

Joy in Enough

AWAKENING TO A NEW ECONOMICS

A VISION PAPER FOR A FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY



AWAKENING TO A NEW ECONOMICS

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ABOUT

Joy in Enough is a challenge to Christians in Britain, and an invitation to all people of good will, to join in building a just economy within the ecological limits of the Earth.

This paper sets out the challenge that we face, and what a Christian response might offer at this time of crisis.

Joy in Enough is a project from Green Christian, a network that helps Christians to understand and relate environmental matters to their faith.

www.joyinenough.org

www.greenchristian.org.uk



THE CHALLENGE

We stand at a crucial point in the history of the human race. We are faced with an opportunity to make or break the earth as we know it, a 'kairos' moment, a time for making choices. On the one hand we live in a world that is wealthy enough to guarantee a good quality of life for all and that has the growing willingness and technology and skills to use the resources of the earth wisely; but, on the other, it is also a world that continues to exploit those resources beyond their limits, causing irreparable damage to the planet and making an equitable world society ever less possible. Either we take the path of responsibility and justice towards the earth and its peoples; or we take the path of further degradation and an uncertain future. This is a choice that is immediate and urgent.

We, as Christians, members of Green Christian, alongside a growing number of Christians and Christian communities, join in the call to integrate faith with ecology and economics and to challenge the present socio-economic norms. The current environmental crisis is largely driven by an economy that pursues growth at all costs. In Joy in Enough we draw on the resources of our faith to offer an alternative vision of how we might move towards a genuinely just and sustainable society, where wealth is fairly distributed and there is enough for all. We also consider those steps that might have to be taken in order to realise this vision. We offer what follows as a Christian contribution to the growing public debate.

**we live in
a world
that is
wealthy
enough**

THE JOURNEY AHEAD

(i) To embark on this journey is to enter a time of dynamic change and uncertainty. But the purpose is clear. We want to build a society where there is delight in enough, taking from the earth only enough to meet our needs rather than satisfy our greed. We want to allow time for earth's resources to be replenished, safeguarding them for future generations. We joyfully seek a just and ecologically sustaining economy where there is enough for everyone, locally and globally.

(ii) This journey is like a pilgrimage. The pilgrim sets out in hope and joy, confident that the journey has a purpose and that the future holds the promise of a new order. Pilgrims trust that, on the other side of pain, toil and death, there is resurrection. The cross was not an end but a beginning. Pilgrims believe in a God who has promised that the Kingdom will come, even though how and when may be a mystery. Occasionally they catch glimpses of the longed-for future and find resting places on the way. In company with other travellers they experience setbacks as well as victories. They journey hopefully, singing songs of anticipation and joy, rejoicing at every step taken, each move forward towards the promised goal.

(iii) The pilgrim also sets out in faith, trusting in a God who keeps his promises. God is with us, we are not alone. The grain of the universe is towards love and goodness and, as we go with the grain, we are on the side of victory even though we may not realise it. We have faith that, weak, stumbling and compromised though we are, God shares with us his work of transforming the whole created order. We delight in the trust placed in us as we live out this calling. We rejoice in the meaning and purpose it brings to life.

(iv) As pilgrims enter ever more deeply into the knowledge that they, with all people and the whole of creation, are loved to the uttermost their sorrow at the spoiling of the earth deepens. They grieve over its exploitation. Their love for others and the natural order increases. Love is expressed in commitment to the common good and the welfare of the beloved, including the natural world.

THE CRISIS

The natural world is showing increasing signs of stress. Climate change is one of the most immediate symptoms of the crisis as greenhouse gases, generated by human activity, pollute the upper atmosphere. This, however, is but one manifestation of the degradation of the planet. Others include deforestation, desertification, loss of bio-diversity and pollution, not only of the air, but of earth, rivers and seas. There has also been exponential increase in the exploitation of resources, aggressive agricultural practices, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, and growth in population. A drop in infant mortality and increased longevity, coupled with a rise in living standards, the demands of consumerism and the technical ability to manipulate nature, are all pushing earth's resources to the limit. We are making far greater demands on the natural world than it can bear.

At the same time, there is a growing gap between rich and poor, not only between nations but, increasingly, between the 'haves' and 'have-nots', in every economy. In improving our material wellbeing the economy has focused on a radical individualism. The need for human mutuality and solidarity and the spiritual and moral aspects of human nature have, too often, been ignored. There has subsequently been an erosion of our social capital as well as of natural resources. We have reached a stage where this approach is at odds with what promotes overall human wellbeing.

We need a paradigm shift to one that enables both people and planet to thrive. To this end we are seeking a different way of ordering our economy.

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THE RESPONSE SO FAR

Recognition of some aspects of the crisis has been growing. The environment has gradually been creeping up the world's agenda. The reality of ecological limits is slowly being acknowledged. Infinite economic growth on a finite planet is unsustainable. The need for change is being more widely being accepted. This can be seen, for example, in the UN's commitment, from the Earth Summit in Rio (1992), through the Kyoto agreement, to the Paris treaty (2015) to combat climate change. There is increasing regulation over the care of the environment and wildernesses. Voluntary bodies, international, national, and local, work to protect wildlife and are having a real impact. There is better waste disposal and re-cycling, and an increased use of renewable energy and energy saving. Greater acknowledgement is found of the damage being done to the environment through industrial and agricultural practices. The importance of species loss is being recognised.

However, progress is slow, precarious and even under threat; too slow to stem the accelerating damage being caused, though every move in the right direction is welcome. Still, there is too little attempt to grasp the radical nettle, not least in linking economics to environmental concerns. It is easy to ignore and put off dealing with a threat that is potential and not immediate. Also the hope is that it will be possible to ride the storm with little or no significant change or through yet more economic growth. Misplaced optimism trusts that human ingenuity and technical expertise will be sufficient. Recognising that our current market economy must change in order to let us survive is daunting. Careful work for a just and sustainable society, however, demands a reimagining of the economy and the courage to dig a different foundation from the one on which we currently build.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE CRISIS

Behind the current situation lies the influence of two features of modernity, which are increasingly understood to be related.

1. The Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution encouraged an instrumental and mechanistic view of nature. Human beings are the subject and the earth the object. We view the earth through the lens of reason and we explore it in a

scientific and detached manner, thus setting ourselves apart from the natural order. Industrialisation and urbanisation further contribute to a perception of human beings as separate from and superior to their environment. Nature is there only to serve human wants and needs. Scientific discovery and technological development has led to mechanisation of life and the ability to harness earth's resources in previously unimaginable ways. The cost to the environment has not been factored into the results of exploring the earth's resources on an industrial scale.

A widespread interpretation, by the Church, of the relation between humanity and creation, as described in the book of Genesis, reinforced this approach. In the eighteenth century, a deistic understanding saw the relationship between God and creation as that between a master and an exquisite piece of machinery. God sets the machinery in motion, which operates according to fixed laws, and human beings are then left in charge of it. Thus the reference in Genesis to human beings having 'dominion' over the earth and subduing it was understood as overcoming and taming the disorderly and savage aspects of nature. As God's viceroy on earth, therefore, humans could justify almost unlimited use of power over it.

2. Related to the mechanical mind set is the now dominant 'basic neo-classical model' or 'the simple mechanical model' of capitalist economics based on the assumption of the free and rational individual operating in an open market. Since the 1980s, this radical school of economic thinking has widely been assumed to have triumphed over all others, especially in the wake of the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist state and the erosion of social democracy. The result has been the acceleration of economic globalisation in trade, manufacture and services, and migrant labour.

The dynamics of such capitalism depends on the current debt-based financial system, which means that the economic structures depend on continual growth for their stability. The financial sector thus becomes the hub of the economy. It was 'short-termism', false optimism and accelerating debt, facilitated by the deregulation of the global money markets, which, as the affluent West increasingly became the debtor nations, led to the collapse and recession of 2009. These two factors have contributed to a wilful neglect of the impact of human activity on the natural environment.

IN SEARCH OF AN ALTERNATIVE

The search for the sustainable society, where enough is enough, is urgent, complex and far reaching. The aim is a radical change in the economy and, therefore, of lifestyle, based on the knowledge that our earthly existence is dependent on the health of the environment, involving a far more robust commitment to the wellbeing of our planet. In such a quest it is proper and necessary to call on all the resources of scientific and technological research and beneficent advances of the modern era, yet we need also to also draw on the riches of our own Christian faith while being open to those of other faiths and cultures who also cherish the wellbeing of the earth. 'Perpetual economic growth is neither possible nor desirable. Growth, especially in wealthy nations, is already causing more problems than it solves' (Centre for the Advancement of a Steady State Economy). Indeed, an alternative model of enough could produce a society with greater wellbeing and less inequality. What might this be like?

(i) It would be sustainable, working within earth's limits. Humanity's ecological footprint, which is the product of the per capita consumption and the population, has to be radically reduced. An alternative model would, therefore, include severely reduced extraction from the earth; an environmentally sustainable agriculture; the maintenance and improvement of the built environment, at most within present limits; recycling, as near as possible, 100% of material goods, eliminating the problem of waste disposal; and reliance on renewable energy. There are also implications for the levels of population that the earth can sustain.

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(ii) It would include preserving and enlarging wilderness areas and encouraging wildlife in both agricultural and urban settings; to ensure the recovery of nature and the maintenance of the eco-systems that are essential for life, including the climate.

(iii) There would be a fairer distribution of resources by reducing excessive discrepancies of wealth and ensuring access to reasonable living conditions for all. The success of society would be calculated in something other than monetary terms via the GDP. Measures would include the quality of life, prioritising well-being above consumption, long term personal and communal health over short-term gain. It would recognise that happiness is found apart from possessions.

(iv) Efficient distribution of goods and services will be through market mechanisms, but monitored and regulated by the state or other authorities, together with a strong civil society providing appropriate vehicles for communal action and responsibility.

(v) To reduce its impact on the environment, the global economy will have to move rapidly from the present growth economy towards more sustainable models of working. This may mean a reduction in the global patterns of economic activity towards more localised patterns of economic sufficiency. At the same time the richer nations must fulfil their responsibilities to the poorer nations in the interests of greater equality.

(vi) Richer societies, like ours, would move towards a more simple and slower lifestyle. An 'enough society' does not, however, mean one that stagnates. An economy that learns to flourish within limits would increase the possibility of social harmony, security and social stability. All these contribute to a more convivial, joyful society, where people know and care for each other. Artistic, cultural, musical and sporting activities are more likely to flourish under these conditions. Eventually a new cultural wisdom will emerge, enabling the new socio-economic model to become the new norm.

WHAT THE CHRISTIAN FAITH CAN OFFER

Searching for this new but necessary paradigm is complex. It will only emerge out of considerable dialogue, debate and experimentation, both at theoretical and practical levels and in the popular and political arenas. Every model, however, needs a basic account of the nature of human existence, of what is counted good and valuable. A new paradigm will need to offer a fresh vision of humanity and its social context, not least in relation to the natural world.

Over the millennia Christian faith has wrestled and continues to wrestle with the meaning and demands of human living in this world in the light of understanding God in and through Jesus Christ. In our own day there has emerged a growing engagement with creation theology across all Christian traditions: Orthodox, Catholic, Ecumenical, Evangelical and Pentecostal. Despite failure and compromise down the years, there is an accumulation of wisdom that can help illuminate the dilemmas of our time, some key themes of which are outlined below.

SCRIPTURE

The Christian Scriptures, found in the Bible, challenge the assumptions of the current 'anthropocene' era. Throughout, the emphasis is on our complete identification with and dependence on the earth, for we are made from it and live as part of the natural world, subject to its limitations. And yet we are in a special relationship with the earth, charged to care for it and to make it prosper.

**a new
paradigm
needs a fresh
vision of
humanity**

The ambiguity of our position has been classically set out in the creation narratives found in Genesis 1-3, but the same theme is found in the Law (Torah), the prophets and the wisdom literature and, more radically, in the New Testament. We are in a covenant relationship with and responsible to God, the earth and each other. Thus:

- Humanity is clearly embedded in creation, set in the natural world, created out of dust, dependent on the welfare of the earth.
- Men and women are created in 'the image of God' and given 'dominion' and authority, to make use of the resources of the earth. But this is not arbitrary power, contrary to the Deistic view noted above, but responsibility to care for and to sustain the world as God intended, as guardian and servant of the earth, enabling it to reflect the glory of its creator.
- Creation is a gift, to be received with thanksgiving as a place in which to grow and flourish. There is a source and generosity on which all life depends. Having freely received we freely give. We pass on that generosity in our dealings with each other and with the natural order. What we take from the earth we replenish. We care for those coming after us. Creation is not our personal treasure chest.
- We relate to the earth with respect and use its resources with regard to the needs of others. The prophets frequently warn of the dire consequences of accumulating goods, including natural resources, at the expense of the poor. The Jubilee laws allow for the land to have regular rest. This is seen as a matter of justice.
- In its intricate beauty, diversity, and yet unity, the creation reveals something of the mind of God. This is expressed most clearly in the wisdom tradition, in Proverbs, the Psalms and Job, where, in humility before its grandeur, the workings of creation offer lessons as to how best order our lives. As often found in other faiths, our task is to work with the grain of the universe.
- The world is more than a stage on which the drama of history is played out. It has its own intrinsic value before God. This is radically affirmed in the doctrine of the incarnation, whereby God chooses, in Jesus Christ, to become embedded in the fabric of the universe. Creation is sacramental, mediating the presence of God, not only in its majesty and beauty but as that which sustains life.

- There is the promise of 'the renewal of the earth'. There is an end to which we are drawn, the promise of the completion of that harmony that is the purpose of creation. This includes the natural order as the place where restored humanity finds perfection and peace.
- At the heart of Christian faith is the belief that we live in a broken and often perverse world, but there is also an invitation to turn round and choose a path that leads towards life. This act of repentance, however, is not an easy path to follow. There is a tendency to choose the easy way, to take the short cut, to accept that which seems to bring in the biggest and quickest returns, and to put self first. The result is often bitterness, anger, aggression and conflict. But there is also trust that the choice is always there and the belief that the resources of faith can equip us for the new, more life giving path. Thus stumblingly, though always consistently, we can follow in the steps of Jesus Christ who pioneered that path for us.

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

The present crisis calls for wisdom. Christians have, down the years, found practical and ethical inspiration from the mind of Christ, from the Scriptures and from the tradition. One important source of such wisdom has been found in the classical cardinal virtues. Virtues are not simply guidelines for ethical decisions but, through discipline and practice, become dispositions, attitudes, that subconsciously inform behaviour, shaping the character.

- Justice points to fairness and the recognition of the common good. It is more than equality before the law. It includes having reasonable access to resources, defending the oppressed and disadvantaged and being concerned for the sustainability of the earth. The common good implies that there is always an obligation and responsibility for and to society, not only for today but for future generations. Private property and wealth are not solely personal possessions but the means by which such responsibilities are discharged. The just society is inclusive.

- Prudence is the exercise of care and caution. It takes into account all possible consequences when considering a course of action. Prudence accepts limits. It is willing to hold back before introducing new techniques or remedies, even if productivity seems threatened. It exercises foresight, accepting controls and regulations, so, as a priority, safeguarding the wellbeing of people and the future of the planet.
- Temperance is the virtue of moderation. This goes against the tendency of excess, of maximising profit and stimulating consumption. Instead, it only takes from the earth that which is necessary for the real needs of humanity, preserving a sustainable balance. There is enough for everyone if we are willing to live within limits.
- Fortitude or perseverance. This gives courage and determination to sustain the struggle towards a just and sustainable society and to go against the prevailing stream. It enables us to accept the restraint of discerning when to move forward and when to hold back, when to compromise and when to stick to our course.

HISTORICAL MODELS

Throughout its history the Christian Church has offered models of how faith, joy and love might look when lived out in community, even though in this life they will fall short of the ideal. This has been embodied, for instance, in the monastic tradition; in the West, for example in the Benedictine rule of prayer, work and study, or in the Franciscans, out on the road, sharing the good news through small acts of loving kindness. For St Benedict the monastery was a kind of alternative city where it was possible to live out the command to love God and our neighbour. For St Francis, rich playboy become the apostle of poverty, the whole created order, human and natural, was seen as our kin and God's gift to us. This tradition continues to our day and in many recent intentional communities as well as in the life and teaching of other wings of the Church, such as the Mennonites, Quakers and Evangelicals, most notably in the statements of the 'Lausanne' conference in 2012. A key feature of all these movements is hospitality, simplicity of life, and a joyful acceptance of ecological limits. They challenge the prevailing assumption that without continuing economic growth our lives will be diminished.

Indeed, recent sociological studies have suggested that there is no straightforward correlation between wealth and happiness. Frequently countries with wide disparity between rich and poor tend to be less contented. Once basic needs have been met, greater income does not necessarily increase wellbeing. Happiness is more closely related to personal relations and the quality of community. A sustainable society, with lower expectations, may well, therefore, be a place of greater contentment, joy and peace.

THE COMMON GOOD

Modernity enthrones the sovereign individual. Each person has the freedom to act provided it does not impinge on the freedom of others (Utilitarianism). Indeed, modern economic theory is based on the assumption that we make personal rational decisions by attending to our own self-interest. In reality, though, human beings are essentially social beings. We are made for each other. We thrive when mutually responsible, caring for the neighbour, enjoying good companionship and serving the common good.

The idea of the common good is has been most clearly developed in Catholic social teaching, since Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891). The virtuous society is inclusive and reciprocal, where all have a constructive part to play and the poor and vulnerable are cared for. Such a society respects freedoms but also has a strong civic structure, through family, work, associations and church, mediating between the state and the individual. Whilst each individual is of intrinsic value they can only reach their full potential in sharing in the common good. This is further developed by Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) where he stresses that fraternity (sic) and reciprocity should be applied to the economic sphere.

Francis, in *Laudato Si'* (2015) explicitly includes the environment in the common good, for the flourishing of the earth is part of our human flourishing and responsibility. Ultimately this notion of the common good reflects the Christian belief in God as Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist in their distinctiveness only in and through their oneness in the bonds of love and mutuality. Thus, at the heart of all things, written into the very flow and balance of the universe itself, are the bonds of community, a community that reaches out continuously in the act of creation and redemption.

THE WAY FORWARD

The following are some of the principal ways of implementing the Joy in Enough agenda.

(a) To put the environment at the centre of the political and social agenda. The question, 'What impact will what we are doing have on our natural environment, locally and globally?' should be at the head of every local and national government, corporate and planning agenda, making the environment a key factor at every level of decision making.

(b) To participate in the search for an economy that is not just dependent on growth. If the market continues as the fundamental mechanism for ordering the economy it must be subordinate to the common good. There is a need for indicators of growth other than the GDP, a new understanding of money and monetary policy, a sense of gift and service, and valuing those things that enrich life but cannot be measured in monetary terms. It is important to cease regarding the economy simply as a mathematical science, as though it is a fixed mechanism that simply needs the occasional adjustment and to recognise that it is a wisdom, a craft, to guide and serve humanity.

(c) To ensure that the financial sector and the multinational corporations are properly monitored and regulated so that they meet their proper and fair tax and social obligations.

(d) To urgently phase out the use of fossil fuels, actively promoting the use of renewable energy.

**value those
things that
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(e) To take our citizenship seriously, wanting the state to promote the common good. Tax is part of social responsibility and not simply an imposition. This requires openness and honesty in accounting; curbs on tax evasion; control of international finance and the end of tax havens; and the acceptance of progressive forms of taxation (such as income and wealth taxes) that reduce the division between the rich and poor.

(f) To press for reform of company law. A company's present sole duty as it is widely understood, e.g. under UK and USA law, is to the interests of its shareholders, effectively through maximising profits in order to maximise returns for its investors, a major factor in propelling never ending growth. This should be replaced by drawing leadership and board members from a wider pool of stakeholders, including workers, consumers, local neighbourhoods, towns and cities, and the environment which, further, will create a new dynamic and impact positively on many other areas of desired change. Examples of such practices can be found both at company level and nationally. (eg - Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

(g) By regulation, financial incentives, and the new inclusive corporate leadership, outlined above, to divert science and technology from serving the current economic model of growth and its associated damage and to increase the incentives to engage in research and production supportive of a sustainable economy, such as developing renewable energy systems, green housing, transport, effective recycling and other ways of conserving and replenishing the biosphere. To encourage local initiatives in these areas.

(h) Since advertising currently promotes a sense of ever growing needs and desires, to control and limit advertising in the interests of the public and the environment.

(i) To work towards versions of a circular economy ('repair, re-use, recycle') with no net waste, recognising that implementation may require a stricter tax regime.

(j) To address the problems of urban housing and the use of land and property as capital. This could be done through changes in property law, giving citizens legal rights to housing, and community land trust, reducing the cost of land.

(k) To promote healthy living, prioritising preventative medicine and primary health care, moving from the provisions of a largely passive leisure and media industry to engagement in more participatory activities that promote increased physical and emotional wellbeing. To encourage volunteering and community development, both of which add to our social capital, indirectly reducing our impact on the environment.

(l) To strengthen the place of the environment in education, both as a subject that is taught, but also as a basic theme throughout the system.

(m) To consider the impact of population growth and rising living standards on the environment across the globe, and, by seeking ways of distributing wealth more equally, encouraging smaller family size.

(n) To encourage the churches to set environmental responsibility at the centre of their life, including environmental concerns in decisions about buildings and other assets and, locally, becoming eco-congregations. In common worship to use increasingly available resources and to celebrate Creation Tide (1 Sept. – 12 Oct) and to widen our teaching about salvation to encompass the whole created order.

**what we are
engaged in is
the creation of
a new world**

CONCLUSION: JOY IN ENOUGH

In the here and now, we, as Christians, living and serving our generation, can only catch glimpses of what the new and sustainable world might be like. But we are already on the journey. This is a time of transition, initiatives and experimentation. In different ways, what we are engaged in, as those who hold this vision, will make a difference and, cumulatively create the possibility of a new world. We are nourished by images and promises of hope. There is a prophetic image of life in the restored Kingdom of God. The people, we are told, will sit under their own vines and fig trees, in orchard and garden, alongside the family dwelling, living without fear, their families safe in a peaceful society. This encapsulates the ultimate hope. Peace is more than tranquillity. Rather it is about that relationship of service and companionship that creates community, honesty, fairness and, above all, contentment in enough. In such a society there will be fullness of joy. Real joy is a quality of the heart, whether of the individual or of the community, like a fountain or spring, welling up from the source of being in God. It offers refreshment to all as it flows out, especially in an arid land, and creates overflowing mutuality where each can receive and give and enjoy and enrich the other. This is the will of God in Christ and the desire of those who follow him. Meanwhile we live in the 'not yet' of the Kingdom, looking in anticipation for the experience of that joy, a joy of which we have a foretaste on the journey with fellow pilgrims from all quarters, and to use our gifts, in the place where we are set, to work in and with the wider community, to create signs of renewal and hope.

As Christians and members of Green Christian, therefore, we stand alongside all, of any faith or none, who are part of the struggle for a renewed and sustainable world order, which nurtures and values the natural environment. To this end we offer these affirmations with joy and in the confidence that it is possible to make a difference.

**create signs
of renewal
and hope**

We also call upon the churches, of which we variously are members, to take seriously, at every level, this challenge to the world's future.

Written by Paul Ballard and the Joy in Enough content team

Front cover image by Frank McKenna / Unsplash
Designed by Jeremy Williams

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The image features a vibrant blue wall with a textured, slightly cracked surface. A dark blue door is set into the wall on the left side. The door has a small, round, dark handle. The overall color scheme is monochromatic, with various shades of blue. The text 'Joy in Enough' is written in a white, cursive script on the right side of the wall. Below the text, the website address 'WWW.JOYINENOUGH.ORG' is printed in a white, sans-serif font.

Joy in Enough

WWW.JOYINENOUGH.ORG