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### JESUS, THE GREAT ECONOMIST

Economics is basically the study of our individual actions and our interactions with each other that are necessary to draw forth and shape resources from nature; to provide for their distribution among us; and to employ them to some purpose that, in one way or another, satisfies us or increases our happiness. These activities were going on a long time before there was a "science" of economics; and, as the intent of any science is to help us improve, the science of economics actually gets down to the search for understandings and principles that can help us do these activities more efficiently.

Regardless of how spiritual or intellectual we consider our existence, our linkage to the energy and material levels of the universe is so extensive that there is virtually no human action possible without its economic counterpart. Even to think, or to pray, requires energy from food extracted by human labor from the earth. We know that the spirit, the mind, and the energy-material realms are all inter-related, so it would appear almost obvious that the teachings of the Master, although usually considered "above" our daily bread-winning activities, are, in fact, directly applicable to economics. If his principles for our individual actions and for interactions with each other are universally valid; then they must hold for the human activities that involve economics.

Frequently, we consider Jesus' teachings as somewhat of a disconnected collection of statements, principles and examples. But if we listen closely to him, and only to him, we will see that it is an entire, integrated system of human action and interaction with the universe that Jesus teaches. The characteristic of a system is that "not one of the least" components can be removed, violated, or can be in error, or else the entire operation won't work right. An airplane is a good example of such a system. Jesus clearly states that it is a system he is teaching with his statement: "He who breaks *one of the least* of these teachings . . . will be least in the Kingdom of Heaven." Can this system of Jesus be defined? Yes, it probably can, as he defined it himself in his Great Com-

mandment: "Love one another . . ." It is the System of Love.

Jesus' teachings are aimed primarily at the individual, and only *indirectly* at the greater organization of mankind. There is, however, nothing whatsoever that is done by or in any organization that is not done by or to individuals. By addressing the larger organizations of man in so few instances in his teachings, clearly Jesus felt that his system was sufficient if operative at the individual level. This means, then, that the more organized endeavors of mankind—family, community, work group, company, state, nation or world, should not be constituted so as to violate the "least of" his teachings as they impact the individual.

But if we are going to consider an economy based on this System of Love, we had best know something about Love. It's been the tradition to get to this point, and then run off and build a commune where resources are "shared in brotherly and sisterly love." Before we go that far, though, let's see what Love is and what Jesus has to say about economics—which is a lot more than we normally give him credit for.

#### The System of Love

First, let's look briefly at the System of Love itself.

Love is a real occurrence; it has causes and effects or properties . . . and it's not nearly as simple as we might think. Even if it is partly instinctual, which it appears to be, there are a lot of parts to this system of love that need to be recognized, practiced, and learned if it's to work properly. It is not surprising then, that most of Jesus' teachings describe the attitudes, behavioral actions and knowledge necessary to cause Love as well as the effects or properties of Love in action.

By carefully analyzing the teachings of Jesus, as well as relying on modern psychology and other sciences, we can define about twenty causes of Love and some fourteen effects or properties that Love has. We cannot go into all of them here; but it is emphasized that, for the most part, these must all be present in order for Love to occur.



Love's causes can be grouped into four components: Respect, Care, Knowledge and Responsibility. Let's take a brief look at each of these.

Respect, the first grouping of Love's causes, consists of three necessary elements: Awareness, Recognition, Admiration. It's pretty clear, for example, that if we aren't aware of something, we can't recognize it; and if we can't recognize it, we can't possibly admire it; and if we can't admire it, on some basis, we can't respect it. And, if we can't respect it, we can't love it, whether it's another human or a rock. This is the beauty of being able to Recognize, and therefore to Admire, all humans as children of God, as taught by Jesus; and being able to Recognize, and therefore Admire, all material objects as embodying his essence. "Cleave a piece of wood, I am there; lift up the stone and you will find Me there." Respect can, then, be directed at all objects great and small. Although Respect, of itself, has no action associated with it, Love is impossible unless it is present.

Care is the second major grouping of Love's causes and consists of the energy expenditures or the actions of Love. The elements of Care consist of Attentiveness, Listening, Thanking, Encouraging, Comforting, Assisting, Sharing, Contributing, and Protecting. Which of these to use depends on the situation, of

course, but they all consist of energy expended, energy given towards some object. Most of these elements of Care are self-evident; but you may not normally think of Comforting in the manner in which we use it. In the System of Love, Comforting means any direct physical contact with an object. We couldn't find a better word, but it applies to the way in which we deal with one another on any occasion, as well as the way a workman, for example, deals with his woodwork and tools. Any object is capable of being Comforted in the System of Love. It means contact with Love intended. This is how love gets out of the kitchen onto the table; via the food served. It is how quality gets into products. There can be no Love possible without the energy expenditures of Care. A close study of Jesus will show that, when he says give, he means give the energy of care, which has a so much broader meaning than the contribution of money and the sharing of material resources to which it has so often been reduced.

The third major grouping of Love's causes we define as Knowledge. Here we look at what goes on in the mind; how we think and what we think. Love requires that we think in certain ways; we define these as Objectiveness (looking for just the facts—the basis for honesty, non-judgement, and tolerance), Positiveness, Conscientiousness (attention to the details), Patience, Humility (not humbleness), Transposition (putting yourself in the place of another), Forgiveness, and Transcendence (such as reliance on the Father in thought or prayer). There are also certain contents of thought vital to Love: these include understanding of the uniqueness of individuality; understanding of the interdependence/cooperation of all objects in the universe; understanding of the freedom of personality to develop as a child of the Father; understanding of the integration of good and evil—for the Good; and the understanding of a loving, living God as the apex of reality. These Knowledge elements are best defined in the character and beliefs of Jesus. And Love, at its higher intensities, is probably not possible without these elements of Knowledge.

The final grouping of Love's causes we term Responsibility. Responsibility consists of Trust, Loyalty, and Service. Trust, Loyalty and Service are the capstones of Love; with Service being the highest organization of all of Love's causes including those of energy expenditure. Whereas Care is somewhat limited in that we can Care for only so many, Service may be extended to all. And the highest manifestation of Love is reserved for Trusting, Loyal Service within God's domains. "He who would be greatest" in Love, then, "will be a (trustworthy and loyal) servant of all." In the manner of Jesus,

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### Love's Effects and Properties

Now let's look briefly at just a few of Love's effects and properties that result when Love occurs. Among the key properties of Love, we find Love's energy expenditures are transactive; that is, "With the measure you mete, withall, it shall be measured back unto you." We find Love's energy expenditures to be additive to all action like a catalyst; in fact, like "yeast in the bread," it permeates the entire action to which it is added. Love is attractive; it draws objects towards it. Love is cohesive; it holds objects together. And, perhaps the most important properties of Love, Love is non-coercive and non-coercible. It neither exerts force nor responds to it except in Protection. It is this property of Love, non-coercion, that we describe as gentle, meek, mild. It does not mean passive or lacking in spirit.

Additionally, Love has a property akin to many other natural phenomena; it has a range of intensities, with the highest intensities apparently naturally reserved for the individual's relationship with God. This range of intensity is apparent in Love's components. For example, the highest intensity of Respect is Veneration; we may reach up to Reverence in our Respect for each other and for many objects of the universe; but Veneration seems to be applicable for God alone. The other components of Love—Care, Knowledge, Responsibility—have a similarly reserved space for God, an entirely natural one, at their highest intensities.

So, although we don't have time to get into the details, and even if you may disagree with some of the preceding observations, we can surely see that Love is not just some simple emotion or feeling, but, as we humans can define it, is a rather complex, holistic system. It is no wonder that Jesus stressed that "narrow is the way." Like the technology of flight, there are thousands of ways to build an airplane that won't fly; any plane that does fly, however, must conform to certain basic principles of flight. And some planes fly much better than others.

It can be seen, now, that to work all of the causes, effects and properties of Love into economic theory and practice is no elementary task. So difficult, in fact, that Jesus saw fit to give us some assistance—assistance which is amazingly comprehensive and precise.

### Jesus' Economic System

First, Jesus states that there are plenty of resources to go around; that our Father, who provides for the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, has allowed ample provisions for his children. Jesus never said that these resources could be converted into useful form without work; but he then goes on to say to those who "labor

and are heavy laden" to learn of him (his System of Love) and he will give us "rest unto our souls"—satisfaction or happiness; "for my yoke is gentle and my burden is light." In raw economic terms, he is saying that if we work in his ways, we will not only find satisfaction or happiness, but it will be easier, that is, more efficient. A lesser amount of effort will be required to produce the result. This is a challenging statement when viewed in economic terms, for with it Jesus makes a stupendous claim: Love is economically efficient. This cuts right to the heart of economics; for all economics is the study of conversion of resources, by human effort, to meet human purposes in the most efficient manner.

To accomplish this, does Jesus circumvent the law of supply and demand? No. In fact, there are few better definitions of this law than Jesus'. He describes the most basic workings of his system as being one of balance: "With the measure you mete, withall, it shall be measured back unto you." This is identical with the economic law of balanced transactions; which, when aggregated, economists call the law of supply and demand.

But what is the "measure" to be in Jesus' system? Here, Jesus is quite specific; his measure is service; with "the greatest" measure being "service to all." Is it not amazing that this is exactly the measure of modern market economics. The worker is paid according to the service he provides; as is the manager; as is the professional, and so on right up to the largest organization. Products are valued and priced according to their content of service and/or their measure of service in the overall scheme of human activity. The largest corporation's revenues and size are directly related to the services it provides, as is any firm's, as is any organization's, including the local public library. The greatest enterprise in any market will be that which provides the most service in its area of expertise. To be of "service to all" would be the apex of economic achievement.

Jesus' equation can only work, however, in a free market. As we will see, the teachings of Jesus are about truths that set men free in economic or material terms as well as in intellectual and spiritual terms. Jesus draws no lines in the application of his words. They are universal.

There's another surprise, though, in this statement of "service to all." The little word *all*. The implications of this single word are so vast in terms of economics—especially what we call economic policy. Suffice it to say, this one word *all* brings into question any economic mechanism that supports or protects special interests by taking from the all rather than serving the all. (And the word *all*, used by Jesus, is not the same word used for group, common good, community, or society. If we



look closely at the System of Love, service to all can only mean service to each and every individual, or to each and every object.)

So the capstone of Love, service, is also the capstone of economic transactions among man, with "service to all" as the objective. This is only a first clue that the System of Love may be completely compatible with economics.

#### Management and Labor

If Love is truly efficient, as Jesus suggests, then it is not surprising that those who Love will be the most efficient as workers and managers of the Earth's resources; and so Jesus states: it is the non-coercive, "the meek," the gentle who shall ultimately have responsibility and management of the Earth's resources; who "shall inherit the earth," Jesus is saying that ultimately the efficiency of Love will win over less efficient methods. Love's efficiency needs no force to reign in economics. People, with freedom of choice, will go where the service is best and the price is lowest; and where they feel loved—or where products embody the qualities of Love.

The management of Love, then, is not the management by authority or coercion; it is the management of service and leadership by example, as Jesus, the greatest leader, was among us "as one who served rather than be served;" who washed the feet of his followers that we might do the same to each other. The manager applying the System of Love will serve his group, not command them nor control any part of their relationship by coercion, nor seek special treatment or advantage. You may not be surprised to find that this, basically, is the Japanese method of management.

The working group of Jesus' economics - "where two or more are gathered"—is centered on Love and will pursue those conditions most favorable to Love's manifestation. Because productivity, that is *efficiency*, and quality are primary issues in today's economy, do not be surprised to find words entering the workplace that have a strange affinity to the causes, effects and properties of Love; Respect for the individual; Care as typified by attentiveness, listening, comforting, encouraging, assisting, sharing; Knowledge as typified by objectiveness (honesty, nonjudgement), positiveness, patience, conscientiousness, humility, forgiveness, and Responsibility, as typified by trust and loyalty among management and labor; and ultimately typified by Service, leaders serving followers, and workers serving each other, and ultimately serving the end user of all resources, the consumer, the *all*. In the workplace, Jesus' teachings are counter to the hostility and an-

tagonism between labor and management. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," is only too true as verified by our decimated industries that have relied on this adversarial concept. If we look closely, we will find that the Japanese work group and the work group concept of America's most economically efficient firms, such as those analyzed in the book, *In Search of Excellence*, already employ the attributes of Love as their foundation—although many of them may not use Love's terminology.

Although in Jesus' teachings we are encouraged not to be too watchful over our own private resources, he holds up the highest standards of accountability and performance for those resources over which we are granted stewardship in business or economic terms. Although he disdains the profit motive as a *primary* intention, "You cannot serve both God and mammon," his standards demand profitability, and he directly states what we economists call the law of highest and best use of resources. In his parable of the invested talents, not only is the unprofitable steward fired on the spot; his holdings are transferred, not to the moderately profitable steward, but to the most profitable steward. He clearly states that those who have such profitability will receive more investment; those who are not profitable will lose even that which they think they possess. No one invests just to receive the principal back at some future date without a reasonable increase. So the economy of Jesus must be a performance economy, meaning resources will be distributed *primarily* according to profitability or efficiency. This does not mean, of course, that certain objectives may not be Contributory, Assisting, Sharing in nature. But no one will long support even a charity that is inefficient in its work.

Jesus keeps stressing service, and many hold that love's Service should be given without charge, without direct or indirect recompense. According more to Jesus than to economic theory, it is impossible to avoid the compensation for services rendered. The question is: who from, in what form and, perhaps, at what time do you wish to receive this compensation? Jesus does suggest that we "store up treasure in Heaven" rather than in our wallet; but, if we think that the loving service of a carpenter who asks for wages in order to house and feed his family is below the loving service of the hospital volunteer who asks nothing (but can probably afford to eat otherwise), then we have not studied the Master—or his life—in enough detail. Regarding compensation, again, Jesus gets precise: "The laborer is worthy of his hire."



It is very interesting the way in which he states this; for it constitutes a theory of wages and labor, without which any economic system would be incomplete. When he states, "The laborer is worthy of his hire," he is saying that the worker is worthy of being paid according to the value he renders (or the service he provides). This is nothing less than the Value Theory of Labor by which, in general terms, our modern market economy operates; but it is actually a little different from the general market-driven theory of wages: by bringing in the concept of being hired, Jesus brings the worker's value into the specific job and market situation. It is the concept used by Henry Ford, in fact, to revolutionize the status of labor in the United States. Rather than pay the general market value to labor, Ford saw fit to pay labor what their services were worth in his unique new production line factories; about twice the going market rate. This is the theory used so successfully by many Japanese firms in adjusting wages and salaries to the objective conditions of the world economy. When things are good for a particular firm, workers get a bonus; when things are not so good, everyone—including management sacrifices. Jesus' theory of wages is, therefore, a candidate for the most advanced ever stated by any economist. While maintaining that a worker be paid according to his value in each specific situation—and this allows for performance measures of value; it also allows for adjustments to changes and competition that are beyond the worker's or firm's immediate control.

And the combination of Service and Performance in the system of Jesus results in a certain level of competition. It cannot be otherwise; the better, the more efficient, the more useful product or service will always be selected if freedom of choice prevails. According to Jesus, there is no market for "salt that has lost its savor." Competition serves a vital function; it enables each of us to face the facts and steers us into our own place of optimum service. Without performance-based competition, your airline pilot would be the first person who happened to sign up. But it is important to observe that competition directed towards providing better, more efficient conversion of resources or service, while certain to eliminate inefficient and redundant suppliers, is not of the same type that purposefully destroys competition in order to have an easier time of it.

Economic theory holds that a performance-oriented competitive economy is impossible without "perfect information"; that is, free-flowing and universally available information so that consumers can make optimum choices and workers can find optimum jobs and

investors can find the most efficient performers. So states Jesus of his system: "All things shall be revealed, there is nothing secret that shall not be known." This constitutes, of course, complete and perfect freedom of information, including that of advertising and other expression.

### The Welfare State

What about the economic issues of assistance and welfare in Jesus' teachings? Jesus says that we "will always have the poor (individuals) with us" to take Care of. His teachings of Assisting, Sharing, and Contributing are well known. Love has its own safety net that stretches to all who are encountered in need; but Jesus, again being very explicit, points to the government of the gentiles and their leaders who are benefactors to the people, and turning to his disciples, says, "With you it shall not be so; . . . but he among you who would be leader (the chiefest) will be as a servant." This teaching, to participate in direct service to those in need, rather than establish a beneficent mechanism using government authority, poses a direct question for the concept of the welfare state including its subsidy and protective mechanisms and its "redistribution" of resources. Jesus makes no restriction regarding cooperative endeavors to assist, share with, contribute to and serve those in need. His organization of his disciples to accomplish these ends is, in fact, one of the world's greatest models; however, he clearly points to the mechanism of a beneficent government as not his way. Where the line should be drawn between a government that is a "servant to the people" and one that is a "benefactor to the people" is beyond our scope here. Even to consider drawing such lines may seem entirely out of date and unreasoned. Until we realize that the government mechanism of the welfare state delivers no love, and, in fact, has largely replaced the direct citizen-to-citizen, neighbor-to-neighbor Respect, Care, Knowledge and Service (it's called Love) that we know in our hearts is required to halt the declining values, immorality, family destruction, work and responsibility avoidance, decaying neighborhoods and other symptoms that the modern welfare state, according to mounting evidence, seems to have aggravated rather than relieved. It is extremely doubtful if Jesus would direct us towards the less efficient solution to the problems of those who have real needs; to say nothing of those who have come to rely on government authority to benefit themselves by subsidy or protective mechanisms.

There have been many who have looked at the com-



munal efforts of the early disciples of Jesus and concluded that communal organizations are the way of Love, wherein all property is held in common and community consensus is necessary to direct the use of resources. Again, Jesus, with one simple parable, destroys the concept of such consensus and elevates private property as an unchallengeable right of the individual. In his example of the householder (note this is a private individual, not a company or civic organization), the householder goes into the labor market to hire workers for his vineyard and agrees to pay each of them the same sum for differing amounts of work. This is certainly one way to create an outrage, which, sure enough, occurred. How does Jesus answer? "Is it not right to do what I will with mine own?" This is precisely an example wherein nobody, including an impartial judge, would probably agree with the householder on his use of his own private property.

And in this teaching, Jesus also validates what we call the Sanctity of Contracts—another vital component of economics, wherein a bargain freely and willingly entered into among informed men is held to even though "circumstances change." Circumstances always change.

Jesus in the Bible uses another example to demonstrate the results of communal property. In his parable of the ten virgins at the wedding ceremony, five of whom were wise—and brought enough oil; and five of whom were foolish, and didn't bring enough; Jesus has the answer to the foolish who want a share from the wise; "Not so, lest there be not enough for anybody." Now it's amazing how Jesus balances this; five against five, a sure deadlock and a war in a communal setting. He also observes what has been the result of all communal/socialistic endeavors that have abrogated private property rights: the result is scarcity, not abundance.

Jesus, of course, says we are to trust the Father and use our *private* property generously; lending it at no interest—even to those whom we doubt will repay; giving

it away to the poor; not even asking for it back if it's stolen; asking the homeless and hungry to join us at our table. But this is all our personal choice, not to be dictated by others.

Jesus also teaches that we should trust the Father in all things, not just our private property transactions. In the larger economic scheme of things, Jesus is the first to suggest the invisible hand of the Father. With the Father, as Jesus describes, aware that in the market place "five sparrows are sold for two farthings, and not (even) one is forgotten before the Father." In using such a minute transaction in the economic market place as his example, Jesus reinforces that the Father's knowledge and care are so pervasive that they easily extend to our economic concerns. Indeed, "The Father knows our needs before we ask him." This teaching of Jesus, while allowing for the planning or control necessary to accomplish a specific project, is directly contrary to centralized planning and control of an economy geared to foresee individual's needs and make individual's choices for them. Such planning and control is based on fear; fear for the future that there will not be enough here, or too much there, or that someone will lose something here, or make too much there... Jesus dismisses such attempts with his "Take no thought for the morrow, sufficient unto the day are the problems thereof." And the real problem that we have in economics today is that so few take the time and effort to learn of Jesus and to follow him. For in his teachings, he presents the keys to economic efficiency in economic terms that are clear and precise—a complete framework of economics, even more than we have briefly reviewed, entirely compatible with his great command: Love one another. It probably isn't surprising that to all of his titles and authority we can confidently add one more: Jesus, the Great Economist.

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*"Political science must effect the reconstruction of economics and industry by the techniques it learns from the social sciences and by the insights and motives supplied by religious living. In all social reconstruction religion provides a stabilizing loyalty to a transcendent object, a steadying goal beyond and above the immediate and temporal objective. In the midst of the confusions of a rapidly changing environment mortal man needs the sustenance of a far-flung cosmic perspective." (\*1092.7)*

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