



# into the Melting Pot

*the question is more important than the answer*

Sunday 11 October 2020

## **Consuming**

A Zoom session looking at how we spend our money, what we spend it on, and how this is impacted by our views on life, living and faith. Hopefully we can share ideas that we might adopt, be challenged by, or just plain make each other feel guilty!! Here are some of the points raised, with some additional background:

### **Avoiding products**

- Some may remember the boycott of South African products some fifty years ago (no more Granny Smiths) due to the Apartheid policies of the government.
- Back in the late 1970s the 'Baby Milk' scandal (where sales reps, in the developing world, would encourage new mothers to use the free milk powder they gave out, instead of breast milk; the mothers would then be having to buy the product, and many would then be feeding their child using unclean water, resulting in many deaths. Although Nestlé claim they are WHO compliant, there have been still calls for boycotts within the last ten years.
- There is a more recent Kit-Kat boycott, with Nestlé abandoning the use of Fairtrade chocolate in that product.
- Large corporations own many different trademark brands, and you might have to do some digging to find out where your money might be going.
- PE will not buy products from Israel, because of the way Israel is mistreating its Palestinian residents.
- Visit [www.ethicalconsumer.org](http://www.ethicalconsumer.org) to find a list of ongoing boycotts, including Amazon and Cadbury (tax avoidance), EDF (environment), Kellogg (genetically modified issues), L'Oreal (animal testing), Shell (human rights) . . . pick your poison.
- Does a boycott have any use? I am reminded that a dripping tap eventually fills the bucket – so whilst our 'drip' may be ineffective on its own, collectively it can bring change.
- Isn't a boycott worthless unless you let the manufacturer know that you are no longer buying their product, and why? JH cited the example of Ecover (and Method) who use environmentally friendly materials in their products, but were taken over by SC Johnson (not ethically endorsed). She now no longer buys those products and wrote to the company to tell them why.
- A similar situation existed when the Body Shop was taken over by L'Oreal, although they are now owned by Natura who do not test on animals.
- PE suggested we have a look at the film 2019 'Dark Waters' which tells the story of DuPont effectively poisoning several communities with unregulated chemicals. Employees have been instructed not to engage in conversation regarding this.

### **Positive shopping**

- Some only buy Fairtrade bananas, tea and coffee, and go without if they are unavailable.
- Oxfam has a good selection of Fairtrade products, but we should be encouraging our local supermarket to stock items by buying them there – make a point of asking for them, by speaking to Customer Services. JA used to buy Fairtrade products in a local

supermarket to resell on the church Fairtrade stall, to boost their profile at the supermarket.

- MC recommended seeking out Zaytoun olive oil grown by Palestinians in Gaza.
- JH highly recommended 'Tony's Chocolonely' (available at Oxfam) – slave free chocolate. CK also now endorses it!
- If you have a passion for non-animal testing, then JH recommends the Compassionate Shopping Guide ([compassionateshoppingguide.org](http://compassionateshoppingguide.org)) which gives free online ethical consideration to a whole range of products to inform your shopping. You can buy a printed version at [naturewatch.org](http://naturewatch.org).
- JH and S&JA recommend a company selling toilet paper, initially in Australia and now in the UK, who give 50% of their profits to building toilets in the developing world. Find them at <https://uk.whogivesacrap.org>. We are happy to let you have a premium bamboo roll to try out – just ask. You do have to order 48 rolls, so storage might be an issue, unless you can share; they are individually paper wrapped (which can be upcycled for wrapping presents!).
- We can support local businesses, or Ilkley will have more empty shops.

### Other issues

- G&CK calculated their annual spend in Tesco, which was not insubstantial. So if they should be concerned about the soy-feed for animals linked to rain forest destruction, then they should contact Tesco to let them know they'll take their money elsewhere unless Tesco change the way they source their meat.
- Have you thought about your energy supplier? JH and others use Ecotricity; S&JA have been with Bulb and now moving to Pure Planet (Which recommended) who all use renewables for Electricity and carbon offset their Gas.
- Ilkley Climate Change had a 'Big Switch' campaign to try to persuade people to move their bank from those who support fossil fuel use (the worst are HSBC (inc First Direct & M&S), Lloyds (inc Halifax & BoScotland), RBS (inc NatWest), Barclays, Santander) to a more ethically minded one such as Triodos and Co-op. To find out about your current bank and energy supplier, visit [https://twitter.com/switchit\\_money](https://twitter.com/switchit_money).
- Remember that our spending supports a supply chain with employment for others, which is important for the overall economy.
- There is no one 'pure ethics' that solves the problems – we have to find our own balance, and being informed is the first step; we then make the choices (sometimes compromises) that best suit our views.

### Giving

- How do we give our money away? Time spent deciding to give a £25 donation to Crisis (homelessness charity) when a trip to a local Café and a contactless payment of £23 is done without thinking. How do we square that?
- How should we spend the money we've not spent because of lockdown restrictions? We can support others who have less than us. Christchurch Benevolence Fund exists to support a number of people in difficulty. Donate at Christchurch account (20-11-81 30637610) putting 'Benevolence Fund' in the identifier.
- Consider making a donation to Ilkley Food Bank if you no longer shop in store. Their Facebook page gives some idea of shortage items, for those still shopping in store.
- Do we tithe (giving 10% either of income or after essential expenditure)? What is sacrificial giving (not just money – time and emotional energy included)? We need to strike a balance and be healthy in body and mind to enable us to give generously.
- WR remembered a sermon story from many years ago where biscuits given out in Africa were being broken and shared straight away; there are many instances where people who have very little are the most generous with their sharing. MC, whilst travelling, was invited for a meal, knowing that their hosts would not have anything to

eat themselves. CK recounted that during a famine in the east of Ethiopia, others in the country were donating 15% of their meagre income to support those on trouble.

### **Living Simply**

- When is enough enough?
- Some buy many items from 'nearly new' or charity shops, so the item gets use, but then this doesn't support the producers of clothes in the supply chain.
- Some might choose to live 'off the grid' by growing their own food, and having their own water supply, etc, but this sort of extreme can be too much of a challenge for some who may then ignore all of the issues; but we should all be able to make a start on that road where we live more simply, with less 'stuff'.
- Are we living in excess? The average UK resident consumes four times that of those in the Indian subcontinent (USA is seven times) – should we reduce our consumption to allow others to increase theirs? The book 'There is no Planet B' by Mike Berners Lee suggests there is enough for everyone – if we share; this means we should reduce our consumption.
- S&JA still 'budget' their money (a hangover from much earlier 'hard-times' when money was tight), and in particular still have 'pocket money' (for personal items such as clothes and hobbies), the latter unaltered since 2008 – we have enough (probably much more than enough)!

### **Postscript**

It may be that we are just looking for ways to justify, to ourselves and others, what we do with our money? Perhaps we just want to feel good about our own perceived ethical positions?

How much of what we do is driven by our faith?

I am convinced that each of us has a small part to play in the bigger picture, by stewarding what we have (and not just money) so that our neighbour is not overlooked.

I hope that some of the ideas mentioned here will cause you to think a little, and perhaps make a small change that puts another drip in the bucket.