
WORK IN PROGRESS

Charles Baird (California State—Hayward) notes he is working on "Labor Unions & Christian Ethics," a revisionist historiography of the American union movement which challenges the conventional wisdom that unions ought to command the respect of those who care about justice and ethical behavior.

Robert Bartel (King College) writes that he is engaged in research involving banking regulation in the United Kingdom and the U.S., and its impact on the relative position of these two financial centers.

Robert Hamrin has written a new book to be released in May, *America's New Economy: The Basic Guide* (Franklin Watts, publisher), which he notes would be perfect as a supplementary text on the real-world economy today.

Randall Haydon (Wichita State Univ.) has been exploring the connections between sin and chaos in society. The greater the presence of sin in a society then the more chaotic would be the economic and political processes.

↓ *Wong-In Koh*, a new member, (2b-1002 Sinbanpo 3rd Apt., Banpo-dong, Kangnam-ku, Séoul 135, Korea)

writes that he is doing scriptural study on the concept of Yobel (Jubilee).

↓ *Greg Krohn* taught a course with *Douglas Sturm* of the Department of Religion at Bucknell University this spring titled "Religion, Ethics, and Economics." The topics included religion and economic history, political philosophy, religious perspectives on economic systems (Jewish and Islamic views as well as Christian ones), and the economic statements of several denominations in the United States. Greg also presented a paper, "Religious Organizations and the Nonprofit Sector in a Mixed Market Economy," at Indiana University—Purdue University at Indianapolis. Copies of the course syllabus and the paper can be obtained by writing to Greg at the Department of Economics, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA 17837.

Stewart Lee calls attention to his college text, *Personal Finance for Consumers*, written with Mel Zelenak and published by Publishing Horizons, Inc. (2950 N. High St., P.O. Box 02190, Columbus, OH 43202).

↓ *Stephen Worland* notes he currently is at work on a study of Marxian elements in the encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*.

VIEWPOINT

Editors' note: We invite suggestions for future VIEWPOINT columns and encourage your response in the form of letters to the editors. Opinions expressed are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or the Association.

Linguistic Choices—Exercising the Power of Words to Include Everyone

Robin Klay (Hope College)

This weekend we enjoyed a visit from my son's grandparents. As "gosh" and "jees" escaped from my son's mouth over a fast game of Uno, Grandmother explained that he should probably use some alternative words to avoid offending people who find them too close to profanity.

The conversation brought back memories of similar exchanges with my own grandparents thirty years ago. At the time I thought they were really straining

at invisible things to find potential offense in these mild and innocent punctuating expressions. By now, I have some biblical reference points to guide me in such matters. We are not to exercise our Christian liberty at the expense of another whose conscience is weak.

It's interesting that while evangelical Christians have always been sensitive to avoid profane language, I don't detect an equally lively commitment to adopt-

ing gender-inclusive language. At a recent conference of Christian economists I noticed that very few made *any* attempt at using inclusive language. The papers presented were unabashedly, and monotonously, full of exclusively male pronouns and references to “sinful man” (here maybe I shouldn’t object), “man-kind,” etc.

If the conference had taken place before 1980, I would not have been so surprised at the linguistic lapse; I am, however, surprised to find it so now. On my own campus (a Christian college) now administrator and few, if any, professors can no avoid a self-conscious apology if they slip into the older, non-inclusive patterns. Most are conscientious about monitoring their own speech and writing to be inclusive in form and spirit.

Is there something peculiar about a bunch of Christian economists which accounts for their obvious lack of concern for, and attention to, inclusive language use? A look around the conference room persuaded me that it wasn’t an age-gap problem, because I was older than at least half of the participants. I expected those who entered professional ranks in this decade—even the male-dominated bastion of economics—to know better and to be less resistant to linguistic changes.

Let me outline three reasons why I hope that readers of this *Bulletin* will make an effort to employ inclusive language in their speaking and writing. The first is foundational, the other two practical. Our God has gifted all persons—women and men—to reflect God’s glory and serve the church and world as members of Christ’s body. Any circumstances or structures (e.g. racism, poverty, or autocratic rule) which detract from the discovery, encouragement, and use of those gifts must be challenged by Christians and changed.

“So what does the use of ‘he’ and ‘man’ in the generic sense have in common with racism?” you may wonder. It restricts the mental images that readers or listeners have as they follow what is written or said. Bountiful published evidence from psychology experiments shows that when the word “he” or “man” is used generically, mental images in the minds of male listeners (readers) are overwhelmingly of male “he’s,” and in the minds of women either male “he’s,” or simply *no* human image at all! If women fail to “see” their own gender in verbal images, the messages will not always reach them, and the aspirations of many cannot help but be more limited. For evangelicals, who enthusiastically support Bible translators’ enormous efforts to bring the Word to life for *all* peoples, in their own lan-

guages and cultures, the power of language to exclude or to embrace should not be missed!

There are also practical reasons for all of us to make effective use of inclusive language. Many journal and book publishers now insist that authors do so. Furthermore, to effectively prepare students for future responsibilities, those of us who are professors need to show students how to communicate in gender- (and otherwise-) inclusive ways. Students’ future jobs will depend on it. Proof from a well-known employer: General Electric in 1981 published an in-house brochure subtitled, “How to communicate more effectively in this changing world.” It speaks of key language problems—“ignoring women in our audiences, ignoring women in GE, and addressing women in potentially offensive ways.” Then it does an excellent job of suggesting solutions to each. (I’ll send a copy to anyone interested.)

The final obstacle for many who are persuaded by the preceding arguments may be, “But how? It’s so awkward to use ‘he/she’ all the time.” Most of us know the answer. Indeed, it is awkward to use ‘he/she’ and should be done only rarely. One alternative is to substitute plurals. For example, “Give each student his paper as soon as he is finished” can be rendered, “Give students their papers as soon as they are finished.” Another alternative is to re-word to eliminate an unnecessary pronoun. So, “The average student is worried about his grades” can be replaced with, “The average student worries about grades.”

One device which I increasingly favor is (approximate) alternation of “he” with “she.” This works best if the “she” pronoun is consistently used throughout a given example (e.g. about a typical banker or economist) and then a switch is made to the “he” pronoun when a new example is described (e.g. a kindergarten teacher). It helps further to open horizons if the examples are cast in a way that runs counter to gender role stereotypes.

I hope that many of you are already convinced that we should be making every effort to use inclusive language. Some may not yet be persuaded. Jesus’ words and deeds expressing deep, personal concern and consideration for women (daughters, wives, mothers-in-law, sick and marginal people) may be an encouragement to you to give inclusive language an honest try. If not, perhaps St. Paul’s counsel to not abuse our Christian freedom at the expense of the weak will serve as a guide.

It takes practice. I recommend trying out inclusive language patterns to see what difference it makes in

your own and others' mental images and their receptiveness to you and your message. Please don't look for a way off the hook by asking a woman who hasn't tried inclusive language herself if she cares whether others use it. She won't really know until she has been exposed to it and attempted it herself.

Our campus chaplain told me that he was initially unaware and unconcerned about gender-in-language issues. Later, he found himself sympathetic, but felt awkward when using different speech patterns. By now, he is offended by non-inclusive language in modern use. I distinctly remember being

touched when I first heard the chaplain give a Communion message for the faculty. He unobtrusively used such phrases as "women and men." He cared enough to use language so as to include me in the invitation to the Table. Can a Christian economist do less?

Note: A very useful brochure, "Guidelines for Non-sexist Use of Language" is available free of charge from the National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801. Ask for stock number 19719.

REPORTS AND REVIEWS

Abstracts of 1987 A.C.E. Session Papers

"Jubilee, Human Capital & the Underclass"

by John D. Mason (Gordon College)

The biblical institution of the Jubilee (Lev. 25) is treated as if it actually existed in early Israel and was practiced for many years. In an attempt to uncover its likely socio-economic purpose and functioning for early Israel, and then to ask what institution today might capture this same purpose and functioning, an interpretation is offered that allows the institution to have been practiced for years with little attention drawn to it. (Its seemingly very radical nature has led many to dismiss its historical existence, arguing that were anything *so* radical actually implemented a much clearer record than exists would have been kept.)

The institution deals only with "distress" sales of land: sales that come most likely after the land had been mortgaged in order to raise money for farm and family expenses. Once sold, the family of original ownership (and their relatives) was to seek to repurchase it. Were it not repurchased by the Jubilee year then whatever sums had been raised would be offered to the owner as partial compensation when the land was returned, thus making the institution somewhat less radical than generally interpreted.

What Jubilee specifically accomplished was to restore a productive base to each Israelite family—and a base that had to be worked in order to bear fruit (not a redistribution of monied wealth). A secondary result of its practice would have been a deconcentration of

landed wealth. The most appropriate contemporary counterpart to the primary purpose of Jubilee would be a secure human capital provision for each citizen: a claim reinforced by reference to recent studies in the U.S. of the role education plays in preventing severe economic harm from the arbitrary events of the market.

The last part of the title was not treated in the paper offered in Chicago. This section applies the argument for a secure human capital base to an area of U.S. society (the urban underclass) where, for various reasons, the provision of a good education has not been achieved in far too many cases. This failure stands as an encouragement for us to understand the reasons why, and to seek to implement the contemporary implications of Jubilee in this very needy arena.

"Poverty and Empirical Christianity"

by Michael Wiseman (University of California at Berkeley)

This paper reviews aspects of the current debate on public welfare policy in the U.S. from the perspective of Christian policy analysis. The objective is to draw together significant themes from the avalanche of policy-oriented literature on American poverty as a guide to economists and others who are professionally interested in these problems and who are called, as Christians, to provide advice and leadership on the subject.