

Cat.2 # 5 Tithing and Survival, Globalization and Eternity

By Pieter Bos

Summary:

Both tithing and keeping the Sabbath are ways of "giving gifts to God." These two concepts, and the promises associated with them, should be understood as covenantal acts: covenant partners exchange gifts! This understanding gives us a fresh appreciation for God as a covenant God. He gave these concepts not in a context of Old Testament legalism, but as notions >> These concepts cannot be written off as Old Testament stuff, or as legalism. They are instructions, of a universal and creational character designed to establish a global economic system that is drastically different from the present one.

In this article on tithing three strands are woven together: Survival, Globalization and Eternity.

Survival.

The principle of survival has become a major motivating force in western society. In the 18th century the major motivating force was Ratio; in the 19th century it was Progress; and towards the end of the 20th century Survival has taken their place as motivating force.

The concept of "survival of the fittest" in animal life, and the struggle for survival in slum areas and refugee camps are the two types of survival the reader may be most familiar with, that is: at a safe distance. Few readers will have ever been a refugee or one of the urban poor.

However, quite a few readers may have been in some way burdened with a heavy workload, responsibility or concern, to the point that you may have sighed "If I can only survive this day, this week...." Did you realize that, in saying that, you were willing to sacrifice something - a meal, an outing, an evening with your wife or your son, part of your salary... a part of the truth, a part of the value or the joy of life, if only you could get through that day, that week, if only you could "survive"?

Surviving, then, has come to mean, "Come through at some cost," or even, "Come through at any cost." What actually happens is that when a person or nation (a corporate person) seeks to survive, they are/ he is, willing to sacrifice an aspect of (corporate) life or of (corporate) values but suffer/but he will suffer spiritual loss: striving for survival leads to spiritual impoverishment, the egocentrism of it individualizes and alienates us. Rather than offering a grander scale of humanness, all it guarantees is a lower state of life, and that only temporarily! That is why survival as motivating force is a lie.

The core of UN global policies is: the survival of the planet. The emphasis in the UN on sustainability is so strong that in fact the position is taken: "Sustainability is the fulfilment of the law," indeed at the expense of love and life: marriage and unborn life (and Christianity) are deemed "unsustainable"!

Globalization.

Global economy is based on the law of scarcity: resources are assumed to be limited, our needs are assumed to exceed our means; humanity is assumed never to grow tired of wanting more goods for a lower price. In "The Lexus and the Olive Tree" Thomas Friedman analyses globalization. He concludes that we "can't stop it . Except at a huge cost to human development" (p. xxii). In summary he says: Globalization is not just a development, but a (new) system, the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies, through which individuals, corporations and nation-states can mutually reach into one another far and fast, cheaply and deeply, leading to international cultural homogenizing. Globalization, he suggests, is designed to lead to the most sophisticated high-tech production, the "Lexus." If for some reason the "Olive Tree" [the place or culture or value that might suffer under this system] is esteemed more important, then only with huge sacrifice, even poverty and isolation, can this Olive Tree be secured.

This widely quoted, and recognised, journalist wants us to believe that global economics rolls along under its own steam. He assumes that it is not good or bad, but simply the next phase, and a very encouraging one: with more high-technology we can survive more comfortably, but an "Olive Tree" can only be secured with huge sacrifice, at a "lower" state of life. In the meantime, he implicitly underwrites what I stated above: survival is a good motivating force, possibly requiring the sacrifice of higher values.

Giving and the quest for survival.

The term /concept "survival of the fittest" became well known through the biologically inspired theory of evolution. The goals of the UN (and WHO) subject human individual life to the survival of "Mother Earth." On both counts, human individual life is not highly valued.

Ruthless striving after the survival of the fittest or the survival of the planet is in entire opposition to the promise of life by the Author of Life, who does not write off the unfit, but heals him >> them; even the old people will be taken care of (Zech. 8:4).

Who, other than the Author of Life, can promise survival at all, even "life to the full" (John 10:10), and

Who, other than the Author of Life, can on top of that guarantee to fulfil such a promise?

Jesus emphasized that survival is a spiritual matter: "Whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel, will save it." (Mark 8:35).

This indicates that to survive we must give our life to the Author of Life!

Now it can be easily reasoned and understood that there is no survival, no life, outside the Author of Life.

But how can giving (life) to God be the answer to the quest for survival?

From giving to tithing and to keeping the Sabbath.

The answer is shockingly simple and basic: we can survive, or rather: we should live, by giving 10% of our resources and 14% of our time (one day a week) to the Author of Life! This is not meant legalistically, but it reveals a universal spiritual law.

I understand this spiritual dynamic as follows. God is infinite, and He created in his infiniteness. Man is a finite creature, and in his drive to be (like) God, he constantly hits the ceiling of his finiteness. He feels so finite, that he constantly says to himself: If I had just some more income, just some more time, then I could survive. But God never made us to survive through some more of the created; He wanted us to survive through some more of Himself! So in his wisdom He said to his creature: Give to me something finite even out of your finiteness, then I will give you abundance out of my infiniteness; submit to your finiteness and so enjoy my infiniteness!

The striking thing is that long before our hurrying and greedy generation said: "Time is money", God already made sure to claim both time and money out of our finiteness. We tend to think that the people in Moses' time lived at a slow pace; still God claimed not only a tithe of their income, 10%, but also one day of the week, even 14%.

Abraham already gave a tithe of everything to the Eternal Melchizedek (Gen 14:20) and Jacob to Elohim (Gen 28:22). As they were under no such law, I understand they followed a universal principle. And God's claim on one day a week was already assured before the fall of mankind; that also concerns a universal principle.

This giving is an exchange of gifts among covenant partners.

There is another aspect here. The core of covenant is that the stronger party chooses the weaker party to prosper and protect him/her, for ever, on the sole condition that the weaker party will for ever follow the initiating party. Such a covenant was stipulated by blessing and curse sanctions, sealed with blood, and at set times celebrated and renewed with a meal and with an exchange of gifts.

God established the keeping of the Sabbath and tithing as covenant actions, captured in the blessing sanctions of the covenant: Sabbath: Ex 31:16, Jer. 17:24 .25; tithe: Mal 3:10. Likewise David and Jonathan covenanted to one another, and they made promises and gave gifts (1Sam 18:1-4) and so did Solomon and Hiram (1Kngs 9:11; 2Chron 8:2).

And what do we see in the concepts of tithing and of keeping the Sabbath? God and Man give to each other according to capacity: Man gives 10% of his resources and God gives abundant prosperity; Man gives 14% of his time and God gives eternal life. Infinite God and finite Man, unequal as they are, team up in a covenantal exchange of gifts!

Living with eternity in mind.

Every thought that handing over 10% of your (personal-business-national) money-budget or 14% of your (personal-business-national) time-budget is too much to survive, is fear, is mistrust of our infinite Covenant Partner. It puts us and/or our nation under a curse (Mal 3:9). (For the concept of modern nations as covenant partners to God, see *The Nations Called*).

Isn't the incredible haste with which this world runs for survival almost a curse? It is certainly not a sign of trusting God. The incredible level of direct and indirect taxation, in Germany mounting up to 70-75% of the average income,

is also, if not a curse then a form of slavery. (This seems to me a form of the authorities impoverishing the people, which is one of the signs of the Queen of Heaven at work.) Present global economics require a 24-hour economy, cause fierce competition, guarantee minimal profits and pose a constant risk of not making it.

God's economy provides a day of rest (in God) a week, a whole year of rest every seventh year, and every 50th year a complete release of debts. God's economy provides a flow of money for God's purposes that is enormous; the banks of the world would notice such a flow, and track and covet and try to control it, because it would shake their monopolies! (Besides: the heavier the direct and indirect taxation, the more the evil of "grey" and "black" money flows emerges.)

Challenge to the Church.

Church, where is God's money flow? Church, why don't we surprise the world by a righteous money flow?

Do we trust God for life, not for barely surviving, but for life abundant, by giving generously from our personal-business-national time and from our personal-business-national resources to Him?

This is not legalism, nor a way to manipulate God, nor a way to secure spiritual dynamics. Of course, certain details are still to be discussed. But this is the way to express that we trust God as our Eternal Covenant Partner, and as such as Author and Keeper and Redeemer of our individual and national life.

Used literature:

Thomas Friedman "The Lexus and the Olive Tree" (Harper Collins, London, 2000).

"Steuern und Sozialabgaben" (Rundbrief 4/02, Fürbitter für Deutschland).

Helene Bos "De Koningin des Hemels in de 21ste eeuw" (The Queen of heaven in the 21st century; emergence, influence and prayer strategy," Serving the Nations" January 2005.