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Response to Myrto Theocharous

Ellie Hughes

Myrto Theocharous presents a fascinating picture in her paper examining the king of Tyre, reimagined by Ezekiel as the original Adam, reframing the fall of humanity in economic terms. Perhaps the most moving – and in some ways disturbing – impact of her essay on me, were the distinctions which could be drawn between her description of the process of dehumanization experienced by the king of Tyre as he ‘blurred the boundaries of identity taking place in his heart’ and our own modern day society. Living in a predominantly secularized western society, I am in no doubt that God utters to us also, ‘You are but a mortal and no god’ (Ezek. 28.2). In exposing the idols of wealth and power which the king of Tyre sought and ultimately left him destroyed and returned to dust, this paper also compels us to consider the similar idols of our age which would tempt us to believe that we, too, individually or nationalistically are, ‘... god[s]; sitting in the seats of the gods in the heart of the seas’ (Ezek. 28.2).

Holding this in mind, I found it helpful and an interesting correlation with my thoughts on the dehumanization of the poor, to consider Myrto’s thoughts on the king of Tyre’s story as ‘everyman’s story’. As we place our own fall as human beings within the King’s story – one of idolatry and a misunderstanding of who we are created to be – it helpfully explains not only how we become dehumanized by our own idolatry and greed, but furthermore how this then impacts how we view the poor. When we misconstrue the gifts that God has graced us with (such as wealth or wisdom, as Myrto identifies) as benefits of our own making, the work of human hands, our view of not just ourselves but the rest of humanity becomes warped and defiled. I find it interesting that in the king’s desire for excess, and his pride in this accumulation of power and wealth, he loses the God-given ability to see people as they really are: his desire to be a god actually prohibits him from being able to love and display the compassion to others which God created us to be able to express.

Myrto’s exploration of the meaning of humanity, how we become dehumanized and the consequences of this for the king of Tyre, and indeed the ‘everyman’ within his story, framed so helpfully my understanding of our need for a gospel-centred approach to caring for people in poverty and those in need. Her comment that ‘attempting to supersede one’s humanity economically is precisely how one loses one’s humanity and

ends up as good as dead' reminds me of the words Jesus spoke, 'Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it' (Mt. 10.39 NRSV).

It is in walking the way of Jesus, in loving the poor and the needy at the expense of ourselves where we find our deepest humanity, where we are most like Christ and therefore the most human we could ever be.