

In the wake of the Willow Creek movement, and its call for the church to be relevant, we tend to think of relevance in terms of the felt needs of religious consumers. Consideration of ‘the world as it really is’ then tends to focus upon the films, music, tastes, conveniences that we enjoy or expect.

George Monbiot is an insightful and idealistic political activist, and in *The Age of Consent*, paints a true picture of the world that God so loved he sent his only son :

Almost half the world's population lives on less than two dollars a day. Despite a global surplus of food, 840 million people are officially classified as malnourished. One hundred million children are denied primary education. One third of the people of the poor world die of preventable conditions, such as infectious disease.

Although wealthy westerners are not individually responsible for the present injustice that plagues our planet, we nevertheless benefit enormously from this injustice, and have the power to oppose it.

A handful of men in the richest nations use the global powers they have assumed to tell the rest of the world how to live. This book is an attempt to describe a world run on the principle by which those powerful men claim to govern: the principle of democracy. It is an attempt to replace our Age of Coercion with an Age of Consent.

Monbiot's book is ‘a manifesto for a new world order’. For those new to global economics and politics, the author provides a crystal clear history and explanation of the mechanics of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation. These descriptions reveal the horror of their effects and the sheer injustice of their existence. His own alternatives are simple, idealistic, and convincing :

1 – A global parliament where the plight and the voice of poor peoples are not cleverly marginalised.

2 – Replace the IMF and the World Bank with an International Clearing Union that prevents unpayable debts from mounting to favour some and disable others.

3 – Establish a ‘Fair Trade’ system that protects weak economies from the currently ‘free’ trade that allows corporations to exploit vulnerable nations for financial gain.

This is an important book from the perspective of ‘worship’, because it exposes what we might call the ‘rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms’ (Eph 6 :12). The satanic sources of structural sin are glimpsed in this book. To read it as a Christian is to open our eyes afresh to the heart of God and his action in the world.

George Monbiot, could have been writing about Holy Scripture when he says, ‘This manifesto, and all the publications like it, is worthless unless it provokes people to action’. And this is precisely his intent. He incites us to encounter the communal ‘exultation’ that

comes when those under the yoke of injustice combine to work for the establishment of liberty. 'It is the exultation which Christians call joy, but which, in the dry discourse of secular politics, has no recognised equivalent.'

If this is the meaning of 'joy', then perhaps there is room in our worship for a little more of it.