

Canopy of Prayer

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contributor
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Dear praying friends in Europe

The Bible says: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36) In asking this rather simple question, Jesus makes a profound point by contrasting the pursuit of profit and success in the world, and the priceless worth of a human soul. Implicit in the question is the warning that human beings face the temptation of prioritising the tangible things and devaluing the things that have eternal value. This is particularly true in the world of money, business and the economy. Profit becomes more important than purity of heart. For God the opposite is true. Does this mean Christians ought to withdraw from the world? No, that would be disobedience. The Bible gives us wisdom to know how to engage the sphere of business and economy for the sake of God's kingdom.

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Capitalism

Capitalism is the dominant economic ideology of the 21st century.

Capitalism can be described as the economic system that seeks to maximise financial return on the use of capital. A broader understanding includes things like private property rights, the rule of law, limited role for government and promoting free-enterprise. Capitalism is compatible with Judeo-Christian values – especially when there is moral restraint on excessive greed and encouragement of social solidarity. Capitalism can certainly be credited with lifting millions of people out of material poverty.



But there is more to capitalism than mere economic facts and figures. The 2007-08 financial crisis exposed the ugly side of financial capitalism. Two decades of deregulation, the weakening of moral restraints and the reckless pursuit of short-term returns in impersonal financial markets, almost brought the entire global economic system to the brink of collapse, which would

have had unimaginable catastrophic consequences. The dirty secret of capitalism is debt, and we know that debt traps, undermines and destroys families and communities.

How should Christians respond?

The choice should never be between capitalism and other economic systems like socialism or marxism. The real question is what kind of capitalism is going to shape the future. Here I have to introduce the philosophy of "Relational thinking" developed by Dr Michael Schluter. Put very briefly: Relational Thinking is about prioritising right and just relationships as the most important factor in evaluating and measuring all economic decision-making at every level of society.

For example, it can be applied to the relationships between management and employees, between lenders of capital and the borrowers, between producers of goods and consumers. When capitalism is based on right and just relationships it can promote economic well-being, financial stability and social cohesion. Reforming capitalism from within is possible and urgently needed.

Prayer points

Let me mention three prayer points in the area of business and economy in the context of Europe.

1. **Brexit** will affect not just the UK but the whole of Europe. The Brexit reality is not just an economic problem but part of larger cultural and social forces sweeping across Europe. Please pray that God will give the leaders making decisions on both sides much wisdom and forbearance, and a spirit of peace-making will prevail before, and more importantly after Brexit.
2. We need a new explosion of **entrepreneurship**. Please pray that God would raise up a new generation of entrepreneurs who have the courage and willingness to develop and manage small and medium-sized businesses. This will be counter-cultural to the mega-companies and the centralisation of economic power in the hands of the few.
3. We need a financial reformation away from **debt and usury**. A debt-based economy incentivises predatory behaviour and instability, and this displeases God. Pray that there would be a shift in values and a rebalancing between risking-taking and rewards for long-term success.



Update: Choice of Commission President, Council President, High Representative for Foreign Affairs

There has been much criticism since the proposed new holders of the EU's top positions were announced. The favoured "Spitzenkandidat" process was replaced by a "backroom deal" between national leaders. None of those named had put forward a manifesto or been scrutinised for their ability to hold these posts and there is a lack of balance between east and west. The choices for Commission President and Foreign Affairs still need to be approved by the European Parliament.

Additional prayer points:-

1. Pray for the situation surrounding the rising tension between Iran and western nations including Europe.
2. Pray for those affected by the heatwave across Europe, especially the elderly, and for those involved in the emergency services coping with forest fires and other dangerous situations.

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