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Creation Care: An Economic Approach

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Last month I wrote to argue that the only mass-produced evidence for American economic growth is the GNP/GDP and Stock Market numbers in the daily news. These numbers are based on dollars in circulation, as if money is wealth and is the main element that counts in our culture, a Culture of Growth. The truth is that money is not wealth; it is an abstract medium believed in as a claim on the efforts of others to provide something wanted by the moneyed. We are told by many influential “Economists” that America is the wealthiest country in the world, assuming that the amount of money in circulation determines its wealth, regardless of its distribution, which at this point is grossly uneven.

In 1972 a report by The Club of Rome, entitled “The Limits to Growth”, presented a computer-based forecast of key variables: global urban population, fossil fuel reserves, food production, arable land, non-renewable natural resources, pollution and CO2 levels, etc. All of which were subjected to exponential growth projections as they interacted with the others. The results of these projections showed steep growth ascending at an ascending rate followed by peak and sudden collapse around 2050, if growth of these and other variables were pursued at the then-current rate. The method used was based on systems thinking and cybernetics: new scientific thinking.

At the time of its publication, “The Limits to Growth” was widely criticized by Forbes Magazine, other business journals, and many economists who criticized the methods used, but chiefly because they disbelieved that limits could be reached, believing that an exchange economy — based on nineteenth century science and economics— would prevent any such events from happening.

Meanwhile, other scientists, social scientists, and economists were pursuing these new ways of thinking that refuted theories and models of these orthodox believers in economism.

Emerging from them were new understandings: the concepts of “Gaia” (that the Earth is a living organism), of “Spaceship Earth” (in which our planet is a closed interrelated system, and that time is cyclical when one thinks of dynamic living systems which must be self-regulating if they are not to grow out of control (the science of cybernetics). Evolution scientists, influenced by quantum physics, have introduced the theory that all of life on earth has evolved as an infinitely complex interrelated system, consisting not just of competition (“survival of the fittest”), but more importantly of cooperation and interdependence of all species, of which humans are members especially gifted to comprehend this. Tragically, we humans are also the only ones who continue to disrupt and threaten this global system by believing in a story involving “money, progress, win-lose competition, and growth.”

As Christians we also believe that God is Creator of all that is, and that Divine Love embodied by Christ is the motive force behind all Creation. The new science suggests a new story much more aligned with the Gospel.

Next time, I will suggest a new story.