

# BIAS TO THE POOR

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*[my updates are in square brackets]*

Always been argued that only the strong should survive. World Development have assumed that whole nations are either rich or poor ~ false expectation in 'trickle-down'. Pressures fall first on those who are in weakest positions.

'All want to make it!' but we start the race from different positions!

Class: Deferential (others lead) Proletarian (together can decide) Privatised (work as a means to a private end). *[The latter makes w/c unappealing]*

Today majority have stake in keeping things as they are – diamond shaped society, no longer pyramid.

Riots underlines alienation *[modern riots buy in to something for nothing]*

Church can Listen *[Benedict]* Magnificat. Given much, much demanded.

Patronising help calls forth anger (rich resent that) so be a bridge so we can understand where most never experience – even if we lose numbers!

2. Everyone can make it?

Stand in the shoes of the poor. Estates were to give a flying start, but families were ripped up to do it!

Unemployment hits poorest most. Families no longer able to help. Then what's the point of training or education? Cover up by cynicism or arrogance.

Don't feel valued and no money so live a grey existence.

Housing lettings damaging ~ Social housing hedged around with mystery.

Badly built and managed.

Inner city housing bad – get it right *[and wealthy will take it over]*

No holistic understand– different helping departments, but one person/family

Relative poverty hurts with advertising ~ anger and despair.

Feel belittled – it gets the better of you and you overspend.

### **3. How the poor see the Church**

Rallying points for ethnic groups or fortresses for vulnerable vs. 'the Others'.  
See life and the community through eyes of own church experience. Kingdom  
and Body of Christ language? God's one creation.

Feel too bad to belong ~ emphasises standards of behaviour (I'm single mum)  
Suburbia who used to live there deskill locals. Clergy should be happy to fail.  
To survive & live is sometimes miraculous, but not appreciated by hierarchy.  
Many Christians succeed and leave. English RCs poorer /Irish [changing]  
But Pius in 1864 *Syllabus of Errors* condemned 'liberalism' & 1930s Pius XI  
condemned socialism – poor felt he was morally wrong – bishops preached  
against unionisation. Methodists introduced 'no politics' rule in 1790.

### **4. Black is vulnerable**

Scarman 1981 on police/community break-down. Community policing costly  
and not always popular with the Force. Police abused too.

'Affirmative Action' rather than 'Positive Discrimination'?

*Justice underlies Bias to the Poor:*

Hbw: *Tsedeq* is not Greek blindness but partial. Paul speaks of 'grace'.

[*Justice, grace, mercy*]

'What do you want to be when you grow up?' – draws a blank.

### **5. Solidarity**

Minorities should not be absorbed into one culture. [cf. Islam and democracy]

Weak people must first find confidence in similar group. Some argue for a  
share in commonwealth, others ask to be left alone (a contradiction which  
shows their hurt at being shut out)

Identity then self-confidence and only then interdependence.

Immigrants send money home and want to return but leave it too late. Next  
generation think differently. Asian father is remote, yet later depends on child.

Exclusive – no other religion can teach us, Inclusive – Christ relevant to all.

We also can receive. Subservient in white-run churches?

**Church Growth** school in Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, California.

*Our Kind of People* Peter Wagner ~ this way we develop healthy communities!

A natural inclination but not Kingdom inclusivity. “Separate but equal” is not on. Comfort insider or move them outward?

## 6. Jews and Gentiles

Cornelius and Jerusalem Council.

Mark’s Gentile section – Syro-Phoenician woman.

Paul in Ephesians et al. He risked splitting the Church!

Racism is our problem not just out there in society. Many applaud justice but see it as impractical in our time.

East London Advertiser 1904 “Europe’s paupers swarming to London.” Dean of Norwich in 1901 “urged the working men of England to rise in all majesty of their manhood, and all the strength and purity of their glorious cause to reject the dumping of alien paupers in their midst.” The Jews!

We must also recognise white pain – experience of violence, housing lack, identity. 1981 conservatives “British Nationality Bill”, that born on British soil meant British – *jus soli* (right of the soil) until living here 10 years after birth.

Repent our attitudes of superiority – others must fit to our ways.

Keeping control of granted money does not honour.

Wilfred Wood “The outstanding need in the black community is a self-image of which we can be proud. The outstanding need in the white community is to adjust to a proud black man.” (letter)

Success is no yardstick for inner city ministry.

1. Paul made every effort to make separate gentile groups feel the unity (relief to Jm church for example, whilst building up their own cultural norms.
2. Jn 8:48. “Are we not right in calling you a Samaritan?” You are more interested in the outsider than your own. He was therefore hated.
3. A multi-racial society and Church? Catholic acceptance is Glory of God, even though it brings crucifixion.

## 7. The Future of Work.

What is Work? More than ‘what the erratic market requires people for.’”

Unemployment: no recognition by society. Cannot make a contribution, lost self-esteem at having some strength or skill to trade for pay. “Pay you to stay alive but no need of you.” There had been pride. Way to adult world for young. Alienation over years: on the stones against each other. Unions only had right to say no, not yes (as in Germany)

Assembly line – my mind is a blank.

Information, Consultation, Participation, Shared decision-making – not same!

There will never again be full employment so we must find use and value elsewhere. There is still real ‘work’ to be done.

Always hits poor worst.

## 8. A Crisis for Capitalism

**1. Creation of wealth is good:** ‘the calling’ provides drive as opposed to Ecclesiastes – vanity. God as creator and sustainer. Can socialism produce same energy? Adam Smith felt self-interest was safe only when guarded by moral sense, religion, custom and education. But EF Schumacher. But this wealth must be offset by:

- a. **Taxation** to be paid willingly for justice, because trickle-down is a myth. Tax reduction decreases poor’s living standard.
- b. Public Spending to correct the imbalance.

**2. Protects against Totalitarianism.**

Poor never sit at negotiating table. Extraordinary act of faith to think that the Free market will not correct itself. (Won’t reinvest in Merseyside docks) Capital moves on when it’s ravaged, like a dictator. People buy advantage for their children but disadvantage the poor – such is their freedom to act and choose. Society must deal with this corporately or individual children will suffer.

## 9. Liberation Theology

Theology operating under sign of Marx as Thomism under sign of Aquinas.

Exodus – saves from oppression of their own mentality too.

Colonial Christianity imposed from above – this accompanies the people.

“Ideological suspicion” - Jubilee disallowed Freehold, usury, allowed slavery.

**Puebla:** 1968. At Medellin in 67, espoused cause of the poor. Poor’s needs must be at centre [*Js said the Poor must be at the centre – different!*]

But Good News more than physical betterment said Pope.

Marx and Christianity agree:

1. man is social being
2. gifts should be recognised
3. economic and social structures can form the mind and destinies
4. indignation at unequal distribution.
5. belief in better future
6. realistic programme for change.

A: Disagree about God. But what sort of God – a monarch? But theism delivers us from self or state and critiques all.

B: Economics treated by capitalists too as a autonomous god!

C: Original Sin. Replace one tyrant with another. All can be bad, but all can be redeemed. The mote in the eye!

## 10. Human Hearts and Social Structures

Christians must ‘keep off the grass’, but life is not compartments. All can make value judgements.

All need reconciliation, including structures. ‘the powers’. It’s tough!

Eventually become more modest and take their proper place in procession.

## **11. Attitudes to the Poor**

**Blame:** Belief that poverty caused by laziness, chronic unemployment, drink. French said old age, loneliness, deprived childhood or health. German – ill health, lack of education.

To take responsibility one needs frail human commodity – self-confidence. If they have that, they should thank God, not blame others.

1800s taught people to beg or lie. 1945 talked of rights.

1842: Shaftesbury said: ‘sinners were with me, saints against me.’

All parts of one Body, humbler parts being given special honour. One organ suffers, all suffer.

Pay all a reasonable wage.

Pay for services – Social Services blamed for neglect then cut back!

1966: USA. Oscar Lewis “the culture of poverty”, so it came from within.

**Anti-poverty programmes.** Money into areas, not bending the mainstream which made for the poverty. On the other hand, Reagan stripped out social care and said ‘build strong economy and poor will benefit’.

Even most prosperous nation has terrible poverty within so trickle?

But money given to successful puts them ahead already.

Act on research they already have before commissioning more!

Three year programmes raise expectations and heighten let-down.

Governments scrap old programmes and institute new ones! Many take away what others give.

Only an adequate family could cope with all the ‘helping agencies’, only the inadequate need them.

### **Community Development expertise**

Keep all in play together. Subjects of their own destiny. Start from gifts people have rather than gifts church needs. Clergy want control. Promotes false conflict? Who are the authentic leaders and voices? What methods?

First response is usually anger and noise.

Deprived Communities result of competition for resources. If they have a stake they will work for that community. Left out and there will be rebellion.

Poor need sign of resurrection now.

- Prevent investment in wealthy areas until poor have investment.
- Adequate wage.
- Authorities consult.
- Poor receive good advice
- Clear rights for claimants.
- Training funds for community leaders.
- Education in democracy.

Meanwhile the day of small things must not be scorned. Community festivals!

**12. Church bear Good News to the Poor?**

Church is for settled successful – but Jesus is on our side.

“Go and tell John what you see” – something tangible is only fair.

- Church remains there
- Church supports local ability
- Serves people where they are
- Obeys God’s word

Worshipping Presence:

resilience of clergy and families

Worship out of the depths.

Transcendence sense.

Feel that Christ has to do with this world. Signs of God’s Presence

- Celebration
- Will to survive of mother and values for children
- Not ‘staying down’ when let down
- Regular visiting with no thanks.
- Join hands in a project
- Indignation at injustice or being ignored.
- Trying to make bureaucracy work for people
- Teacher’s imagination and optimism
- Fairmindedness of good police officers.

- Generosity of time and cash
- Resilience and wit
- Ability to live with mystery

Not optimistic but hopeful.

- Clergy required to live with people.
- Teams for clergy/ministers
- Consultants
- Days off and holidays.
- Family supports
- Accountability and safeguards
- Clergy swaps to see other side and give respite.
- Support money.
- Appropriate training – not identical.

A church for the area but different from the area.

Folk religion seriously.

**The Rich must:**

At business helping disadvantaged

Commit to a voluntary organisation

Look to needs in own area

Influence attitudes – don't stay mum

Political pressure

Church politics – let the poor decide.

Study