

2nd August 2021

Shopping

“Ah, human felicity! to have at once so many wants suggested and supplied! Wretched Grecian daughters! miserable Roman matrons! to whom shopping was an unknown pleasure, what did, what could employ them?”

Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Romance and Reality

Letitia Elizabeth Landon asked an interesting question in 1831: What did people do for enjoyment – our Greek and Roman ancestors, and others through the years – when they didn't have the pleasure of shopping?

We all know the necessity of shopping. I speak as someone who is in no sense a “shopaholic”, and I've never followed the trend of “shop till you drop”. Shopping is simply a necessity. And I'm grateful for those who have kept our essential shops available over the past eighteen months, including delivery people and those who facilitate shopping on-line.

But think about the human interactions that are fundamental to the shopping experience. How often have we heard complaints over the years about the attitude of a shop-assistant – brusque, unsmiling, distracted, or the like? We may even feel we've had cause to complain ourselves. And if you've worked in a shop, or in any “customer-facing” setting, you'll maybe have moaned about some customers too.

So, let's be polite and patient with one another in our shopping. Both seller *and* customer are serving each other. It's worth the effort to make sure our interactions are as helpful and pleasurable as possible.

And let's be fair. The prophet Amos had much to say about how we relate to one another in buying and selling. Here's one example (8:4-6):

Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, ‘When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?’ – skimping on the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat.

Shopping? Fundamental to who we are and how our society functions. It needs to be fair, so that everyone benefits.

A prayer for today

Lord, help me to understand the importance of patience in my time with you and as I interact with those around me today. That's fair, isn't it? Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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