

# Mission, Globalisation and Theological Education: A North American Perspective

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**Abstract:** *This article argues that, in the Catholic perspective, the themes of globalization, mission, and theological education must necessarily intersect in a contemporary approach. By focusing in the laity as the primary subject and agent of the Church's mission, globalisation can be more positively appreciated. Church leaders must serve the laity by providing laity with an appropriate theological-spiritual formation that embraces a mystical-aesthetic view of the Christian project.*

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**Key Words:** Church – social mission; globalisation; theological education; Christian laity – role

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## AN OVERVIEW OF WHAT FOLLOWS

**T**he destination I am heading toward in this paper rests on three conclusions that I have reached independent of work on this piece; they are not fully *argued* here, and thus it may be wise to signal my directions in advance, since the route to them is circuitous.

I am skeptical as to whether we should place great confidence in our ability to cause basic structural changes in the way our globalizing world functions. We need also to exercise great caution on thinking that the word “globalization” and its cognates are especially useful in helping us understand what is occurring in our world. Globalization is useful as a term only to the extent this abstraction fits concrete data on such things as economics, social well-being, cultural changes, and environmental questions across the globe. It may be useful to remind ourselves at the start of Alfred North Whitehead’s words that one of the most pregnant sources of error in human understanding is the “fallacy of misplaced concreteness.”<sup>1</sup> By that he means ignoring the “degree of abstraction” involved in thought when we try to generalize. I fear that — having invented the word “globalization” and finding it useful to explain *some* of what is going on globally — we are tempted to think it explains the causes of *all* the world’s ills that Christians seek to overcome by rooting out “systemic” oppression and injustice.

1. In place of strategies aimed at global, systemic change, I believe that emphasis needs to be placed on the process of disciplining lay individuals who can attempt to realize Christian social goals from within multiple decision making centers and to build up

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 11. John Rahlston Saul argues the case that “globalism” is collapsing, that nation states are once again assuming greater importance, and that globalization advocates were making its triumph inevitable by downplaying inconvenient facts. See, John Rahlston Saul, “The Collapse of Nationalism and the Rebirth of Nationalism,” *Harper’s Magazine* (March 2004): 33-43.

communities that provide ongoing formation and nurture for such persons. We need especially to consider who are to be the “subjects” or “agents” of the Christian mission to minister to the world’s ills and realize the reconciliation that St Paul portrays as key to our mission (2 Cor 5:5-19), a theme very well developed by Robert Schreiter in his two books on reconciliation.<sup>2</sup>

2. Finally, I believe that a more organic way of carrying on theological and missiological education may help overcome our present tendency to analyze and criticize without presenting a synthetic, constructive, attractive vision of Christian living. The critical intellectual change occurs when one realizes that “mission” can no longer be defined by the task of converting others to Christianity and the foundation of new churches in foreign lands by Christians from North Atlantic churches. Nevertheless, it is my experience that this notion dominates most people’s imagination — including that of missiologists — when the word is used.<sup>3</sup>

Overall it is important to acknowledge that in saying these things I am taking positions that I do not fully argue. The presumption is that the world economic system will evolve by fits and starts and that a radical change in it will not occur. To those convinced that capitalism is the cause of most of the elements that keep the poor in poverty, this will seem a fatal flaw. In the end, though, I am convinced that the system that has been evolving over the last five hundred years will persist. This does not mean that the rules and practice of capitalism among nations and regions (such as the European Union) will not differ widely. They do and will continue to, in my judgment. In the United States, for example, even the center left tends to be more *laissez-faire* than is the case in France or Germany. Malaysia’s successful dodging of the 1990s Southeast Asian currency crisis utilizing national policy solutions — and not those urged on it by globalization gurus and the World Bank — shows that old-fashioned “protectionism” can still work. Even given such variations among the leaders of world capitalism, however, the fundamental rule that the owners of capital will always seek to maximize their profits will obtain. Local economies will grow, moreover, only to the extent they produce attractive opportunities, either on their own economic merits or with assistance from organizations and persons willing to accept smaller or no profits because of higher motivations. The problem with hoping that development assistance or grants will solve the problems of poverty, however, is the stubborn fact that — in the long run — business is not the enemy and business needs profits to continue to employ people and produce products.

All that said, unless guided by laws and cultural elements that make them take a broader view of things (for instance, to obviate environmental degradation or following national policies to retain manufacturing jobs), persons with capital will look for their best opportunity to increase their holdings. The ethical-moral task is to convince individuals, corporations and other public and private organizations, as well as nations, to take broader views of matters like social capital and the long-ran genegative impact and the deep injustice of economic stratification. To date our successes in that endeavor are fairly unimpressive, at least in my view.

To concretize what may seem formal, abstract, and tendentious below, my vision of how the negative effects of globalization will be best overcome is when something like the

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<sup>2</sup> See Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992); Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1998).

<sup>3</sup> For a brilliant antidote to this mindset, see the treatment of the history and theology of mission in Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

following begins to happen several hundred times a day in board rooms and other places where decisions affecting the world's poor are made:

Five women and men sit on a loan approval committee in the international division of the HSBC in Singapore. They include a Malay Muslim woman, a Chinese Presbyterian man, an agnostic Indian woman, a Sri Lanka Buddhist man, and an Zimbabwean Pentecostalist man. Each has been trying to make the banking system work for the poor for many years. They meet today to talk about HSBC taking a 25% share in financing an oil drilling operation in Chad in partnership with Exxon, Deutsche Bank, Citibank, and the World Bank. Their concrete concern is about getting the money into the project without having a large percentage siphoned off by kleptocrats. Several, including the Christians, are committed to their faith and see their work as bankers to be part of their religious identity. They frequently talk about their respective traditions' wisdom and principles of business ethics. The Chinese Presbyterian was supported for six months by his church for six months of study two years earlier, when he attended a program on the causes of poverty sponsored by the PC USA, as a result of a General Assembly initiative.

The overarching context in which we dwell is well framed by my friend of many years, Gerald Arbuckle, in the interplay of "crisis" and "chaos."<sup>4</sup> For we live today between crisis and chaos, crisis being a situation in which one can discern a potentially favorable outcome, plan for it, and implement a plan. A chaotic situation, on the other hand, is one in which nearly everything is coming unstuck and the way it will resolve is impossible to foresee. My own tendency is to think our situation is nearer one of chaos than crisis, hence my skepticism concerning whether any church, any band of missiologists, or ethicists is smart enough to propose universally valid solutions. The best results we can hope for, I believe, is that a process that can conscientized large numbers of men and women of good to increase the probability that rough justice and some amelioration of our global situation will eventuate. I fully realize how controversial such a point of view may seem and I am sensitive to the irony that the one who writes these lines has paid his mortgage during the past fifteen years working for Orbis Books at Maryknoll, New York, and that Orbis authors and Maryknoll Society members have done much to spread the view that systemic changes are not only called for but possible.

Since the dawn of modernity, one of the key canons of Western culture's worldview is the one that regards history as the domain in which humans can create the future they want. Belief in this proposition is about as close to a universally accepted dogma of modernity as can be identified. One of the central themes of *Reaping the Whirlwind* by my Doktorvater Langdon Gilkey, however, is the tension between the modern and the classical Christian view of history on this and in questions that ramify from it.<sup>5</sup> His entire book, in fact, can be read as an extended essay on the question whether the two are finally compatible.

The advertising copy on another of Gilkey's books asks, "When the props of society are taken away, how do people survive?"<sup>6</sup> Gilkey's narrative of life as a prisoner of the Japanese in the Shantung Compound during World War II in China gives no simple answer to that question, but when you finish *Reaping the Whirlwind*, you realize that a sense of

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<sup>4</sup> Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 43-55; and *Out of Chaos: Refounding Religious Congregations* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), pp. 65-87.

<sup>5</sup> Langdon Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind: A Christian Theology of History* (New York: Seabury, 1976).

<sup>6</sup> Langdon Gilkey, *Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women Under Pressure* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

irony and skepticism of humanity's capacity to face up to and deal effectively with its true situation are deep in Gilkey's Baptist soul.

### THREE TEXTS FOR ORIENTATION

Three very different texts are fundamental to the ideas I would like to discuss today. I cite them because they state succinctly a number of judgments I have come to make about mission and globalization over the past few years. They are, then, shorthand for my orientation in these matters.

The first text is from Ezekiel 36: 25- 28

<sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup> A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. <sup>28</sup> Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

I bring this First Testament text to your attention because it is so fundamental for understanding so much of how the effects of Christ's work was understood both in the Christian Testament and the first several centuries of Christian history. Namely, that the way in which the work of Christ reaches us is through the transformation of our consciousness that leads us ultimately, in the words of my teacher John Navone over dinner one memorable night in Rome, "to share God's own interiority," in a life of dying to self in order to live to God. Transformation of consciousness, it could be said and I certainly believe, is apt shorthand for the *mission Dei* as revealed in the work of both Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Restoring that Christic-Pneumatic dimension to both missiology and spirituality, again in my opinion, is one of the ways in which theology needs to recover its moorings. In a *Concilium* board meeting in Prague in 1996, Jon Sobrino jumped on a comment that another board member had made disparaging personal piety. With great eloquence, Sobrino said, "Personal religious experience is not private. Rather it is the necessary foundation for our insertion into the Christian and broader human community." I question whether the search for less individualistic spirituality over the past forty years may not have undermined the sense that personal piety and individual conversion is a missiological *a priori* without which very little that is specifically "Christian" will ever occur.

The second text is from Bernard J. F. Lonergan, speaking of the situation of theology and the church vis-à-vis science from the mid-nineteen century to the mid-twentieth:

... the initiative seemed permanently in the hands of those who invoked science against religion and, if it mattered little to them that at any given moment the issue had shifted from physics to Semitic literature, from Semitic literature to biology, from biology to economics, or from economics to depth psychology, the defenders were left in the unenviable position of always arriving on the scene a little breathlessly and a little late.<sup>7</sup>

I bring this text to your attention because much of what I am about rests on a judgment that in our discussions of, attitudes toward, and responses to globalization, we are like our theological forebears, arriving a little breathlessly and a little late at each new perception of a social or environmental crisis. We need, instead, to take a deep breath and then take our bearings on a course of action that will help us better to further the mission of

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<sup>7</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), 733.

increasing justice and enhancing the integrity of creation instead of lurching from crisis to crisis.

The third text is from Roland Robertson, professor of sociology at the University of Pittsburgh:

Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. The processes and actions [that we call globalization]... have been proceeding, with some interruptions, for many centuries, but the main focus of the discussion of globalization is on relatively recent times.<sup>8</sup>

And then in a remark that underlies Robertson's views on globalization, "But it is necessary to emphasize that globalization is not equated with or seen as a direct consequence of an amorphously conceived modernity."<sup>9</sup> I bring this text to your attention because it underlies a judgment on my part that what we are dealing with in globalization is not a new phenomenon but one that is forced upon us in a dramatic manner because the events we today think of as globalization are greatly compressed in time and brought into inescapable relief by the contemporary communications revolution. In an address by Robertson given to the members of the *Concilium* board and Princeton Seminary faculty, when Orbis was the American publisher of *Concilium*, Robertson stressed two more ideas. First, that while there are a number of things occurring globally that we call "globalization," they have radically diverse effects in different locations. Therefore, secondly, we need to attend the specifics of concrete, local impact and culturally relevant ways of enhancing the positive potentials and reducing the negative, said Robertson. It is easy, he said, to neglect "glocalization," which he saw as being as important as globalization.

Which I take as an invitation for us all to ask ourselves how we're doing in the drama of inner transformation and conversion? How's our theological conversation doing in terms of equipping our upcoming generation of laity, priests, and ministers for our new global reality? In particular, are we perhaps joining on anti- and pro-globalization band wagons without doing our homework. And in that context, although I do not cite his work below, a book by Robert Schreiter on the contemporary meaning of "catholicity," forms a backdrop for everything I say.<sup>10</sup> Schreiter is especially convincing when he reminds us that "globalization" is always contextualized. Even if economic processes such as persons with capital to invest looking for places where they can get the best return with minimal interference, how that process affects a given area depends on contextual factors. Global economic and social movements have local impacts, thus the word "glocalization," which needs to be kept in mind whenever we are talking about the broader context. Second, while global communications developments "compress" the time it takes for processes to occur and become virtually worldwide, there are competing processes occurring within and in opposition to global cultural, political, and economic trends. For example, there is the irony that even as the world becomes more unified at one level, consciousness of ethnic and religious particularity often leads peoples to identify more strongly with their own group than they had previously. Religion is undergoing a renaissance in many places, and Christianity has no monopoly on producing concerned, committed persons opposing

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<sup>8</sup> Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Los Angeles: Sage, 1992), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Robertson, *Globalization*, 9.

<sup>10</sup> See Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), esp. ch. 1, "Globalization and the Contexts of Theology," 1-27.

economistic trends. Schreiter is particularly informative when he discusses what Christian identity means in the context of such religious and ethnic identity movements.

### GLOBALIZATION, AN OLD PROCESS – RECENTLY NAMED – HEATS UP

If one reads the history and aspirations of ancient great empires such as those of Alexander, Rome, Persia, Babylonia, China, Islam under the Caliphate, and the Mongols, it is clear that each had a drive to bring the entire known world under its aegis. None, however, attained a truly global reach. Nor did any of them truly know the extent of the earth they sought to dominate. Nevertheless, there is little different in the principles of their expansion from that of the expansion of the West that began in the 1450s, as the Portuguese began exploring down the west coast of Africa. The Italian Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas was, of course, an accident that took place as he pursued the goals of one of two rival Iberian kingdoms. He sailed the ocean blue because Ferdinand and Isabella sought a way to outflank the Islamic Empire in order to gain direct access to trade with merchants who could provide the goods of China and spices of the Indonesian archipelago.

By the late 1800s, most of Africa and large swaths of Asia were effectively dominated by these powers. The third great Continental mass, Latin America, was ostensibly free of external domination after the revolutions of the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the elites that dominate there are the direct descendants of the Spanish and Portuguese captains, governors, and bureaucrats who had ruled the colonies for the crown for three centuries. Practically speaking, the policies they followed throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries guaranteed that decisions would be made for the benefit of the elites. The poor had little or no power, and middle classes were negligible. The economies and social institutions of those lands, including the official Church, were set up to benefit the elites, not the *Mestizo*, and certainly not the Indian. And to the north the captains of industry and the importers of tropical fruit and other primary products were prepared to exert influence on their government to keep things that way.

From the early 1930s in Asia and from 1939 to 1945 in Europe, the world was at war. That war revealed the interconnectedness of the nations of the world in a dramatic manner. Between 1945 and 1990, the former allies engaged in a Cold War in which Africa, Asia, and Latin America became the zones where the First and Second Worlds used surrogates to gain advantages. In response, the non-aligned movement tried to jockey for an independent position, while China was in a class of its own. In any case, by 1991, the nations of the North Atlantic alliance, joined by Japan, and several outlier nations were at the top of the economic heap.

The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was also the period in which civilian applications of information technologies that had been invented in the laboratories of the world's advanced military powers came into their own and began to shrink the world for the owner of a desk top computer or a ball-bearing maker in Indianapolis the same way they had been shrunk for a target selector in the Russian Rocket Service or the United States Navy for nearly fifty years. Those left outside the information revolution came to be thought of as the victims of globalization.

What was happening to the masses in Asia, Latin America, and Africa during this period? The answer to that question, of course, is complex. Their situation was not identical in the single continents. Asia, in particular, is so vast and populated by so many peoples with distinctive cultural and language traditions that the only generalization one

can make is that *no* generalization can be made. In terms of colonizing either the mind or the land, however, it is clear that the West made fewer inroads there than in Africa, Oceania, or Latin America. It is also clear that except in the Philippines, where the Spaniards could exert total control, Christian missions made little progress in Asia in the modern period. In West Asia and North Africa, Islam had ejected Christianity several centuries earlier, except for remnant communities in Mesopotamia, Armenia, Palestine and Northeast Africa. Indeed, despite all the efforts of missionaries from the sixteenth century to the twentieth, it is likely that Nestorian (better, "East Syrian") Orthodoxy ministered to the conversion of far greater percentage of Asians along the Silk Road and into China in the seventh through the ninth centuries than have become Christian in Asia ever since. Yet a change of Chinese Emperors in the tenth century and a decision of the Mongols to become Muslim virtually obliterated all those churches and cut off any chance of Christianity becoming a major force there.

In the area we today call Latin America the situation was quite different both religiously and socially, and the various combinations of the Spanish word *mestizo* captures the central theme. In most of South America and in West and South North America, Indian peoples died in huge numbers of diseases brought in by Europeans. Great pressure was brought upon those who survived to become Catholic, and most did. For many years this entire period was characterized as an unmitigated horror unworthy of the Christians who visited it upon the native populations. Without discounting that for a moment, contemporary historians have also pointed out that among the results of that missionary effort we need to realize that both the Indians and the mixed race issue of marriages between *conquistadores* and Indians found liberating and subversive elements in the religion they took on themselves.<sup>11</sup> The native and *mestizo* peoples, in other words, discerned life-giving elements and actively shaped the message. They were not mere pawns in the hands of missionaries. In terms of economics and social change, at a minimum, one must say that Iberian Catholicism and institutions that derived from Iberian cultures did not become the midwife of the bourgeois revolution in Latin America that accompanied social and economic change in Europe and North America and led to mass democracies.

In Africa virtually no progress was made in Catholic mission from the 1450s through the early 1800s. It was only when freed African-American slaves carried the Gospel to Africa in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that Christianity gained plausibility among native-born Africans. The work of scholars like Kwame Bediako, Lamin Sanneh, and Andrew Walls has made that chapter in Christian history accessible to us today. Sanneh's identifies the embrace of what he calls "anti-structural elements" in Christianity as the cornerstone of the mass conversion movements that would become a torrent in the middle two-thirds of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> Andrew Walls states the case succinctly, when he says:

Modern African Christianity is not only the result of movements among Africans, but it has been principally sustained by Africans and is to a surprising extent the result of African initiatives. Even the missionary factor must be put into perspective.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See Alex García Rivera, *St Martín de Porres: "The Little Stories" and the Semiotics of Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> See Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 9-16, 243-249.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 86. See pp. 85-93 for Walls' analysis of the African dimension in African conversion.

Without denigrating the work of countless thousands of Protestant and Catholic missionaries from Europe and America, it is important to note that the pace of conversion picked up *after* 1960 when they began to leave Africa and Africans began taking over the churches they founded. Moreover, in another important phenomenon, African Initiated Churches of various kinds have become the fastest growing and perhaps the most vital form of Christian life in many places throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

When the formal colonization of Africa had been dismantled, the anticipated benefits of independence, however, never materialized, and it has to be said that the masses were left in dire social and economic situations. The traditional social order was destroyed beyond the possibility of reconstitution, and a just, new order would not stick. From 1960 onward, a class of black kleptocrats arose, men who

- (1) were every bit as rapacious as white colonialists;
- (2) who extorted a huge share of national wealth; and
- (3) enlisted the support of international bankers, politicians, and industrialists to keep them in power to guarantee stability amid Cold War rivalries between East and West.

When one adds to that the inexorable progress of HIV/AIDs and genocides in Rwanda, Burundi, the Congo, and Sudan, the picture is not pretty.

Philip Jenkins' recent book has, in my judgment, given us a valuable summary of what occurred religiously in these three large continental areas.<sup>14</sup> By that I understand two things. First, Christian symbols and ideals are integral to the way that the peoples of Africa and Latin America look out on the world that surrounds them. He observes that Christians in Asia are a tiny minority and that Christian influence there is marginal. Second, he observes that the most vigorous forms of Christianity in Africa and Latin America are Independent, Pentecostal, and Evangelical. If I read his critics right, the greatest demurrals from the case he makes come from progressive Catholics and liberal Protestants. And I suspect that it is no accident that his fiercest critics come from the progressive wings of these churches, wings that he judges to be in global decline. At another level, although I agree with Peter Phan<sup>15</sup> that Jenkins does not have Asia right, his most fierce critics are really disputing his forecast that militant (read, "Evangelical, Fundamentalist, or Pentecostalist") forms of Christianity will first predominate and then set the tone in Latin America and Africa. I read Jenkins as making a betting man's case for his scenarios being probable, rather than predicting inexorable outcomes that his adversaries see him making. And to me the bet seems at least six to four in his favor.

The question for Christian ethics and missiology, it seems to me, is whether "globalization" is the reason that Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia (particularly western Asia) lag behind Europe, North America, and large swathes of Asia. Or, alternatively, is something peculiar to the social, political, and religious institutions in the many geographical and cultural conglomerations of these regions really at issue? And then, what role can Christian churches play in bringing about improvements?

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Peter C. Phan, "The Next Christianity," *America* 188 (3 Feb 2003): 9-11.

## “MISSION” IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

To paint a truly global, missiological picture of the world, we need to take into account North American and European Christianity. If missiology has indeed moved beyond its colonial origins, popularly imaged as white men and women working among “less fortunate” brown and black peoples, what is to be said about mission to the West, including Europe, North America, and nations like Australia and New Zealand?

Andrew Greeley reminds us that simple judgments about the demise of Christianity in Europe are likely to be wrong, and that the so-called “secularization” hypothesis is not sufficient to explain what is happening there.<sup>16</sup> Can it be said that European Christians are driving efforts to ameliorate the situation of the poor in the Third World? Without discounting their many contributions, the motivations of European governments aimed at such progress appears to me to be largely secular, not religious. And while the rhetoric of the European politicians is soothing, European bankers and industrialists appear quite dedicated to safe-guarding capital and garnering maximum return on it. It involves quite a stretch of the imagination to think that, for example, French Catholicism or British Anglicanism will soon nurture churches capable of restoring Christianity’s voice in the public square or even bringing a respectable percentage of their peoples back to allegiance to Christianity. Yet when one talks with Third World Christians, they are often bemused about the situation of such churches believing they have a right to carry on mission as humanitarian rescue operations in the South while being unable to convince even sizeable minorities of their fellow citizens to take their Gospel seriously. If the South is economically poor, I have heard it asked, is it not spiritually richer than the North and should it not, perhaps, begin missions there? African Anglicans who believe they may be called upon to save North American Episcopalians gone astray from sound teaching are serious people. Dismissing them as cultural conservatives does not do justice to the gravity and depth of their convictions, yet I have heard several American Episcopalians speak dismissively of them.

In North America, religious organizations are clearly able to influence the terms of debate on, if not the outcomes of, public policy issues that have an impact on family life, the status of the unborn, and same-sex marriage. They are also quite active in reaching out to and often successful in bringing their unchurched fellow citizens into the church. But it is quite a stretch to imagine the churches in North America sparking major changes in fundamental political, economic, social, and military structures that have an impact on the Third World. To the extent that North American and European structures dominate the globalization process, the deck remains stacked against the poor of Africa and Latin America. No better proof of this is needed than to examine US and EU agricultural policies. Both poles of the North Atlantic economic world indulge in the most hypocritical accusations of one another’s protectionism, all the while clinging to policies that keep Third World imports out.

Yes, things are more complicated if we look to Asia, where the First and Third World often exist side by side in the same nation. We have already mentioned Muslim Malaysia’s successes in saving its economy *against* all “expert” advice of the globalizers in IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. It is certainly unclear where to classify the two largest nations, India and China. At over a billion persons in each, they are so socially complex that it is no exaggeration to speak of several virtual nations — marked by culture,

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<sup>16</sup> Andrew M. Greeley, “Religious Decline in Europe,” *America* 190 (1 March 2004): 16-18.

socio-economic stratification, and religious identification — within each. Japan, and the Asian Tigers are moving ahead. How does one understand Vietnam's semi-capitalist socialism? Yet in all these cases, economic success is accompanied by a certain uneasiness concerning whether Asia will move beyond the mass poverty that has long characterized it. Yes, Asian progress at making goods the world wants more cheaply than the United States, Canada, Australia-New Zealand, and Europe puts their peoples on a path toward equality with the traditional economic powerhouses, much to the discomfort of these Western nations. But from a missiological perspective, at least three things must be said.

First, there is little sign that Christian churches are *decisively* influential in any of these Asian centers and every sign that both Asian religions and that Asian brands of religious relativism and skepticism are on the increase. Certainly Christian influence will never occur on a "Christendom" model, and whether the churches of Asia will have the kind of "diaspora" influence on the larger culture that intertestamental Judaism had on the Hellenistic world is not yet clear. Second, in the broad swath of Muslim Asia from the Indonesian islands all the way to Lebanon, the dominant mood is anger at and distrust of the West, and certainly no public Christian influence is evident. Tom Friedman of *The New York Times* is fond of saying that the future of the Muslim world will not be determined by war between Christianity and Islam but a war *within* Islam to decide how the Islamic world will relate to the rest of the world. I think he's right, and the outcome is not predictable from where I stand. The most interesting kind of interreligious dialogue will not occur on a theological level between Christians and Muslims. Rather, the question is, can Christians and Muslims agree upon a practical agenda on which to collaborate to turn back the nihilistic popular culture that threatens to undermine every theonomic vision of how the world — humanity and nature — and God relate? Third, while the economic miracles of Asia have distinctive Asian features, they are firmly linked into the global banking and capital system. Yes, they follow patterns of loyalty to ethnic groups, family and clients, that are particular to Asia, an important form of glocalization that Westerners often find hard to understand and take into account. But there is little likelihood that they will abandon the principles of capitalism seeking to maximize profits or make major initiatives to aid Africa and Latin America. Who, then, is to convince the owners of capital to take a broad view of how to increase both economic and social capital?

If one surveys the world since 1492, it is clear that the North Atlantic powers have gained power and wealth in comparison to the rest of the world. The biggest and long-term loser in this power game has been the Arab-Turkic Middle East, which before defeats at Lepanto in 1571 and Vienna in 1683, was arguably as powerful as Europe. Sub-Saharan Africa remains as it was before the colonial era, marginal to the world economy. Latin America is harder to characterize, but the volatility of its economic health and socio-political situation say much about a continent that is uneasy in relation to the rest of the world. At a minimum, it is hard to see when the Arab-Muslim Middle East and North Africa will pull out of the decline into which they now exist in relation to the rest of the world.

And if anyone thinks I am pessimistic, just read the 2002 and 2003 United Nations Development Program's *Arab Human Development Reports*. Given the heat generated by Islamist movements and resentments stemming from the perception that declining fortunes are caused by the West in general and, the United States and Israel, in particular, the Arab Middle East promises to remain a source of instability, even if the present Iraq War ends with that unhappy land returning to some semblance of law order. Yet few in the West take seriously the theological underpinnings of Islamist movements, including their belief that they must bring on millenarian conflict which will end in a new Caliphate with

Islam dominating the world.<sup>17</sup> Yet only dealing in a theologically serious manner with those ideas will other strands of Islam more open to dialogue prevail. Alas, the most the Christian world may be able to do in the midst of that process is show that Christianity as such is not wedded to a crusader, anti-Muslim ideology and stand by sympathetically while Muslims struggle for the soul of Islam.

Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa are far different in terms of social and economic capacity, but they are also, arguably, areas in which Christianity is the most thriving. The question, then, is whether Christian churches will be key players in bringing about the changes necessary to help the peoples of these great continents attain a more dignified, free, and just life as vital participants in the world *oikumene*. That question, I think, has two parts. The first is whether the churches in these areas will do so. The second is what the role of churches *elsewhere* should be.

In regard to their relationship to the Third World, Christian mission has passed through three stages since 1492. Today it stands at the beginning of a fourth. In the first period, the goal was conceived almost totally as one of converting people — most of whom were believed would not be “saved” if they did not convert to Christianity — and planting the church. As the first matured, missionaries in a second stage saw human needs and did their best to alleviate them. Particularly when women joined the missionary movement in the nineteenth century, that effort led to large scale educational and medical efforts and, at a third stage, during the post-World War II era of development assistance, everyone realized charity and education alone were not going to solve the fundamental problems. Beginning in the 1960s, the call was to move to a fourth stage, that is to say, away from naive development models to the embrace of liberation and reconciliation models of Christianity’s social mission.

With the meeting of the Latin American Bishops at Medellin in 1968 and the publication of Gustavo Gutiérrez’s monumental *Teología de liberación* the call has been for “structural change” and adopting an position called “the preferential option for the poor.”<sup>18</sup> In that context, the cause of underdevelopment was generally identified as dominance by the North that used force both overtly and covertly to maintain the dependence of the South to the benefit of world capitalism.

While dependency theory has not fared well as an explanation of poverty in the South, the core theological insight of liberation theology has.<sup>19</sup> By that I mean that virtually everywhere it is recognized that Christians must make a preferential option for the poor. Even where preferential option terminology itself has not found favor, churches recognize their fundamental obligation to help the poor remove the causes of poverty. This is true whether one speaks of the Lausanne Covenant (1974), the World Council of Churches’ Statement from Nairobi (1975), or the Catholic Church’s *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975).<sup>20</sup> The concept of Christian mission had been expanded beyond seeking to increase the number

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<sup>17</sup> See Max Rodenbeck, “Islam Confronts its Enemies,” *The New York Review of Books* 51 (29 April 2004): 14-18, a review of nine books on this subject by Muslims and former Muslims.

<sup>18</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de liberación* (Lima: CEP, 1971); ET, *Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973).

<sup>19</sup> This is the thesis of the late Vittorio Falsina in his dissertation, “Contemporary Catholic Social Ethics and International Relations: A North-South American Perspective” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1996). He was editing this brilliant example of multi-disciplinary work for publication when he died in an automobile accident in 2000.

<sup>20</sup> For an accessible version of the main elements of each of these texts, see Stephen B. Bevans and James A. Scherer (eds.), *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 1, Basic Statements, 1974-91* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

of disciples and churches to, as David Bosch would put it (borrowing from Jonathan Edwards), “two mandates, the one spiritual, the other social”; the task, according to Bosch, is to see them as two inseparable aspects of a single reality, “evangelism.”<sup>21</sup>

This insight has now become a commonplace. The problem, I believe, is that it becomes ever more difficult to imagine how this missionary mandate can be carried out. My problem is not with the theory that we should work for all these things, but the pragmatic question, how?

I am convinced that words I heard in Prague in a colloquium between the members of the executive committee of the International Association for Mission Studies and Jan Sokol, the Czech philosopher and statesman in January 2002, are accurate. Sokol, who came within one vote of becoming President of the Czech Republic when Vaclav Havel finished his term, speaking of the Catholic church in the Czech lands, said, “It is hollowed out.” He went on to observe that the church tries to influence events, but mainly it is perceived to be concerned with its own prerogatives, not the well being and development of the people. According to Sokol, Czech politicians ignore the voice of the hierarchy because they know bishops represent very few people.

In the West, including the United States, churches are listened to only to the extent that politicians think they have followers behind them. In the U S, for example, groups like the American bishops issued statements against the Iraq war, but I had the impression they were mostly pro forma. Among Protestants, progressive churches based on Riverside Drive spoke more insistently, but their leaders — like the Catholic bishops — knew that their members were divided. More tellingly, the members of the mainline churches — Catholic and Protestant — were not looking to their clergy for guidance. Among Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, I sensed stronger majorities of people who — if not *wanting* to go to war — felt it was a least worst option. Since such Evangelicals, along with blue collar Catholics and conservatives, are the base of the Republican Party, the President judged correctly that he had the necessary backing. If the war in Iraq turns really bad, as many judge it already has, President Bush may be forced from office. Still the vote will be based on the questions whether the people were deceived or — more likely — whether he botched the post-war reconstruction effort. The judgment will be made on pragmatic grounds, not the grounds of antiwar Christians.

My point? For all the talk of peace making and reconciliation as integral aspects of the Christian mission, Christians and followers of other traditions who espouse such goals have had remarkably little practical clout within the American political system — at least *as organized bodies*. Tony Blair and George Bush are among the most committed Christians ever to hold office in their respective nations, yet both went against their churches’ guidance.

I hear an objection. What about the churches that sent antiwar marchers into the streets? What about the witness of religious orders and various NGOs? Aren’t they being prophetic? If the meaning of prophecy is interpreting the signs of the times and warning that immoral actions will face God’s judgment, groups such as Pax Christi and the Fellowship of Reconciliation are prophetic. Yes, but in sociological terms, they are also resemble “sects.” By that I do not mean that they are fanatics. Rather, in the terminology of Ernst Troeltsch, writing in 1911 and speaking of sects that developed from Protestant churches after the reformation,

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<sup>21</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 403, 409ff.

The sect is a voluntary society, composed of strict and definite Christian believers bound to each other by the fact that all have experienced "the new birth." These "believers" live apart from the world, are limited to small groups, emphasize the law instead of grace, and in varying degrees within their own circle set up the Christian order, based on love..."<sup>22</sup>

In the context of Troeltsch's work as a whole, the sect (or a highly motivated voluntary society) may be the vanguard of a movement (like the Franciscans) that will have a great influence on reforming or changing the direction of the church and perhaps even society as a whole over time, but the very nature of their fervor and idealism means that their members are marginal to and marginalized by the sort of people who dwell among the cultural elites or in government or financial bureaucracies.

To conclude this section, since 1945, we have moved to a position where virtually every Christian theologian and leader sees the search for peace, social justice and the integrity of creation as essential to the Christian mission. During these same years, forces that since the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century have led to a more globalized, interdependent world have sped up. The revolution in communications in the past two decades, moreover, has made war, genocide, suffering, and other forms of injustice visible in ways they never were in the past. Nevertheless, it is arguable that, except around certain margins, the world is not a better place now than it was fifty years ago. My question is not whether Christians have said the right things but whether we have done well or enough. The answer to that is certainly No.

### *Re-Thinking Christian Mission from the Ground Up*

At least since 1975, we have recognized the need to change the systems that cause the problems that make poverty, racism, sexism, and forms of injustice, including the rape of the environment, appear insoluble. Some have said such activities are integral to Christian mission. Others have said they are important, but that the core of the mission still revolves around proclaiming what God has done in Christ and the Spirit.

Wherever you stand on those debates, while oceans of ink have been spilled to make the case for new habits of mind and heart in an area such as environmental concerns, it is hard to argue that concern for the integrity of creation is valued as much as the political benefits of creating jobs and increasing profits, even if the environment will suffer. No doubt some disagreement arises out of honest disagreement whether a given policy will result in cleaner water at an affordable cost or that saving a small blue butterfly is more important than saving a crop or providing jobs. The question, however, is less one of analysis than of paralysis. And part of the problem may be the very use of the term "systemic evil" and taking as our goal, "changing the fundamental structures of oppression" in a world we believe is now "globalized."

If we start with Jan Sokol's trenchant remark, is a large part of our ineffectiveness due to our churches being "hollowed out"? Isn't it a fact that rank-and-file members of our churches really do not see these justice and peace issues as woven into a seamless garment? And that many resent clerical leaders pushing them in directions they have not decided they want to go? Is much of what an attentive elite regards as self-evidently flowing from being a Christian is really so self-evident? At the very least, it is not self-evident to a Christians who have not made the fundamental option for faith. And by faith I mean faith in the strong, Pauline-Lutheran sense of that word as an act of self-giving,

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<sup>22</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (Chicago: University of Chicago, Midway Reprint, 1976), 993.

trusting commitment to Jesus and the Gospel, led by the Holy Spirit. Such a conversion, I am saying, is integral to seeing the cogency of the Christian social message. Using metaphorical terminology, one needs “new eyes” to see the true shape of things, in something like the revolution of heart and mind described and prayed for in Ephesians 1:17-22 and 3: 7-19, esp. verses 9 and 18f.

Am I winding up to a Billy Graham altar call? No. I distrust instant conversions and calling Jesus an answer to questions that he could never have imagined. Even more, I distrust those who think that Christianity and its many traditions have answers to all the problems that face us. What I am saying, though, is that Christianity begins with conversion, continues with inward purification, and has social effects when churches are comprised of people who are truly trying to give their hearts to God by giving their lives and talents to their fellow human beings.

I once heard David DuPlessis, the great South African Pentecostal leader, say, “God has no Grandchildren.” As he went on that summer evening of 1964, when I was a novice in the Society of the Divine Word’s novitiate in Conesus, New York, he added, “*You* can’t pass on *your* faith to your children. They become children of God on their own by responding to the Spirit leading them to Christ.”

And here I to wonder if we in the so-called mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches, with all our theological riches and tradition — including those of us who have gotten doctorates or who are preparing for leadership roles in the church — don’t perhaps have to step back, take a deep breath, and ask if we recognize the fundamental mystery of faith as an individual’s entrée into an inner dialogue with God.

For those more comfortable with theological shorthand than the language of pietism, large swathes of Bernard Lonergan’s *Insight* are devoted to showing that human understanding achieves its apex when it surrenders itself to God’s self-revelation. Lonergan’s is the theology I know best and the contemporary theology that I think deals best with humanity’s, and human individuals’ inability to overcome evil in all its deceitful forms. The way evil is overcome, he says in *Insight*, is for us to embrace God’s solution, thus putting ourselves — “in cooperation with God in solving man’s problem of evil.”<sup>23</sup> In that process, a total conversion begins to take place in the inward person.

In his next book *Method in Theology*, Lonergan uses the language and experience of love to explicate what the search for wisdom in the Christian tradition entails. The foundation of effective action, however, remains what it was in *Insight*. In that process, just as conversion is doorway to knowing God and one’s self, so continual conversion and growth lead one to maturity, just as maturity is shaped by recognition that I can fall backwards. Christianity is not so much a body of truth, in Lonergan’s vision, as it is a community shaped by vital contact with others animated by the one Spirit. To be sure, his book on *Method* shows immense respect for all the disciplines of historical and linguistic studies to enable the community to understand its Scriptures, its doctrines, and itself. But ultimately, everything comes down to “communications,” where “individuals and groups . . . labor to persuade people to intellectual, moral, and religious conversion and that work systematically to undo the mischief brought about by alienation and ideology. Among such bodies should be the Christian church.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), 719.

<sup>24</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 361.

### *Who is the "Subject" of Christianity's Social Mission?*

My question is the manner in which the church should carry on that mission and' more importantly in a postcolonial discussions of mission, who is the subject who carries it on? For starters, though, when I say "mission," I try to banish from my mind classic models of mission that saw Eur-American men and women going into the Global South. Mission today, even *missio ad vel inter gentes* ("mission 'to' or 'among' peoples") is not to defined geographically. That said, in terms of the social mission of the church, we have several models. The Vatican maintains a diplomatic corps, for example, that allows the leadership of the Catholic Church to speak to heads of state in times of crisis. The World Council of Churches has regular general assemblies at which it studies current problems, formulates answers, and works with member churches to create educational materials to help local churches become effective. Member churches of the WCC, on the basis of these documents and their own contextual analysis, make public statements, try to influence legislation and, when necessary, protest states of affairs and actions of governments and corporations that they believe are injurious. International religious orders have increasingly begun to seek NGO status at the United Nations and to testify before UN forums and events organized by others. Evangelical Christians band together to support groups like The Moral Majority to make their concerns known. Similarly, groups like Pax Christi, The Catholic Worker, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation promote policies that they believe will promote peace and justice.

What most of these groups have in common is harmonious with the "voluntary principle," around which civil society is organized. Groups of citizens band together to make their voices heard. I would find it hard to say this is improper.

Still, if one turns attention to efforts to promote peace on the part of the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, the United Methodist Church, or the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at world forums or before Congressional committees, those they seek to influence have one overriding concern: How many people do you really represent and can I serve my interests best by following your advice or merely being polite, hoping you'll go away, or hoping that the cause of the day will change? The UN Ambassador called on by several representatives of religious orders knows that they may represent a large proportion of the six thousand members of the Society of the Divine Word or the three thousand members of the Passionists, but he is skeptical whether they really speak for the two million Catholics their members guide pastorally in sixty-four nations.

While these methods of promoting our causes and points of view are well-intended and probably necessary, they work only to the extent these agents speak for large numbers of constituents. And what I am driving at is that our influence is weakened by the fact that politicians, diplomats, and corporate executives know that elites such as church leaders are often far in advance of our membership. It is a noble goal to get a corporation to change an environmentally destructive way of mining, but your ability to get it changed raises exponentially if you have a sizable bloc of shares to vote.

Without for a minute recommending that anyone abandon its NGO status at the U N or that the Vatican close its embassies, I do think that Lonergan's insistence on conversion as the door — and ongoing conversion as the way of life for Christians — needs to be attended to. Individual religious experience, to recall Sobrino's words, is not *private* experience, and it has *social* consequences.

If we look at historical examples of Christian groups that have been successful in moving from midwifery in the process of individual conversion to forming men and women to be Christian witnesses in the world, there may be lessons to learn. The Society

of Jesus, when it began setting up schools and placing its members as instructors of subjects from grammar and mathematics to physics, philosophy, and theology, thought it would have beneficial social effects. Their goal was to form men and later women to go from their schools into the world with a sense of vocation. Ideally the best of them were further shaped by being guided through the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius and ongoing spiritual direction, to make a difference in the world. The second group I raise up for attention is the *Opus Dei*, founded by Josemaría Escrivá (1902-1975). While holding up the Jesuits for consideration will seem less controversial than doing so for *Opus Dei*, the similarities between the two movements must be recognized.

Neither Ignatius nor Escrivá intended his group to serve narrowly construed *ecclesiastical* ends. Yet ecclesiastical authorities tried to co-opt them. I leave it to your judgment to what extent their co-optation may succeed. A Jesuit friend once told me that it was clear the Jesuits enjoyed too much being the chaplains of kings, the confessors of cardinals, and confidants of Dukes. He smiled and said he wondered when the followers of Escrivá would ever make a similar judgment about their position of power in today's church. Still, both Saints Ignatius and Josemaría wanted their followers to make a difference in the world. Running schools and directing promising men and women through the *Spiritual Exercises* was Ignatius's means to equip the laity to carry Christian concerns and viewpoints into royal chambers, business and banking discussions, and even the military. Similarly Escrivá believed that the work of God was every legitimate form of human work. Long before I heard accusations that Escrivá was a supporter of Franco or any of the hundred other accusations since leveled (many of which, indeed, have foundation) against him, I remember being inspired by a book that one of my college classmates had gotten from his parents, who were members of the Work.

To the extent it "exists" as more than an imprecise summarizer of certain worldwide trends, globalization is actualized by a thousand decisions every day and millions each year. Such decisions include: where to build a new plant; with whom to collaborate on a new generation of software; whether to buy coffee from a supplier using eco-friendly methods of agriculture; or whether to pay bribes to a *padron* and sign contracts that harm workers. What is required to make globalization work *for* the poor is not inventing a new economic order, but making this one function differently. And for that to happen, Christians need to think of themselves not solely as a pressure group working from outside the system, but as communities of people nurturing converted, conscientized men and women within the system. With that as a foundation, a call to a bank's board of governors by an NGO, for instance, may find someone answering the phone already predisposed to hear what a Franciscan general chapter wants to say.

What I think bears thoughtful consideration is whether we today are working hard enough to provide spiritual and theological formation to for the lay person who answers that phone. In my own judgment, the answer is a resounding no. Formation for ordained and lay ministers *within* and *for* the church certainly gets attention. A music minister, for example, can open any of a hundred newspapers and magazines to learn of dozens of places to improve her skills. Similarly, if you are a congregational pastor, you have your choice of hundreds of places from the California's Big Sur to the Lakes Region of England to spend a week, a month, six months or a year in theological and spiritual renewal. Catholic dioceses and orders, Lutheran synods, and Presbyterian sessions assign people to raise funds for such purposes. Yes, and development directors at places such as Catholic Theological Union work long hours trying to raise funds so lay students can attend.

My point is not that no effort is spent on training the laity, it is just that the kind of disciplined nurturing of the lay vocation along lines one sees in the activities of an Ignatius or Chiara Lubich is not prevalent enough. Yet, and this is where I have been heading since the beginning of this meandering paper. In today's globalized world, the kind of decisions that need to be influenced are made in untold hundreds of thousands if not dozens of millions of nodes. Decision making in today's information technology economy is much more akin to the way ants discern the need to move in a certain direction than that of a military commander giving complex tasking orders to air, land, sea, special forces components of his force.

The weakness of our efforts to influence governments lies in accepting the premise that there are a few identifiable power nodes and that, if we can influence them, good decisions will be made. Indeed, few today have much confidence in revolutions. But the truth of the matter is that the ability of legislatures, governors, prime ministers, and international organizations such as the UN and the World Bank to make a *decisive* difference in the matters that will most affect the poor are limited. And even if it seems that a few hundred heads of transnational corporations and banks are reachable at the World Economic Forum in Davos and can be convinced by our ideas, when you talk to those heads of corporations, you discover quickly that they feel themselves pushed now this way and now that — *from within* by forces they cannot control. And that they live in horror that a competitor — *from without*— will make a breakthrough that will put his or her corporation at a disadvantage. You think it should be an easy thing for Oil Corporation A to run an environmentally sound operation paying decent wages in an African nation. The head of that corporation, though, feels trapped between voracious politicians with their hands out and knowledge that Corporation B will be more than happy to take over the operation. Shareholders, he fears, will not forgive him losing the concession no matter how ethical was his decision not to compromise with crooks.

Sharon Welch is especially helpful in her work on feminist perspectives on liberation theology when she reminds us that the type of humanity envisioned by liberation theologians does not come about naturally; it has to be achieved. This type of human community is not a given; it must be fought for. Even then, it can be, and often is, destroyed in history. It is to be achieved, not merely recognized. Liberation theology is part of a struggle for the establishment of a particular kind of subjectivity, not a declaration of the a priori existence of that subjectivity.<sup>25</sup>

Our problem, in other words, is that the whole human race is deceived by and held hostage to visible and invisible pressures. The kind of person who can help us escape this sort of oppression needs formation and a vision. Humanity is held down, like Gulliver, by Lilliputians, but in our case some Lilliputians can be seen and some can hardly even be imagined. Yet, if you take Buddhist anthropology and cosmology seriously — which I do — our problem is that most persons of good will believe that with just a little more effort, these powers can be overcome. But the poison of desire that causes suffering, in the Buddhist analysis, ails us at a level far deeper than good will and common sense can overcome. Alas, I betray myself, perhaps, as a better Lutheran, Calvinist, or Buddhist than optimistic modern Catholic when I say we are not involved in a neutral situation, but one in which sin and illusion hold us in their thrall, perhaps most strongly when we believe political action and better institutions can save us.

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<sup>25</sup> Sharon D. Welch makes a major point of the need to think concretely about who is to be the agent of social change in her *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 66.

When I presented a version of this paper in Chicago on 17 March 2004, one of my oldest friends, Dean Gary Riebe of the Catholic Theological Union asked a question that uncovers the fundamental weakness of my proposal. Gary noted that my way of putting the weight on the action of individuals and skepticism toward the notion that the churches will accomplish much by action in the public square mean that powerful elites will take advantage of our retreat from such activities as exerting pressure on Congress. I did not formulate a very satisfactory response to his question then.

As I reflect further on it, however, I remain convinced that, until the churches convince their membership fully to support the leadership's position on economic, ecological, and war-peace issue, all the statements in the world will have little real effect. To imagine we can function *Christically* in any other fashion is to imagine that we are just another societal pressure group trying to mimic squeaking axles so that the elites in Congress and business —and their functional equivalents in other nations and in international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations — will apply grease to the wheel. The churches' power to transform and inform the terms of debate and decisions in the public square, however, depends upon two things, both related to the degree of conviction and spiritual maturity of their members. First, leadership needs to make cogent cases that convince their own members. Making this work depends on listening to conscientized, well-informed lay people and not formulating unrealistic programs. Especially it means not promoting concrete policies as demanded by Christian faith when, in fact, men and women of good will differ widely on them. Second, nothing will happen if we do not equip our members to *want to implement these proposals* in their communities, families, and places of work. Wanting to implement them depends upon creating the kind of Christian communities that will nurture such activism. Too much pastoral thinking regards "ministry" as something Christians do *within* the church. In my view, pastoral thought needs to become much more *missiological* in finding ways to inspire and nurture church members for work *in the world*. I conclude with a few remarks on theological education.

## THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Three people have influenced my thinking on this. Two are members of the Hyde Park Community in Chicago. The third is a Korean working in Singapore. At a seminar last fall in Pasadena, Amanda Quantz presented materials from her dissertation on Taddeo Gaddi's "Tree of Life" mural in the refectory of the Franciscan Friars at Santa Croce in Florence.<sup>26</sup> The mural itself dates to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and is not particularly beautiful. The light that went on in my head as Amanda talked was one that CTU's Zachary Hayes, OFM, had tried to turn on in 1979, but didn't succeed in lighting. Amanda was illustrating Zachary's point that medieval theology had two modes, one of which had developed along lines pioneered by St Bonaventure. The other line was that of Aquinas. Moving into the Reformation, though, the primary line theology took was, on the one hand "critical" and on the other hand concerned with doctrines. That is not surprising, because Luther, Calvin, and the Reformers were trying to leap over the accretions of the medieval period. What happened, though, was the creation of a theological enterprise that increasingly took its cues from universities and Aquinas instead of integrating that with the aesthetic approach of Bonaventure and the monasteries. My point? Not that the Dominicans were bad and the

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<sup>26</sup> Amanda Donna Quantz, "Bonaventure's Tree of Life in Image and word: An Interdisciplinary Study of Transformation Through Christ" (PhD diss., St Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology, 2003).

Franciscans were good. Rather, that we have become much better at dissecting the Christian mystery than in presenting it as what it really is, an aesthetic whole, a piece of art, that needs to be mediated to upcoming generations as a wisdom, a way of life. Gaddi's Tree of Life is an image of the way that 14<sup>th</sup> century Franciscans saw life as a unity in which the Last Supper and Crucifixion were the well springs of redeemed wholeness.

Moonjang Lee makes this point in an Asian context in an article that will be published in the bulletin of *Asian Christian Theology*.<sup>27</sup> Asian students, he believes, are turned off by the division of theology into guild specialties. They instinctively seek initiation into the *Christian Tao* — the “way of Jesus” — in the way a spiritual master helps give birth to the fundamental intuition that brings one into harmony with the Tao in Taoist-Confucian traditions or to Enlightenment in Buddhist. Becoming one with the Tao results in illumination of the way one lives from within. Such imagery is, of course, not foreign to the Gospel of John or the letters of Paul, for in them the Christ is the light of the world and the one who leads one to new consciousness. Yet the dean who tries to convince her faculty that the curriculum should be devised to help students come to know God and God's presence in the world along such paths would not, I suspect, be voted in for a second term. We have spent at least two hundred years building up guild identities at the expense of a more wholistic view of the theological and missiological education task. Huge investments in professorial self-understanding have been made in forging such identities. Yet initiation into the Tao of Jesus *is* the foundation for all ministry, both in the church and in the world.

Finally, Anne Carr, in her typical manner of making complex things clear, recently made me realize that insights from feminist and process thought on our multireligious context converge to show us the need to move beyond images of divine power and providence taken from regal potentates exercising dominion over their subjects.<sup>28</sup> At another stage in her argument, she notes that there is hunger today for the twelfth century's “symbolic, narrative, metaphorical... monastic-mystical tradition,” joined to what Schillebeeckx has called the “Christian Constant,” a “mystical-political polarity.”<sup>29</sup> The world Christian movement needs organization, to be sure, but it is the kind or organization that is guided by a dynamic, living Spirit. It is primarily a lay movement in which the role of the ordained is to minister to those at work in the countless situations where decisions affecting our globalized world occur. Consistent with the insights of process theology, God works to lure us into creating a more just world by the persuasive power of personal example and conviction, not by manipulating pieces on a chessboard. The way the Kingdom comes is more likely to be the result of flowers planted by followers of Jesus growing up in ordinary daily situations than announced by a heavenly trumpet blast.

That at least is this Catholic's perspective on the intersection of Globalization, Mission, and Theological Education in our day. The weakness in our discussion of globalization and how its negative dimensions can be counteracted, I believe, if we reverse the failure to think concretely on who is to the subject, the agent, who takes on this mission. I believe it is the laity and that they need to be formed in a kind of theological-spiritual formation that embraces a mystical-aesthetic view of the Christian project. The role of church leaders is to serve that laity.

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<sup>27</sup> Moonjang Lee, unpublished paper, cited with permission, “Asianization of Theology and Theological Education.”

<sup>28</sup> Anne Carr, “Providence, Power, and the Holy Spirit,” *Horizons* 20 (2002), 82.

<sup>29</sup> Carr, “Providence,” 86-87.

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