

Why Christians Must Get Poverty and Inequality Right

Over the last two decades, global poverty has plummeted and the world's poorest people have steadily climbed out of the shadow of death. Yet many Christians cannot distinguish between dire poverty and income inequality, falsely believe both are worsening, and oppose the very policies that have lifted the world's poor out of malnutrition.

"Why do we underestimate success?" asks Philip Booth in a [new essay](#) for [Religion & Liberty Transatlantic](#). "Why do we accept fake news about these issues?"

Booth – a professor of finance, public policy, and ethics at the UK's largest Catholic university (St. Mary's University, Twickenham) – [writes](#) that people of faith rightly wish to alleviate poverty. Furthermore, to those with only a passing understanding of economics, news of widening "inequality" seems wrong, even immoral. As a result, believers often embrace the economic program of anyone who professes to care about the needy without understanding the way those policies actually affect the most vulnerable, frequently in deleterious ways.

Booth [explains](#) one reason Christians choose economic policies based on how they make us feel, rather than the empirical basis of their results:

Philosopher Steven Pinker [argues](#) that this tendency is at least partly to do with the "psychology of moralization," whereby academics compete for moral authority. Critics of the present state of affairs who argue that things should be much better are seen as morally engaged, whereas those who say things are not too bad are seen as apathetic.

This is really important for Christians. The virtue of

prudence demands that we think carefully before we take positions. We should say things that will lead the world to become a better place, not things that lead us to be seen as better people. Bad economic policy leads to misery. If Christians encourage the development of bad economic policy out of [virtue signaling](#), they bear culpability for people's poverty. We have a responsibility to contribute to this debate with accurate analysis.

Booth, who is also a senior academic fellow at the [Institute of Economic Affairs](#) and a lecturer at [Acton University](#) 2017, [relates](#) in detail how poverty and income inequality are related, how they differ, and how Christians ought to look at each of them. He explores how Christians should look at free markets and international trade. And he explains why he believes that widening income inequality is a serious spiritual problem – for those at the top.

His expert analysis will give anyone seeking to understand these complex economic issues the necessary tools to better serve his or her neighbor.

You can [read his full article here](#).

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