most human communication only ever approximates the intended purpose, and can be used to obfuscate. ‘Transparency’ means different things to different people.<sup>84</sup> Changed remuneration policies redirect but do not overcome greed.<sup>85</sup> Fundamentally, his principles amount to fiddling at the edges. Christians pursuing mutual love relationships will ultimately be far more subversive, and achieve the God-given purpose of humanity, because they are focussed on loving God and others, even if this love at times coincides with some of Batstone’s suggested remedies.

In conclusion, it has been argued that working with biblical ideas of ‘good’, ‘person’ and ‘moral responsibility’, corporations cannot themselves be ‘good’. Yet these biblical understandings show the best way corporations can be made better. Love may not conquer all until Jesus returns, but in the meantime it can do a lot at a practical level to make corporations better. Love subverts the sins that are otherwise hard to control within large corporations, such as selfishness, often manifested in indifference towards other people within and affected by the corporation, and greed (for money and

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<sup>83</sup> Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Book Club, 1977), 48, quoted in Brock, *Christian*, at 312.

<sup>84</sup> The accounts of a corporation are supposed to give a ‘true and fair’ summary of the corporation’s financial position, but are, for all but a few highly trained accountants, long, convoluted and opaque.

<sup>85</sup> The business model of Macquarie Bank, mimicked by Allco Finance and Babcock & Brown, was meant to align employee’s returns with the long term interests of the institution, but ended up favouring short term gain based on speculative projects and products. Both Allco Finance and Babcock & Brown ended in disaster for employees and shareholders alike.

power). Love also subverts the ideas that corporations are moral agents and responsibility lies with 'them', and refocusses our attention on our responsibilities for telling the truth and loving others. The corporation thus offers an unimaginable number of opportunities for humans to achieve their God-given purpose of loving others. In time our fixation on the corporation as an entity may give way to seeing a wonderful complex intertwining of mutual love relationships realised as directors, shareholders, managers, employees etc live lives sacrificially for the good of others.