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Response to Lynn H. Cohick

Katie Harrison

One of the things that struck me most about Lynn Cohick's paper was that although, as she identifies, the ancient and modern worlds have different ways of conceiving of poverty and demanding justice, the *causes* of poverty are largely the same. As Lynn listed the reasons why individuals in the ancient world faced poverty – ill health, lack of opportunities to work, poor governance and corruption and ethnic tensions and conflicts – I recognized each of them from the world I encounter in my work every day. However, I wonder if seeing these causes regularly in the contemporary world really makes clear the importance of the opportunity to choose as a richness? Lynn writes about the way that in the story of the widow's mite, the widow was still able to give, but actually, I think, some people today do not have that choice.

I also found it interesting though that we both put more emphasis on structural issues in discussing the causes of poverty and in people's opportunities to become free from poverty. Nevertheless, we both agreed that matters of the mind and heart are key for overcoming poverty, and this is personal as well as structural: perhaps this is an indicator of how tricky it can be to talk about agency and responsibility without getting drawn into what you might call a 'blame game'.

I am glad that Lynn, in her response, picks up on the phrase, 'Dream better dreams': I think that is an important part of people overcoming the fatalism we have talked about. Dreams engage the heart and the mind. They can provide an inspiration and an impetus for change. Lynn's response described some of the dreams of Christians in the ancient world. These are also some of the dreams of Christians today: it is one of the reasons why we believe that the church is such a powerful actor in overcoming poverty. Further, I would add, I think it is an important idea and activity for those of us who do not lack material things. What dreams could or should we dream that would move us to live in ways that help others to overcome poverty?