

GOD, MAMMON & BSE

Architects used to be trained to try and achieve 'commodity, firmness and delight' in their buildings. 'Commodity' or fitness for purpose, 'Firmness', (stability and keeping the water out) were our client's minimum requirements - and what they thought they were paying for. 'Delight' was the extra we tried to add, but because it is not something you can easily measure with money, under pressure it often got lost.

Delight is of course not easy to measure, though that doesn't stop us from trying. Does anyone remember the search for a Third London Airport back in the Sixties? One site report considered the demolition of a beautiful old church (Fairford) and tried to put a monetary value on it to compare the cost of this site with another which included a marsh expensive to build on). This attempt was the thin end of a very dangerous wedge on which we need to keep a wary eye. There are some things whose value cannot be measured in money, not just beauty or history, but also love, friendship, work and society. Keeping these values is more than just an option.

This week has been full of anger over food safety. News bulletins have extensively reported how farmers in both England and France have fed processed offal to cows and sheep, which they have been forced to do by commercial pressures. Farmers who rely on grazing cannot compete with those who choose to fatten their stock more quickly by taking dangerous short cuts.

Doing what is 'right' may not always be economically viable. Those who are being forced into taking decisions that should not even be put to them, need our prayers and support, in whichever country they live. By being forced to choose between what they know is right and that which is economically possible, they are having to choose between two masters. As Jesus said: "You cannot serve both God and Mammon."

Let us pause for a moment as we shop to think whether the choices we are making are not perhaps part of the problem.

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