

Labor, Service and the Reality of Slavery

by S.G. Smith

The Divine Institution of Labor

From the very first chapter of Genesis, man was commissioned by God to be fruitful, to multiply, to fill the earth and to nurture or subdue it. In Genesis 2, more detail is disclosed regarding this fruitfulness in terms of keeping and tilling the garden of Eden. Therefore, man's first job was that of being a farmer, or gardener. There was no question, or frustration, over seeking any particular career path. Adam, and his wife, were commissioned to be farmers and their *wages*, any fruit but one, would have a direct bearing on the success of their stewardship. This was mankind's service to God, through which he was also served.

Of course, knowing the rest of the story concerning Adam and his wife, we learn that the labor of men (as well as the *labor* of women) is cursed by God as a constant reminder of the original sin of mankind. So we are therefore left with the particular response of succeeding generations in how we negotiate this burden, or restriction, regarding our labor.

Apparently, though difficult to gage, the labor of Adam was much easier in his sinless state. One might say that work was

just *no sweat*, before sin. Sadly, this is no longer the case. Additionally, in subduing the earth, various types of labor have developed over the centuries.

The Division of Labor

Bypassing the theological foundation of this development for the moment, we see the seminal emphasis on the division of labor developing within the first offspring of Adam and Eve. Cain, like his father, is a tiller of the ground, while Abel is a keeper of flocks. One is for food, while the other is for clothing. Herein is the rudimentary economy of a family or tribe. Unfortunately, the labor-management relationship somehow broke down which resulted in the first murder. We will visit the spiritual side of this phenomenon a bit later.

After Cain departs from God, people initiate the earliest development of an urban economy with a progressive sophistication in their division of labor. In Genesis 4, we encounter the rise of metallurgy, as well as entertainment. These will apparently aid in dealing with the hardships associated with a lifetime of labor. Nevertheless, conflict and murder do not seem to have diminished among the subsequent generations of Cain. In fact, under Lamech, violence is being justified. What is being lost is the notion that through *serving God* we serve one another. Forget God; let's just serve one another *out of the goodness of our own hearts*.....yeah, right.

Eventually, through the corridors of history we arrive at someone like Adam Smith, who virtually codifies division of

labor in his overall scheme of land, labor and capital. Thus *division* of labor is the path to greater production efficiency. This concept of *efficiency*, which boosts both economic supply and demand, even leaves its mark on science and engineering. Sadly, however, the dark side of all this is exposed when some began viewing slavery as a very efficient choice for labor division. In other words, *I da' boss, you da' slave; do what I say!* I'm fairly confident that Adam Smith would *not* have agreed. I am not trying to diminish the importance of what we refer to as management, or other levels of service, within the hierarchy of more complex production schemes at industrial levels. But let's get real! That which smacks of involuntary servitude, either through economic manipulation or physical coercion, is just spiritually dehumanizing.

Then, of course, there are those who consider work itself to be a curse. The truth is that the work, or labor, of man does indeed carry a separate curse from our first parents. Nevertheless, man was *designed* for labor and he will never enjoy either blessing or fulfillment without being productively engaged within God's creation. This is the feature that government welfare advocates don't understand (or don't want to understand). We directly address the creation (perhaps you prefer *land* or *resources*) to obtain food, as well as produce more refined products we find useful and necessary. This investment in creation requires our labor. So where does slavery fit in?

The Institution of Slavery

Slavery, or involuntary servitude, in

contrast to divine service (voluntary servitude) is a distortion, or perversion, of God's *original* purpose. Since the Fall, however, men have sought to relieve themselves from the hardships of burdensome toil and labor. Slavery, imposed by man over others, is oppression. In the providence of God, slavery *may* unfortunately arise as the result of judgment. Either way, this is not a state that any normal person would find desirable. Furthermore, the philosophical justification of enslaving others presupposes interesting, yet disturbing, perspectives on how man views himself. Any institution of slavery assumes one set of men (lords, or ruling class) are superior, wiser, stronger, or better in some way, which naturally gives them managerial supremacy over another so-called slave class. I cannot help but think of that famous "first commandment" of that new *animal order* in Orwell's book, *Animal Farm*, and how it was later amended:

***"ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL,
but some animals are more
equal than others."***

More equal than others (?????), welcome to the new woke math supporting the new social order. So does it matter whether you are listening to the "new kids on the block" or the old elite talking about capitalism or communism, democracy or autocracy, conservatism or liberalism; if these are people of corrupt character, will they not use language or any tool at hand to influence, cajole, manipulate or coerce others (ICMC) to do their bidding? I trust I do not have to review the history of slavery in order to convince the reader of the 'long train of

abuses' associated with any system of slavery. Shooting from the hip, the book of Exodus should suffice.

The Babylonian Old World Order

Having mentioned Exodus (which involves the Egyptian empire that I don't have time to discuss), let us jump ahead to the Babylonian empire. We could historically back up and consider the cultural foundation of Nimrod's Babel, but Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon will suffice for this short presentation.

One must understand that Babylon *was* great. As thoughtful scholars are often mystified by ancient Egypt, our consideration of Babylon probably serves us better, foundationally, in evaluating our current socio-economic and political concerns. Babylon is the first empire associated with what the Bible refers to as the time of the Gentiles, following the Solomonic empire of Israel.

Although a number of features surrounding Babylonian culture could be of significant interest, I am suggesting that this empire has had its most unique and lasting impact on human civilization in the area of banking, money, and debt. One might say that I should just summarize this by saying *economy*. Yet every culture, past or present, has an economy. The fact that Babylonian society had a very different economic emphasis compared to surrounding cultures, beyond ancient Mesopotamia, is seminal to understanding its historical impact.

Due to the lack of time, or space, for an essay like this, let me summarize this

emphasis as briefly as possible in a *mental* example. To the degree that you might think, or seriously consider, the notion that "money is debt" (or "debt is money") *is a fact* is the degree to which you have been thoroughly infected by a Babylonian economic worldview. The real *irrefutable fact*, from the Bible, is *the borrower is servant to the lender*. The degree of deficit servitude might just end up being tantamount to slavery.

Following Babylon, subsequent Gentile empires in the ancient world, prior to Christ, made their particular contribution to the cultural development of modern human civilization.

- Babylon - money, usury, and deficit financing
- Medo-Persia - bureaucratic regulation/control
- Greece - humanistic philosophy; rationalism
- Rome - statist oppression from militarism

Do you ever feel sort of "boxed in" as to what you have to do? Do you ever feel *less* free than what you imagined life should be? Do you ever sense that you have been influenced, cajoled, manipulated or coerced (ICMC) by others along lines which make you feel uncomfortable or drove you toward choices which you now regret?

True freedom, true liberty, as well as personal fulfillment can only be found in true service to God. Furthermore, we should really do unto others as we would have them do unto us. **Love** was never the hallmark of any imperial order. However, God *is* love, and through Christ, he welcomes you to His eternal family.....an eternity of servicewhere we enter into His eternal rest!