

## **Where Would Jesus Bank?**

All four New Testament Gospels agree that at some point in his ministry, Jesus created an incident in the temple at Jerusalem, the seat and center of Jewish worship. This incident involved overturning the tables of the money-changers, and perhaps also driving out the buyers and sellers of sacrificial animals from the temple precincts. Jesus is said to have denounced their turning of God's house of prayer into a den of robbers. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are likely correct in placing this incident shortly before Jesus was arrested by the Roman authorities, condemned to death, and crucified. Jesus' provocative action could well be what got him killed.

The money-changers changed foreign money into coinage acceptable for temple contributions. The trade in animals was integral to the sacrificial system of worship. At the least, Jesus must have regarded what took place as economic extortion or exploitation. Excessive amounts of money apparently were being made by money-changers and animal dealers who preyed upon their customers.

It's rather easy to draw parallels between the ancient targets of Jesus' wrath and those religious figures of today who prey upon the people who flock to them for promises of blessing, forgiveness, and salvation. Religious hucksters are a dime a dozen.

However, Jesus' action was not directed against some fringe religious cult leaders or self-styled religious entrepreneurs or first-century version of today's televangelists intoxicated with their power to manipulate and master the wishful and hapless. No, Jesus' action was directed against a system that was regarded by the governing political and religious authorities as integral to their way of life.

Think Wall Street! Think AIGChaseCiticorpNYSE! ! Think military-industrial complex! Think any institution in our society that gains its money largely by exploiting the common person (middle class) and the poor by means of high credit fees and interest, trade advantages, self-serving management, and wasted tax dollars (e.g., war profiteering). It's not clear Jesus had any money, but if he had, he would have wanted it to be used for those in need, not those with greed.

Where would Jesus bank – today? The question presents us with one of the major issues of our time. There are few institutions of finance, government, or trade where one can count on one's money being used primarily to enrich the lives of those of modest or insufficient means.

Money should follow service that upbuilds. Nowadays, most people rather follow the money.

*Copyright 2010 by Byron C. Bangert*