

March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Dear Friends

My secondary school choral contributions were limited to singing bass substitute in a third league quartet. Never-the-less, the words of *Fairest Lord Jesus* resonate to this day. On reflection, the alternate title *Beautiful Saviour* seems to distort its poignancy for these times.

News headlines of late have given several bank executives a good drubbing. Not that they are now more avaricious than they have ever been, rather, their severance accruals contrast so starkly with the misfortune of the many who have suffered as a consequence of their maladministration. Our outrage is stimulated by an outcome, we regard *un Fair*.

In their book *Animal Spirits*, Akerlof and Shiller examine some of the human drives that influence our economy. They observe that most economic theory is formulated against the assumptions of a perfectly rational mind. Yet, from the time of Joseph and his designer outfit, mankind has demonstrated capacity to sub-optimize personal return, in favour of fair-exchange. Our current malaise, they contend, is exacerbated by un Fair dealing.

Researchers Fehr and Gächter demonstrate, with a game dependant on cooperation for success, that the game fails when participants cheat. Whereas, when penalties are introduced for unfair conduct, even at a cost to participants, the game tends to persist with greater rewards for the eventual winner.

The point to this observation is that we are more responsive to concepts of social equity than assumptions about our rational behaviour, give credit.

Our biblical understanding of *fairness* is often masked by an over developed doctrine of justice in which we insist on punishment, retribution and end-time cleansing as God's final solution. However, justice deferred seems not to influence current behaviour and the relationships of His people. Discipleship by contrast has the potential to keep the game fair.

Heller, in his recent reflection on the story of the 'lost son' speaks of the 'Prodigal Father' who is so prodigious in his love, that his grace is deemed by the non-prodigal son, to be un-Fair. Our *Animal Spirits* are at times hard to reconcile! God's concept of fairness extends mercy to returning profligates.

In these times of raised disparity, indeed hardship for some, we are encouraged that your commitment and chorus continues to bring attention to the Fair est Lord Jesus, the ruler of our human nature and redeemer of our fallen greed.



May the Good Lord continue to bring joy to your heart and those you love most.

Yours truly

Victor