



# Depth Perception

Commentary from Design For Ministry™

Los Angeles – Milwaukee – Philadelphia

## Creation: the moral meaning of money

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(excerpted from *Creation: the moral meaning of money*, by Mark L. Vincent,

©2005 Design For Ministry™. The complete paper is available from <http://www.designforministry.com/>)

Money is at the crux of many ethical dilemmas in the marketplace. Choices are often made in a moment, and in that moment a person's or organization's history, values, preferences and ethics come together. Expectations of others, institutions, and marketplace also converge on those making an ethical choice.

Persons who wish for their monetary choices to reflect their morality discover that previous scholarship is largely not helpful. Much of it polarizes between practical positions of understanding money as something to use (consumption) or something to protect (conservation). Where the literature is more reflective in nature, it tends to be religious or philosophical and invites the seeker to not be materialistic (ascetic).

[Perhaps] a better way to construct moral meaning with money is to draw on themes of creation, that is, defining, building, increasing, managing and growing....

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A consumption-oriented person wishing to protect the free-market society so

they can remain a consumer must expand language to that of building and managing that market. If the market disappears they cannot function as a consumer. Thus they seek to build and manage protections to preserve (conserve) the market. At the moment they begin speaking of preserving the ability to consume, they move into creation space.

Similarly, the conservation-oriented organization that wants to preserve a resource must expand language to that of building and managing in order to describe how it intends to succeed. An organization cannot conserve a thing without consuming resources to do so.

The ascetic perspective does not escape this language problem either. In order to describe how it will withdraw and create sanctuary from the material world, the ascetic perspective must also build and manage. Even hermit's caves get organized....

- mark l. vincent

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