

# Colloquium 2000

Faith communities  
and social movements  
facing globalization

edited by  
Ulrich Duchrow

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Studies from the  
World Alliance of Reformed Churches

Faith Communities and Social Movements  
Facing Globalization

International and Interfaith Colloquium 2000  
on Faith–Theology–Economy

Edited by Ulrich Duchrow

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## Foreword

Ulrich Duchrow

Globalization can mean many things. Some people understand it to involve the worldwide spread of modern technologies of production and communications of all kinds across frontiers – in trade, capital, production and information. Others see it as a more complex historical process in which economies and whole societies become more interconnected through new hierarchical relationships that may benefit some communities or regions but that weaken and destabilize many others. This unevenness of results has caused impoverishment and even misery for millions of people, as well as serious ecological destruction. In still another sense, globalization is shorthand for the cultural changes that follow when societies become linked with, and in varying measures dependent upon, world markets.

The negative consequences of this experience with globalization have motivated more and more members of faith communities and social movements to resist what has come to be called “neoliberal capitalist globalization” and to look for alternative economic, political, cultural and spiritual models. If globalization means the displacement of activities that until recently were primarily local into networks of relationships whose reach is distant or worldwide, then faith communities are right to resist its ugliest consequences, even by organizing a “globalization from below”. Some groups harness the Internet and other instruments of globalization to urge reform of existing policies and institutions. Others go farther, arguing that globalization is an ideological capitalist project that has to be rejected as such, and helping to build up local communities that are as much as possible independent of the world market.

Inspired by the “conciliar process of mutual commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation” (JPIC), called for by the sixth assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Vancouver in 1983, leadership for these efforts has come especially from the WCC, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), regional ecumenical networks like Kairos Europa, Pax Christi, and international campaigns like Jubilee 2000.

Out of this cooperation and common action, a plan emerged to organize a colloquium that might bring together as much as possible the many institutions, initiatives and persons who work on the challenges of reconciling faith and theology with the economy. It was decided to hold Colloquium 2000 in Germany. In cooperation with the WCC, WARC and Pax Christi International, a broadly based organizing committee was formed and sponsored by Kairos Europa, the Gossner Mission, the German section of Pax Christi, the Franciscan Mission

Centre, Catholic and Protestant Urban Industrial Mission, Evangelical Academies in Germany, the Rabanus Maurus Catholic Academy, the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck, the Evangelical Mission in Southwest Germany, the United Evangelical Mission, Missio Munich, the Institute for Theology and Politics, the Africa-Germany Network, Religious for Peace, Pro Ökumene, the Reformed Alliance, Südwind e.V., and the Board of Mission and Ecumenism of the Evangelical Church in Hessen and Nassau.

One hundred and fifty representatives of churches, other faith communities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and grassroots initiatives from nearly fifty countries participated in Colloquium 2000. Sixty of the delegates were from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Colloquium 2000 was held June 9-16 2000, at the Evangelical Academy of Hofgeismar, with the theme: "Faith Communities and Social Movements Facing Globalization." Many participants joined twelve exposure programmes in Europe that preceded the colloquium in order to visit initiatives working with victims of globalization. On June 9 2000, most delegates participated in the Religious for Peace vigil that is regularly held in front of the Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt, the most powerful "global player" in Germany.

This book contains most of the contributions that led to intensive discussions at the colloquium, partly in shortened form. The complete documentation, including the issue group reports, can be found on the Internet at [www.econtheo.org](http://www.econtheo.org). The issue groups explored the ideological dimensions of economics; money and finance; production, work and unemployment; poverty and exclusion caused by wealth; ecology, science and technology; (counter-)culture and media; interreligious aspects of economics; churches and social movements; local economies; international solidarity against imperialism and alternative international regulations.

There also was an electronic discussion via the Internet that concentrated on the meaning of "globalization" and on how to link faith resources like the Bible and theology to economics. This documentation is available on the website under "Archive - To all participants".

Most participants came mainly from Christian backgrounds. Participants from other faith communities were asked in advance not to expect a fully interreligious conference, but rather to serve as reflectors and inspirers. Every day was opened with group work on the Bible, a primary resource of the Christian faith.

As the colloquium went on, it became clear to most participants that neoliberal capitalism is also built on a kind of "faith" - a faith analysed especially well by researchers like Susan George and Fabrizio Sabelli in their book *Faith and Credit: The World Bank's Secular Empire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994). The same is true for "spirituality" (see Dorothee Sölle's text under II.3) and "theology" (cf. Jung Mo Sung under IV.3). Bas Wielenga (IV.1) and others

argued that neoliberal capitalism is not only ideological but even idolatrous. This is why the WCC and WARC are calling churches to engage in a process of recognition and education that may lead them to an unambiguous statement of confession about economic injustice and ecological destruction.

This leads us to the inner logic and architecture of Colloquium 2000 and of this book. The introduction by Philip Potter remembers the history of how the ecumenical movement discovered and began to mobilize against the adverse consequences of globalization.

*Part I* shows why and how the different faith communities and their constituencies engage in criticism of neoliberal globalization and work for alternatives to it. It is encouraging to know that Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist communities and their related organizations strive for similar goals at local, national and global levels – well aware, of course, that achieving those goals will be difficult. The colloquium was purposefully designed to link up with the ongoing concerns of faith communities and social movements.

*Part II* offers different perspectives on globalization from the fields of political economy (Julio de Santa Ana), philosophy (Jörg Rieger) and spirituality (Dorothee Sölle). How should one go about analysing the “process” and “project” of globalization? How should one understand and overcome globalization’s western character of self-made successfulness? What are the structures of capitalist spirituality and the spirituality of resistance? Who are the key actors of a globalized economy and how might people take their economic lives into their own hands?

*Part III* selects from the wealth of the Bible insights about alternative kinds of economies, politics and ideology. Seven study groups explored different strategic options offered by the Bible to resist existing structures and establish alternatives to them: prophetic critique of economic and political power; taming economic and political power by law; resistance against economic totalitarianism; and living economic alternatives as faith communities. To be sure, the biblical texts cannot be related directly to present day realities. But by analysing the socio-historical context of selected biblical texts, the study leaders were able to focus the Bible’s messages with sufficient sharpness to shed light on our present situation and context.

*Part IV* is both hermeneutical and strategic. Bas Wielenga highlights the ecological and social crises of our times as essential elements of our context when listening to the Bible. Mary Grey calls for a hermeneutics of subversive retrieval from a women’s perspective. Seeking strategic approaches to overcome capitalist globalization, Jung Mo Sung concentrates his attention on wrong theological assumptions in western culture, such as the idea that inequalities and social exclusion are inevitable. He argues for a culture of grace and solidarity. This is complemented by the ideas of Islamic liberation theology offered by Ashgar Ali and Irfan Engineer, representatives of the network of

engaged Muslims. Strategic considerations conclude *Part IV* with reflections on why the churches find it so difficult to live up to the commitments of their biblical foundation, and how they might overcome the obstacles to biblical faithfulness.

The Colloquium 2000 Declaration concludes the volume.

The Colloquium was not a conference held in isolation. Its memory is part of a process and it is meant to energize that process. So this is an invitation to use its resources and to join the ongoing struggle of faith communities and social movements. The WCC and WARC, in particular, are giving priority to the recognition of, education for, and confession about global economic injustice and ecological destruction. Expressions of structural and cultural violence also deserve to be taken up in the work of the Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence.

I wish to thank all who contributed to this book: the authors, and Wolfgang Geller and Frank Kürschner-Pelkmann, the coordinator and the press officer of the Colloquium. We also thank the WARC communications office for publishing this documentation, as well as those who supported the colloquium and this publication financially.

*Heidelberg, September 2000*

## Introduction

## The ecumenical movement facing globalization in the 20th century

Philip Potter

My task is to introduce our work on globalization by drawing attention to some of the factors which have brought us to this point. We meet at the beginning of the 21st century and the third millennium. The word “globalization” came into general use only in the 1990s and we are still wrestling with what it is and what the consequences could be for humanity. However, we have emerged from the momentous 20th century which has brought about globalization in the different ways it is conceived. The 20th century has also been the century of the ecumenical movement, and of the emergence of a deep concern by communities of faith and of social movements for this planet earth and for the well-being of the people who inhabit it.

*Oikoumene*, from which we get the term “ecumenical”, is a word that we find in the Greek version of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.

It first occurs in Psalm 24: “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world [*oikoumene*], and those who live in it.” *Oikoumene* is a verbal form of the Greek word *oikos* [house]. Note that “house” is not just a building, but comprises those who live in it: it is the people who make it a house. And it is directly related to “the earth”, the whole natural order. But the Psalmist says that both “the earth”, nature and “the word”, the *oikoumene*, the house in which all live, are the Lord’s. In Hebrew, “Lord” does not have the sense of domination or distance. The Hebrew word is “Yahweh” – the one who is there, present and going before as leader and protector.

I want us to remind ourselves, through this little exercise in semantics, that the ecumenical movement is precisely the calling of all of us to consider ourselves co-inhabitants of the earth, and to be present in caring concern for the earth and for all who share with us a common humanity in the presence of God, creator, preserver and fulfiller. People of faiths other than Judaism and Christianity have other ways of expressing the relationship of creation, humanity and the divine or the holy. At any rate that is why we are here for these crowded but convivial days.

I mentioned a moment ago that the 20th century was the century of the ecumenical movement. Actually, the movement started earlier with young people – the YMCA and the YWCA in the second half of the 19th century, and the World Student Christian Federation at the end of that century. In 1909, there was a student conference on what was called “the social problem” – the

problems of people and their relation with each other in the world. At the end of the conference, the participants made a confession. They said:

“We are the social problem... Our lives betray the same spirit of self-seeking and disregard for the persons of our fellows which give rise to glaring social evils. The spirit of worldliness may be detected as certainly in the colleges as in the commerce of our countries. We have to set our house in order. We have to exchange our own unsocial manners and unchristian hopes for those which spring from Jesus Christ.”

The young people, women and men, who made this declaration immediately got to work “to set the house of our world in order”. Right at the heart of the ecumenical movement was the concern for the global house of human beings and of nature. We meet here in this tradition and with a deep sense of urgency as faith communities and social movements facing globalization.

I do not want to go into details now about what has been happening during the 20th century in terms of our witness and service. As I understand it, we are here to face the particular issues posed by the present reality of globalization. In fact, there has been a global economy since at least the 17th century, with Europe playing a dominant role, which has progressively been taken over by North America since the end of the first world war.

I would like to share one experience with you which relates to our concern about the global economy and finance. I was eight years of age when the Wall Street crash took place in 1929. I remember vividly its catastrophic effects on us in the Caribbean and especially in my little home island, Dominica. Our world trade in limes, sugar, bananas, and so on, collapsed. Our families became impoverished. To top it all, a devastating hurricane in 1930 destroyed homes and crops. That was the beginning of my keen political and social consciousness. The Wall Street crash was generated by an extravagant money market and reckless investments which went up and up and then came down. Within ten years, a second world war followed the first. Our present concern about globalization should be seen in the context of the breakdown of the global economy over 70 years ago, and all that has happened since then.

Our theme is faith communities and social movements facing globalization, a word that has been constantly on our lips for the past six or seven years. In 1992 I wrote an essay on “The Global Economic System in Biblical Perspective” in *The Ecumenical Movement Tomorrow*. The word “globalization” was not then in general use. Since that time there has been a flood of books and articles on the subject and it shows no signs of abating.

What brought about globalization in its present form and what are its character and efforts? Of course, I am not about to embark on a treatise on globalization. I only want to make a few quick points. The signs of things to come already started in 1971-73 when the US dollar went off the gold standard. At the same time there was the oil crisis, with the price of oil shooting up. But

we must remember that the currency in which oil was reckoned was and is the US dollar. Then from 1979 into the early 1980s, western countries embarked on financial deregulation. That meant that the nation-state, which was accountable to the people, was no longer in control of the movement of finance. What followed from the freedom of financial markets? It is estimated that over 2,000 billion dollars are floating around the world every twenty-four hours. That is considerably more than the money controlled by national banks. All this is often called “casino finance”.

Another fact of which you are aware is the incredible development of science-based technologies which have considerably increased economic development and goods. Of special importance here is the key role played by biological sciences, affecting even the bodily structure of human beings, as well as of animals and nature. The slogan today is that everything which can be produced should be produced.

The third ingredient of globalization is the breath-taking increase in communications of every kind.

These factors have had a profound effect on the life and relations of peoples and nations.

Last week, on June 5, the prestigious Bank of International Settlements in Basel published its annual report. I quote a few sentences from this report: “The general impression given by the world economy is that it has reached a critical point, but no direction regarding the future...” The rapid expansion of financial credit in many economies and the tendency for lenders to take big risks “implies not only that the world economy is perhaps more exposed to macroeconomic shocks, but also that the dynamic of markets faced with such shocks can prove to be less anticipated than in a more regulated period.”

It should be obvious that a deregulated economic and especially financial system poses many dangers for the world as a whole, even though there is a general consensus among the powerful in the rich countries that the process of globalization is irreversible and inevitable. However, one fact stands out about the globalization process. The rich people and nations get richer, and the poor people and nations get poorer. There is a dangerous and punishing imbalance between the rich and the poor (now over six billion people) in our world. This fact has brought about a very dangerous situation.

Indeed, this glaring reality has mobilized faith communities and social movements as never before. I need only to mention two events – the discussions surrounding the attempted imposition of a Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) in 1997–98 and the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 1999.

For over three years, the exclusive club of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) discussed the Multilateral Agreement on Investments in secret. Renato Ruggiero, WTO director at the time, spoke of it

as “the constitution of a unified world economy”. The WTO would administer this MAI, the aim of which was to extend deregulation to the investment of the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) in the industry and services of other countries, while specifying the obligations of these countries regarding financial transactions, property and natural resources. In short, what MAI would stipulate would be the rights of investors, while receiving countries would only have responsibilities.

It was during this process that vigilant NGOs observed the attempt by the US government to obtain “fast track” authorization from Congress to allow the President to sign commercial accords without the legislature having a say. In April 1997, after three years of covert negotiation, the Congress became aware of the OECD discussions on MAI. This document got into the hands of NGOs through the Internet in Washington and also in Canada. At the end of 1997, there was a debate in the French National Assembly on this MAI and it was declared: “We do not know who is negotiating what in the name of whom.” The French were afraid that if MAI were applied to them, it would mean the death of the French film industry. It was only then that the alarm was sounded in Europe. In the public debate which followed, the defenders of MAI claimed that there was nothing new in the draft agreement, only the rationalizing of existing practices. Since the developing countries were envisaged as the main targets of the agreement, one can easily perceive the cynical brutality of the whole project.

The WTO meeting in Seattle in December 1999 was certainly a moment of triumph for the solidarity and tenacity of civil society movements. It was they who forced the representatives of the less developed countries to stand up and be counted. One correspondent present commented: “The global economic system is based on the principle of *laissez-faire*. The global governance system is based on autocracy.”

I do not think it is necessary now to discuss the implications of the Seattle meeting and of the secret MAI negotiations. Certainly, the vigilance of civil society groups is forcing governments in some industrialized countries to reflect on their attitudes and policies. For example, at a summit in Berlin in June 2000, fourteen Social Democratic leaders declared that “globalization is an irreversible economic, social and cultural reality” (the usual mantra). But they went on to say, “But we can control it collectively”, and they described the task ahead as one of articulating “a political project of progress for the new century”. The point of view timidly expressed here is that globalization demands a global solidarity that must be organized.

A British political scientist, John Gray, wrote in his book, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*:

“A regime of global governance is needed in which world markets are managed so as to promote the cohesion of societies and the integrity of

states. Only a framework of global regulation – of currencies, capital movements, trade and environmental conservation – can enable the creativity of the world economy to be harnessed in the service of human needs.” (London, Granta Books, 1998, p.199)

In his recent history of the 20th century, *The Century of Extremes*, Eric Hobsbawm wrote these words of warning:

“Our world risks both explosion and implosion. It must change... If humanity is to have a recognizable future, it cannot be by prolonging the past or the present. If we try to build the third millennium on that basis, we shall fail. And the price of failure, that is to say, the alternative to a changed society, is darkness.” (New York: Vintage Books, p.585)

Let us, then, commit ourselves afresh to work for a changed society where people may live in justice and peace and for a sustained and sustaining earth.

PART I  
WHAT ARE FAITH COMMUNITIES ALREADY DOING?

1. Christianity

The World Council of Churches

*By Martin Robra, Justice, Peace, Creation Team, Geneva*

The delegates of the eighth assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), meeting in Harare in 1998, voted unanimously to give priority to the challenge of globalization in the coming years. Philip Potter's introduction to this volume probably reflects the deep-felt convictions of many of these delegates. They called upon the WCC to expand its significant work on social justice issues and to cooperate with networks, ecumenical groups, and other organizations that support the goals of justice, solidarity, and life with dignity in sustainable communities.

Julio de Santa Ana helped the staff of the WCC to describe more precisely what is really meant by "globalization", a term that has become a catchword carrying many different and partly contradictory meanings. He distinguished between globalization as an historic process, and the political and economic circumstances and events within that process. Any description of the historic process must go far back into the history of imperial misuses of power. Colonialism and imperialism were specific "projects" in the historic process, shaping global capitalism, but also shaping struggles for national liberation.

Today we are confronted with the devastating consequences of corporate globalization and domination, guided by a neoliberal capitalist ideology. The delegates at the Harare assembly wanted the WCC not only to analyse the global economic system and resist its harmful consequences, but also to strengthen the search for life-giving alternatives that are visible signs of God's justice and concern for the whole creation.

A year earlier, the 23rd general council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), meeting in Debrecen, Hungary in 1997, had already presented an unambiguous challenge to the churches by deciding to embark on a *processus confessionis* regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction (see the WARC contribution below). Based on the recommendations of the Harare assembly, the WCC cooperates closely with WARC in this area of work. In November 1999, they jointly organized a conference on the consequences of economic globalization in southeast Asia, together with the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Church of Christ in Thailand. They also broadened the cooperation by including other ecumenical organizations such as the Lutheran World Federation, the YMCA and the YWCA, and the World Student Christian Federation.

The WARC initiative challenges WCC member churches to focus on the consequences of globalization in ways that affect their very being and are at the centre of their witness and service. The Harare delegates said:

“The vision behind globalization includes a competing vision to the Christian commitment to the *oikoumene*, the unity of humankind and the whole inhabited earth... The logic of globalization needs to be challenged by an alternative way of life, of community in diversity. Christians and churches should reflect on the challenge of globalization from a faith perspective and therefore resist the unilateral domination of economic and cultural globalization. The search for alternative options to the present economic system and the realization of effective political limitations and corrections to the process of globalization and its implications are urgently needed.”

Violence is a complex phenomenon. The peace researcher, Johan Galtung, has often said that direct, structural, and cultural forms of violence are inextricably related and must be treated together. This also was emphasized in the debate about racism in the early 1970s, a debate that was sparked off and stimulated by the Programme to Combat Racism. Thus, the Justice, Peace, Creation Team of the WCC believes that assembly decisions about globalization, the cancellation of debt and the jubilee, and the Decade to Overcome Violence have to be seen as closely related. Work on the Decade and on globalization are two sides of the same coin, reflecting the use and misuse of power as common concerns.

Life-giving alternatives, specific to their contexts, must be found to the harmful policies and institutions of neoliberal capitalist globalization. This became very clear to me recently in the lead up to the Ministerial Round of the World Trade Organization in Seattle and in the solidarity with Jubilee South, the coalition of movements calling for debt cancellation in Latin America, Africa and Asia. In both instances, again and again people called upon the WCC to further develop the ethical and spiritual dimensions of resistance and to search for alternatives. Precisely for that reason, I am delighted that Colloquium 2000 links reflection on faith, theology, and economy.

### The World Alliance of Reformed Churches

*By Milan Opocensky, former general secretary, Prague*

I wish to describe briefly what is meant by the resolution of the 23rd general council (Debrecen, 1997) calling for a committed process of recognition, education and confession in relation to economic injustice and ecological destruction – a *processus confessionis*. First, it is a call to Alliance member churches to initiate and facilitate programmes, resources and practical steps at all levels of their life as an extreme priority. Secondly, it is an invitation to other churches,

Christian world communions, the WCC and other organizations and movements to cooperate. We are challenged by the cry of people who suffer and by the groaning of creation.

In the Reformed tradition, we sometimes speak about *status confessionis*. This refers to a situation in which the boundaries between right and wrong, between good and evil, are not respected. In such a situation, the integrity of the proclamation of the gospel is in jeopardy. It may be a situation of oppression and exploitation, or a situation of hypocrisy and heresy. A declaration of *status confessionis* usually addresses the practice of the church as well as its teaching. It is related to a particular problem (e.g., apartheid) and to a specific situation; at the same time, it invites all churches to concur in the act of confessing. The declaration is a clear decision for the truth of the gospel, and against false teaching and its practical consequences.

Let me draw your attention to two examples from the recent past. First, the Protestant church in Germany was misled and seduced by the pro-Nazi movement of the *Deutsche Christen* (German Christians). This led to the Barmen Declaration in 1934, the basis for developing a “confessing church”. Secondly, in 1986 the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa issued the Confession of Belhar in response to apartheid and social oppression. I quote from this confession: “We believe that God has revealed himself as the One who wishes to bring about justice... We believe that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice... We believe that the church must stand against injustice and with the wronged. Therefore we reject any ideology which would legitimize forms of injustice...” It was perhaps the first time that a Reformed confessional statement spoke so explicitly about social injustice, peace, suffering and need, or about the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests.

We in the Alliance stand in the tradition of Barmen and Belhar. This tradition has given us the courage to take another bold step. The 23rd general council called on member churches to address worldwide economic injustice and ecological destruction in the context of their faith and as a challenge to the integrity of that faith. Deliberately, the general council spoke of a *process* of confession, because it may be a long time before it is possible to formulate a confessional pronouncement on economic and environmental matters. We all need time to recognize the problem and to educate ourselves.

In my view, this is what this conference is all about. We have recognized a pressing issue of contemporary history. We are confronted with formidable forces of dehumanization and brutalization. There is no doubt that, in some parts of the world, globalization claims both human and environmental sacrifices. We are dealing with idols and false gods. The apostolic writing speaks about “our struggle against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers...” (Eph 6.12). We come here to compare notes, to help each

other to understand better what is happening in this world and to strategize our networking and our common action.

The time for noncommittal private opinions is over. We find ourselves, qualitatively, on a new level in our discussions. After Debrecen, we simply cannot ignore the reality that one confessional family, supported now by the decision of the eighth WCC assembly (Harare, 1998) and many more people in the church universal, is approaching the problem from the perspective of faith and confession. The process is very slow and sometimes we are impatient; but let us remember that it took approximately sixty years, between 1920 and 1980, before a consensus was reached concerning racism and *status confessionis* was declared on this matter.

A new beginning starts with repentance. We Christians have to confess our complicity in the global economic order. Often we are not sensitive enough to the way it victimizes people. Care for the household is driven out by greed and the competition for survival. We acknowledge the abundance of life offered to all by God. We view with distress the current distortions that make the household the servant of the economy. There is a danger of a total “commodification” of life – everything becomes a commodity that can be paid for only by those with the money to become consumers. The prevailing global economic system claims universality, but serves, first and foremost, the making of profit, and requires human sacrifices, as in the time of the idol Moloch (2 Kings 23.10; Jer 32.35). It is accompanied by exclusion and death. It denies the gift of God’s blessing and challenges our Christian faith. We are challenged to resist its negative consequences, to celebrate life and to share our gifts. We search for alternatives that affirm and promote life. We are partners in a covenant that is a covenant of life and peace (Mal 2.5).

The day is approaching when for the sake of our faithfulness and our credibility we shall have to make a clear decision. In the spirit of the Barmen Declaration, we shall have to confess clearly: Not Jesus Christ and making profit – not Jesus Christ and mammon – not Jesus Christ and the Multilateral Agreement on Investments – but Jesus Christ as the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and death. Let us help each other to discern and to make the decisions that are needed. Now is the acceptable time (*kairos*)! Now is the day of salvation (2 Cor 6.2)!

Religious orders: an example from India

By Stella Baltazar fmm, Animation Service Centre, India

Asathoma Sat Gamaya: Lead me from the unreal to the real

Tamasoma Jyothir Gamaya: Lead me from darkness into light

Mrithyorma Amritam Gamaya: Lead me from death into immortality.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti. O peace, peace, peace.

A village farmer, with deep satisfaction, said: "This time our crops are growing better and healthier in spite of low rainfall. Now we know and understand the value of caring for the land in a healthier way." Almost all of the villagers shared this opinion. I could sense the difference felt by the farmers about farming methods because something new had happened.

In another village, the women took me to a field to show me how they grew a double crop and how they prepared fertilizers and pesticides in their field. Women are not only the leading agriculturists; they manifest a new confidence from regaining traditional wisdom about the land. They said: "Now we don't need to depend on chemical fertilizers and pesticides. They destroy our land and the fertility of the soil." The wisdom shared by these women is becoming the basis of a movement. Our people seek alternatives to counter the aggressive imposition of pesticides and fertilizers by multinational corporations (MNCs).

Their change in attitude was made possible because some of us had spent several nights in these villages animating and educating the people for their own empowerment. Several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) assisted the project by pooling their expertise on dry land farming. Agricultural and animation experts were combined with monetary resources to support this new venture. Committed men and women in the late 1970s and early 1980s introduced a new dimension in mission that empowered the poor.

Drawing inspiration from them, I began my mission among rural Indian women fifteen years ago. It was possible to reach them mostly only at night. Women would complete their day's work, then come for meetings. Night after night I spent time with them reflecting on their problems and building up their self-confidence to claim their rights from the government. Over time, they were able to secure more basic needs for the village, take up gender issues, and form networks at the *taluk* and district levels that empowered women.

Religious congregations are going through a soul-searching process to find relevance in our world. We are called to listen to the groaning of the spirit. Religious life needs to be re-imaged in order to make it relevant to our situation. Since Vatican II, this process of search has been experienced by many of the religious orders, and new ventures have been initiated.

Today there are hundreds of small groups of religious men and women dedicating themselves to the cause of self-determination for the Dalits and tribals. They live in the villages, slums and cities in order to respond to the cry of the most exploited: women, unorganized workers, unemployed youth, street children, AIDS victims, or the most neglected tribal population. Compared to the total number of religious in India (over 80,000 women and about 25,000 men), the number of those radically involved is however small.

Living our lives as a conciliar community becomes meaningful when we are part of the basic human communities of India. We recognize differences of religions, caste, languages and ethnicity as sources of celebration rather than

of separation and antagonism. It enables us to discover the beauty of each other and it challenges us to mutual commitment. In the face of antagonism and violence, we are called to be peace-builders. In the face of tensions and conflict, we need to become zones of compassion, reconciliation and peace. We must learn to globalize our concern for the cause of just relationships and to lay the foundation for peace. We must mobilize against the exploitative and oppressive policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, make the aspirations of the poor known to the world, stand in solidarity with the poor, and promote forums for networking and collaborative action for peace.

These commitments will enable us radically to redefine our way of life. Communities will emerge in response to felt needs rather than to decisions from above. They will be contextual, filled with the compassion of God for humanity. Prayer life will assume great significance, though perhaps not as in the present mode. This type of response to religious life will be manifested in three ways.

1. Men and women will find meaning when working in the midst of the poorest masses and/or will get involved in affiliated services to create solidarity and facilitate networks. They will emerge as pressure groups to persuade the government to favour the masses. They may face violent opposition. But they must move forward with determination despite the risk. They may not appear to be “religious” in the traditional sense, preferring to remain secular among the masses. Their numbers will grow in the future.
2. Men and women of the ashram movement will begin to transform the ashram way of life (instead of being removed from the people), seeking simplicity and closeness to the people. They will mobilize the people based on the value of religious fervour and build their self-determination to follow the path of nonviolence, drinking deeply from the religious heritage of India and nurturing their souls from the inner springs of the divine presence from within. This will fulfil the promise made by Jesus when he said “from his heart will flow streams of living water”.
3. Interreligious and ecumenical groups will increase their concern for the poor and derive meaning from the radical way of living the gospel. Their dialogue of life will promote pardon, healing and restoration to human fullness.

In this quest, we are challenged by the person of Jesus, whose commitment to the cause of the poor motivates us. The conciliar community may live all three forms of response in combination. Ours will be the church in solidarity with the poor, forming women’s collectives as symbols of women’s solidarity and involvement. God’s new community will live radical discipleship, cooperating with social movements and participating in peace discourse. The community of committed persons will facilitate and promote zones of solidarity as conciliar communities. This will be a new paradigm of religious life in the future: the creation of a global community to resist situations of violence,

including violations of human rights. Our experience will facilitate a radical redefinition of the theology of religious life itself, enabling us to decode our minds, to re-image God and to relearn the liberating tenets of the Bible and the scriptures of other faiths.

## Pax Christi

*By Martin F Herndlhofer, German section of Pax Christi*

Globalization is a complex phenomenon, both deeply abstract and chillingly concrete. Pax Christi, the international Catholic peace movement, has concentrated its efforts on understanding how the structures and actors of globalization are changing the patterns of dependence and interdependence in the world, and how this understanding can be put to use, often jointly with other Christian and non-Christian organizations, in overcoming the violent consequences of global change.

The German section of Pax Christi has been active, and reactive, in three fields of work:

### 1. Reorientation – a learning process

We started a process of reorientation when the dichotomy of East-West relationships changed. Now in our work for peace, we have started a process of “economy-learning” in order to discover the social and economic dimensions of the peace question.

### 2. Campaigning, lobbying and political pressure

With the end of the East-West conflict, there is more public awareness of military disputes within and between states of the South and East. One reaction to this development has been “new military interventions”, often justified by politicians on “humanitarian” grounds. Pax Christi has responded by supporting or initiating campaigns and networks on topics or problems that seemed to be of the greatest urgency:

- The “Products for Life – Stop Arms Exports” campaign
- The campaign against the Eurofighter 2000 aircraft
- The campaign to ban landmines
- The NGO International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)
- The democratic control of international financial markets
- The Jubilee 2000 campaign
- Global migration

### 3. Face-to-face work in conflict resolution and reconciliation

We are engaged in the construction and extension of social services for peace and reconciliation:

- Pax Christi One World Solidarity Fund

This fund helps support exchanges of information, public work, lobbying, and partnerships.

- Shalom Diaconate

The Shalom Diaconate, an ecumenical service in the conciliar JPIC process, has trained people to work for peace since 1994. The name Shalom Diaconate was chosen by the ecumenical assemblies of Basel and Seoul. Training by the ecumenical service enables people to develop expertise in nonviolent conflict resolution through elementary courses and seminars on relevant subjects. Various kinds of support are offered for participants that want to serve abroad. There are opportunities for some of them to join groups that sponsor nonviolent, civilian conflict resolution in different regions of the world.

- Civil Peace Service

For several years, the German section of Pax Christi has built up peace service projects together with local organizations in Central Bosnia, in Zenica and in Banja Luka, the capital of Republika Srpska.

#### 4. Development and conflict

A project on violence in situations of economic deprivation.

We are living through a massive and universal process of political and economic transformation. This process has three distinctive characteristics: democratization, globalization and the dismantling of state structures. Most civil conflicts can be related to a combination of these three characteristics. This does not mean that they always lead to violence. There are many good examples of new democracies that have found nonviolent ways to solve social, economic and political conflicts. Even if violence occurs, moreover, not all conflicts take the form of civil war.

It is characteristic of the international community, especially of the economically powerful countries in the North, to engage too late in efforts to prevent or stop violence. Then too, most peace-making efforts focus on political elites whose primary interest is staying in power. Little can be expected from them unless their power is threatened. Nor are leaders from the North much influenced by international bodies like the UN that lack enforcement powers. Real solutions to violence are rarely found.

By contrast, numerous southern regions have grassroots groups that play an important role in the development of peaceful and just structures. They are also active in the process of establishing human rights and democratization. These groups expect cooperation from and solidarity with Europe. To help make this happen, civil society in Europe and grassroots groups in the South need to strengthen their network.

The international structure of Pax Christi wants to contribute to this network. Pax Christi International and its German section started this project on development and conflict, for which it can draw on its long experience in peace work and its existing contacts in the South. Seven other European national sections participate in this project.

*Conclusion*

To achieve sustainable peace, trust and readiness for peace must be forged at the local level. A key strategy, therefore, is to focus on ordinary people instead of leaders. Building bridges instead of barricades, this strategy will strengthen local capacities for peace. Civil and political society in Europe should actively support its implementation.

## 2. Islam

A third world Muslim perspective on globalization

*By Mohammad Abdus Sabur, Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN)*

*The context*

I doubt the existence of a *third world* Muslim perspective. What we have instead is an Islamic perspective that we consider universal and applicable to the one world of humanity.

Yet today, at the beginning of the 21st century, we have to ask ourselves: where is humanity?

When we hear that a five-year-old girl was raped and killed; that young schoolgirls aged nine to fourteen are sold and forced to become prostitutes; that transporting women for the purpose of prostitution is a lucrative business protected by people in the power structures; that millions of children go to bed without food while billions are spent on arms; then we must ask, "Where is the sense of humanity that we are talking about? Where are the living religions that we feel proud of? And where is the kingdom of God?"

The vast majority of people in the South and in the south of the North are living in a period that, in many ways, is parallel to the period of *jhilliah* [ignorance]. In that period people could hardly see beyond their own tribe or community. Intolerance resulted in prolonged bloodshed. There was no sense of humanity. The condition of women was especially bad. Many attempts were made to bury women alive. That is the period to which Islam came as liberation.

Today we witness a similar situation. Though we are living in an era of advanced technology, we are almost blind to the cruelties of inhumanity, or helpless in the face of ethnic cleansing, the honour-killing of women, the abuse of children and drugs, unemployment, extreme poverty and exploitation. The global economic system, controlled largely by the G7 countries, also yields enormous differences in human wellbeing. Many leaders in Muslim countries are beneficiaries of this system. It is the poor, across religions, race and colour, that are the victims of this system.

So the obvious question is, is Islam relevant and can it be a resource for alternatives?

This question is particularly apt when Islam is equated with what is happening in Afghanistan, where women are discriminated against and oppressed, or when, in the name of Islam, innocent people are taken hostage in the Philippines, Christians are killed in Indonesia, and in many Islamic countries women are denied voting rights and people's participation discouraged.

What is happening in Indonesia is very painful. The killing of innocent women and children because they belong to another religion is not acceptable. We must try to understand the historical causes, the political, cultural and economic underpinnings. The people of Indonesia were "divided and ruled" for many years.

Or consider Afghanistan, where during the cold war various tribal groups were armed by western powers to fight against the Soviet Union. As a result, a major segment of Afghan society was criminalized by weapons and drugs. The common people, particularly women and children, are now paying the price. The urgent task is to stop this killing and these crimes against humanity.

From a Muslim perspective, the western media often portray Islam and the Islamic world in a biased way. For example, the hostage-taker Abu Sayaf in the Philippines is described as an Islamic terrorist, whereas George Speight and his followers, who have been holding the prime minister of Fiji and parliamentarians hostage, are not referred to as Christian or indigenous terrorists. I believe that such inhuman action is not within the scope of any religion. Islam certainly does not permit it.

Is there any way to resist the hegemony of global power led by the USA? Is Islam still relevant to the search for alternatives?

In the early days of the Iranian revolution, Muslims were greatly inspired, for two main reasons: The Iranian people were able to oust the autocratic, corrupt regime of the Shah of Iran, a regime that was very much supported by the western powers. Secondly, the revolution represented for many Muslims the potential for effectively challenging the concentration of western power. Alas, the people's aspirations for inner democracy were not realized, and the potential for redistributing power soon dissipated.

Or consider the case of the Malaysian prime minister, Dr Mohammad Mahathir, who is seen as speaking for the third world. Yet he cannot tolerate opposition within his own country. He uses "black laws" to suppress opposition voices. His newly built palace also contradicts the Islamic principle of simple living.

Islam certainly stands for liberation from ignorance, oppression, slavery and injustice. It also stands for equality and peace.

Hazrat Mohammad (Peace be upon him) worked for the liberation of the oppressed, the poor and the needy. The Quranic teachings inspire greater solidarity among the whole of humankind. One verse says "O humankind, we

have created you all out of a male and a female and have made you nations and tribes, so that you might recognize one another, the noblest of you in the sight of God who is most righteous (and just)”.

### *The challenges*

The challenges are numerous. How can Muslims of the third world speak with one voice when they are so different culturally, politically, economically and socially? In some countries, Muslims are in the majority while in others they are a minority. The Muslim perspective is rarely uniform. Muslim rulers, the elites and many employers exploit Muslims and non-Muslims alike. We claim that we belong to a liberative and historical tradition, yet in practice we cooperate with and sustain exploitative structures. Therefore, the real challenge for Muslims today is to articulate, inspire and promote an essential Islamic perspective, one that features moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions around which Muslims may unite in solidarity with oppressed and poor people across all religions, races and cultures.

### *Identifying real needs*

Human wellbeing is hard to define and to measure, and so the discourse of economics often slips into the easy alternative of holding up some measure of material wealth – its level and/or its growth – as the ultimate goal. It is fairly easy to conclude from this that economists, by and large, believe wants are unlimited, and therefore that consuming more goods will bring pleasure. Whether or not material wealth is an appropriate marker for economic success, the assumption that it is has produced many ways to persuade consumers to buy more goods and services. Islam, on the other hand, distinguishes between wants and needs. Real needs are not unlimited. Rather, they are determined by the physical, social and moral nature of a community. At present, false symbols of vanity and prestige are being used everywhere to encourage more spending.

### *An Islamic framework for economic development*

1. All wealth in heaven and on earth belongs to God. Islam favours the use of these resources for the collective welfare. The worldly owners of resources are merely trustees.
2. The eradication of poverty is the primary objective. “Poverty in the midst of plenty is a negation of the very principle of brother and sisterhood by which Islam stands and falls.” “He who eats his fill while his neighbour remains hungry by his side is not faithful.” The Islamic strategy enables the poor to be involved in the production, distribution and financing of economic activities through *ushr* and *zakat*. Both have a formidable impact on the reduction of income inequalities. The prophet disapproved of share-cropping systems (*mukhabira*, *muhaqila*) which are exploitative.

3. The Qur'an lays great stress on distributive justice. It opposes the accumulation and hoarding of wealth. It discourages the circulation of wealth among the rich. Islam intends to root out the last vestige of *Zulum*, meaning all forms of inequality and exploitation. The Qur'an permits the oppressed to fight against exploitation and oppression. The highest kind of *Jihad* is to speak up for the truth when governments (*sultan*) deviate from the right path.
4. Islam emphasizes the comprehensive improvement of human qualities, that is to say, to make them *insan-e-kamil*.
5. Islam encourages solidarity and cooperation. The prophet said: "The faithful are to one another like (parts of) a building – each part is strengthening others." Thus, mutual cooperation in all phases of life is a fundamental requirement of Islam.

#### *An assessment of governance and the state*

Tolerance and respect for other religions is an important liberative principle of Islam. The Qur'an makes it clear there is no compulsion in religion (2.256) and that your religion is yours and my religion is mine (109.6). Within three decades after the death of the Prophet, however, Islam lost its liberative and democratic character. In most Islamic states today, we see disparities of wealth and income, inequality in the status of men and women, and discrimination in the treatment of minorities. There is little room for the poor to participate in decision-making processes.

The state structures of Islamic states are rank with corruption, nepotism and ineffectiveness. In most cases, an autocratic regime stays in power without a popular mandate. Religious institutions mostly identify themselves with the regimes, rather than standing in solidarity with the poor. They are rich. Their property and wealth are very often invested in commercial enterprises that make substantial profits.

#### *The efforts of people's movements*

In many places, people at the grassroots level have tried to mobilize themselves through peasant movements (Tehebhaga, Telengana, Naxalbari, etc.), often with discouraging results. Unfortunately, such movements seem to be declining at the present time. Meanwhile, various democratic movements in Islamic states are making civil societies more visible and vocal and are providing space for the disadvantaged.

Some NGOs have tried to empower landless people in rural areas through various efforts to enhance their mobility and to better articulate their basic rights. Even so, in several Islamic countries nearly half the rural population remains below the poverty line.

The essence of all religions is to ensure justice for all, but instead institutional religion very often sides with vested interests and autocratic establishments.

Religious institutions have accumulated tremendous wealth, whilst millions of people are still starving and living on the streets. Many religions build splendid, extravagant places of worship, in clear contradiction to the spirit of religion.

In order to establish genuine peace, faith communities need to demonstrate their solidarity with poor and oppressed people by working with them to improve their access to resources and to assure their participation in decisions affecting them. With determination, equality and justice can be realized. Faith communities also must take responsibility for holding governments accountable for injustices. Unfortunately, progressive political processes seem to be moving away from pro-poor programmes as they submit to the imperatives of globalization.

#### *Islamic institutions and civil society organizations*

In the Islamic tradition, two kinds of organizations show solidarity. One is the charitable organization (DAWA); it provides financial support for relief, welfare and development. The other offers political support, often for Palestinian causes. Unfortunately, very little support for other issues, such as human and women's rights, has been mobilized. Nor are there visible efforts on the part of Muslim organizations to address the economic issue of pooling resources for development.

On the other hand, NGOs and other, mostly secular, civil society organizations are providing support at the grassroots. However, some women's movements hesitate to work with Islamic organizations because they are perceived as being part of a system that oppresses women.

#### *Solidarity amongst international movements that oppose the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO*

Most recent protests targeting the policies of the key multinational economic institutions – the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization – have been organized by civil society organizations. They collectively resist these programmes because they believe them to be unjust, especially to the poor and oppressed. Many people and groups allied with the World Council of Churches and the Vatican are actively engaged. A few Muslim scholars have spoken out against globalization and what they perceive to be the new world order. Even so, compared to the number of Christians, it is difficult to identify many Muslims who have given leadership to this burgeoning movement. To some extent, western Christians share resources for missions of solidarity, whereas some of the richest nations of the Muslim world provide little support for such work. Nor do they organize forums to speak out about democratization, women's rights and economic justice. There is much work to be done.

*The task ahead*

1. Our primary challenge is to reform and deepen the education and training of people in the Muslim world.
2. By sharing experiences and resources, we need to expand efforts to mobilize interfaith and international actions of solidarity. In the reality of our multiethnic and multireligious world, we need to work together to face common challenges.
3. Serious work is required to transform Islamic teachings and perspectives into action for economic justice, women's rights, human rights and just governance. Muslims are not supposed to bow down or be afraid of the powers and authorities in this world. We must fight for justice.

### 3. Hinduism

#### The Hindu response to globalization

By *Geeta Menon, Stree Jagruti Samiti, India*

Let me begin with a small confession. I am not a Hindu theologian nor have I experienced any of the spiritual enlightenment which Hindu seers claim to possess. I approach my topic as a social scientist and a social activist. The fact that I am a Hindu and live and work in India, a country with a Hindu majority, is secondary and incidental.

Religious people are susceptible to the delusion that their actions are motivated by extraterrestrial considerations. Globalization not only affects economies and politics, third world countries and the marginalized. It also affects the world of religion, and the sooner this is understood, the better religious people can understand their own responses, the more sensitive we can become to the ethical dilemmas of our times.

There is another aspect of globalization which has direct bearing on the religious. Any student of political economy knows that the productive forces in society operate through the diverse forms of capital. In this too, globalization has seen a qualitative change. I am referring to the dominance of speculative capital under globalization, capital which undermines nation-states and knows no national boundaries, capital which zips through the circuits of the world economy at the touch of a computer button.

If formerly, the movement of capital adversely affected a few single factories or at the most entire industries, today it can affect whole countries and national economies overnight.

Never since the great depression has the cataclysmic might of capital come to the fore as in the last decade. Look at the way the Southeast Asian economies collapsed in 1997-98. Before that it was Mexico. Nobody knows what tomorrow will bring.

How does this unpredictability affect the world of religion? To some extent it is true that at a psychological and social level, the religious response is a means of coping with the unpredictable, the unknowable, the uncontrollable. It is a collective way of dealing with the world of chance. Under globalization, with the world economy transformed into a global casino, the sway of chance has increased a thousandfold. Never since man left the jungles has life become so unpredictable. Global capital has assumed the form of an extraterrestrial and independent force, which no governments can regulate, nor any human agency can subdue, whimsically making and destroying not just workers but also capitalists. This human impotence in the midst of so much technological power, this anarchy in the economy in the midst of so much planning and organization, this human alienation in the midst of so much communication, this ignorance in the midst of so much science and knowledge, is what characterizes the human condition today. It is a human condition which leaves a spiritual vacuum, driving people either to crass materialism or to religious fundamentalism.

The Congress party was a congress of different classes and castes, social orientations and ideologies, and hence could never become a pure platform of what is called Hindu nationalism. The organization that consolidated itself as the voice and organization of Hindu nationalism was the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Since the present Indian government is led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), whose ideological inspiration is the RSS, it is important to dwell briefly on this organization. Besides, its front organizations have been involved in criticizing and opposing some aspects of globalization.

The RSS believes that the Hindu past possesses all the conceptual tools with which to understand and to reconstruct society. Advaita Vedanta was the guiding outlook of its founders. The RSS considers itself as a cultural organization and it identifies its foes primarily in cultural terms. It identifies social groups who culturally distance themselves from Hindu civilization (read, caste civilization) as foes.

For the RSS, Christian converts “were given not only psychological affinity with the people of western countries, but were weaned away from the national society – the language, the script, the dress, other modes of life, the festivals, names and nomenclature – all undergo a change.” (Shripaly Sastry, “A retrospect, Christianity in India: An exposition of the RSS’ views on the relevance of Christianity in India today”, *Bharatiya Viehar Sadhana*, 1984, p.8). “RSS writers allege that Christian values have tended to distance Christians culturally from the national mainstream in some parts of the country. From this a subproposition is deduced: because some Christians do not consider themselves culturally Indian, they do not experience a sense of community with other Indians.” (Walter K Andersen and Shridhar D Damle, “The Brotherhood in Saffron”, *Vistaar Publications*, pp.72-73)

Similarly, the RSS has been extremely suspicious of and even hostile to what it sees as the westernized elite, who propose capitalism or socialism as solutions for Indian development. Again at the root of this hostility was the fear that capitalism or socialism would damage the social structure and cultural ethos of Hindustan. It had already seen how capitalism had subverted the traditional caste system. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, an RSS leader, was more direct. He felt that capitalism and socialism were flawed because they stimulated greed, class antagonism, exploitation and social anarchy. (Andersen and Damle, *op. cit.* p.173)

One point requires clarification. By and large, the RSS has not been dominated by those who wanted to preserve or bring back the traditional caste system. Its success lay in the fact that it recognized the irreversible changes brought about in the traditional social order and based its strategy of Hindu reform on the basis of these changes. In fact, it could only work towards its aim of Hindu unity and solidarity because the traditional caste system, with its caste ghettos and hierarchy, with its strict rules and purity and pollution, had broken down.

The RSS response to globalization is directed at its cultural and economic effects.

Let us briefly go into each.

Today, there is a hue and cry, articulated especially by the Hindu revivalists, that globalization and westernization are eroding and destroying traditional Indian culture. This caste culture fostered among its members a community ethos, family values, respect for elders, the sacrificial role of women, pride in one's tradition, the value of austerity. "Globalization is mutating this *jati* (caste) culture. Whatever little support and solidarity the *jati*, the clan or even family provided to help its members cope with the traumas of the capitalist jungle, is becoming less and less. *Jatis* are being forced to preserve their culture now more as empty rituals, while their substance is vanishing." Furthermore, "globalization is not only undermining *jati* culture. It is also propagating a global culture. This culture is cosmopolitan, not parochial; individualist, not communitarian; irreverent, not respectful; sensuous, not repressive; fleeting, not enduring; bizarre, not conventional. This culture cooked in the global melting pot is, in a way, the very antithesis of *jati* culture, home-grown in India's ghettos." (Lancy Fernandes and Satyajit Bhatkal, "The Fractured Civilization", *Bharatiya Janwadi Aghadi*, pp.101-102) The RSS is very well aware that, for a people confined in *jati* ghettos, westernization with its promise of liberalism and the pursuit of happiness has a hypnotic lure.

It is in this context that one should understand the RSS opposition to globalization. Globalization is viewed as another form of cultural imperialism. That is why RSS activists oppose girls and women wearing jeans, the opening of McDonald fast-food joints and the spreading of McDonald's culture, the

celebration of Valentine's Day, the Miss World competitions and other beauty pageants. This is also one of the reasons why they have stepped up attacks on Christian missionaries, who they believe are agents of this cultural imperialism.

The Hindu revivalists have also opposed globalization on economic grounds. Since the past few years, one of the front organizations of the RSS *parivar*, the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, has launched a tirade against multinationals, the proposed amendments to the Patents Act, the opening up of sectors like insurance and banking to foreign capital, etc.

The double-speak of the *Hindutvawadis* was completely unmasked in the famous case of the US power multinational Enron. The BJP and the Shiv Sena had before the 1995 state assembly elections carried out a sustained campaign against how Enron would mean the plunder of the country. The saffron alliance rose to power with the promise that if elected they would throw Enron into the Arabian Sea. After coming to power, the Shiv Sena-BJP government not only crushed the movement of the local people against Enron, but also signed the second phase of the project with the same multinational. The only promise which the *Hindutvawadis* have carried out to date has been decisive action, not against imperialism, but against the minorities, of which the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya and the subsequent anti-Muslim pogroms can never be forgotten.

However, the *swadeshi* platform of the *Hindutvawadis* served an important strategic purpose for the RSS *parivar*. First, it helped the BJP to woo a significant section of the Indian monopoly capitalists who wanted to protect their interests even while they were globalizing. Secondly, it helped the BJP to win the support of a huge section of the small capitalists, who were genuinely threatened by the liberalization and globalization policies of the Indian government. However, the Hindu fundamentalists do not have a fundamental contradiction with imperialism. Their main agenda is cultural. Their foes and targets are not big capital, Indian or foreign, but social communities, who they regard as a threat to their cultural hegemony. The *swadeshi* movement was just a means to come to power, so that they could use the levers of power to further their cultural agenda. They call this agenda cultural nationalism. Their dream is to make India into a regional power and even a superpower, fully armed with nuclear weapons, by the awakening and organization of Hindu might and the suppression of all "alien" cultural outlooks. It is not for nothing that progressive forces within India have labelled the RSS agenda fascist.

Our discussion on the Hindu response to globalization would be incomplete if we did not point to another development which has gained importance in the last decade. Until recently, Hinduism was confined to the Indian subcontinent or to people of Indian origin. A few decades ago, Hinduism for most people in the West was nothing but a bizarre backward religion where Hanuman the monkey and Sabbala the cow are worshipped. This perception is now changing,

especially with the export of Vedantic philosophies to the West. Of course, the process began more than hundred years ago when Swami Vivekananda addressed the Congress of religions in Chicago. However, it is only in recent years that the spreading of Hindu thought beyond Indian shores has gained momentum. This development is significant for two reasons. First, it is an attempt to disengage Hinduism from its social structure of caste. Secondly, it has received a fillip and an impetus from the very process of globalization.

### *Conclusion*

Today's information revolution cannot be reversed or wished away. Like it or not, the world has shrunk into a global village. And yet, the present world order, where the productive forces can explode, without social regulation, and where the fate of millions is linked to a global casino, cannot be sustained either politically or environmentally. The present world order cannot environmentally be sustained. The pauperization of countries groaning under unrepayable debt cannot create harmonious international relations. The growth of mass poverty and marginalization along with the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few is a dangerous cocktail which can only engender anarchy and terrorism worldwide.

Humankind is at a dangerous crossroads. It possesses all the instruments of liberation or global destruction. The advanced instruments of production may not automatically ensure us greater happiness, but they can definitely help in solving the pressing problems of hunger and disease and overcoming the marginalization of entire peoples, entire nations and classes from the fruits of progress.

However, this is impossible unless there is also a revolution in our social relations and in our philosophies and theologies. Is this revolution possible without regulating the power of global capital?

One thing is certain. The religious scriptures of the world may provide people the strength to fight against oppression or exploitation. They cannot contain the conceptual tools to understand the present world or to reconstruct the world. Christians, Muslims, or Hindus who pore over their religious texts in order to find the answers engendered by globalization, are like our forefathers who tried to understand the origin of man and the earth from the scriptures. Such a preoccupation can only lead to the growth of rival fundamentalisms and sectarianism. Globalization cannot be understood without the tools of political economy and sociology. The power of global capital as the ultimate regulator of our social lives cannot be vanquished without the weapons of science.

Lest we are misunderstood, we are not pleading that science be made the new god in our lives. We are as much aware of the danger of making science into a religion as the danger of religion taking on the role of science.

## 4. Buddhism

The Buddhist community facing globalization

*By Wallapa Kuntiranont, Network of Socially Engaged Buddhists, Thailand*

Globalization is the latest expression of a long-standing strategy for development based on the liberalization of trade and finance. As globalization progresses and the world's economies are linked more and more, consumers become more alike in their tastes for fast food and action movies, and producers become more reckless in their uses of the natural environment.

From a Buddhist perspective, the core of globalization is the propagation of *tanha* (desire). *Tanha* is the root cause of all suffering, according to Buddhist analysis. When the cultural values of a society spring from these unwholesome roots, the society will face many kinds of difficulties. Globalization may lead to the spreading of greed, violence and individualism to all corners of the globe.

The Buddhist notion of happiness does not come from trying to satisfy *tanha* or desire. A good Buddhist society is dominated by the values of cooperation, generosity, compassion and spirituality. A simple life with far fewer consumer goods will ease our lives from material burdens and allow us to cultivate more spiritual qualities.

Buddhism does not reject material wellbeing. Rather, it considers material wellbeing to be only one means of achieving the higher end of human fulfilment and happiness.

There are a number of grassroots initiatives in Thailand that are led by socially engaged Buddhist monks, farsighted farmers and NGO workers who are trying to liberate their communities from mainstream market forces. One of their approaches is to replace the kind of cash crops promoted by the government for export with crops that first meet the needs of local consumers, and only then allow any surplus to be sold elsewhere for cash.

In addition, some communities have been experimenting with alternative agricultural systems that feature organic fertilizers and insecticides on a subsistence economy base. After a decade of experimentation, major improvements in the quality of life can clearly be seen – a visible demonstration of viable alternatives. Let me illustrate this theme with stories of three communities.

*Ta Sawang: A Buddhist approach to rural poverty*

Abbot Nan Sutasilo or Luang Por [Father] Nan of Samakkhii Temple, from Ta Sawang subdistrict in Surin province, in northeast Thailand, was one of the first “development monks”. He used to think that development meant a road and electricity for his village. He no longer thinks so.

When the abbot changed his views, real changes began to take place in the small village of Ta Sawang subdistrict. He came to realize that the enemy was really man's own endless desires. This led him to take a group of villagers to the graveyard for meditation on a new way of life. A clear and calm mind helps one to see through illusions. Without this "spiritual immunity", it was difficult for the villagers to fight the consumerism that had buried them deeper in debt.

The abbot taught the villagers to apply the objectivity, patience and self-discipline gained from meditation to the analysis of their chronic poverty. After helping them to identify its causes, he then helped them to think about ways to ease their debts through self-reliance. The abbot set up a fertilizer bank, using donations made to the temple, so that villagers could avoid borrowing money from other banks at high interest. He readily acknowledged his own debt to the villagers, since they give the monks food and take care of them.

A village rice bank was soon set up to ease the hunger created by drought. In a spirit of sharing and self-reliance, the better-off villagers donate rice to the bank so that the poor can borrow at lower interest. The abbot also initiated "friendship farming", for which villagers donated their labour to plant rice on communal land that also was donated. The rice from this joint effort went to the rice bank in order to help more villagers.

Friendship farming contributed much more than the rice harvest to the village. It also encouraged the return of a spirit of brotherhood within the community, the recovery of a tradition that was lost with the breakdown of village life caused by economic pressures.

The effective application of Buddhist faith also accounts for success in generating enough village savings to start new projects. The villagers are required to make a religious promise that they will decrease their purchase of unnecessary products. This effort later grew into a village savings group. Its funds are being used to set up a medical cooperative and to help pay off bank loans before villagers lose their land to the banks.

The abbot's latest project is the formation of a small group of monks interested in rural development for other towns. They intend to spearhead development work as best suits the villagers' needs for a balance of spiritual growth and basic material needs. These monks need to acquire "spiritual immunity" through meditation just as much as the villagers do. For these monks, inner development must come first and be allowed to inspire outer development.

*Ban Tha Laad: the middle path between the modern and the traditional*

Phra Khru Supjarawat, a Buddhist monk from Ban Tha Laad, a remote village in Kud Chum subdistrict in Yasothorn province in northeast Thailand, is similar to Luang Por Nan in the sense that they both believe it is easy to lead people in meditation, but much harder to become involved in the development of a community.

Phra Khru Supajarat does not reject all modern things. Modern life has arrived in this village, and it certainly is here to stay. On the other hand, he believes that local cultural and spiritual ways help people deal with the problems of modern life. By keeping alive traditional values such as integrity, morality, compassion, and *sammakee* [communal harmony], he believes that the drive for material wealth will be less compelling and destructive. He likens this to walking the middle path between the traditional and the modern – finding a balance through understanding and awareness.

Traditionally, communities like Ban Tha Laad were very self-reliant. The villagers themselves provided most necessities like food, water, clothing and health care. This self-reliance eroded during the last few decades, and was replaced by greater dependence on outsiders through a larger money economy, formal education, and government administration and services.

At first, Phra Khru Supajarat helped promote government development policies and activities. But then he began to discover problems with this kind of development. Logging companies decimated the forests, and the government began promoting modern farming and cash cropping for export. Phra Khru Supajarat felt increasingly uncomfortable with modern development. Real progress was elusive and debts were increasing. Financial pressures mounted as villagers purchased new household goods. Some villagers turned to drugs and gambling. He concluded that the community's real needs were not being met by the government's prescription for development.

Phra Khru Supajarat was absent from the village for a while. When he returned and reflected upon what had happened, he resolved to let Buddhist principles and local values guide his development work. Community problems with debt, health and addiction led him to begin working on the revival of traditional medicine. From there, his work expanded to include natural farming, a cooperative rice mill, credit programmes, a cooperative store and other initiatives. Phra Khru Supajarat encouraged everyone to participate.

Nongovernmental organizations such as the Thai Interreligious Commission for Development have supported Phra Khru Supajarat by providing training opportunities and links to people with similar interests within and outside the region. He, in return, has always shared his experiences and connections with other monks and villagers.

Phra Khru Supajarat helps people and communities develop in special ways. *Sammakee* is an integral part of the development plan of all the villages he has assisted. Traditional farming, self-sufficient economic relationships, indigenous culture and spirituality all promote communal harmony and are shaped by it. Virtually all the villagers testify that *sammakee* is the most important tradition to maintain. Increased economic prosperity would be nice, but the values of sharing, cooperation, harmony and hospitality come first, above all else.

*Sajja Sasomsap: the Buddhist approach to economy*

The Buddhist monk Phra Subin Paneeto spent many years travelling through Thailand from north to south and from east to west, preaching to people and telling them to be in harmony, to economize and to rely on themselves. But the sermon was practically useless. Nothing seemed to get better.

Phra Subin finally came to the conclusion that rural development and spiritual purification are not possible when people are preoccupied with surviving one more day. He therefore decided to persuade people in his hometown of Trad to save money for the purpose of establishing a pool of community savings called *Sajja Sasomsap* (Honesty Savings Bank) from which members of the community might borrow at relatively low rates of interest.

From a single group started eight years ago, there now are more than 139 *Sajja* savings groups involving more than 20,000 people – almost half the population of the province. The initial cash flow of a few hundred baht has grown to more than 25 million baht today.

The success of this “alternative” financial institution for the poor has been almost entirely the work of Phra Subin. According to him, rural Thailand is chronically in debt. Poverty uproots villagers, forcing many to leave their homes in search of work in a big city. Their departure undermines the sense of community, harmony and kinship traditional to Buddhist villages. Materialism and individualism gain ground and people begin to take advantage of one other. Money-lending, at high rates of interest, creates huge problems.

In Phra Subin’s view, the only way for the poor to free themselves from these difficulties is to attain self-reliance by organizing themselves. The community savings schemes function like an informal credit union, governed by Buddhist principles and social norms.

Only villagers from the same community may apply to be members of a *Sajja* group. This rule ensures active participation from members, a key to a group’s success. Members must attend every meeting of the group, lest they be disqualified as future borrowers. If they misbehave or are dishonest, they are unlikely to find someone willing to guarantee new loans. *Sajja* savings is a concrete exercise in discipline and patience.

Money is not Phra Subin’s reason for setting up these groups. The savings fund is a way to study people’s nature and enable them to help one another. When he convinces people to pool extra money, he aims to build friendships in community.

*Sajja* savings release people from the restraints of poverty and provide a platform for self-reliance. Some people think the best way to help the poor is to donate money for charity. Phra Subin thinks that charity ruins the potential of poor people. It will turn them into beggars. When the money runs out, they will always want more. Rather than handing out charity, why not teach them how to grow vegetables they can eat or sell?

*Conclusion: the traditional and the modern*

In general, the picture of rural Thailand during the last decade is much more depressing than these stories suggest. Many farmers have accumulated insurmountable debts by joining the cash crop economy. Thousands of rural people have lost fertile homelands to big development projects like hydroelectric dams and power stations, forcing their relocation. For these and other reasons, the Forum of the Poor has loudly protested against the consequences of globalization. People are starting to look for alternative agricultural solutions, especially for the poor. This is an exciting new search for understanding, but it is too early to predict any real and positive results.

By trying to combine the modern and the traditional, the villagers of Ban Tha Laad have introduced a widely diverse collection of development approaches. They have even started to use their own currency for local transactions. This, too, will enhance flexibility and the range of development experiences within the community.

The paths of development being followed by Ban Tha Laad, Ta Sawang and the groups of *Sajja Sasomsap* in Trad will not be easy. The trappings of modernization like roads, mass media, formal education, the market economy, and migration are ever-present realities today. Yet family and communities are still very strong, and several grassroots initiatives are providing alternatives to mainstream development. Reflection on the experiences of these communities may serve as an inspiration to other local groups as they make their choices among alternative development paths. The people of Ban Tha Laad, Ta Sawang and the groups of *Sajja Sasomsap* in Trad have much to contribute to international communities.

## PART II ANALYSIS

### 1. Our situation – an essay of economic analysis

*By Julio de Santa Ana, Ecumenical Institute Bossey*

#### Introduction

Economic analysis is developed on two interrelated levels:

- *Structure* (the order and organization of the parts of a whole, of a totality; combination of the parts as generally dominated by the whole) and
- *Conjuncture* (combination of circumstances or events).

Current economic analysis gives more attention to the conjuncture than to the structure. However, in order to understand conjunctural analysis, it is necessary to have an understanding of the prevailing structures.

Structures are more solid than the eventual combination of different historical trends in present circumstances. In the present economic situation these structures are the result of long-term historical processes. It is in their context that ongoing changes are taking place.

#### *THE process*

For more than five centuries a process of social, economic and political domination has been developed on a global level. Up to the beginning of the 16th century there were some important powers in the world. But they were not “global powers”. There was, for example, the case of China, which by the early 16th century exercised a clear domination in East Asia, part of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. China should be considered as the major power of the world at that time. But it was not a global/world power. The construction of global powers began with the expansion of western economic interests and western political domination. It has been a process dominated mainly by western interests. In economic terms, we say that it is a process of capitalist development, handled by a social class that started to take shape for the first time in history in western societies: the bourgeoisie. This social class evolved during these last centuries. It started to exercise political power by the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries (first in the Netherlands, afterwards in England, and since then elsewhere). Today the bourgeois who manage the current economic process are not the same as those of centuries or even decades ago.

The process of the capitalist economy can be characterized by:

- a) its dominating aim. It aimed at subordination of all other interests. In this sense, it has been a *process of conquest* by western powers (mainly bourgeois)

which constructed an order of domination. This order became systemic. As with any system, it is hierarchical and intends to remain so.

- b) its instrumental character. The dominance of capitalists combines political intentions with the evolution of western science and of technology based on this science. It aims at the management of nature (space) and history (time). In this sense it has a *Faustian dimension*. It results in the accumulation of things, artefacts, gadgets, without which it is impossible to live. They are produced by human beings and the process, it is important to underline, has been male-dominated since its inception. It preserves the patriarchal orientation of most of the traditional nonmodern, precapitalist societies.
- c) it is an ambiguous process: it aims at freedom, but imposes oppression. It aims at happiness, but creates pain and suffering. It says that it affirms life, but it brings death (see the semifictional latest book by Susan George: *The Lugano Report*, London & Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 1999). It deals more with having than with being, but it is a having that influences the being. It is moved, in most of the cases, by good intentions. That is: it is a process which has a certain intentionality (freedom, human rights, it even says that it looks for justice), but takes no account of its unintended effects (violation of human rights, oppression, damage of the environment, etc.).
- d) it is a process where different projects coexist, *but where always one project has dominated, and where only one project dominates at present*. The successive dominating projects up to now have had a fascinating, bewitching effect on most of the (nonwestern) peoples of the world.
- e) it is a *world process*, a *global process*. Thus, it is said now that it is a “process of globalization”. I think that it is more appropriate to say that it continues to be *THE capitalist process*.

### *THE project*

We cannot analyse capitalist domination in detail here. Now, because capitalist development takes place at the global level, capitalism is managed not only by the western bourgeoisie, but by other dominant social classes in nonwestern societies (“the West” here is understood mainly in geographical terms) that follow the model of the western bourgeoisie. Capitalism cannot be exercised without cultural and military domination. It is based on commercial domination as well. The ambiguity of the process can be understood when we perceive through the analysis that the present stage of capitalist domination has been allowed by the historical compromise achieved by the end of the Second World War between capital and labour, which opened the way to the so-called “glorious thirties” (1948-1979, that Eric Hobsbawm denominated “the golden age” of the 20th century). During this period an amazing capitalist accumulation took place. At the same time, the labour social movements were partially coopted by capital.

Capitalist accumulation was beneficial for industrial capital. Two things happened: first, with this accumulation important investments were made in research and development (R&D), allowing the invention and creation of informatics which resulted in the shaping of the cyberspace that we know today. New technologies have reinforced the global orientation and global aims of capitalist domination. Secondly, by the beginning of the 1970s, the Bretton Woods order, constructed at the end of the Second World War to prevent the economic conditions developing that were the breeding ground for international warlike confrontations, was brought to an end by a decision of the Nixon administration in the US. Fixed and stable money exchange rates were suspended, and as a result financial instability was again introduced in the world. This situation allowed banks and other financial institutional agents to observe that it was possible to produce great benefits in this framework. The Thatcher government in the UK, followed by the Reagan administration in the US, institutionalized the situation (cf. François Chesnais: *La Mondialisation du Capital*, Paris: Syros, 1997, pp.63-64). Financial deregulation, liberalization of domestic financial markets and the fact that they should become open to the transactions of financial capital, were three major structuring measures by decision of state authorities (following the Thatcher-Reagan model) which, combined with technological developments achieved since the end of the 1960s, opened the way to the domination of financial capital.

*THE* dominating *project* in the historical process of capitalism is managed by the different actors that rule the order of the system according to their financial interests and perspectives. Very quickly a new combination of circumstances enabled financial capital to become the dominant capital. It has taken the place of industrial capital (just as, more than two centuries ago, the latter took the place of commercial capital and of agrarian export capital, which prevailed in the early period of capitalist development). In the present conjuncture, financial capital is constructing a new situation: a) it is highly hierarchical, because the financial system of the USA dominates the rest; b) it is characterized by a lack of mechanisms of supervision and control; c) it is bringing about an unprecedented integration of financial markets. This new model (enabled by technological developments) is proposed as *THE MODEL* (this is *THE* project) to be adopted at the global level. The IMF and the World Bank have the function to impose this model through the structural adjustment programmes that started to be applied by the second half of the 1980s.

There are other projects in the context of the ongoing historical process. Some adhere more or less enthusiastically to the dominant project. There are also projects of resistance, both at the macro- and local levels. *THE* project must be seen in tension with the others. For example, the last Davos Forum can be understood as the step that capitalists took after the WTO meeting in Seattle (December, 1999).

Without going into too much detail, it is possible to say that financial capital aims at imposing the pattern of the integrated financial market on the rest of the markets. Some follow the model. Others are untouched (this is the case of the labour market). Financial capital is doing this on the basis of three things: a) it seems to be successful; thus b) it becomes paradigmatic; and c) it is nourished by industrial capital. Most of the important industrial capitalist actors became associated with banks and institutionalized financial investors during the last 15-20 years. This is an important element of the analysis, because it shows that there is still an organic link (both at the level of existing wealth and also of the enterprises) between industrial and financial capital. They are not in contradiction, at least at the highest level of command of the capitalist evolution. Thus, it is possible to say that financial capital, based on the strength of industrial capital has taken the lead in the capitalist process.

As a consequence, we perceive a qualitative transformation of capitalism. The most important element of the capitalist process is no longer now *the commodity*, but money. This is a major characteristic of financial capital: money becomes the main commodity (I think that it is useful to quote what Marx wrote: "In the last decades of the 17th century it has already been shown that money is a commodity, but this step marks only the infancy of the analysis. The difficulty lies, not in comprehending that money is a commodity, but in discovering how, why, and by what means a commodity becomes money." Karl Marx, *Capital I*, London: Unwin Brothers Ltd., 1946 (reprint), p.64.) This brings us to the issue of financial capital. However, at this point I think that it is necessary to say, even *en passant*, that this transition and transformation of capital enables some people like Ignacio Ramonet to say (cautiously, of course!) that we are now living through "a second capitalist revolution". It is important, because if it is so, then capitalism is far from being exhausted.

### *Financial capital*

When financial deregulation was institutionalized, the liberalization of internal financial markets was implemented, and financial transactions could be made without supervision or control, industrial transnational corporations became aware that an important part of their income could come from the financial sector. They fed financial institutions (banks, other financial creditors, etc.) in order to ensure that they achieved a higher income than through their current industrial production. Governments (whose role should not be neglected: they formalize the framework for the action of financial actors) followed a similar pattern: most of them have debts (public debts), which by the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, were converted into financial obligations (bonds), that were bought by banks, financial institutions, including mutual funds and pension funds. In this way, the political sector became captive to (or, at least, highly influenced by) financial actors.

These two links, between industrial interests and finance and between political institutions and financial capital, should not be neglected.

As also said above, new technologies (especially those related to informatics) provided the ground for global operations of financial capital. The latter can act at the same time, with the same resources, at different fronts. Financial capital works *virtually*, investing in different ways, in different stock exchanges of the globe. Mutual funds, investment funds, and off-shore operations are neither supervised nor controlled. Forty-two free-trade zones, fiscal paradises, in the world permit operations of this kind. In order to implement this new situation, at least five main elements need to be combined:

- first, the power of some state institutions (the G7, the OECD, some geographical blocks like NAFTA, the EU, and a few others of the world);
- secondly, the managerial capacity of certain systemic pillars that can be considered the privileged instruments of the capitalist systemic order (the IMF, World Bank, the WTO);
- thirdly, the impact of R&D, both as providers of infrastructural tools and, at the same time, as important participants/actors in the global economic order;
- fourthly, the financial actors (banks; financial institutional investors, who are powerful arbiters of where and when investments and withdrawals are to be made; mutual funds investing in “securities” such as stocks, bonds, short-term money instruments, derivative funds, etc.; pension funds, eager for a high return in a period when the workers’ and industries’ contributions are coming down because of unemployment as well as salaries not following the cost of living; “hedge” funds which are highly speculative);
- finally, the participation of a vast public, that legitimates this state of affairs.

Speculation has been mentioned. Financial capital, most of the time, is used speculatively. It is exceptional when it is not attracted to some kind of speculation. Susan George, in her fictional book *The Lugano Report*, exposed it clearly: “State authorities, even in the most powerful countries, no longer exercise full control over the value of their currencies and monetary policies. Foreigners hold massive stakes in government bonds (national debts) and can withdraw these investments at the slightest unwelcome signal, causing meltdown of financial reserves and jagged fluctuations in exchange rates. George Soros’ billion-dollar coup against the British pound demonstrated that Central Banks are no longer a match for powerful speculators” (p.25)

Speculation implies two elements at least. One is competition. Michael Porter has given a detailed analysis of the structural determinants and components of competition (*Competitive Strategy*. New York: Free Press; 1980). The other, closely related to the imperative of competition, is risk. If up to the end of the 1970s it was necessary to observe “the prudent rule of business”, it seems now that the imperative is *to risk*. A majority of actors are following this way, not only the merchant and the trader, but also the savers – the increasing number of people

who invest through the internet. We are beyond the self-interest of Adam Smith, that enables the “invisible hand” to transform the concurrent interests in the market into the best possible world, creating wealth. Now, it seems to be appropriate to have the taste of adventure, of struggle, in order to get big returns. However, there are as yet no economic theories that offer a model of systematic relationship between risk and return (See Douglas Greenwald: *Encyclopedia of Economics*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982, p. 830).

The risk (and danger!) of speculation can be shown by certain figures: much more money is exchanged in the world every day than the amount in the banks, other financial institutions, and national treasures (three-and-a-half times more, it has been calculated). Maurice Allais, Nobel Prize winner in Economics, in a recent book (*La Crise mondiale d'aujourd'hui*. Paris: Clément Juglar; 1999) points out that much more money is offered through credit mechanisms than there is real money existing in national treasures, banks, etc. This indicates that the present situation is related to inappropriate financial and monetary structures. Allais affirms that we are at the eve of the explosion of a big crisis. Capital, and above all financial capital, is highly irresponsible. And it will be responsible for the crisis (as capital was in 1929).

### *Looking to the future*

The work of analysis has limits. Analysis does not mean to make predictions. But analysis makes it clear that we need to change this situation. I think that we can learn from history. The 1929-1933 economic crisis was not the only cause of the Second World War, but it contributed to it. At the end of that war, a great historical compromise was established between capital and labour. It helped to construct some major tools that, in many parts of the world, facilitated a period of some historical progress. It was not progress for all, but during the thirty years that followed the end of the war, there was economic growth, scientific and cultural advance, and real social progress in many parts of the world; national liberation movements brought many colonized nations to freedom; trade unions worked fruitfully for the benefit of the working classes, etc. Many things were unsatisfactory: violations of human rights, economic imperialism, wars in the periphery of the world, etc. Nevertheless, Hobsbawm and others insist on speaking of a “golden age”.

This was possible because of three things: a) a great catastrophe, which called for a transformation of the world situation; b) a somewhat clear proposal for an alternative (the wonderful contribution of Karl Polanyi in the third part of his book *The Great Transformation*, 1944, which he elaborated while in exile in the UK, after many contacts with popular sectors of society arising from his involvement in programmes of popular education); and c) a strong social movement aiming at important changes in society. Both the workers' movements and the national liberation movements were instrumental in the formulation of

the historical compromise which opened the way to the thirty years of progress that followed the Second World War.

If we want to stop the prevailing irrationality of the logic of the present phase of capitalism, we need to work on at least two different levels at the same time: one is the formulation of coherent alternatives, both at local and global levels. Alternatives that break and overcome the logic of the neoliberal ideology that guides the operations of leading capital in our time. Alternatives for negotiation, for compromises (I do not think that, in the present historical context, we can defeat capitalism). The other is to work for the construction of a new social movement which, necessarily, must be the result of alliances and coalitions among the classical social movements and the new emerging ones.

Having said this, I think that it is necessary to undertake research into the social contradictions that are now appearing between/among the new ruling class, the power-elite of this period of history, and the social classes who are called to converge in order to confront the actors who lead the present stage of capitalist domination.

I say this because economic analysis cannot be reduced to figures and “economic” facts. It involves social and political elements as well. I am convinced that we are called to work for a new *political economy*.

The problems that we face are too serious and dramatic to leave in the hands of the agents of financial capital of our time. It is necessary to come to an end of the period of the “sorcerer’s apprentices”. It is time to introduce “good sense” in the place of “common sense”.

## 2. How can people take their economic lives into their own hands? Reflections from the underside

*By Jörg Rieger, Southern Methodist University, Dallas*

### 1. Taking things into one’s own hands

People have been taking things into their own hands for quite some time. The European Enlightenment is one of the milestones in this process. The German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, understood Enlightenment as “humanity leaving behind its self-caused immaturity”, “*der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit*”. Immaturity was seen as the inability to take things into one’s own hands. The churches, incidentally, were seen as one of the primary forces promoting such immaturity.

Learning to take things into one’s own hands was of course never just a philosophical principle, just another idea cooked up by the thinkers. Europeans and, later, North Americans did not learn to take things into their own hands

in a vacuum. Economic and political developments prepared the way. The first step dates back to the 15th century when Europeans began to learn to take things into their own hands in the conquest of the Americas. Christopher Columbus and new economic ventures helped prepare the ground for Europe's philosophical and political self-assertion. Later, the French and American Revolutions prepared the ground for the self-assertion of the middle classes and early capitalist ventures. The colonialisms of the 18th and 19th centuries further expanded the control of the modern self. Against this backdrop, the history of modernity can be understood as the history of learning how to take things into one's own hands. We must not forget, of course, that only a certain group of people learned how to take their economic lives into their own hands.

In this process, the history of ideas cannot be separated from the history of political and economic interests. The United States, where I have lived and worked for over a decade, exemplifies these connections. It embodies the principles of modernity like no other country. The historian Henry Steele Commager points out that while the principles of modernity were conceived in Europe, they flourished in the US. The same is true for modern capitalism. In Europe, modernity and the Enlightenment were always tempered by structures inherited from the past, but in the US things could unfold more freely, without all that baggage.

The "American way" ties it all together: philosophy, economics, and politics are all geared to the idea that anyone can take their life into their own hands. The mottoes are well known. "Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" is one of them. Another is the Nike motto, "Just do it". Southern Germany, where I grew up, has an ethos that is not all that different. "*Schaffe, schaffe Haeusle baue und net nach de Mädle schaue*" is a familiar slogan there. "Work, work, to build your own house; don't pay attention to the girls" (or to anybody else, for that matter).

These principles of modernity, it seems to me, remain at the ideological core of globalizing capitalism, but, in the more and more unregulated environment of global capitalism, they become even more damaging than before. Glossing Commager, one might say that capitalism was born within nation-states such as England, Germany, and the United States, but flourishes in the global society where things can unfold even more freely.

## 2. *How not to take things into your own hands*

We need to remember this history in order to understand where we are going and how not to take things economic into our own hands.

At the basis of much modern philosophical and economic thought is individualism and the idea of individual merit and success. Much modern theology has bought into this point of view. As a result, people tend to assume that success, including economic success, is self-made.

In the United States we talk about the “self-made man” (the male term indicates an additional problem). Germans speak about the *Leistungsprinzip*, i.e., that people are rewarded according to their achievements. Even contemporary concerns for community-building are easily sucked into this mindset. In reality, however, the success of modernity is anything but self-made. Nobody is ever self-made, not even Bill Gates, the chairman of Microsoft. The modern self has a long and paradoxical history of producing its self-determination on the backs of other people. The success of modern capitalism, whether national or global, is built on the backs of many others.

In this situation, individualism is merely an ideological cover-up. Unfortunately, much contemporary critique of individualism perpetuates this cover-up and buys right into it. Certain moralists and church people keep reminding us that we are all terribly individualistic and therefore need to make a special effort to relate to other people. But that is not the point. The point is that we are *always already* related to others. We need to understand what those relationships look like. Contrary to popular opinion, we are never self-contained monads: our identity is produced on the back of others. This is still the case in global capitalism, even though the rich increasingly tend to behave as if they do not need the poor any more.

### 3. *How can people take their economic lives into their own hands?*

When we talk about people taking things into their own hands we do not have to worship the image of the modern self. Alternatives exist already – we do not have to play God and create them *ex nihilo*, but we do need to reinforce them and build upon them.

#### *Step 1: We need to understand the relations already in place*

If the individualistic self is a myth of the powers that be, then those who are marginalized and oppressed assume a crucial role. Here we encounter another paradox – people on the margins of global capitalism are central to its transformation. We need to listen to *them* if we want to know who *we* are. We cannot escape the vicious circle of economic dominance and deprivation without learning the truth about global capitalism from those whose lives it destroys.

That’s a crucial, and painful, step that I find missing in many of our efforts at transformation, particularly in the churches. We need to go beyond juggling with statistics – even though that is not unimportant – and meet the people. This implies a whole new way of relating to those who are oppressed.

Obviously, we have known for quite some time that giving handouts to the needy is not the answer. But it is not very different when we create social programmes geared primarily to integrate the less fortunate.

In both cases, it is assumed that the system works, more or less, and the situation of the oppressed is seen as the exception rather than the rule. All we

need to do is bring the people into the system. What I am suggesting is different. Once we realize that oppression is not the exception but the rule, we need to confront the system as a whole. We can no longer make common cause with the powers that be. And a major impulse towards transformation will have to come from those who know at first hand the dark side of how the system works.

Let me remind you of the strong words of Frantz Fanon in his famous book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, New York, 1968, p.49):

“Now, the *fellah*, the unemployed man, the starving native do not lay a claim to the truth; they do not say that they represent the truth, for they are the truth.”

Such a claim is, of course, easily misunderstood in terms of the autonomous modern self. The truth of the oppressed, however, is not built on the individualistic dreams of the modern self and its sentimental essentialism. It simply has to do with the fact that they are oppressed. The truth is related to and generated by the specific forms of their oppression.

We will get nowhere without the “tradition of the oppressed” – we cannot hope to transform the system without it – but we must not romanticize those who are oppressed. In my experience, oppressed people know better than anybody else that they are not God.

*Step 2: We need to rethink what we mean by taking things into one’s own hands*

History has taught us that revolutions that do not move from the bottom up – that are not intimately tied up with the weakest members of a system – are often problematic, leading to a mere reversal of power structures, where one group in power is simply replaced by another. That’s a lesson that the churches need to take more seriously – even the Confessing Church and the Barmen Declaration seem to have had a blind spot here.

The fact that certain ways of taking things into one’s own hands have at times led merely to a reversal of power is often used to discourage transformation altogether. But taking things into one’s own hands does not necessarily have to lead to this. There are other forms of empowerment.

Those who take things into their own hands must remember (in Karl Barth’s words) that they are “not the One”, that they are not God. Once again, the encounter with the marginalized, the underside of history, may teach us a few lessons here. People at the margins are reminded every day that they are not God. Those of us who are not marginalized can only learn this in the encounter with people at the margins: only in building relationships with them are our dominant models of power and agency transformed.

That’s the point of Pentecost as I see it. The Holy Spirit’s empowerment has nothing to do with absolute control. Just the opposite. The Spirit empowers those whose lives are destroyed by absolute control and those in solidarity

with them who thus give up their positions of control. The task is not for the powerful to empower the powerless: the task is to create new forms of empowerment where the two sides encounter and reshape each other.

*Step 3: We need to rebuild community*

For the Industrial Areas Foundation, for instance, community organizing often seems to mean primarily that the disadvantaged also get their share of the American pie. The search for economic self-determination needs to go beyond this: community can only be rebuilt if it addresses and resists that which destroys community in global capitalism.

For the Christians among us, this needs to start in our churches. We cannot rebuild community without addressing our own complicity with what destroys community; let us admit it, the difference between church towers and bank towers is often quite relative. This is true for theology as well: we theologians often behave as if the world would be saved if only we had more influence, but we need to address first of all how that which destroys community shapes even our most pious thoughts. We must not overlook that globalization also affects the world of religion. Like it or not, global capitalism is not just “out there” but also “in here”.

In seeking to create new models of community we need to realize that the modern image of community formation has not worked. In the United States we see this in the talk about the “melting pot”. We have used this model to create others in our own image – to melt down difference – and to reject those who would not fit in. Another image, often marketed as a postmodern alternative to that cruel game, is the “salad bowl”: a salad is better if it has variety, if it includes diverse elements. But this image often ends in a toothless pluralism which does not challenge the established power structures. Each group is left to fend for itself.

We need new images. Perhaps the image of a rope is more helpful: the more strands added to the rope, the stronger it becomes, while the various strands retain their original colours. (Cf. my books *Remember the Poor*, Trinity Press International, Harrisburg 1998, and *Liberating the Future: God, Mammon and Theology*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1998.)

*Conclusion*

To learn how to take our economic lives into our own hands, we need first of all to be aware of the interrelations of the oppressed and their oppressors: we cannot find the truth without the oppressed. Second, we need to resist the temptation of absolute control, by maintaining close relations to people “on the underside”. Third, we need to recreate community without neglecting the tensions of global capitalism, and therefore in conscious resistance to the powers that be.

Alternative concepts of economic agency must not be built on the idea of the modern self. We need new models of agency, new models of how to take things into our own hands, new images of agency that are produced not at the centre of global capitalism but at its margins.

All of this is related to Pentecost. Global capitalism has reduced the Holy Spirit to inner life and religiosity. The bank towers don't really mind if the church towers ring their bells and do their own little thing. Yet many of us are now experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit anew. We experience the Spirit in the most powerful ways where we are opened up to those who are brutalized by global capitalism but still refuse to be controlled.

### 3. The spirituality of globalization and the spirit of resistance

*By Dorothee Sölle, Theologian, Germany*

Why, when God's world is so big,  
did you fall asleep in a prison  
of all places?

Rumi

*The prison we have fallen asleep in: globalization and individualization*

I take up Rumi's idea of the "prison" in which we humans who have no thought of God have fallen asleep. I try to describe our first world prison at the beginning of the millennium. As I see it, this prison is determined by two trends that match perfectly: "globalization" and "individualization".

Since 1989, we have been living in a standardized, globalized, technocratic economic order that demands and achieves total disposition over space, time and creation. Its engine runs on, driven by the coercion to produce more and more and confirmed by technological success. This engine is programmed for ever more speed, productivity, consumption and profit – for about twenty per cent of humankind. In all of human history, no empire has been more efficient or more brutal. Within this super-engine, human beings are not only "alienated" from what they might become, as Karl Marx observed, but they are also addicted and dependent as never before.

One of the spiritual difficulties in our situation is the inner connection between globalization and individualization. The more globally the market economy structures itself, the less interest it demonstrates in the social and ecological webs in which humans live, and the more it requires the individual who is without any relation whatsoever. The partner that our global market

economy needs is *homo oeconomicus*: a one-dimensional individual, fit for business and pleasure, but showing no interest in the anti-personnel mines that his car manufacturer produces, or in the water that his grandchildren will use – not to mention interest in God.

As the agent of justice and protector of the weak, the nation-state is “down-sized”, dismantled and disempowered. At the same time, the individual inside the rich world is built up as the being with an unlimited capacity for consumption. By now, choice, purchase, presentation and enjoyment have long found their own forms of religious staging and production: “cult marketing”. The religion of consumption no longer needs the old and milder forms of the opium of the people. Much more efficient opiates are for sale everywhere.

Living with the super-engine, I do not find the New Testament and many other items of the religious tradition of humanity “mythologically encoded”. I find them enlightening and clarifying. The New Testament describes the normal condition of human beings under Roman imperial rule as being-in-death. “We know that we have passed from death into life,” the First Letter of John exclaims (1 Jn 3.14). Here, normative submission to the all-governing power is called death. Alienation, sin and addiction are different names for the spiritual death that masquerades as life, the death that “surrounds” us.

In the same manner, Paul speaks of us having been “enemies” of God. (Rom 5.10) This expression also contains nothing that we must dismiss as mythological projection. The tradition of religion helps us to identify correctly our role at the apex of world society: we are enemies of the earth, enemies of more than two-thirds of all human beings, enemies of the sky above us – and enemies of ourselves. Whoever believes that we can evade this role subjectively has already made an arrangement with the super-engine. Such a person uses the engine unknowingly, profits from “its positive side” and in so doing experiences the slow death that the engine has planned for the soul.

Within globalization, corporate world dominance collaborates with a novel form of unrelenting individualization that has no attachment to our fellow creatures. This collaboration appears to be beyond hope. Many regard it as a headlong rush towards an apocalyptic end; thoughtful people among them accept it as our unstoppable fate. Can we still live “as we believe we should live in a liberated world” (Theodor Adorno)? This would mean insisting on another vision of our life together, a vision that nourishes resistance.

But are not such visions long gone or turned into harmless private eccentricities? Are there any forms of resistance at all? Is there any point to protesting or studying and practising civil disobedience in new ways? Has not the spirituality of mysticism, from which resistance could emerge, itself already become an aspect of the market against which it promised to offer protection? I struggle with my own fear of the world and the feeling that religion is dying into a spiritless materialism: “fun culture” rules. It is no coincidence that I seek

help exactly among those who know the “dark night” of history and of the eclipse of God.

When we only stare at the lords of this world and the mass of individuals rendered harmless, we do not yet have new eyes for seeing. Fear of the world then encircles us and locks us up in the most exquisitely furnished jail that has ever existed. The New Testament offers a new perspective. Its sociological world is neither the masses nor the individual, but the groups that set out on a new way. In the course of Christian mysticism, every rebellion appealed to the early churches and their situation in the ancient *imperium*. They looked back to a time in which it was not a patriarchally-ordered hierarchy that decided what belongs to God and what belongs to Caesar. It was the groups themselves who appealed to the justice of God against that of the emperor. Their understanding of religion was not the performance of rituals that are judged harmless by Rome or by Washington. Religion as a private matter is a contemporary liberal idea. It knows nothing at all of the mystical ardour that another embodiment and reality of life has always needed and has always sought.

The early church refused to involve itself in many of the social benefits and obligations of the empire. Christians did not go to the theatres, the public baths or the circus. They shunned what Rome culture called *circenses*, games to entertain the masses and divert their attention from real problems. The public executions staged by Rome for deterrence effect were command performances, but Christians still tried to stay away. Every event connected with the military, the swearing of oaths or the offering of incense to the emperor, was seen to be of the devil. In a minority Christian culture, abstinence, separation, dissent, opposition and resistance flowed one into the other. It was to precisely these forms of negation of the dominant culture that later dissidents looked back.

This thinking presupposes that mysticism enables community even where its manifestation is extremely individualistic. Of necessity, mysticism desires to get away from the privatization of joy, happiness and oneness with God. The dance of the love of God cannot be danced alone; it brings people together. God’s conviviality (Ruysbroeck) brings people out of the “purely religious” activity that is thought to be harmless. The understanding of human dignity, freedom, and the openness for God or the divine spark cannot be reduced to a special religious space where God can be served and enjoyed but not shared with the eighty per cent of people who do not share the blessings of the new economic order.

In the present scenario there are global players and satiated, isolated individuals. But it is the groups who are committed to voluntary effort, critical openness and taking their own initiatives that are the bearers of hope. Politically speaking, these nongovernmental organizations, among which I count those sections of the Christian church that are alive, are the carriers of resistance. From a spiritual perspective, they embody a different subject from the one that

has fallen asleep in the prison of consumerism. What sustains those groups? What keeps them awake? Why do they not give up? I believe that it is elements of mysticism that cannot be extinguished.

God is nothing that seeks to be everything, says Jacob Böhme. My fear tells me that in the world of globalization this “nothing” is less and less noticeable, that more and more the silent cry is drowned out. But the nothing that wants to be everything generates its own imperturbability, yes, its own mystical defiance. Böhme conceives of God as a movement, as something flowing, growing, driving, as a process. When we engage ourselves in the process we become part of the God-movement and are connected with all others.

When we are part of the movement of nothing, we too live with our nothing, confront our nothing or, as mystics have always put it, become “annihilated”. Unless we “disrobe” our faith, unless our faith becomes stark naked, we cannot take part in the process. Here I address the ego, possessions, and violence which are the focus of the disrobing of resistance. To be egoless, propertyless and nonviolent is to be identified with the nothing that wants to be everything.

Often tiny, sometimes at a loss as to what to do next, and frequently unorganized, groups of resistance come into being before our very eyes. To spot these new hope-bearers, to understand and strengthen them and protect oneself against one’s own fear of the world, it is good to look for the element of mystical resistance in them. The subject that weaves itself into the web of networks and grows into resistance cannot be destroyed. That subject is and remains a “member,” even if it does not always know it. The nothing that wants to become everything is also at work in and among us.

### *Out of the home into homelessness*

At the theological seminary in New York where I used to teach, we were once asked about our religious experiences. There was an embarrassed silence; it was as if we had asked our grandmothers about their sex life. A young woman eventually spoke up and offered to present, in a week’s time, an extensive report on her experiences. Accordingly, she told us that as a very young girl in the American mid-West, she had spent many hours reading in bed at night, without permission. One winter’s night, she woke up at four in the morning, went outside and looked at the stars in the clear, frosty sky. She had a once-in-a-lifetime feeling of happiness, of being connected with all of life, with God; a feeling of overwhelming clarity, of being sheltered and carried. She saw the stars as if she had never seen them before. She described the experience in these words, “Nothing can happen, I am indestructible, I am one with everything.” This did not happen again until about ten years later when, in a different context, something similar took place. The new context was a huge demonstration against the Vietnam War. There, too, she knew that she was sheltered, a part of the whole, “indestructible”, together with the others.

Struggling for words and with her own timidity, she brought both experiences together under the rubric of “religious experience”.

Suppose that this young woman had lived in fourteenth century Flanders; she would have had at her disposal other traditions of language allowing her to say, “I heard a voice” or “I saw a light brighter than everything else.” Our culture confines her to sobriety, self-restriction and scholarly manners of expression. How she fought these constraints and the very fact that she did so makes her story unforgettable.

Mystical experience is bliss and simultaneously it makes one homeless. It takes people out of the home they have furnished for themselves into homelessness, as it did to young Gautama, known later as the Buddha. I sensed a bit of this ascetic homelessness in the student’s report and in her feeling of being drawn more and more into a nonviolent life. The least that can be said is that being touched by religion produces a condition that evokes alienation; in terminology that conveys a degree of loathing, the New Testament specifies it as alienation from “this world”. Distance from everyday reality does not necessarily legitimate the big word “resistance”, but it does point to a different life. Bliss and homelessness, fulfilment and quest, God’s presence and the bitterness of God’s absence in everyday, violence-riddled reality belong together.

I am personally acquainted with many groups that practise pacifist and ecological resistance and, above all in the world’s poorest countries, economic resistance. I learn from them ever anew that experience, analysis and insight alone are too weak to bring us out of the prison wherein we are asleep. We need a different language that keeps awake and shares the memory of liberation and the promise of freedom for all. We need a different hope than that of political strategies and scientific prediction.

*For us, inside the rich world, the ego is the best prison guard*

There is a story about an Egyptian monk who was tormented by temptation. One day he decided to leave his cell and move to another place. As he put on his sandals he saw another monk not far away who also put on his sandals. “Who are you?” he asked the stranger. “I am your own ego,” came the reply. “If you are leaving here on my account, you should know that wherever you go from here I shall always go with you.”

This story may not be quite as old as it sounds. The hope of escaping from the old ego by changing one’s place, clothes, roles or partners is not restricted to hermits. There is something coercive about that hope. It is a manifestation of the ego, the best guarantor of the prison wherein we have fallen asleep. Our ego is the agent that does not allow the bundle of desires, drives and needs in us to come to resolution.

That is precisely how it shores up in us such a profound dependence on this world.

Egolessness, propertylessness and nonviolence belong together. They are the cornerstones of the change of life that comes from the spirituality of mysticism. Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh speaks only when he has something to say; a presentation of the ego in the manner of talk shows is not intended. He lives a simple life with his monks, without alcohol and as a vegetarian. Nonviolence is the foundation of his peace work that includes encouraging American veterans of the Vietnam War to help Vietnamese children today. There is an attempt to turn the tide, away from the ego, property and violence and into a different freedom. This search for a different life can be seen also in many unknown “lowly” folk. I want to let them speak here, on different levels, in different forms and with different consequences. To speak of democratizing mysticism means also to discern it in the everyday forms of nonconformist life.

Ego, property and violence are real and cry out to be relativized or to become redundant. But ego and egolessness are connected, paired in the same way as property and propertylessness, violence and nonviolence. In discussing each pair, I cannot isolate the naturally affirming term from the negating term that points to liberation. I need to keep both terms together, for who wants to dissipate in egolessness or be completely without property? It is not an either/or. Instead, it is a growth process that always develops new forms.

The most difficult and convoluted component of this critical life process is the relationship of ego and egolessness. Frequently there is a desperate search “to find oneself” and finally, to find time, space and freedom for oneself. Yet that search thoroughly negates any sense of leaving oneself, the mystical desire of getting rid of one’s ego. It is precisely for that reason that it also fails to satisfy the realistic practical desire “to gain one’s life” and finally come to enjoy it. But mystical desires can be as little denied as “that of God” in us.

It is necessary to forget the ego. That is exactly what mystical tradition had in mind when it connects remembering God and forgetting the ego. The process in which the ego ceases to forget God is the same as the one in which it begins to forget itself. Remembering and forgetting are two sides of one act. Mystically speaking, forgetfulness of the ego, replacing the normal forgetfulness of God, is part of immersing and losing oneself, of falling in love, i.e., one of the activities in which we depart from ourselves. A human being does not obtain a face by looking in a mirror, like the monk in the story earlier. Having a face includes looking at something different, being captured by something outside ourselves. Losing ourselves in something that is not us is the most wonderful way of disempowering the ego and in this sense becoming free.

The mysterious “way inward” is not one on which one finally comes to know and find oneself. It is a way on which being possessed by the ego loses its power. The ego liberates itself because it knows itself as having always existed in the accusative, as Emmanuel Levinson put it.

A different relation to the ego and its needs would be one of the spiritual preconditions of a different lifestyle that does not build on plunder and rape. How did people come to perceive egolessness as liberation and understand freedom as freedom from the ego? Mystics of every tradition have fought against flooding the ego with objects that foster covetousness. In the worlds of poverty, this had subversive meaning; there was a non-coveting freedom from money and goods, a defiant independence from “the good life” and luxury. “Riches I heed not,” sang the people, conscious that next to the idol there are other values worth striving for.

In current globalized production, the remnants of that independence have to be eradicated. The consuming ego of the consumer must not show such disinterest in looks, accessories, outfits and an environment shaped according to “style”. Instead, it is bombarded with ego-propaganda. Needs are altered in the sense of “more often”, “faster”, “more”, “right away”. The education in ego fixation is conducted worldwide by the media, adroitly using the real needs of human beings that traditionally are all affirmative: I would like to “be” more attractive, musical, quick-witted, appreciated, etc. Those “being-needs”, present in different degrees in all human beings, are titillated in advertising and, before they are recognized as such needs, are changed into “having-needs”. I see the empty white beach, feel how wild and inviting it is and am skilfully diverted to the product that I am to “enjoy” instead, by buying it.

The ego is not only to be made greedy for new things. It is also to become thoroughly dependent on the possibilities of choice and the abundance of options. Buying is itself staged as a religious act in the temples of consumerism. The motto of the postmodern world may well be “I consume, therefore I am”. The artificial creation of needs is an essential component of economic life; the counter-model of “live simply so that others may simply live” is degenerated as sheer romanticism. We are further removed than ever before from an economy that sustains existence and is not hounded by progress. To be “over-choiced” with thirty different kinds of bread does indeed develop the shopper’s awareness of differentiation and sense of taste. However, from the ego that is becoming dependent on such a surplus of choice, it also takes away the time and energy for other life pursuits. The ego is diverted and, with the help of the world of consumer goods, “turned in on itself”, as the tradition used to depict the sinner: *homo incurvatus in seipsum*.

The least to be learned from the tradition of mysticism is that becoming empty in a world of surplus, learning to switch off, limiting oneself are small steps in the liberation from consumerism. Freedom cannot be imagined without letting go. To enter into the way from the ego to ego-liberation is a beginning in resistance. In the consumerist culture of plundering, the ego turned into an addicted identity functions as the best guard in our jail; it controls and effectively suppresses our attempt to escape. We need a different relation to the ego that

includes egolessness as the liberation from impositions and constraints destructive of life and that perceives the ego in terms of communal participation.

The question about the ego's attachment to itself and the possibility of freedom from the ego has to be raised against this background. The consciousness of the market collides with the hope of eventual liberation from the ego. Wherever the ego's understanding reigns as the subject of the economy, the ideal of freedom from the ego that the monks, béguines and mystics promoted comes into conflict. Egolessness may be tolerated on occasion as a private alleviation of the worst personal aberrations, but as a goal of life, egolessness is irrelevant and foolish. As the late Middle Ages knew, ego, property and violence have an inner connection. Being rid of self-interest, the annihilation of the ego – these must be understood as radically contradictory to the basic reality of the market.

There is a story about the great impressionist painter Claude Monet (1840-1926) that throws light on this different relation to the ego. On Monet's eightieth birthday, a photographer from Paris visited him, wanting to take pictures of him. But Monet said coolly, "Come back next Spring and take pictures of my flowers in the garden, they look more like me than I do." A mystical answer! Becoming egoless does not begin with the superego's demands or rituals of purification but in the amazing sharing of the one life that is in everything.

*"Go where you are nothing!"*

Egolessness is not a task to be performed; initially, it is happiness; the flowers in the garden really do resemble Monet more than his photo! A greater freedom is possible, fear and inconsolability fall away and, yes, consciousness, this needy individual being, recedes. "My soul was so captivated and delighted that I had no thought about my own salvation, and scarce reflected that there was a creature such as myself," writes an 18th-century man about a moment of mystic rapture. (William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1929, p.210) Egocentricity melts away before the sun of mystical union.

According to Meister Eckhart, the goal of human life is to become free from oneself and all things. This freedom from the ego is not only a supra-temporal religious-ethical idea; the ego to be relinquished plays its particular role as the agent "of this world" where its binding function can be abolished in the process of letting oneself go. Today it oversees us in the prison of the false economic order by aligning our needs with that order. It makes sure that we venerate, research and pay for the violence named "security". It makes us dependent on what Eckhart called the spirit of "mercantilism", on what John of the Cross identified as "cravings".

"Go where you are nothing!" I understand this "go where" as more than an inner process of consciousness-raising. It is also the real experience of real people who resist the principalities and powers that rule over them. The citizens of the democratically organized rich world have access to places where they

are *not* simply nothing. They can elect parliamentary deputies; they can appeal through courts of law and attempt to make their voice heard, however increasingly restricted that is turning out to be. And yet, repeatedly, in essential issues concerning creation, our fellow-creatures, the disenfranchized and human labour, these very citizens experience failure. And then nothing seems more normal than to give up and let what cannot be changed stay as it is. “Go where you can accomplish something!” seems to be the imperative that has more rationality. What is to be learned from mystical egolessness goes beyond this.

John of the Cross speaks of the dark night that we enter into unprotected, without all the security mechanisms that we use for consolation and diversion. “Go where you are nothing” means trying to make manifest what has no lobby for its work, what exposes you in your nothingness, your inconsequentiality, the negation of the self. And you are not to be ashamed of your nothingness. You are to let go of your fear of being nothing and be free for “the nothing that wants to be everything”.

Those who have freely chosen this way of becoming egoless, in the sense of having no power and authority, include many highly gifted 20th-century people with affinities to mysticism. The great philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) chose to give away his millions and become a grade school teacher. Simone Weil worked on a factory assembly line. Albert Schweitzer went into the jungle at Lambarene. They all chose a place where they were nothing. “Go where you are nothing” also holds true for those who, in trying to block transports of nuclear waste, face the superior strength of a heavily armed police. At the atomic waste site of Gorleben in Germany, resisters – and life itself – are nothing. Martin Buber said, “Success is not a name of God.” Becoming subjects in our world means to go where we are nothing with this dream, this hope, this faith that God is the nothing that seeks to be everything. Resistance needs a different spirituality.

### PART III BIBLE AND ECONOMY

#### Introduction

*By Ton Veerkamp, Theologian and economist, Berlin*

#### *A preliminary remark on the Bible*

The Bible is a *grand récit* (great narrative), to use the concept of French philosophers like Lyotard and Derrida. It summarizes the collective experiences and visions of a culture, a people, a nation. It does so not by outlining a theory but by telling a story. The story of the Qur'an, and of its coming down to Mohammed, is the *grand récit* for many peoples, from Morocco to Indonesia. The story of enlightenment, emancipation and technical progress is the *grand récit* of the western bourgeoisie. The story of liberation for the working class, of overcoming exploitation and establishing a classless society is the *grand récit* of the labour movement. The Hebrew Scriptures have been the *grand récit* of the Jewish people since the time of the second temple. Through the heterodox-Jewish messianic movement, the Bible became, in an alienated form, the *grand récit* of western culture up to the era of bourgeois revolutions in the 18th century. According to some French philosophers, we are experiencing "the end of all *grand récits* (e.g., François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, 1979). The Christian faith is no longer the *grand récit* of a particular culture, but everywhere of minorities.

#### *Biblical vision and biblical dilemma*

The vision of a society based on solidarity and equality is central to the Torah, the prophets and other writings (Tanach). Since Judaeen society was ancient-oriental and agricultural, and our societies are mainly industrial and post-industrial, the vision of the Torah is not immediately applicable to our social problems. But this vision provides us with a fundamental orientation. I try to bridge the gap by using the word solidarity, a virtue of the labour movement, and equality, a vision of both the French and the American revolutions. The Tanach tried to tie together the family clans (*beth 'aboth*) in a system of "brotherhood". All members of the Judaeen society are children of Israel, offspring of the twelve sons of Jacob/Israel. The *'aboth* (the chiefs of family clans) are required to behave like brethren in order to avoid a situation in which almost all of the land, the resource of economic life in their society, is controlled by a few. Leviticus 25 is the crucial text. In other words, the *grand récit* of the Tanach has resisted the economic, social, political and ideological "normality" of the ancient Orient since about 600 BCE. Exploitation, in the economic sense of the word, was "normal" in ancient oriental culture. A society

without exploitation is the divine commandment; exploitation of the children of Israel is strictly forbidden in Israel (*'osheq*, *'ashaq*, Lev 19.13, 1 Sam 12.4, etc.).

Late texts of the Tanach and all messianic writing of the apostles and the evangelists are mainly concerned with politics rather than economic life. The economic and social aspects of the *grand récit* are identical with the Torah. The main concern however was the global power of the Roman Empire. The messianic outlook of Jesus as told by the messianic writings was in radical opposition to Rome and its "system" (the Greek word *kosmos* means "order of the world"). All the gospels and most of the letters reflect the defeats of the Judaeen people and the futility of any militaristic strategy in its wars against Rome. Even the genuine Pauline epistles written before the first Judaeen war are full of dark suspicions of the coming catastrophe. The first letter of John, arguably the latest document in our Christian Bible, probably reacts to the devastating defeat of the Judaeen people in Egypt, Libya, Cyprus and Mesopotamia, whereas the Revelation of John that anticipates final victory perhaps was written during this war. For the time being, global Rome seemed invincible. John's answer was solidarity (the only meaningful translation of the Greek word *agape*). Passionately sticking to the identity of Israel and to the Torah was the only possible form of resistance. Thus, solidarity and refusing to adapt to the rules of global power is the only way our *grand récit* can be told in the 21st century. This may conserve the fire of revolution that glows below the ashes of global power; or it may deteriorate into in-group fundamentalism.

Our dilemma is choosing between finding a place of faithfulness within the system ("orthodox" Jewish and Christian answers) or changing the system itself (the answer of radical movements in both faiths). Might both strategies work at the same time? This I call the dilemma of the Bible.

#### *Analysis: what is the system?*

The danger of using words like globalization, neoliberalism, and casino capitalism, is that they communicate more moral indignation than analytical understanding of the system. What analytical tools should we use?

Basic concepts of Marxism have guided me through thirty-five years of political life. I agree that exploitation is a fundamental feature of the mode of production in capitalism. In order to give this concept analytical rigour, Marx translated the sociological idea of exploiting and exploited classes into the economic concept of surplus value. By surplus value Marx meant the difference between the value of the product and the value of the capital (constant and variable) involved in the production process – in phenomenal terms, between revenues and direct and indirect labour costs. How does such a difference arise? It arises because workers are obliged to sell their labour to capitalists, and because capitalists pay workers for only part of the value of their output. The remainder is privately extracted and divided according to the interests of

those who own or manage the means of production. Thus surplus value is based on surplus labour. Marxist analysis of the economic process has influenced the labour movement. Its aim has been to get rid of exploitation, not because it is morally bad but because it is the only way to realize the vision of a democratic society transformed by a democratized economy.

Bourgeois theory invented the concept of value to formulate its economic, social and political claims within a feudal-absolutist society. The paradigm changed about 1870, when neoclassical theory introduced the element of utility (consumer preferences) and explained how it entered into the demand for commodities. The idea of marginal utility – and an analysis of how utility affects prices and quantities – provided the missing link in a fuller theory of how markets work. This theoretical construction remains to this day much of what is taught in most universities around the world, both North and South. This paradigm may now be changing as the bourgeoisie, though sticking to its own liberal (not neoliberal!) ideas, seems to be contemplating a return to a modified concept of value. The question now is what value does labour add to shareholder value (*Börsenwert*). Shareholder value is the result not of realized profits but of expectations of profits. Entrepreneurs wishing to nurture their enterprises have a much longer time horizon than the owners of certificates of ownership who can dispose of their shares with the click of a mouse! “Speculators may do no harm as bubbles on a steady stream of enterprise. But the position is serious when enterprise becomes the bubble on a whirlpool of speculation. When the capital development of a country becomes a by-product of the activities of a casino, the job is likely to be ill-done” (John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, ch.12, VI).

How does exploitation or the production of surplus value function in a period of shareholder value? In the North the answer to this question may be different from the answer in, say, the export free zones of the Chinese coastal regions. And what does a society made democratic through democratization of the economy (i.e., socialism!) look like in a period of casino-capitalism, as defined by Keynes?

The British economist Joan Robinson once said: “Exploitation is bad, nonexploitation is worse.” She meant that people within the system may fight exploitation and poverty with the means of resistance developed by the labour movement. But the masses that are trying to survive on the outskirts of the big cities of the South, and the millions of refugees roaming the South’s countryside or starving in the huge camps of Africa, are not exploited, because the system has no use for them. Their destiny is worse, Robinson said. The system reduces humanity to “human capital”, valued only for its capacity to create value and in the process of accumulating capital. An ever-increasing number of human beings, mainly in the South and in all the states of the former Soviet Union, are not even granted the “privilege” of being used. Even in the North, many people

during the last twenty years have been made redundant. According to this logic, a person who does not own human capital, who is not worth paying to produce, is no longer human at all. He or she may or may not survive in an informal sector that is alienated from human society. The Marxist concepts of exploitation and of the reserve industrial army do not easily explain the growth of informal sectors in the South and North.

Even so, Marxist theory is helpful in thinking about the emergence in the informal society of structures of class exploitation such as sweatshops and child labour, and therefore about the necessity of class struggle in informal sectors. We have heard about the resistance and the class struggle of South Korean workers in the 1980s. Some nongovernmental organizations see the solution in the self-organization of the informal sectors. But should we completely forget the theories of dependency? They saw the world as a totality that must be totally reshaped.

In the ashes of Pompeii, a statuette originating in ancient China (in the Han dynasty) was found. It must have been brought there before the year 79 CE, suggesting some sort of trade between the Roman empire and ancient China. Owners of capital (Sinbad the Sailor!) therefore transported goods already before the 16th century from one corner of the world to another. History records that they also traded “human capital” in its most brutal form – slaves to produce cotton and sugar in the American, Dutch and British colonies. Presently, capital is hunting cheap Indian engineers in Bangalore and Kerala to write Microsoft programmes for a couple of dollars so that Bill Gates, the private owner, can get richer. Capitalism was always a story of western domination and its domination is always global. After 1989, the analytical concept known as imperialism was more or less given up, but I believe it still has importance. The answer of the labour movement to the imperialism of capitalism was international solidarity, sometimes a helpless or inconsistent answer. But it was and is the only possible answer. Fifteen years ago, it proved to be impossible for socially engaged church groups to mobilize trade unions in the chemical industry in Germany to act in solidarity with Brazilians striking against German companies like Höchst and Bayer in São Paulo. Solidarity action in Germany against Höchst and Bayer could have helped Brazilian workers. And the managers of those companies might have realized that global resistance is possible and dangerous to their power. Unfortunately, German trade unions do not give a damn about international solidarity.

*From analysis back to the grand récit*

Solidarity is a new moral virtue, one that was absent in all systems of moral philosophy and moral theology up to the 19th century. The idea originated in 18th-century French jurisprudence: all members of a group were liable for the costs of damages that a single member caused. They are to act jointly – in

solidarity – to meet a particular liability. The idea was carried forward by the western labour movement when its groups supported others struggling for their rights, as in the case of strikes. It was developed further into support for all members of the working class or oppressed groups that engaged in the common struggle for a more just (socialist) world. So solidarity, the key concept of the *grand récit* of the labour movement, was not an all-inclusive, universal love-your-neighbour-whatever-he-or-she-may-be-attitude, but rather a special and exclusive attitude. Solidarity was for comrades in the socialist or labour movement, not for the common enemy.

Of all biblical concepts, *agape* has the closest affinity to solidarity; therefore it should not be translated as love or charity. The famous sentence of 1 Jn 4.12 should read: “God is solidarity.” *Agape* or solidarity is not development aid or a project of an NGO. Solidarity is a virtue in the common struggle against the system. The system itself is characterized in the messianic writings as the opposite of *agape*: *misein*. This word has an emotional and political connotation: the system *misei* (“hates” or “fights with all political, military, ideological means”) against Israel and the social order of the Messiah of Israel. John 15 has to be read in the light of the political struggle of the community against Rome: “When the system fights against you, you may know that it first of all fought against me (Jesus)” (15.18). This is not dualism, but real antagonism in a real world. Solidarity in a common struggle and militancy against the system are two sides of one reality. We must remember that the traditional concept of *militia Christi*, or messianic militancy, is the congenial answer to the “hate”, or the contempt and militant aggression (*misein*) of the system.

I grew up in the social environment of the labour movement and learned this kind of Bible reading within the political struggle of the European Left. Since the labour movement is no longer a decisive political and social influence in the North, we need to ask how to redefine solidarity for the 21st century. What should messianic militancy look like in the presence of the overbearing political, military and ideological power of the system? Messianic militancy could take the form of messianic cleverness (Mt 5.39ff; Rom 13.1ff). Are there other forms?

## 1. Pentecost as new economy

*By Ched Myers, Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, Los Angeles*

The season of Pentecost is crucial to the life of Christians, for at this time we renarrate the “birth” of the church in the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet what sort of Christian practice the Spirit empowered at Pentecost has been a divisive issue in the life of the church ever since, not least in this century. Today what it means to be “Spirit-filled” is usually understood and debated in terms of

“pneumatic phenomenology”. The roots of the feast of Pentecost, however, are agricultural – and thus unavoidably social and economic.

Before it became a Christian feast, Pentecost was a Jewish observance called the “feast of weeks” (Shavuot). Coming after Passover, Shavuot was originally a celebration of the first fruits of the agricultural harvest (Ex 23.14-17; Deut 16). However, after the Hellenistic period and the destruction of the temple in 70 CE the festival became a commemoration of the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mt Sinai. This is how it continues to be celebrated in synagogues today. But there may be more to the symbolism of the original feast of weeks than just harvest thanksgiving. It is interesting to note the similarity in its timing with that of the Levitical jubilee:

From the day after the sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks... You shall count until the day after the seventh sabbath, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to the Lord. (Lev 23.15)

You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period... gives forty-nine years... And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. (Lev 25.8, 10)

This suggests that this feast of new grain was meant to remind Israel that redistributive “sabbath economics” applied at each harvest. The Torah’s sabbath regulations represented Yahweh’s strategy for teaching the people about their dependence upon the land and upon the “divine economy of grace”. That is, the earth belongs to Yahweh, and its fruits are given to people as a gift (Lev 25.23). Thus the people should freely and justly distribute those fruits, instead of seeking to own and hoard them. “Sabbath” first appears in the Hebrew Bible in the Exodus story of manna in the wilderness (Ex 16.23). This archetypal story was more than a lesson about Yahweh’s sustaining love. It served as a reminder that the purpose of economic organization was for there to be enough for everyone, not for surplus accumulation that benefited the few (see Ex 16.15-26 and 31.12-17). In this context Moses prescribes periodic sabbath rest for both the land and human labour, an alternative rhythm that sought to disrupt human attempts to “control” the forces of production.

Deuteronomy 15 extends this sabbath logic: “Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts... If a member of your community... is sold to you and works for you six years, in the seventh year you shall set that person free.” (Deut 15.1, 12) In agrarian societies such as biblical Israel or parts of the third world today, the cycle of poverty begins when a family has to sell off its land in order to service a debt, and reaches its conclusion when landless peasants can only sell their labour, becoming bond slaves. Sabbath debt remission was to be Israel’s hedge against the inevitable tendency of human societies to stratify, concentrating power and wealth in the hands of the few and creating a hierarchy

of classes with the poor at the bottom. According to Leviticus 25, this weekly and seven-yearly cycle was supposed to culminate in a jubilee, or “sabbath’s sabbath”. The jubilee sought to dismantle inequality through wealth redistribution, releasing each community member from debt, returning all encumbered or forfeited land to its original owners, and freeing all slaves.

The rationale for this restructuring of the community’s assets, which includes a prohibition against lending money at interest (Lev 25.36f) was to remind Israel of its identity as an Exodus people who must never return to a system of slavery (25.55). The extent to which biblical Israel abided by the jubilee code is a matter of much scholarly debate (and in capitalist religion, much scepticism). Yet sabbath economics remains at the heart of the Torah and its feasts. Jesus of Nazareth, standing in a long line of Hebrew prophets, sought to renew that old jubilee vision in his practice as well. It is significant, then, that Luke’s narrative of Pentecost in Acts reappropriates the jubilee implications of the feast of weeks. For when the Spirit descends, the redistribution of wealth and the “economics of enough” are reinstated (Acts 2.44-47; 4.32-37). The story of the Spirit’s descent on the disciples at Pentecost follows upon the ascension of Jesus and the restoration of the twelve in Acts 1. It consists of three parts: the experience of the “tongues” (vv.1-13); Peter’s speech and the response of the crowd (vv.14-41); a description of the discipleship community of goods (vv.42-47). These three aspects represent essential and interrelated characteristics of Luke’s portrait of the nascent Christian movement.

The narrative begins abruptly with the unusual phrase, “When the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled...” (2.1) This may signal that the primal intentions of the feast of weeks are about to be realized: the “first fruits” of the new messianic movement will be manifested publicly, while the jubilee symbolism of the “sabbath’s sabbath” feast will be enacted.

In fact, the Pentecost narrative opens with “tongues of fire distributed among the disciples” (2.3), and ends with them selling their possessions and “distributing them to whoever had need” (2.45; the only two appearances of the Greek verb *diamezizoo* in Acts). Peter’s invitation to repentance then echoes a theme from Jesus’ first sermon, in which he declared the day of jubilee (Lk 4.18ff). Peter reiterates Jesus’ unilateral cancellation of debts (also termed “forgiving sins”; see Lk 5.20ff). All this suggests that Pentecost may have far more to do with the jubilee vision of redistributory justice than with the ecstatic spectacle of glossolalia.

The setting of the story is significant. The house in which the disciples are gathered (2.2) is presumably the same place as the “upper room” of 1.13. This space has been romanticized by church tradition. In fact, as co-conspirators with someone who had just been executed as a political prisoner, the disciples are probably in hiding from the authorities. But as Bill Wylie Kellermann points out, “The story in Acts 2 begins in the upper room and ends in the streets of

Jerusalem.” Whatever else the “great wind” of the Spirit did (2.2), it transformed fearful fugitives into “bold” public proclaimers (2.29). Indeed, writes Kellermann, “After what’s been done to Jesus, you’d have to be either crazy or drunk to be shouting his name in the streets and pointing accusing fingers at the executioners.”

The “tongues as of fire” correlates to the baptism “with the Holy Spirit and with fire” promised by John the Baptist back in Luke 3.16, of which the reader is reminded in Acts 1.5. But these tongues are immediately put to practical use in 2.4ff, as the scene becomes public. We are told that witnessing this event are “devout Jews from every nation under heaven” (2.5). From around the empire both Jews and Gentiles hear about the “powerful works of God” in their own tongue (2.11). There is no indication that the tongues in this context are anything other than a symbol of cross-cultural communication.

It is equally startling that these cosmopolitan visitors of high standing are being instructed by rural, uneducated, but suddenly polyglot Galileans (2.7; see 4.13). Moreover, Luke has made it clear that women are part of the discipleship group (1.14), and Peter’s argument from Joel confirms that women are participating in this prophetic revival (2.17f). In other words, boundaries of race, class and gender are being transgressed by a church empowered by the Spirit, and a new “community without walls” is being born!

In order to interpret this remarkable event Peter cites the prophet Joel (Joel 3.28-32a). The phrase “pouring out the spirit” there is notable because in most of the prophetic writings this verb (Heb *shaphak*) is used in relation to God’s wrath (e.g., Is 42.5; Jer 6.11; Lam 4.11; Ezek 7.8; Hos 5.10; Zeph 3.8). But the judgment motif is very much intact, symbolized by the apocalyptic imagery of 2.19f. Joel is standing in a long prophetic tradition that identifies divine intervention with cosmic upheaval (see e.g., Is 13.9f; 34.4; Ezek 32.7; Am 8.9; also Joel 2.10), a tradition upon which later apocalyptic literature through the New Testament era draws heavily.

The judgment is made quite specific in the rest of Peter’s speech (2.22-35). It is the complicity of the audience, which represents the nation as a whole (“men of Israel”, 2.22), in the execution of Jesus of Nazareth (2.23, 36). We would do well to remember that this indictment has been twisted to fuel millennia of Christian anti-Semitism. It is not some kind of cosmic ethnic slur, but a specific argument that had been heard before in Israel. The exhortation to “save yourselves from this crooked generation” (2.40) is an allusion to the Song of Moses (Deut 32.5). The nation’s leadership has once again chosen to silence a prophet rather than heed him, thereby forfeiting its legitimacy (this theme is reiterated in later Acts speeches; see 3.22-26; 7.51f).

Yet, Jesus was more than a prophet: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus who you crucified” (2.36). Peter could not have offered a more politically volatile

conclusion. His people at that time were firmly under the boot of Caesar's "lordship", and all "messianic" movements were suspect by both Roman and collaborating Judean authorities. Peter is, in other words, denouncing the prevailing political arrangement and challenging the people to transfer their allegiance from executioner to victim (2.38). This is the specific meaning of Peter's call to "repent", as it was for John the Baptist (Lk 3.8ff) and Jesus of Nazareth (Lk 13.3-5). And such subversive preaching will shortly land Peter, as it did his predecessors, in jail (see Acts 4).

Backing up Peter's critique of the public order, let us not forget, is the alternative social practice of the Spirit-filled church (2.42-47). The new converts are welcomed into a community in which "all things were held in common" (2.44). By the end of the Pentecost narrative the "house" has been transformed from a hiding place for political fugitives (2.2) to a place where jubilee economics are being celebrated at table (2.46). The Spirit's presence transforms human life inwardly and outwardly, the private and the public spheres.

On the church's feast of Pentecost, it is appropriate to focus preaching on Luke's presentation of the characteristics of a genuinely "Spirit-filled" church. "Can these old bones live?" the prophet Ezekiel was asked by God while "in the spirit" (Ezek 37.1-3). It is a question worth asking in our churches and in our culture today.

Peter's example at Pentecost shows how the Holy Spirit can "embolden" (2.29) someone who has known betrayal and disgrace to speak the hard truth to his own people, in order to bring about repentance and renewal (2.38ff). The outpouring of God's Spirit is disruptive to our traditions and institutions, in church and world alike. For Luke, the Spirit empowers the church to cross established (and enforced!) boundaries of gender, as Peter endorses women prophets (Acts 2.17f); of race, as the disciples engage in multilingual outreach to Diaspora Jews and proselytes (2.9) and "all who are far off" (2.39); and of class, as "uneducated, common Galileans" preach to "devout leaders" (2.7) and even to the scribal authorities (4.13).

The narrative of Acts 2 characterizes the "Spirit-filled" church as one that crosses cultural and linguistic barriers in order to proclaim the good news (2.4-12); speaks hard truth to those who have acted unjustly and challenges them to repent (2.14-40); and embodies an alternative lifestyle of renewal and reconciliation (2.41-47). To what extent does this portrait characterize the church today?

We would do well to ponder with the text the "meaning" of the gift of tongues (2.12). While debate has often focused on the controversial practice of glossolalia in the charismatic movement, in this context the gift functions strictly to facilitate cross-cultural communication. It has often been pointed out that this "sign" foreshadows the pan-Mediterranean missionary reach of the gospel in Acts. What is overlooked, however, is the obvious: in this multilingual

moment, Luke is affirming the diverse cultural contexts in which the new Christian movement will spread.

We might go further and say that Luke's narrative of the tongues at Pentecost is a reiteration of the old story of the tower of Babel (Gen 11.1-9). The Babel tale culminates the rebellion theme of the primeval cycle of Genesis, which narrates the "fall of civilization" from a garden where human beings enjoyed communion with God and creation to an archetypal metropolitan nightmare of hubris and oppression. This ancient Hebrew legend probably reflects a nomadic polemic against the powerful city-states of Mesopotamia.

"Babel" is a thinly-veiled reference to imperial Babylon (v.9a). It is characterized by centralization (v.2), cultural conformity (v.1) and the architecture of power (vv.3f). The "tower" (v.4) no doubt refers to Babylon's grandiose ziggurats "reaching to the heavens", an image that reappears in later prophetic denunciations of Babylonian arrogance (see Is 14.13f; Jer 51.53). "Brick-making" (v.3), meanwhile, can only allude to the political economy of slave labour that Hebrews knew first-hand, as the Exodus narrative of life in Egypt makes clear (see Ex 1.11-14).

The story fiercely condemns the tower as a symbol of centralized power (and idolatry, see Is 2.12-15). The root of the problem is the fact that "they are one people and they have all one language" (v.6), because this confounds God's intention that human communities be "scattered abroad over the face of the earth" (vv.8f; see 1.28; 9.1). Through divine intervention the imperial project is shattered and dispersal assured through the heterogeneity of cultural-linguistic diversity (v.7). The tale understands this "scattering" not as the tragic result of judgment but as a good and "natural" restraint upon the human impulse to construct societies of domination. Several millennia have only confirmed this story's political insight – and its uncanny depiction of the enduring correlation between massive state construction projects and imperial ambition remains just as relevant today.

In Luke's portrait of Pentecost we find a kind of renarration of Babel's lesson: "And at this sound the multitude came together and were confused because each one heard the apostles speaking in their own language" (Acts 2.6; the word for "confusion", Gk *suncheoo*, is the same root word used in the Septuagint text of Gen 11.7, 9).

The point of the gift of tongues is to communicate the gospel across linguistic barriers, but not to eradicate those barriers. Unity through the Spirit does not mean speaking "one language"; instead there is an implied celebration of human diversity.

Unfortunately, the issues of social architecture at stake in that old Hebrew story are still with us. As did ancient Babylon, modern European imperialism has systematically eroded local cultures and spread the colonizer's language and culture. Today the revolution in global communications, the opening of

trade barriers and the growth in multinational business, and the mobility of world populations from leisure travellers to displaced refugees are all working to accelerate this erosion. Ethnic costumes are giving way to western fashion, traditional chants to Madonna, and regional dishes to McDonalds. One linguist estimates that of the some 6,000 languages still being spoken today, possibly as many as half are no longer being spoken by children.

Human variety is as essential to social ecology as species diversity is to a healthy biosystem, yet both are falling victim to global capitalism. The new tower of Babel is the banal homogeneity of commercial culture and transnational technocracy. Christians in North America and Europe today who are suspicious of pluralism and who cling to the ideal of a dominant culture need to be reminded that the strongest biblical argument for diversity and against conformist centralism is also the oldest one. The church must renew this argument whenever we observe the feast of Pentecost.

In the great narrative of the Bible, God's presence among us is always subversive. This God is not a domesticated deity, baptizing our traditions and institutions, but One who seeks to liberate us from our enslaved condition, to heal us of our wounds, and to animate us in the practice of justice and compassion that characterizes the divine way. So it is to be expected that whenever God's Spirit is outpoured on the people, their traditions and institutions are disrupted and disturbed. The narrative of Pentecost in Acts is not about ecstatic personal spiritual experiences, but about a challenge to the entire order of things, personal and political. We can only assume that the Spirit is just as subversive today.

## 2. Prophetic critique of economic and political power

### Solidarity against domination and sacrifice

*By Park Seong-Won, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Geneva*

The preaching of the prophet Hosea revolved around two central concerns. One was the Ba'alist nature religion with its fertility rituals and sacred prostitution, which had been such a major threat to Yahwism since the time of Omrid rule. The second concern was the politics of the time: internal anarchy within Israel and power struggles in the international sphere. In relation to our topic, the total message of the prophet can be better understood by seeing it within the political context, since the prophets addressed, and were influenced by, very specific situations.

In the second half of the eighth century, the Assyrians had risen to almost complete mastery over the Near East. The Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BCE) was the architect of this imperial enterprise.

Tiglath-pileser III developed the practice of transplanting subjected populations in order to neutralize the identity of the population that he had conquered. This mixing of peoples from various territories suppressed local nationalism by which masses were simply subordinated to the imperial power. In addition, conquered territory was annexed to the Assyrian provincial system and governed by an Assyrian official.

It was a humiliation for small countries. Some attempts were made by a coalition of small countries to resist the imperial domination of Assyria. For instance, in 734-732, Aram and Israel formed an anti-Assyrian coalition along with other states. This revolt was led by Rezin, king of the Aramean state of Damascus, and Pekah, who had taken over as ruler in Samaria after assassinating his predecessor. It was an attempt to unite all of Syro-Palestine in a common rebellion against Assyria. However, this failed because of lack of cooperation from Judah.

Learning more about Isaiah's political advice to Ahaz will be helpful for us to understand the complexity of international politics in the region. Ahaz, the Judean king, was a pro-Assyrian ruler in principle. But since he was threatened by the coalition as well as by Assyria, he was confronted with three alternatives. He could join the revolt, he could appeal to Assyria for military assistance, or he could remain neutral and defend his city against attack. Isaiah carried out his prophetic work in this context.

The prophet Isaiah was opposed to any policy other than one of neutrality and argued against any dependence upon or agreement with Assyria. An alliance with Assyria would have forced Judah to become an Assyrian vassal, necessitated the paying of tribute, involved Judah in fighting against the Israelites in the north (a subsequent Judean invasion of Israelite territory is reflected in Hos 5.8-12). It also required political and religious concessions to Assyria.

Isaiah was also vehemently opposed to the revolt against the Assyrians and the Judean reliance upon Egypt for help, when Ahaz was seeking for help from Egypt. He saw this reliance upon Egypt and the hope for military solutions as a disregard of and lack of faith in Yahweh. Isaiah 31 addresses this concern with the following arguments:

The Egyptians are human, and not God;  
their horses are flesh, and not spirit.

When Yahweh stretches out his hand,  
the helper will stumble, and the one helped will fall,

And they will all perish together. (Is 31.3)

Reliance on either Assyria or Egypt meant trusting human power, human weapons, rather than trusting in Yahweh.

It was the same in the Israelite context when Hosea criticized Israel's foreign policy. The prophet sharply criticized Israel's frantic efforts to stabilize her

national life and improve her political status through dependence on major foreign powers. Turning to Assyria and paying the tribute were simply prostitution on an international scale, the hiring of lovers (Hos 8.9), and thus infidelity to Yahweh. Falsehood and violence were interwoven in Israel's foreign policy: "they make a treaty with Assyria, and oil is carried [as a sign of treaty relationship] to Egypt" (Hos 12.1).

Ephraim has become like a dove,  
silly and without sense;  
they call upon Egypt, they go to Assyria (Hos 7.11-13).

Political affairs in both Israel and Judah were chaotic, turbulent and violent. Succession to power was through successive assassinations. A number of kings like Mehaahem and Hoshea retained power, or purchased their right to rule, by paying tribute to the Assyrian kings. They were busy with seizing power in unjust ways rather than taking care of their people. They enjoyed their power at the expense of the most vulnerable in the society.

The social and economic situation was also full of injustices. The older peasant economy with familial ownership of the land and economic autonomy of individuals was eclipsed by the rise of an urban culture in Samaria, which created commerce and an affluent upper class. Small farmers were displaced to become dependent workers. Urban merchants manipulated peasants by stockpiling grain, buying crops at low prices, and then offering loans at high interest rates to nearly bankrupt farmers – loans they could not repay. Finally, small landholders were forced off their land, and the merchants then purchased it, grew crops with "debt" slaves, and sold grain at high prices to the landless peasants who had been displaced into the cities. Some peasants stayed on the land as tenants, paying rent to the new owners as they worked the land their families had owned for generations.

Elders and judges who were supposed to stop such practices received bribes to ignore the injustice. By celebrating sacrifice in this economic context, priests and worshippers also ignored serious injustice. The religious rituals only served to justify power and the ruling class, instead of discerning what was wrong in the society and what was right in the eyes of God. One can imagine the degree of distorted worship from the prophet's critique in Amos 2:

"They lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge; and in the house of their God they drink wine bought with fines they imposed." (Am 2.8)

The story of the cleansing of the temple courtyard in Mark 11 also implies such a distorted mechanism of abusing ritual arrangement for the poor, for the sake of the wealthy.

The cleansing action of Jesus did not take place in the temple building itself, but in the court of the Gentiles. This is the area where non-Jews (Gentiles) could go. The Jews had begun to use it for other purposes. They bought and sold the

animals and birds that the people offered as sacrifices in front of the temple. Offerings bought in the ordinary market were very often rejected by the priests as being in some way not perfect. So others were sold here by traders who made very high profits indeed. A pair of doves was the offering of poor people and cost a few cents in the marketplace, but in the temple courtyard it sometimes cost several dollars.

They changed money there. The money used during the Roman rule had on it the picture of the heathen Roman Emperor's face, so no one was allowed to bring it into the temple. These coins had to be changed by Jews for old Hebrew coins before they could pay their tax to the temple. The money-changers, like the traders, made huge profits. The temple, which was supposed to have responsibility for the proclamation of justice, had fallen into injustice.

Three issues arise from this situation of political turbulence, social chaos and religious irresponsibility: 1) domination by an imperial power, 2) the irresponsible attitude of the state, and 3) liberation of the people in a real sense. These issues are still relevant today, in the context of globalization driven by invisible powers.

Are there explicit examples that may explain what I mean by the three points that I made?

#### *Domination by an imperial power*

To realize what this can mean in today's politics, I quote part of "A National Security Strategy for a New Century", which the Pentagon wrote in 1997.

"We seek to create conditions in the world where our interests are rarely threatened, and when they are, we have effective means of addressing those threats. In general, we seek a world in which no critical region is dominated by a power hostile to the United States, and regions of greatest importance to the US are stable and at peace."

#### *The irresponsible attitude of the state*

With regard to the irresponsible attitude of the state, I want to share the problem my own country is facing. Kim Dae-Jung's economic vision was supposed to be a people's economy. But at the moment his recovery strategy for the ailing economy is exactly the opposite. He is one of the best disciples of the International Monetary Fund. People are the first victims of the structural adjustment programmes that the IMF imposes. That something is wrong with the IMF's rescue intervention with regard to the Asian economic crisis was clearly revealed by an article by Joseph Stiglitz, Chief Economist and Deputy President of the World Bank until last February. The Chinese phrase for the economy, "*Kyung Sae Jae Min*" means "to save people by governing the world". But economic globalization is moving in exactly the opposite direction, saving the market by governing people.

*Liberation of the people*

As part of the struggle to identify what vision the church should have and what role the church should play in the context of neoliberal globalization, I would like us to reflect on one more biblical passage:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (Mt 28.19-20)

This is known as the Great Commission, which was understood by traditional theology as a missiological mandate. A geographical understanding of this missionary mandate persuaded Christian churches to expand their territory by converting all kinds of peoples on the globe regardless of the spirituality they already had. This type of missionary work is still going on in the name of “mission to unreached people”. But, if we read this text carefully in the light of the political situation of that time, it means something totally different.

As we all know very well, all nations and all people in the region were under the Roman Empire’s occupation. They were brainwashed with the Roman ideology summarized in the famous phrase, Pax Romana. The Romans attempted to globalize their power and their culture throughout the then known world. Security and peace were only guaranteed for those countries that were part of the Roman Empire. The identity and dignity of being a nation and a people were ruthlessly denied. Subject peoples simply subjected themselves to the value system, culture, economic structure and military power the Roman Empire imposed on them. No other choice seemed available.

But Jesus spoke a different language to that of the Roman Empire. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” (Jn 14.17) The “world” here means the Roman Empire. The Pax Christi is in direct confrontation with the Pax Romana. It is a peace based on love, tolerance, service, sharing, and nonviolence, while the Pax Romana is a “peace” based on conquest, occupation, annexation, domination, exploitation, and military solutions.

What then does Jesus mean by “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”? Doesn’t it mean this: Go and liberate all nations that are subjected to the Roman Empire? What does Jesus mean by “baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you”? Doesn’t it mean this: Give them a new identity as people of God, and educate them to speak God’s new language?

This is prophetic work: undoing colonization and imperialism and redoing liberation and restoration of the dignity granted by God. I hope the Holy Spirit will enable us to discern what this Word of God means in today’s context of globalization.

## Jesus' criticism of the temple economy

*By Sharon Ringe, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington DC*

Let us look at Jesus' actions in Mk 11.15-19 one by one.

### *Jesus drove out the merchants*

The language is the language of exorcism, and in this case the "spirits" are the system of commerce of the city that had crept into the marginal areas of the temple itself. The specific goods traded are not the issue here, but rather the participation of the temple in the political economy of Roman-occupied Israel/Palestine.

It is important to understand the role of the temple as the symbolic centre of the social order and a central component of the economic order of an advanced agrarian society, with its aristocratic imperial governance. Both the Jewish elites and the Roman empire were beneficiaries. As the religious centre, the temple functioned in the larger political economy to legitimize the extraction by the political authorities of any potential agricultural surplus from the peasant base. It did this through the imposition of a system of tributes or taxes paid from the initial income of the harvest (thus decreed as "surplus" before the subsistence claims of the producers could be made on the harvest). The temple and the government worked together. The double system of tributes was lethal for the peasantry and the urban poor alike, all the more so because, in addition to the sanctions of force available to the state, the temple's sanction would include a judgment on the violator's relationship with God if the tribute were not paid. Poverty and religious inadequacy went hand in hand.

In addition, the religious activities of the temple supported an economic infrastructure necessary to facilitate the participation of pilgrims who came to the temple from far-flung corners of the empire. These travellers needed food, lodging, and other consumer goods and services, as well as the specific elements needed for the sacrifices. These commercial practices in the precincts were part of the commercial project of a far-flung economic system – one might even call it a globalized economy on the scale of the then-known world – in which decisions were made at some distance from the interests of those whose daily lives it touched, and even the smallest aspect supported the wellbeing of the strongest players in the game.

### *Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of the sellers of doves*

Something is being turned upside down. The first objects of the action are the street-level representatives of the larger financial institutions. The plethora of currencies characterized the imperial reality. The monetized economy that was both the product of and the necessary support of the imperial

superstructure, which included the temple, placed at its mercy those of the societies' "leasts" whose day-to-day life was conducted in the barter and direct exchange systems of their rural villages. The problem is not occasional or even chronic corruption, but rather the monetary system itself, which threatened the wellbeing and even the survival of the poor. The second group, representing a system that Jesus "overturned", is that of the purveyors of "doves" – birds used in the purification of women following childbirth, and of lepers who were among the poorest worshippers. The ostensible purpose of the presence of these merchants was to facilitate the participation of these people in the blessings of the temple worship and sacrificial systems, to enable them to procure the necessary means to set them right with God. The setting of high prices was not the issue, but rather the system that imposed criteria of exclusion, contrary to the hospitality of the divine project (*basileia*).

*Jesus did not allow the carrying of "goods" through the temple*

The focus is not on objects which were to do with specifically religious practices. Rather, the word *skeuos* refers to household goods, even military goods. At issue was the movement of all goods. It was interrupted by a guerrilla blockade or boycott (the root meaning of the word "sabotage" derives from wooden shoes, called "sabots", that were tossed into production lines to mess up the production process). Operations were shut down until further notice.

*Finally, Jesus taught*

The actions were interpreted as referring directly to Is 56.7 and indirectly to Jeremiah 7. The vision of the former is not only affirmed, but even moved from an eschatological dream to something that should be true already. The indictment of the latter is astounding. The "bandits" were the thieves, muggers and quasi-terrorists, bands of which set upon unwary travellers and careless urban dwellers in direct actions of rage, frustration, and social subversion, and were the earliest wave of those whose political rage against the Roman domination would eventually find expression in the Zealot movement as the Roman-Jewish War approached. The temple is compared to a cave or hideout – a base for these assaults – rather than a place for the worship of God.

Some commentators suggest that the Gospel writers have in mind a condemnation of the Zealot occupation of the temple mount in the middle of the war, and thus a condemnation of political rebellion and "hyper-nationalism" as antithetical to God's will, in contrast to the inclusive opening of the holy places to "the nations" envisioned in Is 56.7. Perhaps both are true.

The sequence of these acts essentially points to Jesus' action of putting a full stop to the acts of the temple in supporting economic stratification rather than justice. The radical challenge of Jer 7.11 (LXX) is that the judgment of the God of justice will be maintained. The time for reform is past, and if collusion in the

exploitation does not end, the temple itself will meet the fate of the fig tree. For the Gospel writers, indeed it has. The calamitous destruction of the temple is here interpreted as the consequence of the collusion of the elites – religious, political, commercial, financial, and any other sort you might identify – in a project that contradicts the divine project of justice.

The response indicated in v.18 then becomes clearer. The people are in awe at the confrontation of the system that cloaks collusion with exploitation under the protection of religion. And the fear of the chief priests and scribes stems from the confrontation and the “teaching” – the painful reminder of the cost of the compromises they have made with the powers that be, in terms of the loss of integrity of their own vocation and “house”.

What we need is a “dynamic translation” of the story into modern reality.

### 3. Taming economic and political power by law

#### Jubilee in the Hebrew Bible

*By Jorge Pixley, Seminario Teológico Bautista de Nicaragua*

There are several indications in Isaiah 61 that it refers to the law of a year of jubilee which is described in Leviticus 25. Is 61.1 speaks of *qero' deror* [proclaiming liberty] to the exiles. In Lev 25.10 we read, “You shall sanctify the fiftieth year and *qeratem deror* [proclaim liberty] throughout the land to all her inhabitants.” There are some common points and some significant differences between the founding text and the prophetic text. To proclaim emancipation or *qero' deror* is a formal legal declaration of freedom from debts and from debt slavery. It was a legal manoeuvre well known in the ancient world where it was legislated and implemented by Solon in Athens in the early sixth century BCE, some 80 years before the presumed date of the prophecy in the early restoration at the end of the sixth century. In the case of Isaiah, the implementation seems distinct from the legislation, although, because of the uncertainty of the date of the Holiness Code, we cannot be sure that their dates do not in fact coincide. Textually, at least, they are separate, and the reference in the prophetic text is to a legal codification taken as independent of the prophet and his message.

The legal text establishing the periodic emancipation is less drastic than the Solonic law which forbade the claim on the bodies of debtors in the payment of obligations. In the Sinaitic legislation, debt slavery was not abolished but ameliorated by a periodic general release, presumably to complement the restriction in the Deuteronomic code of such slavery to a maximum of six years (Deut 15.1-6). The prophetic text makes a specific application to the *shevuyyim*, the captives but usually more specifically the exiles.

The fact that the reference is to the jubilee legislation becomes even clearer in the reference to the “year of the Lord’s favour and the day of vengeance of our God” in Is 61.2. That the application is to the Gola, the community recently returned from political exile in Babylon, becomes clearer in the reference to the mourners of Zion in v.3 and the restoration of the ancient ruins in v.4. As the spokesman for the Gola, the prophet proclaims jubilee to those who have just returned. They have already known release from exile in a foreign land, but now they find themselves strangers in their ancestral land, with Zion in ruins. The prophecies of Second and Third Isaiah have long been recognized as homiletical exhortations. Here the prophet is trying to move the exile communities to claim their rights to the lands their grandfathers abandoned fifty years before. They will no doubt encounter opposition from those who have used these abandoned lands for two generations, and it is in this context we should understand the reference to the year of the vengeance of God in v.2.

It is important to realize that laws are formulated in general terms and are not usually automatically applied unless they are in the interests of the rulers, as tax laws would be. Those laws which defend private parties only become effective when those parties take the issue to court, so to speak. The case of the poor who had lost their lands in the time of Nehemiah in the fourth century (Neh 5) is a clear case in point. The law called for slaves to be released after six years and for mortgaged lands to be returned to their legitimate owners in the fiftieth year. But nothing was done until the debtors cried to the governor to demand that justice be done to them. Had there been no laws about release of debts and mortgages it would surely have been unlikely that Nehemiah the governor would have taken action in calling an assembly to force compliance. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that, even with the law, nothing would have happened had the victims not banded together to demand their rights.

Some ask in desperation, “Was the jubilee ever implemented?” It is clear that this does not pose the question correctly. A law for the benefit of victims is never “implemented” automatically. It is a resource, something to which popular mobilization can appeal, as the debtors did in the time of Nehemiah’s governorship. Were there no laws requiring the release of debts, the outcry of the debtors would probably have found no response. Laws which protect victims are definitely necessary, in biblical Israel and in today’s globalized economy.

Let us close by turning to Paul’s famous discussion of biblical law. “The law”, says Paul, “is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good. Did what is good, then, bring death to me? God forbid! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.” (Rom 7.12-13) God’s laws, good laws which were meant to sustain life, are holy, just and good. We could add they are necessary to order life in complex societies

like ours. But good laws can become the basis for evil social actions if the people are not alert to the social realities in which they live. So for laws to be of service to the defence of human lives the people affected must be alert, ever mobilized to watch out for the interests of those discarded by the laws of the market, which themselves are to be seen as necessary and good, though they quickly become the occasion for washing our hands of the evil which they generate when they are not tempered by good laws and by democracy understood as the vigilance of an ever-mobilized people.

Now is the time (Lk 4.14–30)

*By Barbara Rauchwarter, Theologian, Austria*

Jesus is teaching in the synagogue of his hometown on the sabbath. After the first part, the Shema, prayer, blessing and reading from the Torah, he chooses a moment in the middle of the second, more didactic half of the service. He chooses the Haphtara (reading from the Prophets), which are cited to explain the passage from the Torah. Isaiah 61 can be invoked in connection with the beginning of the jubilee year (11QMelch) or Gen 35.9 in connection with the seder, the blessing over Jacob. Luke adds a quote from Is 58.6 about setting free “those who have been crushed” (NEB). This points to the day of atonement, Yom Kippur, that proclaims the jubilee year.

Jesus expounds the scriptures. He argues with examples (Lk 4.25-27), like one on whom God’s Spirit rests. (Luke paved the way for this knowledge in the message of the angel to Mary and in the baptism of Jesus.) The beginning of the quote (v.18) hereby becomes enormously topical. Now is the apocalyptic time of change.

Apocalypse originally meant revelation, and this revelation takes place at this moment of speaking and listening. It radically puts an end to everyday normality. Nothing remains as it was. This is the scandal that rapidly turns initial amazement and applause (v.22) into rejection – even rebellion and a desire to kill (v.29). “Is this not Joseph’s son?” contradicts the revelation and seeks to restore everyday normality, the familiar. Everything is supposed to stay as it is. And “that it does is the disaster. It is not what is to come but what is given”.

### *Digression on the understanding of time*

In traditional theology there are terms to indicate and interpret feelings about time.

1. *Near expectation* is an expression of the apocalyptic feeling of Jesus and the first Jesus movement.
2. *Parousia postponement* refers to the failure of the first Christian generation to fulfil their expectation to see Christ come again.

3. *Distant expectation*: Christ's second coming and the beginning of the final kingdom of God are projected into the future – until the last judgment or doomsday, to use a more popular term. Eschatology is then understood as the doctrine of the “last” things. I want us to understand it as the doctrine of the “most important things”: death, resurrection and the dawning of God's kingdom.

Eschatology understood in this way describes and awaits the upcoming kingdom; it is the belief in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, and belief in the hope of Israel. Nonlinear eschatological thinking describes the hope of those struggling for liberation that God will stand by them in their present situation, in their struggle for just relations.

Rudolf Bultmann rejected all forms of apocalyptic thinking with the following argument, which reflects a theology that – despite the Shoah, Hiroshima and ecological disasters – reads biblical texts exclusively and stubbornly in the light of a linear experience of time:

“Mythological eschatology is basically countered by the simple fact that Christ's return did not take place soon, as expected by the New Testament, but that world history ran on and – as every sensible person knows – will continue to do so.”

God's kingdom lies far away. It has been postponed till doomsday. On the basis of this theology, the memorandum of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) on the economic order can assert that this order “should by no means be measured against the absolute criteria of perfection and the solution to all problems, as though it were the final stage before the coming of the kingdom”.

Luise Schottroff sees these theological terms and their underlying attitudes as based on a linear concept of time that characterizes and determines western thought, even its awareness of history (just think of Hegel). Any idealization of progress can only be understood as linear. Schottroff states that this common, rationalist approach liberates one from the apocalyptic feeling of the turn of the age that was typical of Jesus and his friends, by ironically dismissing or even mocking New Testament texts. So regarded, the kingdom of God seems an exotic, ancient and naive concept.

She calls us to set aside this conventional attitude when reading the eschatological texts of the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke. We will discover that these texts are based on a completely different notion of time. It is the time of watching and waiting in the night, a time of pleasure in festivity, a time of growing and maturing of trees, seeds and dough, a time of labour for a pregnant woman, a time of horror at the end of security: in our text it is the time of being startled out of the security of an oppressive life. The Gospel eschatological texts speak of experiences of time that express interpretations of the present in relation to God. God is very near. Our text is about this time, which suspends the usual security and starts off something completely new.

Today the year of the Lord's favour has been proclaimed. The institution of this year (the jubilee year), rooted in Leviticus 25, provides that everyone is moved back into their original ownership and social situations. That means that debts are cancelled, slaves are freed, and prisoners get to leave their debtors' prison. Telling this to the poor (Gr. *ptochos* = the poorest of the poor) is the good news of the anointed one, the Messiah, Christ Jesus. Those for whom this news is intended are named in the text: the poor, the prisoners, the blind and the broken. Sadly, the theologies of the rich countries tend to "spiritualize" this message, and thereby falsify it. Poverty is frequently interpreted as the hunger of the soul or spirit, so that those who are filled, indeed over-filled, can still nibble at God's promise. Captivity is defined as being captive to the constraints of consumerism; being broken is the shattering of hopes and the destruction of dreams. Hopes, dreams, and vision – all human gifts of transcendence – do not accord with the brutality of competition, the constant quest for advantage in the battle for survival. Any attempt in the midst of wrongdoing to salvage something like spiritual consolation from the message of Jesus is bound to fail. This is shown by the addiction of people in rich industrialized countries to pick and choose from the most varied religious offerings and cobble together a kind of patchwork religion. It also is revealed in efforts by the European Union to integrate the churches in order to give Europe a "soul". It maddens me that church institutions are so keen to fulfil this commission. Europe already has a soul, a diseased soul that has shaped and continues to shape world history in a devastating fashion.

We are in the centre of the text. The words of the prophet Isaiah that Jesus reads induce applause and amazement – even for those whose souls are dried up. It might sound like a kind of childhood memory – a voice from the past when "wishing did some good". But Jesus brushes aside this sentimentality in saying: *Today* this text has come true. Today the kingdom of God? Today and here? In Nazareth? In Hofgeismar? In Mödling? (Please think of the places you come from.)

Let me introduce you to Mödling, my hometown.

It is near Vienna, at the foot of the Vienna Woods, in the last foothills of the Alps before the great plain stretching to Hungary. The small town centre has been renovated very stylishly, with small townhouses from the Renaissance period. History is reduced to facades. It is a nice place to live. Many Viennese have settled here because the air is better. Mödling is a student town with a big technical college (3,500 students), three large grammar schools and a number of others. The city council offers young people hardly anything. The local cinema that young people used to manage themselves caved in to competition from a cinema complex in the nearby shopping city. This shopping centre advertises itself with the slogan: "Shopping makes you happy." The cinemas claim they are a "fun world".

I live in the pedestrian precinct that includes a shopping mall and posh shops where you can buy what you do not need and envy people you don't like. There are many pubs in this part of town, where young people meet for beer and techno music. In Austria you can pay to design your own licence plate. Many of my students are given their own cars when they finish school. Statistics say that every Mödling household possesses 2.5 cars. And there are at least fifteen cars with the word BEER on their licence plates. The word BOSS is also popular. Many of the members of my parish council adorn their cars with a modest sticker depicting a fish, mostly near the exhaust pipe, which bears a witness that "Jesus loves you".

Increasingly I discover that my students secretly work after school and in the holidays because their fathers have temporarily (?) lost their jobs. They rarely admit this, so the young people use skin-tanning liquid to keep from looking tired. They work in order to keep up with the standards of their circle of friends.

The places where they hang out are goldmines. The many shops usually stay around for two years, then change owners and goods depending on the fashion. Only one shop has never changed hands in the twenty years I have been living there. It is owned by a shoemaker who still mends shoes by hand. He often works late into the night. I am so grateful to this shoemaker, not just because he looks after my shoes so well, extending their lives, but because he continues in this line of work. When I pass by his shop, I say a prayer for him. I also ask God for protection when drunken teenagers speed home at night, tyres screeching and techno music blaring at full blast.

### The gospel of liberation

*By Mary Grey, Sarum College, UK*

In Is 61 and Lk 4.18-30 we have the famous texts which inspire the Jubilee 2000 debt cancellation agenda. The key questions are: How much effect did the jubilee laws have on life in Israel? What did Jesus mean by framing his teaching in this context? What challenges or strategies for resistance to global structural injustice are offered to us today?

I begin with imaginative reconstruction of the Lukan tradition on four levels: what it meant for Jesus, what it meant for his hearers that day, what it meant for the Lukan community, and what it means for us.

#### *What it meant for Jesus*

The Lukan Jesus, full of the Spirit, walked into the synagogue that morning and effectively set his whole ministry in the context of proclaiming jubilee. This means that all his subsequent teaching is seen in this context, the context of liberation of the oppressed, and the context of the good news spelled out as

breaking the chains of poverty, debt, hunger, and brokenness of every description. When we come to Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, we have to understand this text as background. When we come to the meaning of the Easter Jesus and Easter faith, and the encounter with the disciples en route to Emmaus, this Easter proclamation too must be seen within the continuing significance of the jubilee laws for the Christian community.

For the Galilean Jesus of Nazareth, baptized in John's message of repentance, the jubilee agenda offered a way of responding to the desperation he had been part of from his earliest years. Galilee, home to the radicals, the revolutionaries, the apocalyptic thinkers, wanted vengeance for the oppression of the people by Rome and its tax collectors. Isaiah's text – behind this one – emerges from the return from exile in Babylon. The exilic return in Luke must then be seen as a leaving of the exile of oppression, of being outcasts, of the imprisonment of oppression. Hence the text is *proclaimed* deliberately by Jesus, not simply read or asserted. In fact, the impact of Isaiah's text is deepened here by the inclusion of "let the oppressed go free", which comes from Isaiah 58.

The mission of the Jesus movement being inaugurated now is one of proclaiming good news to the poor; release to the captives; sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favour.

Let us not spend time arguing if Jesus was literally inaugurating a jubilee year – as others have done. (And a case can be made that this was a jubilee year.) Likewise, let us not also argue as to whether the jubilee laws of Leviticus 25 – referring to debt cancellation, restoration of land, and setting free of slaves – were actually put into practice or not. The point is clear: Jesus is putting the structural justice of socio-economic reality at the heart of his mission, at the heart of the inauguration of the reign of God, the agenda of kingdom ethics. We see here a prophetic vision harnessed to the sacred and moral quality of the law within the traditions of Judaism. We are brought back not only to the requirement of care for the widow, the orphan and the stranger (all categories of poverty), but to the fact that closeness to the land, to the sacredness of the earth was one of the earliest features of Jewish religion.

#### *What this meant for the hearers, the audience*

Who exactly was listening, and what did it mean to them? Especially as it seems that they rejected the proclamation. The men of Capernaum were present – and there would be some women, carefully segregated, no doubt. Those who had managed to leave their children and household duties behind. It is probable that there were many members of Jesus' family present – but were they, too, among those who rejected him?

The people of Capernaum shared the widespread poverty of Palestine, wealth being concentrated in the hands of a few rich people. As well as the fishing in the lake, their economy was dependent on the cultivation of crops

and the raising of sheep and goats. Yet all of this was dependent on land, most of which was owned by the Herods and their families. Herod's confiscation of land was notorious – and even reached the attention of Rome. At the time of his death, what land that was not passed on to Herod's sons was sold to wealthy landowners. So the small amount available to ordinary people would be less fruitful agriculturally and probably physically less accessible. Think of today's situation where poor people are forced to live on mountainsides or on cliff edges, or on semi-arid land, so that they are the first to be hit by floods, hurricanes and drought.

But on top of this was the heavy taxation of Herod's court and Rome, both direct and indirect taxation. Direct, on all agricultural products; indirect included tolls on bridges, roads, customs dues and market taxes. Herod ruthlessly exacted further sums to subsidize his own expenditure. Add to this the burden demanded by the priests, in terms of a tithe on first fruits and other offerings. If you were a farmer, about 40 per cent of your income would automatically disappear. But if you were a tenant farmer your plight was far worse, because you had to pay the landowner in addition. But these are people with money, who are trying to cope with the market economy. In the congregation in the synagogue that morning – or waiting patiently outside it – are also the outcasts, the lepers, the disabled, crippled, the blind, women working in the sex trade who would have been denied entry to any "respectable" location. Women – whose work was invisible, to the economy as well as to the Lukan text – would have been present (see Luise Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters*, Westminster: John Knox Press 1995). Those who simply "waited on", who were in service to all the male needs in a patriarchal household; those who ground the flour at the mill, who baked the bread, who were occupied in sewing, weaving, spinning, dyeing, who fetched and carried the water, mended the clothes; all the women who must have been involved in the work of fishing – mending nets and selling fish – but are never mentioned by the Gospels; in fact all the women who sustained the daily rhythms of life, yet are still rendered invisible, all these people are waiting to hear the good news that morning.

And as the familiar words of Isaiah were proclaimed, their hearts were uplifted, their hopes rekindled. "They were amazed by the gracious words that came from his mouth", this charismatic young preacher and faith healer. Their longing was for the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, yet this preacher reminded them that Elijah was sent to a widow of Sidon, that Elisha was sent to a Syrian leper. Rage filled them, these revenge-hungry people. This was not the message they wanted to hear. Poor, vulnerable Israel had been in the shadow of the great kingdoms for centuries. Why should the gentiles be included? But for another reason for their rage and their rejection of the jubilee proclamation, let us see what the evangelist, Luke, envisions with the story. What is the message for the Lukan community?

*The message for the Lukan community*

There are at least three key messages for Luke's community. The first is that Luke was dealing with very rich people. Not only our passage here, not only the Lukan version of the Sermon on the Mount, or the expansion of the wedding feast to include the outcasts and marginalized, but the special Lukan parables – the rich man and Lazarus (16.19-31); the good Samaritan (10.29-3); the rich man who was building bigger and bigger barns (12.16-21) – give clues as to whom Luke was speaking. No doubt these characters were recognizable at the time. His focus is unmistakable. In putting the liberation of the oppressed at the heart of the mission of Jesus, right from its inauguration, Luke gives force to a prophetic vision by grounding it in the Jewish legal tradition.

But the second theme running through his proclamation is a nonviolent agenda – the reason why the Sermon on the Mount appealed so much to Gandhi? The Lukan Jesus will bring about the kingdom peacefully and not through armed struggle. We see this in his teaching on peace in the Sermon on the Mount, the sending of the disciples who must bring the peace of the kingdom into every house they visit, the healing of the ear of Malchus, struck off by the sword, and so on. But this was not the expectation of the revenge-hungry Galileans. There was a text known to Luke, and to his communities – but perhaps unknown to Jesus – a Qumran text (1 IQ) dated about 50CE, where mention is made of the return of the High Priest Melchizedech. This is a text concerning the jubilee of the last days, when people will return to their own land, debts will be cancelled and Melchizedech will appear. He is an eschatological figure and he will lead the people out of captivity. Although Isaiah 61 is never mentioned, it lies behind this text, which deals with the jubilee and sabbath provisions of Leviticus 25 and Deut 15.2. But, although Melchizedech comes to “judge the holy ones of God in the interests of the reign of justice”, he also comes to exact vengeance for God and probably to slaughter the enemies of Israel. As crucial for the people as the proclamation of the day of the Lord's favour is therefore the day of judgment, the day of vengeance.

So it is possible that Jesus' hearers in the synagogue that day were thrilled by the announcement that the jubilee year of the Lord's favour was being inaugurated, but furious because of the omission of the day of vengeance. They were unwilling to see God's reign achieved through reconciliation and healing, and not through violent struggle. (Hatred and punishment of enemies is characteristic of Qumran, and of the zealot revolutionaries.) If we link that with Luke's third theme, the proclamation of the good news to the ends of the earth, the inclusivity of the Lukan vision of the kingdom – which we will see developed in Acts – we recognize that it is already being prepared for here. And it is not acceptable to Jesus' hearers.

So how can we judge the truth of Jesus' claim that “today scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” when the message of the passage – for Jesus, for Luke,

and for us – is that he was rejected? What exactly was fulfilled? The enduring achievement is the proclamation of the gospel of liberation at the heart of Christianity. Even the fact of rejection by the community is prophetic of the way the message of liberation is always rejected by the powerful. The assassination of numerous men and women today who have resisted oppression – Archbishop Romero, Bishop Gerardi, the Jesuit martyrs and their housekeeper, the raped sisters in India, the continuing resistance of Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma... The enduring achievement is the abiding presence of the proclaimer, the Anointed One, in the Christic communities through the centuries.

The third theme is the tension between the continuity and discontinuity of the biblical message of jubilee today.

*What is the meaning of the text today?*

The Jubilee 2000 campaigners highlight the following themes:

- The context of globalization and the weakened power of governments, eroding democracy, in the face of the powers of the transnational corporations. Can the tradition of the sacredness of law tame this power?
- The context of environmental crisis. The concept of jubilee with its traditions of sabbath rest for the land, suggests that the land and its resources are not without limits. Nor is human creativity and capacity for work without limits. Of course the fallow year also allowed the poor to glean what they could from fields, vineyards and olive groves. Yet, the prevailing ethos today is one of enlightened self-interest. In the recent Reith Lectures in Britain, *Respect for the Earth*, even Gro Brundtland (Norway) with a focus on health, thought that appealing to moral or religious motives was now ineffective. Does this mean that the prophetic vision of jubilee has no compelling power, because society has rejected the call to simplicity, to voluntary simpler lifestyles, but that its grounding in law offers a better way forward? That, legally, putting limits on the destruction of the forests, the dumping of nuclear waste, etc. could be achieved by extending the focus of the agenda of “liberation of the oppressed” to seeing the earth itself as the new category of the oppressed.
- Thirdly, in the tension between continuity and discontinuity, the text invites creative development in the way the jubilee coalition extends beyond the Christian community to include all faiths and people of goodwill in the debt cancellation effort. Can we build on this in a multi-strategic way? Can we re-shape the vision so as to have maximum impact, appealing to a universal longing for a just and sustainable world? A longing beneath the current apparent idolatry of wealth and success.

Nature as the “new poor” – I owe the suggestion to Sallie McFague, *The Body of God* – extends the category of poverty to the stricken earth. At the same time, the sacred quality of the land, viewed as the “Body of God”, and the reverence this should inspire with regard to all resources, like water, could

bring another dimension to lawmaking. Yet, in fact, the opposite is happening. There is a developing policy, driven by a combination of World Bank and business interests that the only response to water shortage – in drought-stricken areas and elsewhere – is that water should be handled by the market. For example, Clinton's advice, in his recent visit to India, that privatizing water was the only solution. Another report currently being circulated advocates supporting investment decisions, as regards water, based on a willingness and ability to pay. How can the jubilee traditions be invoked here?

The Lukan text renders the poverty of women invisible. This has to be made explicit and the subject of legal reform. The need is as urgent now as it was in the world of Luke to recognize the contribution – unseen and unsung – of women to the global economy. And to recognize that women offer alternatives to this economy. See the work of Ina Praetorius, *Weiber-Wirtschaft*.

The Lukan text restricts the proclamation to the words of Jesus. We can creatively extend this to the baptized/anointed Christic communities themselves. And to the agency and vision of women themselves, poor people themselves. In Rajasthan, NW India, a government report on women, which has as goal the empowerment of women, is being implemented without the agency of the women working at community level. Yet grassroots democracy generates the real inspiration for a way forward. Vandana Shiva demonstrates the success of the *satyagraha* nonviolent protests in changing unjust laws of patenting, for example. Seattle demonstrated the power of the NGOs as an alternative to the WTO.

As Maria Harris expressed it in a development of the jubilee agenda which was inspired by feminist theology (*Proclaim Jubilee*, Westminster: John Knox Press 1996):

“The demand is liberation; the emphasis is connectedness; the corrective is suffering; the power is imagination; and the vocation is *tikkun olam* – the repair of the world.”

#### 4. Resistance against economic totalitarianism

Refusing to worship money (Daniel 3)

*By Ton Veerkamp, Theologian and economist, Berlin*

The text speaks for itself. It reduces Hellenistic modernization to its very core: gold. Nebuchadnezzar of the scriptures is the king who destroyed as well as carried out the will of the God of Israel. For that reason, his figure is ambiguous. For most regions rimming the eastern Mediterranean, Hellenism was destructive of traditional political, social, economic and ideological structures. It monetized societies. Since the heavy burden of tribute had to be paid in the form of money, people worked for money by tilling cash crops

instead of food crops. The monetization of these economies altered relations among all members of society. Because money transformed the ultimate loyalties of human beings, it became a god. People had to accept this divinity of money with body and soul, or, to speak with the “Shema Israel”, with all their heart, all their soul and all their intensity. This is expressed by the Aramaic words *pelach*, “pay reverence to”, *nefal*, “fall down”, and *sesad*, “worship”. The cult of money was created by the Hellenistic state; it accounts for the monotonous repetition of “the image of gold erected by Nebuchadnezzar, the king”. The Hellenistic state saw itself as a universal order of things: “all peoples, all communities, all tongues shall fall down and worship” the new god, money. The Roman Empire was the political fulfilment of the Hellenistic claim of universality.

Jewish life in Mesopotamia during the last two centuries before the Common Era was extremely threatened by this monetization. It destroyed human relations among the Jews. In almost every region of the Middle East there were uprisings and revolutions. The war of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers was a social revolution; its aim was to restore traditional social structures and to destroy the sources of alienation and exploitation. Our story is best seen against this background of social revolution. Any refusal to worship the god money was strictly revolutionary and was punishable by death. The Hellenistic state, protector and enabler of the new social order, could not react otherwise. The heart of our story is summarized in two small words: *wehan la*, “if not”. The king used these words to claim ultimate loyalty: if not, then death, cruel death, without escape. The three Jewish men, public servants of the state at that time, reckoned with escape. Then these words were uttered: *wehan la*, “if not”. If there is no God who can rescue them, even then they will not fall down. We have to read the passage carefully, *hen itaj elahana*: if their God is standing against this *wehan la*, they do not dare to say so. If there is no God who can rescue them, they say merely: “if not”. But that is clearly intended: even if there is no God whatsoever, they will not fall down and they will not worship. In the books of the Maccabees the martyrs let themselves be slain on the sabbath day rather than violate the sacred law of sabbath by fighting with their arms; they knew that they would not be rescued. Daniel may have thought about those people.

In the first part of the text we hear “King Nebuchadnezzar” eight times. As soon as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego enter the stage, we hear only “Nebuchadnezzar”. Only his servants called him “King Nebuchadnezzar”. The refusal of the three men to do likewise was a crisis for the state, a state built on the foundation of money. There was a segment in society where Nebuchadnezzar had no power at all, even if he killed these men.

Now we should not think that Nebuchadnezzar learned something from the intervention of the God of Israel. He simply made out of this God his own god; all peoples, communities and tongues should worship this god. For a

short moment the king was confused and provoked. Immediately he resumed command over whatever was and is and will be God. The next chapter tells how Nebuchadnezzar had to be humiliated before he could understand what had happened. And even that is not enough. The next kings in this astonishing book of Daniel, Belshazzar and Darius, must also be brought to reason. The problem will be solved only when, in the seventh chapter, the power is given to the *bar-'enosh*, the "child of humanity" (better than "son of man") as the only alternative to human power so far, the power to devour and devastate animals. That this might happen was the hope of Jews and Christians alike. The conversion of Nebuchadnezzar was no conversion at all. He understood God only as his royal god. Constantine did the same. The Messiah of Israel, who came to abolish all powers of man over others, was now incorporated in a new kind of Roman Empire. Christianity at first was a permitted religion. Soon it became the only religion for all peoples, communities and tongues under Roman jurisdiction. What Nebuchadnezzar and Constantine did has been done by world Christianity in the business of Christian missions, regardless of denomination. We should commemorate the unsung labours of thousands of women and men who gave up their home countries to be of some help to their fellow human beings in other parts of the world. But their enterprise resulted in a new edition of Hellenistic modernization, the destruction of social structures in other civilizations. It is the complete opposite of the divine command of the Messiah of Israel to the twelve at the end of the Gospel of Matthew, but that is another story.

The end of our own story tells how Nebuchadnezzar made the three men prosper. Again we have to listen very carefully. Unfortunately, the translation does not reflect the wording of the text. In the case of God, we hear *hazalah*. This verb is most often used with the subject, the God of Israel, who saved the people from the hand of Egypt; we hear this verb very often in the book of Exodus and in second Isaiah. In the case of Nebuchadnezzar, instead of *hazalah*, we hear *haziach*. This verb means to be successful or fortunate. All that a king or the state can do is make some people prosper. God saves the people as a whole. The three men represented Israel as a whole. Daniel chose these two words because he knew that many people confuse being saved with being successful. Already in those times the fortunes of a Jew could suddenly reverse, as we read at the end of the fourth chapter of Esther, a text from the same period as Daniel. Mordecai said to Esther: "Don't think that only you of all Jews may be rescued."

John Calvin observed that only God and God alone saves. The Calvinist bourgeoisie forgot this distinction. Business success was tantamount to being saved by God, so they thought. The consequence of this confusion was the utter mercilessness with which the Puritan bourgeoisie treated the poor since the end of the 16th century – the beggars, the vagrants and later the workers. Because they were not successful, these unlucky humans were treated as damned. The

global behaviour of the western bourgeoisie and its disciples around the world belongs to this tradition.

The three men admitted the possibility that there might be no God who could save them. In the country of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, we have been taught to live before God without God. He wrote this in a Nazi jail from where there was no escape. *Wehen la*, “if not” or “even then”, means that we have to learn to say no as soon as they demand that we fall down and worship their golden assets and derivatives, their futures that have no human future at all. We have to live wherever we find ourselves, even as public servants of a Nebuchadnezzar that makes us prosper. But as soon as we start to think that there is something good about global markets and their “universal laws”, we are already worshipping the image of gold. May we not be led into this temptation. May all human beings be delivered from this evil.

Resistance against robbers (Luke 10.25–37)

*By Bafana Khumalo, Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa*

### *Introduction*

Economic despotism is a major challenge for faith communities in our day. It is so pervasive that its effects are felt far and wide across the globe. The challenge we face is not only to resist, but to develop strategies that undermine these global forces of capital. The intention for this Bible study is to provoke discussion on how we can best respond to this scourge.

It is unbelievable that six years have gone by already since we voted to usher in a democratic order for South Africa. Many in my country and elsewhere greeted the demise of apartheid with euphoria. We were rightly excited that the heinous system of divide and rule that destroyed so many lives had been brought to its knees. But our feelings were not destined to last long. As soon as the celebrating died down, reality set in and we realized that the struggle had only begun. For example:

- The popular economic policy of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) gave way to the neoliberal policy of GEAR;
- Trade policy was liberalized, exchange controls were removed, and transnational businesses dumped products;
- Unemployment rose;
- Financial market activity grew;
- The government embraced globalization as the preferred means of development, resulting in increased poverty and cuts in social spending.

### *Analysis*

Our text maps out some interesting dynamics. It takes the form of a story within a story. The outer story describes a conversation between Jesus and an

expert on the law in question-and-answer mode. The inner story is the telling of a parable by Jesus.

The setting of this story and its dynamics have always fascinated me. It seems strange that a teacher or expert on the law should ask the question at issue. Luke clarifies the motive for this confrontation in verse 25. He declares that, "...an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus." As a teacher of the law, he dealt with similar issues on a daily basis. Thus, for him to pretend that he was ignorant on this matter is provocation in the extreme. It could also be possible that he intended to embarrass Jesus publicly, particularly if Jesus was not very familiar with the scriptures. Of course, the confrontation between Jesus and those who represented the status quo, the establishment, the system, had commenced much earlier. The expert's question was clearly intended to expose and embarrass Jesus.

Jesus' response was to throw the question back at the expert: "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" (v.26) The expert's response was a summary of the decalogue, "Love God and love your neighbour." Jesus affirmed this and asserted that the acknowledgement and keeping of these laws is life-giving. Whereas the expert was asking a futuristic question, Jesus' response was about the present. He was almost saying, "Before you worry about the future, which may be far off, concern yourself with the present conjuncture which is within your grasp, and in this way influence the future positively." This obviously did not satisfy our learned friend. He pursued his agenda by asking the obvious, "who is my neighbour?" Now, is this not a strange question coming from a professor? Jesus responded by telling the story that is well known to all of us: the story of the man who is robbed on the Jericho road.

It is worth noting that for Jesus the major question was not necessarily who is my neighbour, but rather how to act neighbourly. Too often we choose neighbours who are like us, those who agree with us and who see things as we see them. In short, our neighbours are an extension of ourselves and our interests. Jesus brings this matter into sharp focus when he asks (v.36), "Which of the three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

Neighbours are chosen for us by circumstances. When fellow human beings are confronted by exploitation and other forms of robbery, our faith obliges us to be neighbourly. Being neighbourly is not just a comfortable engagement to make us feel good and benevolent. It exposes us to the danger that we ourselves may fall victim to the robbers. When we choose to look the other way, even as the priest and the Levite did, we are colluding with those who placed the victim in jeopardy.

For some of us, the liberation theologian Ed de la Torre analysed this text in an interesting but disturbing way. He raised questions about what the text is not saying explicitly. What choices would people have had, had they come a

few minutes earlier and seen the robbers attacking the man? He asked questions about the larger context of stories, about making choices that seem more critical. This kind of analysis certainly does not minimize the role of the Samaritan. Rather, it broadens concern beyond the victim alone. Could the Jericho road be made safer, for example? If one takes the Jericho road as a metaphor for the journey of life, then it should be possible for children to play on this road without fear. Women should be able to walk along it at any time of day or night without fear of robbers. This is the challenge for all of us.

It is relatively easy for us to say we need more Samaritans. We could train a few more people to look out for victims of robbers and care for them. We could collect donations to build a hospital in the area that makes assistance more accessible. Even the robbers might be willing to contribute, especially if it sustains their business. Maybe they would be willing to donate ambulances to make the service more efficient. This obviously does not deal with the flaws of the system. It is much easier to do this relief work than to work at systemic change. Focusing exclusively on the victims exposes more people to the dangerous consequences of the system.

This focus on the system becomes even more urgent for me when addressing the consequences of globalization and their implications for alternative strategies. Allow me to illustrate my concern:

1. During the exposure trip in Germany we had the privilege of engaging members of the workers' council at General Motors in discussion. It became apparent that the trade union movement is facing serious challenges from globalization. There is a programme of restructuring going on that inevitably will affect many jobs. Workers are uncertain about their future.
2. Worker representatives with whom we talked were more concerned about protecting the benefits of workers still employed than saving the jobs of those who are not. To the extent they understand the need for solidarity, their focus seems to be on how to link up with other workers in Europe rather than the broader context of global labour solidarity. Workers in the GM group elsewhere in the world never featured in the discussion. Global capital is clearly achieving its objective of dividing the workers while it consolidates its power over global markets.
3. A priest in Frankfurt recently told us about a group of monks who are providing meals for the poor and destitute in the city. They are a dedicated bunch and have been doing this for a long time. They collect money to provide at least one decent meal a day for the homeless in the city. The priest said that he had invited them on numerous occasions to join a march against the banks in the city but had failed to persuade them. These monks find it difficult to challenge the root causes of poverty and homelessness because the banks that are helping to marginalize people are providing money for the relief work of the church.

4. The responses of church leaders to the problems of globalization at the opening session in Frankfurt were very revealing. The symbolism of two towers, one of the bank and one of the church, said a lot. The church finds it difficult to understand the effects of globalization because it is a beneficiary of the system. Put differently, the church has been coopted into a system that destroys many lives.

The challenge confronting us is to cleanse the Jericho road of robbers. It means tackling head-on a system that creates conditions that lead to robbery. Anything less will prolong the suffering of the victims. As in Frankfurt, the robbers are willing to share their loot in order to keep the city clear of the poor, who are a “disturbance” to trading. They are even willing to finance agencies that provide services to deal with the symptoms of poverty and homelessness.

We must be alert when we sit down to engage such people in discussions about society’s problems. Their motive almost certainly will be to coopt us in order to sustain their interests. Has the time come for us finally to declare that the capitalists of industry are engaging in immoral practices and that they are agents of the devil with evil intentions. If we are willing to say so, then we should be ready to take the next step of finding practical ways to undermine the system.

This requires that we refuse to collaborate. What strategies might we adopt to disengage from the evils of the system? Consider, for example, changing our lifestyles and forfeiting the privileges of the system; calling for our churches and people’s movements to withdraw money from the institutions most implicated in immoral practices; mounting mass mobilization programmes to alert national governments to the roles they play in the system’s scandals.

### Resistance and revenge? (Revelation 18)

*By E Gerrit Singgih, Duta Wacana Christian University, Indonesia*

The symbols in the book of Daniel are reinterpreted in the book of Revelation for a new situation where there is oppression. Heaven again intervenes to help the people of God. The end is announced (18.2) by one of the angels, who cries out that Babylon the great is fallen. Babylon is pictured as a wicked woman, a harlot (17.5-6). She is contrasted with another woman (12.1-2, 14), who is protected by God against her enemies in heaven. It is interesting that here the source of evil is pointed out as heaven itself. There is mutiny in heaven. The Holy Qur’an explains that the reason for the mutiny was the refusal by Iblis, one of the angels, to pay homage to Adam as the first man. The powerful dragon tries to snatch and devour the mother’s newly born child, the future ruler of the universe. The forces of the archangel Michael won the war, and their opponents, “the dragon and his angels”, were thrown down to earth. Having been banished to earth, they by no means were rendered powerless. Because the dragon was

angry with the woman (12.17), it went off to make war on the rest of her offspring. In the next chapter, the picture in Daniel 7 reappears: an almost unimaginable beast rises out of the sea and receives power from the dragon. So powerful is the beast that it is allowed to make war on the saints and conquer them (13.7). Another battle was needed, this time on earth, in order to punish Babylon and to save the people of God. In Daniel 7 the saints of God are the hosts of heaven; here they are the faithful who had been following the Lamb. They were chaste (14.4). The text is ambiguous about whether they are alive or already dead (14.13). It does not matter: they will be vindicated by God even if they are already dead. Their death was not meaningless.

Ulrich Duchrow draws our attention to the often overlooked fact that the punishment is described in *economic* terms, among others (*Alternatives to Global Capitalism*, Utrecht 1982, pp.200ff). Babylon will suffer commercial and financial bankruptcy: the merchants will cry because no one will buy their cargo of expensive goods (18.11ff). Even slaves are mentioned, suggesting that Babylon's merchants had been buying and selling "human souls". The beast secured economic power over the world. According to the book of Revelation, economic power was only one manifestation of the absolutist power of the beast. If this power were taken from the beast, all the businesses that are connected with it would go bankrupt.

A new heaven cleansed of rivals and a new earth cleansed of the dragon is revealed (21.1-8). The new Jerusalem will come down from heaven to dwell with a new earth. Heaven no longer will need to intervene in earthly battles to save the people of God. The sea, a representation of chaos, will be gone forever. Death too will be gone. Hence, there will be no mourning, no crying, no pain. The dragon will be put in a maximum-security prison. Is it not dead? After one thousand years, Satan is let loose, only to be thrown into the lake of fire (20.10) where he will face a fate worse than death – endless torment. Even so, the author of the book of Revelation, together with the sages of the East, observed that evil cannot be totally eliminated, as it is part of the world. We can only struggle to limit evil. Remember, we are warned, that the Devil is not dead. If in the future you live forever, you are likely to face him, even in his situation of torment. Then perhaps the cause of suffering will come out of your new situation where you cannot suffer, cannot cry and cannot feel pain because all are unknown to you!

As in the book of Daniel, the book of Revelation contains a theology of resistance to the powers of economic domination. During the thirty-two years of Suharto's reign in Indonesia, he accumulated every kind of power, but above all economic power that he shared with members of his family and close relatives. Madame Suharto was known as "Madame Tien". Tien indeed was her name, but "tien" also means "ten" or "ten per cent" in Dutch. It was rumoured that ten per cent from all the government contracts automatically

went into her bank account. Suharto's sons and daughters, his brothers, cousins, sons-in-law, and almost everyone in the clan owned businesses with lively interactions with the great multinationals of the world. By 1998, Suharto had been put under restriction and was in danger of being put on trial. His family and former business associates were facing great difficulties because of their connection with Suharto. His son Tommy who formerly owned an airline and an automobile factory has declared bankruptcy in order to avoid payments on his enormous debts. How the mighty have fallen!

Here, more than in the book of Daniel, the theology of resistance is coupled with a theology of revenge. The people are asked by the angel (18.4-6) to disassociate themselves from Babylon and "render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed". And in 16.6, God the Holy One is praised because of his justice. Men, who had shed the blood of saints and prophets, are given blood to drink. "It is their due", said the angel of water, reflecting the thinking of John the seer. Does justice include revenge? This is the great dilemma facing us in Indonesia. What shall be done to Suharto? Many Christians in Indonesia refer to South Africa, where people opted for reconciliation rather than revenge. But there the question of justice loomed large.

## 5. Living economic alternatives as faith communities

Exodus 16 and Mk 10.35-45

*By Jorge Pixley, Seminario Teológico Bautista de Nicaragua, Managua*

The first text before us is an important part of the Exodus story, the foundation story of the people of Israel. It is situated in the desert of Sin between Elim and Sinai on the fifteenth day of the second month of the exodus from Egypt, just fifteen days before the arrival at the mountain of God which occurs in the text in Exodus 19. The story has a parallel in Numbers 11, which happens at Taberah at an undefined time after the departure of the people from the mountain of God on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year of the departure from Egypt. So the stories are placed almost exactly one year apart. Both stories deal with the hunger of the large crowd of over six hundred thousand men of war and their families (Num 1.46). Both deal with the provision of meat, the meat of pheasants, and bread, the manna that rains from heaven.

It is important, however, to note the differences. Exodus 16 is a story of grace whereas Numbers 11 is a story of sin, the sin of uncontrollable desire, and its punishment. By weaving the story in with the story of the Spirit coming upon the elders, the Numbers narrative makes it also a story of Moses/leadership. Both texts share to some extent all of these motifs, but the Exodus 16 story, after

the contrast with Numbers 11, takes on a sharper focus. Sin is downplayed and judgment absent. This is a story of nourishment in a place of scarcity.

The scarcity of food in the desert is, obviously, a most serious problem for a large crowd like the people of Israel. Although they took cattle with them, the cattle had to be preserved to provide milk and cheese during the 14 months of the expected crossing of the desert, including the stay of 11 months at Mount Sinai. And, as it turned out, the 14 months became 40 years. Moses grumbles about the complaints of the people (v.8), but the Lord does not appear offended and seems to recognize their validity and responds by sending pheasants that same afternoon (v.12-13) and initiating the next morning the rain of bread from heaven that will nourish the people during their entire desert passage (vv.13-16).

The centre of the passage has to do with the equity of the distribution of manna. When the family representative went out to gather manna for his family, he was instructed to gather one omer per person (v.16). Some gathered more, but when it was measured back at the camp they had no more than the rest (v.18). This ration was to be eaten during that day and nothing saved for the next (v.19). When some people doubted and saved part for tomorrow's meals it spoiled and was infested with worms (v.20). The point is furthered explored with the double portion which was gathered on Friday to provide for both Friday and for the sabbath (vv.22-30). Moses was irritated by the greed and lack of faith of his people (v.20). It is not said that the Lord was angered. I think that the point is that people have a natural desire to look out for themselves. In this the defenders of capitalism with their anthropology based on a natural greed are not wrong. The corruption of socialist leaders should not be seen as purely personal defects. There are of course heroes of revolutionary honesty, people willing to share the scarcity of hard times. One thinks of Ernesto Che Guevara. But societies cannot be built on the expectation of generalizing the "new person" growing out of the revolution. Such "new people" exist, and thank God this is so, but greed and self-interest seem to be too general to hold a realistic hope of wiping them out in a new socialist or Christian community.

There is a problem with our text which seems not to have been included within the perspective of the narrators. The economy built on the daily portion of manna for each was a fine and equitable way to share the scarcity imposed by the transition from Egypt to Canaan. But it was a "solution" that fell from on high. God resolved the problem, with Moses as his assistant. The beneficiaries had no say in what took place. Experience in Sandinista Nicaragua and Communist Cuba has taught us that even the best economic arrangements fail when they do not grow out of the desires of the people who draw benefit from them. One of the problems with industrial capitalism is the loss of participation in the decisions that matter, both in the workplace and in the public forum. In the wealthiest nations workers are able to get a share of the consumer goods on

the market but the workplace is an alien place where they must follow rules drawn up by others and the democracy of public life is reduced to a few elections which have very little impact on the lives of the people.

But this prepares us for the text we have from the Gospel of Mark where Jesus lays out his expectations for his followers. There is one standard among “the nations” Those who have power lord it over the rest of the population and expect privileges in return for their high estate. But “it will not be so among you” (Mk 10.43). In the community of the friends of Jesus the greatest will be the one who serves most. If in this community anyone aspires to hold the higher positions, let him or her be the servant of all. The contrast between “the nations” and “among you” is fundamental. In the faith community we can expect and require a selfless sharing. We are reminded of what Luke tells us about the first community of believers in Jerusalem who had all things in common (Acts 2.44 and 4.32). Those who had possessions of real estate sold them and brought the product of the sale and put it at the feet of the apostles for the common pot (Acts 4.34-35). Within this faith community the demands on participants were high. It was possible to tell the story of Ananias and Sapphira as a credible, true story. Because this couple sold their property and retained a portion for their own requirements they “falsified the Holy Spirit” [*pseusasthai se to pneuma to hagion*] (Acts 5.3). They did not lie to men but to God (Acts 5.4). As a result each in turn fell and expired. Such expectations could never be made in a large complex nation such as exist this day, but they are feasible in relatively small faith communities where the people know each other and in their face-to-face encounters can require high standards of solidarity and achieve these standards.

And this brings us to our theme for today, Living economic alternatives as faith communities. Large and complex societies must organize in the more or less automatic ways in which markets organize people and in the impersonal manner in which laws impose obligations on the market to satisfy the needs of the weakest and to offer them weapons with which to defend themselves when abused by the powerful. Germany or Japan could not possibly organize around the demands of solidarity with the needy as a moral requirement. Germany and Japan have a market which is given great freedom and which, as a result, produces a concentration of wealth and also the exclusion of many who have either little incentive or few tools in the struggle to compete. Both Germany and Japan, like any complex society, have laws which provide minimum guarantees for those who because of natural disasters, illness or misfortune no longer have the means to purchase their minimum needs for survival.

But when we look at the global system which prevails today we find very few safety nets for the victims of the system, which are many times more on a global scale than on the national scale of economically privileged countries like Germany, the United States and Japan. And we have no global government where laws might be enacted to protect those with few resources or to allow

them channels to question the way in which their workforce is treated on the market. It is most important that in our time together we come up with some proposals for creating global law in keeping with the global market system. But we know from our studies of the apostle Paul that laws are necessary, but that even the best of the holy and good laws are not capable of creating the social salvation for which we strive. There is not and cannot ever be a concrete social communism where each gives according to ability and receives according to need. That does not mean that we should let up in our struggles for ever better systems of protection for the defenceless in the current global market system. It means that our lives cannot be lived wholly in terms of the future, a future which may never become real and which, even if it should, would pass away like everything in history.

But, and this is the point of these biblical texts, it is in this context that the existence of small communities built on trust and solidarity becomes crucial. Faith communities are not the solution to the problems created by the global market. But people must find ways to live their fifty or seventy years of life that are human, ways which respect the other and especially the other who is excluded from the market with its benefits. In today's world this is only possible for people, rich or poor, who belong to faith communities which care for the defenceless of the world and recognize in all the dignity of sons and daughters of God. Face-to-face faith communities are some of the few remaining spaces where people can have a say in their lives and where they can maintain the dignity of equality in access to material goods. It is hard to imagine how the immense transformations required in the global economy can ever even begin to get off the ground unless there exists a pool of people who refuse to believe that giving a free hand to the market can ever solve human problems and know from the multiple small experiences of cooperatives, international solidarity, peaceful resistance to militarism, and positive actions in defence of small parcels of the environment, that alternatives are possible and desirable.

So, the story of the equality of the manna in the desert and the demands of service in the community of believers placed on them by Jesus can serve us as motivation. Biblical reflection is not the place to spell out the actions we must take. We can, however, bear witness to the ways in which we have created alternatives in our communities around the world, and so motivate each other to search for new and creative ways to resist the idolatry of a totalizing market and to open up spaces of economic activity which give people the opportunity to live out their humanity before God and each other.

PART IV  
LINKING FAITH WITH STRATEGIES FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

1. Linking faith traditions and economics

*By Bas Wielenga, Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, India*

We are listening to various religious and humanist traditions. I shall confine myself to the tradition to which I belong, in the hope that others will communicate the insights of their traditions.

*The problem*

Before assuming that the linkage of our faith traditions to the burning political, economic and ecological questions of today is problematic, we ought to affirm our own experiences. Many of us have learned that ancient songs, prayers, stories and celebrations touch people in their struggles, encouraging and guiding them, creating space for them to cope with defeat, renewing their spirit and their vision.

I hope that all of us will agree that criticizing mammon, independent of theological and ideological fashion, is more appropriate than ever before, and that God still expects us to take the side of the poor. We read texts and hear songs about the fight against damming the Narmada valley, about opposition to the “terminator” technology of Monsanto, and about the debt slavery of whole nations. The poor of basic communities know they have been exploited in the past. Dalits identify with the Galileans in the time of the Gospels. We must not forget these heart-warming faith experiences when turning the discussion to linkages of faith to struggle. The aim of such a discussion is to encourage reading of the Bible, the Qur’an or the Gita, and to reaffirm what is precious as the source of our faiths. Yet problems must be faced.

People on the other side of the barricades are desperately trying to ally God with mammon. Michel Camdessus, the executive director of the International Monetary Fund, writes about God and the market. Michael Novak identifies Isaiah’s suffering servant, who brings justice to the ends of the earth, with the despised transnational corporations. Prosperity theologians see God’s blessing in the accumulation of wealth. We must confront them with the essential perspective of the Bible, of God’s covenant with life and with the poor. It rejects enslavement to mammon.

Others may argue that the biblical texts are the outdated products of traditional society, no longer relevant to a high-tech global economy. Here we have to work from two sides, like digging a tunnel. We have to dig into the ancient texts to analyse their context and we have to analyse our own context. Only then may we find out how they connect. Distances differ. Indigenous

peoples and subsistence producers, who were declared obsolete long ago by liberals, missionaries and Marxists, have survived under terrible pressure. They may be more comfortable with certain biblical texts that have a comparable context. The ancient texts also display something comparable to the experience of global markets, especially those written in the time of the Hellenistic and Roman Empires. From the question of Ecclesiastes, "What is the gain?", to the weeping kings and merchants of Revelation 18, we hear voices that not only are understandable to modern readers, but also challenge them. Moreover, it may be useful to read again the ancient texts emerging from a subsistence context, and to probe what they still may say about today's ecological crises.

Of course, there are dangers when comparing biblical and contemporary situations. On the one hand, we may misunderstand the biblical situation. For example, if we read the book of Joshua solely as a story that legitimates conquest and ethnic conflict, as has happened in western nations, we miss an essential lesson. In such cases, we need an historical reconstruction, such as Norman Gottwald did in *Tribes of Yahweh*.

Or a biblical paradigm may be well understood but applied in the wrong place. Years ago, Prabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE, called on Tamil theologians to preach Exodus sermons. His implication was to endorse separatism as the only way to address the problem of discrimination against the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. This kind of case requires a critical analysis and democratic discussion of whether the conflict is properly understood. Are the Tamils facing a pharaoh-like empire based in Colombo, or would another paradigm be more illuminating? Is this not a case of bitter conflict between brothers, such as Jacob and Esau representing Israel and Edom, struggling over *one* blessing, requiring reconciliation, not exodus? A Yugoslavian theologian in his context of fratricidal conflicts has spoken of a "theology of embrace".

The problem also is one of choosing the right paradigm within the Bible itself. In Paul's time, the question was whether the armed uprising of the Maccabees should be used as the model for the struggle against the Roman empire, as the Zealots thought; or would a subversive submission after the manner of Jeremiah be the better way, while following a strategy of forming messianic cells all over the empire, as Paul advocated.

### *Reading strategies*

Some of us may fear that turning to Bible studies could lead to a nebulous mixing of religious ideas, moral notions and analysis. Of course, we have to be clear that religious texts should not replace analysis. Yet there can be a fruitful interplay between the two, as there can be between poetry and analysis. Poets and prophets, as well as priestly figures, can pose questions and provide images that illuminate and stimulate the analysis. Marx's quotations from Dante and

Shakespeare illustrate the point. He rarely quoted biblical texts in that way. But one example may be recalled. Speaking of the “all-engrossing appetite of interest-bearing capital” that “claims the ownership of all wealth which can ever be produced” and to which “all surplus labour which the human race can ever perform belongs”, he suddenly exclaims “Moloch” (*Capital* III, Moscow Progress Publishers, 1971, p.397). From analytical language, he switches to prophetic language. With the image of Moloch, the idol that demands human sacrifice, he illuminates and deepens what his analysis had shown.

The same can be said about his extensive quotations from Luther’s critique of usury. These references bear a close relationship with our concern regarding the link between faith and economics. Luther discussed the problem of capitalism’s rise not just as a moral question – “you shall not steal” – but as a theological question of faith – “you shall have no other gods”, taking mammon as the most popular “god”.

Here is not the place to go into details regarding methods of reading the Bible. I plead for a variety of approaches that supplement and correct each other, and thus reduce the dangers of proof-texting, ideologically closed reading and academic reductionism. What we need is simultaneous work on contextual social analysis, biblical theological themes, and particular books of the Bible.

Gottwald, Cruesemann, Veerkamp, Albertz, Horsley and a growing number of others have advanced the contextual analysis of successive biblical periods and Duchrow has linked this in very helpful ways to the question of strategic options.

Simultaneously we need to study biblical themes that articulate basic relations and elements as they evolve across different periods. I think of themes like *adam-adamah*, male-female, poverty and wealth, work/labour/slavery, debt, seeds, desert, chariots and horses, needs and desires, body, flesh, spirit, visions of hope and so on.

Thirdly, we benefit from the study of particular books of the Bible, as Fernando Belo and Ched Myers have done on Mark’s Gospel. As more and more ground is covered, new scholarship helps to curb the abuse of isolated texts by theologians like Michael Novak. The choice of books to study may be influenced by our context. The reading of our situation may even lead to a particular type of text. There is a time to read Ecclesiastes, and there is a time not to read Ecclesiastes, as when we are already sceptical enough. This raises a question: How do we allow biblical texts that we have not chosen to interrogate us? The church’s lectionaries and the canon of the Bible may draw us into that. But the church will also be a channel of communication between specific readings in different contexts. It is very important to create space for such interaction, without sinking into a noncommittal pluralism. Within the framework of God’s covenant with the poor and with life, there is much to be explored and deepened.

One further suggestion regarding reading may be helpful. We need to reflect

on the relationship between the economic and other, noneconomic dimensions of reality. Bible readers for a long time have ignored the ways in which faith relates to economic realities.

Neoliberalism tries to subsume everything under the logic of capital accumulation, including faith and life. Faith places the experiences of economic injustice in a special perspective that subsumes the economic under the basic covenantal relationships shaped by justice according to God's will.

Faith is linked to economics in a critical and liberating way. It relativizes economics. It points at spaces and times of freedom from economic necessities: thanksgiving, sabbath, festivals, space for old people and children on the city square (Zech 8).

Humans are not born to be slaves in the service of capital accumulation. They are born to be free in the service of God, of each other, and of life on earth, in their economic and noneconomic relations. Neither humans nor nonhuman nature fit comfortably into the narrow logic of the neoliberal project. Much more than we realize, we are already resisting the pressures to live according to that logic alone. Even the most diehard capitalist may act occasionally against his better judgment. People are guided by a variety of motifs and desires. And they often are – thank God – incoherent and self-contradictory. They may decline a better paying job for some noneconomic reason. The billions spent on advertising demonstrates the need for a lot of persuasion in order to get people to buy things they do not need. It shows not only the power of mammon, but also its weakness. People can refuse, resist, ignore, drop out, go mad. Faith, friendship, love, solidarity cannot be easily commodified, however hard businesses may try. Indeed, humans do not live by bread alone. They are mammon's Achilles heel. Its other weak spot is the intricate web of life in nonhuman nature. Nature protests with catastrophes that push up nonproductive costs and undermine the profit prospects of capital. This is one reason for drawing special attention to the ecological question.

### *Ecological economics – creation and liberation*

The ecological crisis is consistently underestimated in leftist circles. Most analytical contributions have not yet seriously considered the basic contradiction between capital and the conditions of labour – the “second contradiction” of capital, as scholars and activists around the journal *Capital Nature Socialism* put it. I agree with them that any analysis of the economy that leaves out the ecological conditionality of life and ignores pollution, resource depletion and the irresponsible risks that profit-seeking capital takes (as in gene-technology) is basically deficient. Similarly, any eco-theory or movement that does not consider its economic and social consequences is equally deficient. The ecological and the economic are inextricably entwined.

Herman Daly observed at an international congress of ecological economists

in Berlin, 1999, that the World Bank refuses to acknowledge the embeddedness of the economy as a subsystem in social and ecological relationships. Its preparatory paper for the Rio conference on environment and development acknowledged only economic “inputs” and “outputs”. It rejected a proposal to make visible the fact that an economy takes its inputs from the environment and dumps its waste, often in poisonous forms, into the environment. This refusal is axiomatic for neoliberalism. It cannot admit that the economy is a subsystem of anything else or that it has to acknowledge the limits set by noneconomic realities.

Marxists, as materialists, could not avoid taking note of the role of nature. Marx criticized the Gotha programme of the German Social Democratic Party for ignoring the fact that wealth has two sources, both labour and nature. But for a long time no attention was given to the implications of this insight and to the second contradiction of capital, despite the fact that the law of entropy was discovered in the lifetime of Marx and Engels. Georgescu-Roegen, Martínez-Alier, Altvater took up the issue in the 20th century. Many leftists are still tone-deaf on this point.

For Bible listeners the issue should be quite clear. The Bible speaks of God as one creator and redeemer/liberator. But theology, creation and history – including the history of liberation – have often been kept apart with damaging consequences. The theme of creation taken separately has been used to justify conservative policies of the status quo. Nazi ideology perversely deified *Blut und Boden*, blood and soil, *Volk* and race. In response, the Confessing Church focused exclusively on God’s revelation in Jesus Christ. Liberation theology initially based itself on the Exodus paradigm, prophetic texts and the Gospels. The challenge is to integrate faith in God the creator, the king of creation, into a liberative perspective. How can we read Genesis and Exodus, the psalms and the prophets, together, in such a way that the givenness of life and the blossoming of its diversity does not become the ideological basis for a cosmic religiosity or a biological approach that separates itself from the historical struggles of the poor?

One contribution to this integrative work is to discern the theme of creation as a continuous, basic element of the biblical faith-tradition, stretching far beyond the first chapters of the book of Genesis. We need to add the dimension of creation relations to those of gender and class relations in our contextual analysis of biblical texts.

Take water, for example, a source of life and conflict more than ever before. The imperial ambitions of Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations were based on the taming of the rivers Nile and Euphrates/Tigris, while the Palestinian economy, lacking large rivers, was dependent on rain. Such ecological differences have economic, social, political, cultural and religious consequences. Deuteronomy points out that in Egypt “you sowed your seed and watered it

with your feet” (through irrigation), “but the land which you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land which the LORD your God cares for” (Deut 11.10-12). Martin Buber observed that this rain-dependent ecology and economy provides a particular orientation for the outlook of Israel’s faith. Unlike the pharaohs, they know of limits and have a sense of dependence. That insight contains paradigmatic lessons for all of us. We must learn again that life depends on sharing within given limits. The point is not to move from technocratic and imperial megalomania to passive dependency on rituals and prayers for rain. The biblical tradition emphasizes the simultaneous need for rain and for human labour, beginning in Genesis 2. It acknowledges that humans are empowered to interact with nonhuman nature, beginning in Gen 1.28. Read together, the two creation narratives – Gen 1.1-2.4, reflecting God’s gift in the Babylonian setting, and Gen 2.4-25, reflecting peasant life in the Palestinian context – do justice to both aspects of human work as it relates to nonhuman creation. They speak of “dominion” and of protective “service” (Gen 2.15).

Our problem is that we seem to lack the wisdom – as Job 28 indicates – to distinguish where and when we can welcome the possibilities of science and technology to enhance human labour, lessen the toil, and protect life, and where and when our drive to rule and control becomes harmful to life.

The story of the flood, presented as the consequence of violent abuses of power, suggests a possible answer: The ark of Noah, a paradigm of life-saving technology, reminds us that survival is possible only together with all the other species. Power is given not to conquer and destroy, but to enhance the blessings of life. The covenant with the earth and with all life locates the central narrative of the Bible, a narrative of liberation from enslaving empires, in the context of affirming God-given life. The rainbow of Genesis 9 returns in Revelation 4 in the apocalyptic visions of the anti-Roman prophet John the seer on Patmos.

The givenness of life – of earth, water, seeds, breath – contrasts with the imperial claim of Pharaoh, who said: “My Nile is my own; I made it for myself” (Ezek 29.3). Just like the transnational corporations of today: these resources are mine, I made them in my lab, I have patents on the basic forms of life. This dragon-like pharaoh, says Ezekiel, will be cast into the wilderness, given as food “to the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air” (Ezek 29.5). Liberation from Egypt is not only about freedom from bondage, but also about the removal of the barriers to power and wealth that block the flow of life to all. The plagues in Egypt can be read – like eco-crises – as warnings to the powerful that creation cannot be taken for granted. The Creator, the giver of it all, will for the sake of life and the enslaved become the Liberator, again and again.

Neoliberalism speaks of “nature capital” and “human capital”, implying that everything and everybody is subsumed by the logic of accumulation. The Bible, in contrast, knows about the embeddedness of the economy in society

and creation. It uses economic language to underline the alternative logic of giving and sharing and producing life. For example, the word *nachalah*, possession of a share of the land, has been widely interpreted in discussions about debt release and jubilee. Or take another example, *otzar* or “treasure”. The Bible speaks of the “treasury of heaven”, from which God gives wind and rain in order “to bless all the work of your hands” (Deut 28.12; cf. Jer 10.12f; Ps 33.7; 135.7; Job 38.22; Mt 5.45). In Jewish tradition, rain is a symbol of resurrection, which reflects the ecological experience of the desert-like fields turning green and flowering after the rainy season has come. Neither the biblical nor the Jewish tradition rejects the fertility of life as something pagan, belonging to Ba’al, as many Christian scholars tend to do. Genesis 1 and 9 speak of the Creator’s urging of creation to thrive and to multiply life (Gen 1.22, 28; 9.1). All that is under God’s blessing.

The problem is that the same treasures of abundant God-given blessing can be turned into the accumulation of gold and silver that is put into the treasuries of temple and palace. There is “no end to such treasures”, as Isaiah laments – a reminder of finance capital today. Ba’als are the gods of ownership who turn the gift of fertility into the power to control. In contrast to his vision of peace and justice based on the Torah (Is 2.1-4), Isaiah sees the land “filled with gold and silver”, with chariots and horses – the military power to protect wealth. He also sees idolatry, the worship of wealth and power that brings humans to be “humbled” and “brought low” (Is 2.7-9).

Accumulation may know no limits, but the treasuries of gold and silver do not last. The prophetic narratives of history tell how they are plundered through conquest and imposed tribute. Jesus’ teaching about “treasures on earth”, “where thieves break in and steal” (Mt 6.19ff), refers to this reality. He invites us to set our heart on the treasure of the kingdom of heaven that aims at justice on earth, as consecutive passages of the Sermon on the Mount spell out. Note especially the striking reference to God the creator (cf. M Ganavaram, *Treasure in Heaven and Treasure on Earth*, Coventry 1994). The axiomatic starting point is: “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Mt 6.24). God’s kingdom and its justice cannot be combined with the kingdom of mammon, which is “unjust” by definition. It creates endless worries for the poor, mammon’s human slaves, who ask, “what shall we eat?” But “life is more than food”. See how the heavenly Father cares for the birds and the lilies that do not depend on human labour. And look how hungry humans under glorious kings like Solomon, the prototypical accumulator in biblical texts, still do not get their just share. That is the cause of their worries. Worry does not change their conditions, however. Their only option is to seek the kingdom of God and its justice, where “all these things shall be theirs, as God knows their needs” (Mt 6.25-33). Jesus understands the struggle for justice as one of sharing the blessings of God the creator, who sends his “rain on the just and the unjust”, all-inclusively (Mt

5.45). For that to happen, mammon must be abandoned and defeated. The Hebrew Bible and Jewish liturgy stress this aspect of God's reign as king of creation. Unlike so many kings, he cares for the life that he has created. But Christian theology has neglected God's relation to creation. That is one of the reasons why prosperity theology can pretend to have biblical roots. It quotes texts about God's blessings without referring to the axiomatic condition of justice, a condition that requires sharing and legal protection for the rights of the poor, as in the sabbath year and jubilee legislation.

To understand the search and struggle for justice in all its dimensions we need the whole Bible, and we need the humility to listen to the experiences and insights of Israel and the words of the Torah and the prophets. God needed not only religious geniuses or righteous saints. God needed a people in a land where an attempt could be made to translate his will into the economic, social and political fabric of life. This is not meant to promote a religious theocracy run by priests or charismatics, but to challenge us as citizens to participate in the collective search for justice. The Hebrew Bible, the faith-source for Jesus and his followers, does not give us ready-made recipes, but it shows a direction.

#### *On the way to global solidarity*

Liberation theology and especially feminist theology have taught us the hermeneutics of suspicion. Exegesis, translations, texts are shaped or influenced by patriarchal biases, or affected by other power struggles. Critical readings are needed in order to avoid giving domination and patriarchy legitimacy in the scriptures. This is very important when discussing how to use the Bible with those who use biblical quotations to justify submission to various forms of domination.

Our job is far from over when we develop a healthy suspicion in critical reading. Feminists, who have strong reasons for being suspicious of patriarchal tendencies in biblical texts, have not stopped at proving how right they are with their suspicions. Many of them have gone beyond suspicions, knocking on the door of the texts till they disclosed liberative dimensions and opened up springs of inspiration. They teach us to supplement the necessary hermeneutics of suspicion with a graceful hermeneutics of surprise. Whatever powerful forces may have tried to obscure, the voices and visions of the poor and oppressed can be discerned by those whose ears are tuned to the voice of the One whose name promises his presence on the long road to freedom: "I shall be with you." Openness to that surprising presence in creation and liberation is the key to a hermeneutics of solidarity for all the "oppressed of the earth" (Ps 76.9). We need this openness to resist the destructive processes of capitalist globalization.

How can a return to faith resources foster solidarity? Does not religion divide? Does not contextual theology divide? We are moving towards a plurality of readings from specific angles and contexts. Women, Dalits, Adivasis, blacks,

Third-World peoples are developing their own approaches to biblical texts. Is there a way in which these different readings can enrich each other without losing their specificity? Or do we have to give up the idea of a common “great narrative” (*grand récit*) represented by the biblical canon? That must not happen. It would leave the faceless and inhuman story of capital accumulation, a story of dead labour and dead nature, as the only narrative that connects us all – a narrative of news bulletin to news bulletin about stock markets going up and down.

Scriptures point in the opposite direction, from death to life in its vital diversity. Bible, Talmud, Qur’an, and Hindu scriptures offer a rich diversity within each faith-tradition. Part of the diversity may reflect social conflicts, but much of it demonstrates the diversity that is intrinsic to life, both biologically and culturally.

In biblical terms, the kingdom of God offers both a unifying perspective and space to honour and respect multiple identities, as opposed to the homogenized identities of global capital. It offers a context for messianic cells to form links of solidarity between Jew and Greek, male and female, workers in different labour markets, victims of WTO policies – supporting one another against the divisive role of capital in pitting everybody against everybody in the name of competition.

The secret of these cells, like that of seeds, is that they are based on a story of death and resurrection that is beyond the grasp of the powers that be. They nurture a faith that can face desperate defeats and a solidarity that turns victims into actors again and again. Radical discipleship may collapse, as Ched Myers hears Mark tell the story, and yet it revives. This story has the capacity across ages and oceans to inspire activists in different parts of the world to confront the powers of death, of nuclear militarism and global imperialism. Such hermeneutics of surprise and solidarity requires a sharing of readings in the context of forming alliances across social, cultural and political borders. The Torah and the prophets, poets and sages, evangelists and apostles do not exclude each other. They are addressing different constituencies *together*, contributing their various narratives and traditions to the common, ecumenical canon and worldwide horizon. Remember the formation of the tribal covenant!

Hopefully we shall see the formation of alliances of people’s movements, alliances that reflect the canon as something with promise. There are many different movements: Dalit movements, women’s movements, indigenous peoples’ movements, workers’ movements, peasant movements, peace movements. Each has its particular story to tell, of oppression and suffering, of struggle, victories and defeats. They give support to each other and, in forming alliances, experience the widening of their horizons and hopes, inspiring each other not to give up.

## 2. Faith and the economy: a hermeneutics of retrieval from women's perspectives

By Mary Grey, Sarum College, Salisbury, and the University of Wales, Lampeter

A hermeneutics of suspicion confronts the apparent absence of women from both economic statistics and faith structures. But both these apparent "absences" must be challenged.

In the case of the churches, it is women's consistent loyalty which has kept religious life going, especially in times of crisis, even if they have been excluded from decision-making structures. Women are conspicuous by their presence, rather than their absence. Indeed, women are at the very centre of faith life, as prayers and teachers, but not in leadership roles.

But, similarly, women are also at the centre of economic life: women are involved in all kinds of work, paid or unpaid, seen or unseen. Women's involvement in the endless labour of sustaining life itself, from the search for water and kindling wood in many parts of the world, to the widespread responsibility for the welfare of children, is not a statistic ever factored into economic calculations. Yet economic life depends on this work.

What is needed is a reimagining of economic structures, and the basic unit of exchange, from its narrow, monetary basis. If we began to honour the fact that the concept of exchange is many layered, and that the most basic unit of exchange is actually a relational one, namely the exchange of relations between mother and child – could that be the beginning of redefining the economy towards an economy of care, based on relationships of mutual respect and responsibility?

This calls for a hermeneutics, not of suspicion, but of subversive retrieval: we call for a recombination of the ministries of care (*diakonia*) with those of leadership. No longer should there be a toleration of a gender split between the two, (that is "caring = female" and "leadership = male").

The theological backbone of this reimagined economy should be a reclaiming of the Biblical Wisdom traditions of *Sophia/hokmah*. But we should do this together with the prophetic dimensions and refuse to allow a tension between the two. I offer three aspects of this retrieval, and end with a paradox.

First, to reclaim the *Sophia/hokmah* traditions of the Book of Wisdom, the Book of Proverbs, the Wisdom of Ben Sirach is to reimagine the household (*oikos/oikoumene*) where Wisdom sets the table and invites to the meal. Wisdom, whose household is governed according to the principles of right relation, of relational justice. Wisdom, who governs according to the principles of ecological wisdom, respecting the wisdom of poor peoples, of indigenous peoples, whose economy respects nature's rhythms. Wisdom's hospitality recalls the northern and western hemispheres to a hospitality that they have lost, but is still

honoured in many parts of the third world but still could be eroded by the spread of western values.

Secondly, to invoke the Wisdom traditions is to fashion a critique of modern technology, a technology offering only a cheapened, narrow possibility for life on earth, a technology which short-changes humanity, instead of allowing for the fullness of life. Celia Deane Drummond in her book *Theology and Biotechnology* states that “A reconstruction of such language through wisdom would acknowledge the real difference between the kind of sustainability that is advocated by multinational companies that have profitability as the real motivation and the sustainability of local peasant farmers living on the margins of society.”

Thirdly, invoking the wisdom traditions enables us to connect with the cosmic wisdom traditions of many other faiths, and especially with the wisdom traditions of indigenous peoples.

All of this leads to the expanding of the notion of “exchange” from its focus exclusively on money and profit, to “the exchange of life in its fullness” (John 10). The idea of “where your treasure is, there is your heart” is central to this. Within this expanded notion of the economy, the aim is to move from “money as medium of exchange” to “exchange as the fullness of life”. Here, the invoking of religious visions of flourishing is vital – of the flourishing of all embodied life, of visions of transformed life – of new life in the desert where the wellsprings will flow, of the redeemed city where the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. These are visions where all are called to the abundance of life, not merely the dominant few who control the economic system.

Ultimately, theology offers a paradox. Globalization prioritizes the winners in monetary categories. Prophetic religion turns this on its head, valuing the loser – those with no spending power, the most vulnerable categories of people, the weakest in the diversity of life forms. Perhaps this is the real challenge made by faith to the economy: faith sets us in motion – giving, not to receive in monetary terms, but to lay the basis for exchange in terms of transformed relations. Now, on this earth, and not in some imagined afterlife.

### 3. Christian faith and globalization

*By Jung Mo Sung, Catholic and Methodist Universities, São Paulo/Brazil*

#### *Social apartheid*

“The most important fact in the world today is undoubtedly the dreadful empire of the logic of exclusion and the growing insensitivity of the great majority to exclusion.” (Hugo Assmann, “Por una sociedad donde quepan todos”, in José Duque, ed., *Por una sociedad donde quepan todos*, San José: DEI, 1996, p.380.)

There are “poverty belts” not only in third world countries but also in rich countries like the United States. They are composed of people excluded from the market, people who lack a livelihood and the conditions of a decent life. This does not mean they are excluded from knowledge about the consumer society. They are confronted constantly with information about sophisticated and superfluous goods, even as they are denied access to the satisfaction of their basic survival needs.

Among the major causes of this exclusion is the structural unemployment impacting virtually the whole world.

Unemployment is referred to as structural when it is the result of fundamental changes in the structure of an economy, rather than the periodic unemployment associated with business cycles. Large companies may continue to make big profits during periods of structural adjustment, and may even see their shares appreciate on stock exchanges while laying off employees.

Structural unemployment is one of the fruits of the current global economy and its technological revolution. In this new global economy, according to Peter Drucker, “production is no longer ‘related’ to employment, and capital movements, rather than trade (whether of goods or services), became the driving force of the global economy.” (“Changes in the World Economy”, *Foreign Policy*, December 1992, p.17.)

This process may be seen as the climax of changes already described by Max Weber in his well-known book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In capitalism, Weber says,

“...man is dominated by money production, by acquisition, seen as the ultimate goal of life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as a means to satisfy his material needs. This inversion of what could be called a natural relation, which is so irrational and naive, is clearly a principle that drives capitalism”.

In premodern societies, people worked to survive. In capitalist societies, people live to accumulate wealth. In today’s global economy, cutting jobs seems to create more profits for companies and more earnings for their shareholders and executives. The financial system that should be connected to and at the service of production has become bigger, more important, and largely disconnected from production. Wealth is primarily oriented to finance. Moreover, it is largely invisible, no longer consisting of tangible goods but rather of figures blinking on computer screens.

The desire and the endless search for wealth produce two very serious side effects. The first is the threat to the ecological system. The greed for more profit will eventually destroy an ecological system that took billions of years to develop and that makes human life possible. It also produces severe social crises in many countries. It creates poverty and stark social contrasts as well as fast-growing violence, drug traffic and corruption.

Three other factors are important in third world countries. The first is that being poor or jobless in a rich country, where social programmes work relatively well, is completely different from the experience of people in poor countries where social safety nets hardly exist and government budgets are under attack.

The second is that almost all third world countries have what might be called “different overlapping times and spaces”. In many countries, social groups live in different historic times. Some still live in a premodern culture, using traditional production techniques that predate the agricultural revolution and without access to formal education. Others have been introduced to the technological revolution of the Ford industrial era, while still others live in a postmodern culture with access to last-generation technology. Such diversity leads to serious economic and social problems. People void of education and training in modern techniques are not qualified for jobs in companies that, for competitive reasons, require the skills needed for modern production processes.

In addition, there is the serious problem of “space distance”. The elites of third world countries identify more closely with the elites of rich countries than with their mostly poor fellow citizens. They belong more to the community of world consumer markets than to their domestic societies. This makes it much more difficult to create the sense of community needed for the middle and upper classes to support programmes and policies that seek to solve their countries’ social problems.

#### *A culture of insensibility*

A society based on the logic of exclusion creates, but is also fed by, a culture of insensibility. A callous and unfeeling culture is neither born nor grows just by chance. It derives its character from several historic and social factors of an anthropological nature. We shall mention only those factors that are most relevant to our concerns.

Our societies nurture the idea that inequalities and social exclusion are inevitable. This notion gained ground with the collapse of the Communist bloc. When that alternative model failed, the idea that capitalism represented the “end of history” gained momentum. Hence, our current social situation came to be seen as inevitable.

Not only inevitable, but also fair. Kenneth Galbraith calls it “the culture of contentment” – the notion that those who are well integrated in the market “are receiving their just deserts”, and therefore, “good fortune being earned or the reward of merit, there is no equitable justification for any action that impairs it – that subtracts from what is enjoyed or might be enjoyed”. (John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Culture of Contentment*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993, pp.18f.) A corollary is that the poor themselves are to blame for their own poverty. They deserve to be poor. The current market mechanisms are seen as “incarnations” of a transcendental judge and justice. This is a secularized version of retribution

theology, much criticized by Jesus and the Reformers. In a Christian context, it translates as prosperity theology.

Not only inevitable and fair, but also beneficial. To neoliberals, with their unshakable faith in the market, social inequality is the powerhouse of economic progress because it encourages competition between people and social institutions. Social crises, moreover, are seen as temporary and as a sign that the economy is moving towards full market freedom.

Today's economic and cultural leaders identify economic growth with human and social development. They propose that the modernization of the economy and society as a whole depends upon the continuing growth of markets. They understand modernization to require the suppression of debate about all human and social values and all the rights and duties, whether of people or of countries, that both logically and chronologically come before the market system. They want to reduce everything to its effectiveness in allocating the scarce means of production and finance to the goal of unlimited wealth accumulation.

Thus Roberto Campos, a former minister of the economy in Brazil and a staunch defender of neoliberalism, says that modernization, the only viable solution for Latin America, "assumes a cruel mystique of performance and the worship of efficiency" (*Além do cotidiano*, Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2nd ed., 1985).

How can a mystique be cruel?

Mystique is the force that makes us overcome the temptations of sin.

But for neoliberals, the original sin, the source and origin of all economic and social evil, is the economists' "pretension of knowledge" of the market: the claim to understand the workings of the market that underlies all state interference with markets and all efforts by social movements to solve social problems. Wanting consciously and intentionally to solve social problems is the sin that initiates rather than solves problems.

For neoliberals, the only solution is to have faith in the market's "invisible hand" and to view the sufferings of the excluded as "necessary sacrifices" required by market laws. Hence, the mystique that should help us overcome the temptation to do good things has a cruel face. It goes hand-in-hand with worshipping not the God of mercy and life but market efficiency.

*The good news of a God that is love*

Faced with this "idolatry of the market", what "good news" should we announce to remain faithful to the gospel?

Any criticism of neoliberalism implies a criticism of the "sacredness" of the market and its laws. It means unmasking the worship of an idol that continually demands the sacrifice of human lives for the sake of endless consumption and wealth accumulation. It is not our job to show that the root of economic and social evil is the quest of a more humane and fair society. On the contrary: the

apostle Paul made clear that “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6.10).

We have to recover a simple and irrefutable truth: the economy exists for the sake of people’s lives, and not people for the sake of economic laws that are designed to accumulate wealth. This is one of the most important ways to translate the teachings of Jesus into the language of today: “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath” (Mk 2.27).

Those who are excluded from our societies hunger not only for bread but also for the humanity they are denied. They hunger for a God who excludes no one (cf. Acts 10.35 and Rom 2.11), and who lives among human beings so “that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10.10). For this good news to be heard in our society, the churches must return to their fundamental theological task: to criticize theologies, like retribution theology and prosperity theology, that sacralize the injustices of the world and legitimate the culture of insensibility. We must show that God is not behind all suffering and injustice, neither is he the provider of wealth for minorities. We must announce that God does not save us because of our merits, but because of his grace, and that, if we want to live according to the grace of our Lord, we must recognize freely, beyond the logic of the market, the right of all people to a good and decent life.

We must return to a theology of grace and recover the value of solidarity.

We are talking about a society that includes all, a world where “Jews and gentiles” learn to respect their differences and everyone has the right to live decently. Markets will still be important components of the society. But they will be neither sacred nor almighty. There will be state and social democratic mechanisms to control and supplement market mechanisms so that basic rights are respected and the ecological system is preserved.

Fighting for a society that includes everyone does not mean adopting an *a priori* political or economic project. Rather, it means weighing and measuring several possible global or partial projects in order to discover the right combination of concrete models and proposals to help us build a society where all may live a decent life.

In a globalized world, solutions to our problems should not be considered only in local and national terms. Articulation and coordination are required on an international level. Christian churches and international ecumenical bodies are among the few institutions with international and local networks that are concerned with the life of the poor and the excluded in the Americas. It is up to us to use these connections to favour life, the “breath of the Spirit” that inhabits all human beings, the great gift of God.

#### 4. Muslim commitment to justice

*By Asghar Ali and Irfan Engineer, Centre for Study of Society and Secularism, India*

Religion in general and Islam in particular can play a positive role in uniting people for justice and equality, particularly the weaker sections.

The current process of globalization powered by transnational capital is driving humanity towards conflict. Economically, it is marginalizing the people of the South. Culturally, it has aroused fears of a cultural invasion from the North. The younger generations are more vulnerable to this consumerist cultural invasion. In response to the economic marginalization of the South and the cultural invasion from the North, there is a rise in national chauvinism and religious revivalism. The rise in national chauvinism has often led to a targeting of minorities.

The rise of Islamic revivalism in Iran, Algeria, Egypt, etc., is also in response to the cultural invasion of the North, through TV channels and other media, and growing poverty and unemployment in some of the Muslim majority countries. Islamic revivalism is on the increase even in countries, like Malaysia and Indonesia, that have gained from the globalization process by way of new investments, and increased industrialization and exports. This industrial activity has occurred only in a few urban locations. Islamic revivalism, even in these countries, is a response to the growing disparities in income and the changing lifestyles and influence of western culture. Islamic fundamentalism is therefore a political rather than a religious response. Meanwhile, family values are being eroded and the world is being torn apart by ethnic and religious conflict.

This does not mean that globalization as such is undesirable. The peoples of the world should interact more. There should be cultural exchanges and greater understanding of others. Within each cultural and national tradition, there should be a universal attempt to address social inequalities, gender inequalities and questions of human rights. Global solidarity is needed to tackle poverty, to respond to natural calamities, and to protect the environment. A narrow nationalism is inadequate to address such concerns. Addressing violations of human rights, gender inequalities and environmental destruction takes us beyond national boundaries and overrides nationalist concerns. We need an international perspective and outlook.

Marxism professes an international perspective and working class solidarity. In Marxist analysis, the working classes of the world, irrespective of country or nation, are exploited. It is only possible to liberate themselves if they unite to fight capitalism. Through socialist revolution, they will have to take the means of production into their own hands. Trotsky argued that socialist revolution would never succeed in one country alone. Socialist revolution would have to

be on an international scale. While Marxism talked of the need for the international solidarity of the working class for its liberation from capitalist exploitation, it lacked popular appeal because of its materialist outlook and its emphasis on economic factors. It offered a good critique of capitalism, but it did not take cultural factors into account.

Religion and faith have a wider appeal. Religious solidarity can be used to promote global solidarity. From its very inception, Islam talked of community – a concept of solidarity that is above nationalities. But solidarity is not an abstract concept. Solidarity is concrete: solidarity in struggle to achieve something or to address some concerns. In today’s context, solidarity must address human rights; poverty; gender inequalities and gender discrimination; environmental issues; and democracy and transparency in government, making power structures – whether transnational corporations or states – accountable to people.

Religions may differ in some of their rituals. Rituals are products of the cultural contexts in which the Word of God was revealed. But the core values of the religions complement each other. Buddhism emphasizes *karuna* or compassion. Christianity stresses peace and love. Islam emphasizes justice and equality. There can be no love without compassion. There can be no peace without justice and equality.

#### *Islam and the weaker sections*

During the lifetime of the Prophet and for a few decades thereafter, Islam was a revolutionary force. Any historian would agree that the Prophet, as the messenger of God, powerfully challenged the rich traders of Mecca. The traders belonged to the tribe of Quraysh, the leading tribe of Mecca. These rich traders were arrogant and drunk with power. They violated the tribal norms and disregarded the poor and needy. When the Prophet began to preach his divine message, it was the poor and oppressed of Mecca, including many slaves, who joined him. The Prophet himself was an orphan and came from a poor but a noble family of the tribe of Quraysh.

The Prophet, through his revealed message, castigated the rich of Mecca in no uncertain terms. The Qur’an says, “Woe unto every slandering traducer, ‘Who hath gathered wealth (of this world) and arranged it: He thinketh that his wealth will render him immortal. Nay, but he will be flung to the Consuming one; And what will convey unto thee what the Consuming One is! (It is) the fire of Allah, ‘kindled...’ (Chapter 104) Similarly, in chapter 102, the Qur’an says: “Rivalry in worldly increase distracteth you. Until ye come to the graves. Nay, but ye will come to know!... Then on that day, ye will be asked concerning pleasure.”

The Qur’an, in the conditions then prevailing, could not abolish slavery altogether, the details of which need not detain us here. But it not only encouraged emancipation of slaves, it gave them, in religious matters, complete equality

with other faithful people. It even encouraged marriage between slave-girls and free men and vice versa. One of the closest companions of the Prophet was a negro slave called Bilal. He was appointed by the prophet to be his *moazzin* (the one who called people to prayer). Prayer in those days was no less than a stirring call for change.

The accumulation of wealth was strongly denounced in the Qur'an. The Qur'an even prescribes that surplus wealth, or what remains after meeting basic needs, should be given away for the needy. "They ask thee what they ought to spend. Say: That which is superfluous." (2.219) Even hoarding gold and silver is strongly denounced by the Qur'an. "They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah, unto them give tidings (O Muhammad) of a painful doom." (9.34)

It is a well known fact the Qur'an strongly denounced *riba*. Usually, this is translated as usury or interest, but in our opinion the term is much more comprehensive. It includes all exploitative practices, even the profits of the capitalist system. For the *riba* the Qur'an says, "Those who swallow usury cannot rise up save as he ariseth whom the devil hath prostrated by (his) touch." (2.275) And again, "O ye who believe! Observe your duty to Allah, and give up what remaineth (due to you) from usury, if ye are (in truth) believers. And if ye do not, then be warned of war (against you) from Allah and his messenger. And if ye repent, then ye have your principal (without interest). Wrong not and ye shall not be wronged." (2.278-79)

And as for taxing the wealthy heavily, the principle of *zakat* has been imposed by the Qur'an. (The Qur'an has not prescribed the rate; it is the Prophetic tradition which does that. In our opinion, the rate can be varied in the interest of justice for the poor, according to the situation.) Everywhere *zakat* is mentioned along with prayer in the Holy Scripture. "Who establish worship and spend of that we have bestowed on them." (8.3) Also the needy and deprived are given due share in the wealth of the wealthy. "And in their wealth the needy and the deprived have due share." (51.19) Even the prayer is of no consequence, if no kindness is shown to the poor and the destitute. "Have you observed him who belies religion? It is he who turns away the orphan and does not urge others to feed the needy. Woe to those who pray but are heedless in their prayer, who make a show of piety and give no alms to the destitute." (Chapter 107)

Thus it can be seen that Islam came to change the status quo in favour of the oppressed and exploited, what can be termed the weaker sections of society. Any society which perpetuated the exploitation of the weak and the oppressed cannot be termed an Islamic society, even if other Islamic rituals are enforced. The Prophet, in one of his traditions, equated poverty with *kufir* (unbelief) and has sought refuge in God from both. Thus abolition of poverty is *sine qua non* of an Islamic society. Another tradition of the prophet makes it clear that a country can survive with *kufir* (unbelief) but not with *zulm* (oppression).

Allah made justice the kingpin of society: "Say: My Lord enjoineth justice" (7.29). And also, "Lo! Allah loveth those who act in justice." (49.9) According to the Qur'an, even piety cannot be divested of the element of justice. "Do justice, it is nearer to piety." (5.8) Thus piety in Islam is not merely a meticulous observation of ritual prayers without social justice and benevolence, which, according to the Qur'an, are key concepts.

Nawab Haider Naqvi, a Pakistani economist, rightly maintains that "... social justice in Islam, rooted in man's belief in God, entails an automatic duty to do justice. The one cannot exist without the other..." (NH Naqvi, *Ethics and Economics – An Islamic Synthesis*, Leicester, UK, 1981)

Unfortunately, soon after the death of the Prophet, revolutionary Islam was transformed into an Islam of the status quo. Right through medieval times, it further imbibed feudal practices, and the *ulama* came to support the powerful establishments. They wrote more on ritual practices and spent their energy on subsidiary matters (*furu'*) of the Shari'a and completely played down its élan for social justice and its active sympathy with the weak and the oppressed (*mustad'afin*). They came to identify themselves with *mustakbirin* (the powerful and arrogant).

Received Islam is thus an Islam of the status quo. If the true Islamic spirit is to pervade Islamic society, it is highly necessary to abolish the capitalist system based on the exploitation of man by man.

### *Islam and liberation theology*

Islam, shorn of its adopted metaphysico-theological obfuscations and seen in its early theological formulation through the Qur'anic revelations, was pre-eminently liberative in its character. Islam was both a religion in the technical sense and a social revolution which posed powerful challenges to the oppressive structures of its time in and outside Arabia. Its basic thrust was towards universal brotherhood, equality and social justice.

First, it emphasized the unity of mankind, through the Qur'anic verse, "O mankind, surely We have created you a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely, the noblest of you with Allah is the most pious of you." This verse clearly demolishes all notions and concepts of racial, tribal, national or familial superiority and puts the emphasis on a piety that is no mere ritual piety. The Qur'an defines piety in terms of justice: "Do justice: it is closest to piety."

Secondly, Islam lays great emphasis on social justice in all its aspects. There can be no justice without the liberation of, and giving leadership to, the weaker and marginalized sections of society. The Qur'an does not hesitate to entrust leadership of the whole earth to the *mustad'afin* (the weak). According to the Qur'an, they are the leaders and the inheritors of the earth. It also enjoins the faithful to fight for the liberation of the weak and the oppressed. "And for what

reason” says the Qur’an, “have you not to fight in the way of Allah, and of the weak among the men and the women and the children, who say, Our Lord, take us out of this town, whose people are oppressors, and grant us from Thee a friend and grant us from Thee a helper.”

Thus it can be seen that the Qur’an puts forward a position of what can be termed “liberative violence”. The oppressors and the exploiters persecute the weak and readily use force to defend their interests. It is not possible to liberate the persecuted without fighting. In another verse the Qur’an enjoins Muslims to fight until there is no more persecution. The Qur’an categorically denounces *zulm* (oppression) and wrongdoing. Allah, the Qur’an says, does not approve of harsh crying except by one who has been oppressed.

If the core values of all religions that seek to liberate human beings from exploitation were emphasized, the world would be a better place in which to live. Religion should guide us in establishing the kingdom of God on earth, and in turning the world into heaven, rather than aspiring to heaven after death.

## 5. The insurgence of indigenous peoples as new historic subjects

*By Giulio Girardi, Italy – Nicaragua – Cuba*

The last decade of the second millennium was marked not only by the breakdown of European communism, but also by the insurgence of the indigenous peoples as new historic subjects. These are both epoch-making events, but with totally opposed meanings.

If the collapse of communism and the establishment of the new world order is presented as the “the end of history”, the final conclusion in the liberation struggles of the peoples, indigenous peoples assert that history has not come to an end, that a new history is just beginning. If the new world order seeks to impose its imperial logic in blatant disregard of peoples’ rights to self-determination and diversity, indigenous peoples powerfully reaffirm these rights. If the new world order advocates the consolidation of western civilization and the dominant relationships which characterize it, indigenous peoples remind us of the possibility and the urgency of an alternative civilization, based on the right of all to life and self-determination. In reaction to the culture of fatalism and despair, indigenous peoples raise banners of resistance and hope.

We must start from these facts and this contradiction, listen to our indigenous sisters and brothers and appreciate the words which they express after 500 years of silence. We want to give our “occidental” research an explicitly intercultural character, and through it make atonement for the physical, cultural and religious genocide of indigenous peoples. These acts, perpetrated with the complicity of the churches, give a criminal character to the origins of our

civilization. With the collaboration and inspiration of its victims, we want to search for an alternative to this civilization, which is dominated by the North, and the Christianity which has justified it. A leading role in our search for an alternative civilization and religion should be provided from the South. The indigenous cultures and religions that we want to appreciate are not, of course, pre-Columbian, but those which have renewed and enriched themselves during these 500 years of resistance and struggle for liberation.

The starting point of our reflection should be to consider the options for the poor. When the oppressed are indigenous peoples, how can they become the subjects? In the context of the modern project of civilization, what is the intellectual validity of the point of view of "primitive" peoples, and in what way is it superior to the point of view of the transnational bourgeoisie?

We must analyse the economic-political contributions and the theological contributions of the indigenous peoples, and the relations between the two. The indigenous cultures, with their right, in solidarity, to self-determination, which stands at the heart of their claims, make fundamental demands in these two areas.

*In the economic-political area*

- the demand to rescue the ethical and religious dimensions of the economy, in opposition to the autonomy of the markets, which is strengthened by neoliberalism;
- the demand to rescue the leadership of the community and the people in the orientation of the economy, in opposition to the dictatorship of the market and the leading industrialized (neoliberal) nations, in particular the United States;
- the affirmation of solidarity as the fundamental law of economy and society, in opposition to the law of free competition;
- harmonious relations with nature as an essential dimension of the economy, in opposition to the priority of profit and of the accumulation of wealth;
- the key role at the local level of self-determination and solidarity;
- the demand that the state respect the political, economic, cultural and religious self-determination of the peoples composing it, and promote a real and not just formal decentralization of power, thus creating the conditions for local economies.

*In the religious and theological area*

The affirmation of the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples calls radically into question Constantinian Christianity, its complicity with the conquests and colonizations, its pretending to be the only true religion, its method of mission, and its politics of discriminating, persecuting and destroying traditional religions.

Positively, it means rescuing indigenous and traditional religions, and in general the recognition of religious pluralism; it includes appreciating – within Christianity – the indigenous church, indigenous theology, the indigenous way of reading the Bible; it leads to a deep renewal of Christian theology from the perspective of macro-ecumenism; at the same time it implies the rescue of the origins of Christianity in its diversity and creativity, with its popular, communitarian and self-governing characteristics, its methods of spreading sisterhood and liberty, its subversive and anti-imperialistic spirit.

Given the option of allowing oppressed people to become subjects, the experiences of indigenous cultures prove the possibility of rethinking and re-establishing, from the communities below, the economy and Christianity.

*Translated from the Spanish by Bernd Kappes*

## 6. Faith communities' commitment facing globalization: a challenge to the churches in the West

*By Ulrich Duchrow, Theologian, Heidelberg University and Kairos Europa*

### *The present situation*

The sixth assembly of the World Council of Churches (Vancouver, 1983) decided to ask WCC member churches to “engage in a conciliar process of mutual commitment for justice, peace and the integrity of creation” (later called the JPIC programme). This process was taken up by the churches in a variety of ways at levels ranging from the local to the global. But with what seriousness of commitment? Evaluating this question can help us discover what hinders faith communities from committing themselves, and hopefully find ways to overcome it.

Historically speaking, the decision made in Vancouver has to be seen in the context of dramatic conflicts. The anti-apartheid struggle was moving towards its climax. In 1977 the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) had declared apartheid and its theological justification a *status confessionis*. In 1982 the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) took a similar action, even suspending the membership of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa. For the churches of the Reformation this was the strongest way possible to reject a position on theological grounds. It said, in fact, that those who hold this position exclude themselves from the community of the church. The Confessing Church in Germany had rediscovered this particular sanction even earlier, in 1934, when it applied it against Nazism and the German Christians that legitimated Nazism. By 1983, some churches saw the production, deployment and use of ABC weapons of mass destruction and their theological justification as a case of confession. At that time also, Reagan, Thatcher and others were introducing

the ruthless policies of neoliberalism. Here again certain “Christian” groups and political parties were defending these policies on theological grounds, whilst a few theologians were raising the question of whether the global market economy had also become a confessional issue (Ulrich Duchrow, *Global Economy: A Confessional Issue for the Churches?* WCC Geneva, 1987).

The language of “confessing” is only one way of expressing the strongest possible commitment by Christian churches. There are other ways to do it (cf. the framework paper for JPIC, *ibid.*, pp.220ff). Some traditions use the language of “covenant” and “covenanting”. On the basis of God’s covenant with Israel, the people have to live up to the rules of the covenant as expressed in the Torah. If they break these rules, they break the covenant. Around 1980, there was a Christian movement in the United States, building on the symbolism of the “Abolitionist Covenant” against slavery in the 19th century, and calling for a “New Abolitionist Covenant” against weapons of mass destruction. Another form of commitment involves the church as a eucharistic community. Paul warned the Corinthians that they could not share in the community (the new covenant) of the body and blood of Christ if, at the same time, they broke the social solidarity with the poor by not sharing meals with them (1 Cor 1.17ff). Others did likewise by restating the biblical truth that it is essential for the church to be the “church of the poor” or the “church in solidarity with the poor”. Still others, like the drafters of the South African *Kairos* document, stated that the church is only church when it is prophetic. The historic peace churches reminded the ecumenical movement that to follow Jesus in radical discipleship is another way to express commitment. Finally, the study of early Christianity rediscovered the structures of conciliar decision-making when conflicts occur – hence the term “conciliar process”.

Unfortunately, Emilio Castro, the former general secretary of the WCC, stopped theological work on these various forms and traditions of ecclesial commitment in 1986. In the staff working group developing a framework for the conciliar process, representatives of the Vatican had made clear that they did not want to link ecclesiological questions with JPIC. They wanted to discuss ecclesiology in the Commission on Faith and Order and not in the context of JPIC, which they regarded as political and ethical. Ironically, when the Vatican finally decided not to co-sponsor the World Convocation on JPIC (Seoul, 1990), other Vatican representatives explained they could not take co-responsibility for the convocation because the ecclesiological question had not been clarified!

The final document of the World Convocation on JPIC was called: “Entering into Covenant Solidarity for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation” (Preman Niles, ed., *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*, WCC Geneva, 1992). It contained three parts: 1) “A preamble to the act of covenanting”, containing several basic reflections on conversion towards God’s covenant; 2)

ten “affirmations on JPIC”; and 3) “An act of covenanting”, including the action of the delegates and a call for a process within the churches and movements and for some examples of covenanting. The first affirmation read: “We affirm that all exercise of power is accountable to God”, and the second said: “We affirm God’s option for the poor”, both referring to injustices of the global economy. Each affirmation contained three parts: we affirm, we resist, we commit ourselves.

The big problem, however, is that the expected process within the churches did not happen.

There has been some change in Europe due to the conciliar process. Perhaps the most important result was that ecumenical groups and base communities working for JPIC were recognized as legitimate expressions of the church. When they started raising these questions in the 1960s and 1970s, they were usually marginalized and labelled as Marxists for trying to introduce politics into the church. The dramatic worsening of conditions in the 1980s and progress on theological work concerning the conciliar process changed the atmosphere somewhat. JPIC questions came to be acknowledged as legitimate questions for the churches. Yet this acceptance was not deeply rooted. When neoliberal capitalism triumphed in the 1990s, there seemed to be no alternative. Most churches joined the general disorientation, turning back to business as usual and trying to defend their turf. There was no committed follow-up to the Seoul convocation in 1990.

There are, of course, several reasons for this. In the first place, the synodical structures were not really mobilized. Without corporate decisions, commitment had no sustainable basis. The only committed follow-up was the WARC decision in Debrecen in 1997 to initiate a *processus confessionis* within all member churches concerning economic injustice and ecological destruction. Now WARC is facing the same problem. The report of the first regional symposium of this process in Bangkok, in 1999, clearly states: “The heart of the problem is that the churches themselves, especially the churches of the West, are not ready.” So we have to dig deeper.

First of all, there is a long history behind this failure of the mainline churches. According to the biblical witness, the people of God is a people liberated from imperial structures and called to live out an alternative to them. Yet the church made adjustments to the Roman Empire after Constantine, sharing the power and wealth of the secular society in its economic, political and cultural/ideological dimensions. The last millennium has been characterized by the imperialism of Europe, and later the West as a whole, in its worst forms: genocide of the indigenous people of the Americas, slavery, colonialism, ecological destruction and finally the present violent form of global capitalism. Mainline churches and their theologies not only tolerated this, but sometimes were the driving force behind it.

The electronic discussion preceding this colloquium identified several key ways the churches legitimated their adaptations to the structures of modern capitalism.

The notions of “divine providence” and “meritocracy”, for example, were used to justify the allegedly autonomous absolute laws of economics (Jung Mo Sung). Then, too, faith became individualized according to the basic anthropological assumption of capitalism, legitimizing the absoluteness of private property (cf. Hobbes, Descartes and Locke; see also Ulrich Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism*, Geneva: WCC, 1982). The anthropological idea that a human being may be “master and owner” – note the maleness of this paradigm – also penetrated the churches and their theologies (AK Hammar, U Wagener, B Walpen). As long as there is no repentance with regard to this history, western civilization and its churches are bound to repeat it.

Of course, there were movements of protest and renewal throughout the centuries; but most of them were marginalized. It is only in the 20th century, when the ecumenical movement began listening to the oppressed voices of the South and women that a process of liberating churches and theologies from the imperial paradigm has begun to emerge. This process is still incomplete. It needs to be intensified.

I think Ched Myers (*Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis 1988; *Who Will Roll Away the Stone? Discipleship Queries for First World Christians*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994) is right to link Mark's Gospel to the situation of the churches in the West. It is power and wealth that have been the main temptation of the churches to assimilate into the dominating structures. It was the shying away from the cross, the consequence of confronting the political, economic and ideological powers that hindered the twelve disciples from following Jesus in a committed way. Peter did not want to move towards Jerusalem, the symbol of the economic and ideological power vested in the temple priests by the political power of the Roman Empire (Mk 8.31ff). He denied Jesus in the palace courtyard (14.66). All male disciples fled away from the cross, only women were “looking on from a distance” (15.40). How did the risen Jesus respond to this denial according to Mark? He invited the disciples to start all over again in the periphery of Galilee, promising that he would be with them on the way (16.7). What does this mean today?

*The starting point of transformation: locating ourselves at the periphery*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that the fundamental theological question for the church is *where* it is. The Bible is crystal clear: God reveals Godself at the side of the oppressed, the marginalized, the excluded, the poor. God heard the cries of the slaves in Egypt (Exodus 3); spoke through the prophets for those who experienced injustice at the hands of the monarchic system and the property

owners within the people of God (e.g., Jer 22.16); identified with the “suffering servant” in the face of imperial arrogance (Is 53); hid the Messiah in those whose basic needs were being denied (Mt 25.31ff); built the cells of a new humanity among the weak, the lowly and the despised (1 Cor 1.27f), etc.

There is nothing new about needing to help each other, with our different backgrounds and experiences, to elaborate how we can best ready the churches and ourselves to accept God’s presence at the periphery. How, if we are ourselves representatives of the marginalized and excluded, can we experience God’s empowerment to overcome powerlessness, fatalism and accommodation to the powers, and create sustainable commitment? How, if we belong to middle class churches, can we change our policies in order to rebuild our communities and have physical contact with the poor and the excluded? How do we share our properties? How do we accept the resulting conflict with the powerful and wealthy among us who will resist these changes? How do we come to realize that these changes produce not loss but profound joy, as experienced by Zacchaeus (Luke 19.1ff). Intensive reading of the Bible in community is the key to getting ready for direct contact with victimized people. It opens our eyes and generates the emotions needed to make commitments for change.

My hypothesis is that we cannot create sustained commitments to economic justice in our churches until we reorient our location to the periphery. What does this mean for the timing of the *processus confessionis* against economic injustice and ecological destruction? That process must be built up from below. Whatever gets done at national, regional and international levels will have to be based on hearing and strengthening the voices of the struggling victims. The WARC/WCC Bangkok symposium in November 1999 is a good example of this approach.

*The context of the commitment: conflicts with power and wealth*

Those who join oppressed, exploited and excluded people in their struggle for justice are bound to get into conflict with those who oppress, exploit and exclude. If it is true that studying the Bible is crucial to the task of getting ready to share God’s compassion, we must find out why the churches that so readily adapt to the empire do not get this message from the Bible. I think that a major cause is the way mainline theology reinterprets the cross. It has been changed into a symbol of individual forgiveness of sin and salvation. Even worse, it has not been understood as the Messiah’s nonviolent resistance to the violence of the empire. Rather, it has become a symbol of not resisting, of sacrificing oneself as a victim. Here feminist theology did a great service to the whole church by exposing this manipulation of the symbolism of the cross by the powerful. Another misinterpretation of the cross, due to Anselm of Canterbury, interpreted the death of Jesus on the cross as the necessary fulfilment of the law by paying one’s debt.

This means that reading the Bible does not automatically lead towards commitment for justice. We have to deconstruct centuries-old theological adaptations to imperial and capitalist forms of individualized religion that hinder, even pervert, our listening to the texts. These misinterpretations have everything to do with avoiding conflict with the powerful.

As we try to strengthen commitment in our churches, we need, therefore, purposefully to dramatize conflicts with the powerful. In this way, the issue cannot be avoided and learning can start. A classic example of this need to be dramatic is conflict in the 1970s and 1980s around the Special Fund of the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism. Money was given for humanitarian purposes to liberation movements that fought apartheid. The majority of people in western countries and the churches, therefore, called them terrorists.

How might we dramatize the struggle against the global economic system supported by western political powers? Jesus attacked the system of economic exploitation in Jerusalem's temple with three nonviolent actions (cf. Mk 11.15ff and Ched Myers, 1988, pp.299ff): he drove out the money dealers, he sent away those who profited from selling doves to the poor for sacrifices, and he stopped sacrificial worship altogether. What would this mean today in a financial system favouring financial speculation and tax avoidance? Could it mean that discipleship groups and ecumenical institutions need to boycott large commercial banks and challenge the churches to do likewise? It is hardly conceivable that the broad constituency of mainline churches are ready to join prophetic nonviolent actions against the centres of power and wealth accumulation. Even Jesus was left alone by his disciples when he challenged the economic agents of the temple. Accordingly, committed pioneers like "Religious for Peace", the group that for years has sponsored nonviolent demonstrations at the Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt, need to lead the way in regaining the "saltiness" of the church.

*Ways to broaden the commitment: organizing resistance and alternatives*

What other ways and means are available to broaden commitment in the churches? The Bangkok report, part 3, summarizes several valuable proposals, including the formulation and testing of hypotheses; development of a set of questions seeking answers from the churches; identification of pioneer churches and the formation of regional "ecumenical coordination centres" (ECCs); and the holding of regional hearings and symposia. In addition, let me suggest the following:

*1. Decision-making processes*

After the LWF declared apartheid and its theological justification a matter of confession in 1977, committed groups in the United States formed a "Lutheran Coalition on Southern Africa". Within two years they organized a decision-

making process in all the district synods of the Lutheran churches, asking for three things: 1) join the *status confessionis* against apartheid called for by the LWF Assembly; 2) as a sign of seriousness, disinvest from all banks that invest in South Africa; and 3) ask the national conventions to do the same. The coalition succeeded in winning over two-thirds of the district synods, whose delegates won over the national conventions against the opposition of the national bureaucracies. The treasurers of the national churches even resigned over the conventions' decisions.

Might analogous processes be initiated in regard to the injustices and destruction of the global economic system? Could "ecumenical coalitions for economic justice" be formed at all levels to nurture processes of ecclesial decision-making? For churches without synodical structures, similar organizational forms would have to be identified. To be sure, the global economic issues are far more complex than apartheid. But their complexity can be simplified by choosing strategic entry points.

Each local coalition might choose as partner one group of victims whose struggle with the system has been particularly difficult. Its representatives could witness to their suffering and its causes, much as South African partner churches were given the opportunity to speak in the district synods of the Lutheran Coalition. They might be representatives of organizations for the unemployed, the homeless, etc. Churches of the South could challenge their partner churches in the North to join this process for global economic justice.

A concrete rejection or boycott might be selected and made a test of commitment: e.g., a boycott of commercial banks involved in financial speculation and tax flight, or a consumer boycott against a transnational corporation victimizing workers or nature.

Church money might be invested in an alternative bank at a lower rate of interest to support alternative structures for sharing work and income; or to use church land for exemplary ecological and/or social initiatives.

World ecumenical organizations might complement bottom-up decision-making processes with a middle range decision-making process at the international level. In this case, proposals by WARC and the WCC to hold a series of continental symposia modelled after the Bangkok symposium might help focus the work in different regions. The general assemblies of these organizations in 2004 and 2005 could form middle-range points of crystallization.

The Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence ought to be linked to this process of overcoming neoliberal globalization. The WCC has not yet told the churches that these two processes belong together and that they are new emphases within the interconnected conciliar process for JPIC. To do this is of utmost importance. Otherwise the churches in the West will once again neglect issues relating to the global economy, choosing violence as the "softer" problem

causing less conflict. This would distort both processes. The work on violence would neglect the violence that is rooted in the economy and culture of the West. The work on the global economy would lose one of the most important experiential entry points into structural issues and would lose the energies of people engaged in the isolated issues of violence. This is an urgent theoretical and organizational task for the WCC.

Still another opportunity for the churches is to monitor and become involved in the different global events sponsored by the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the UN system. Here we experience the very important struggle of global civil society to protest against the consequences of the neoliberal system and to work towards viable alternatives. Each event provides a unique chance for the ecumenical groups and the churches of the respective countries and regions to educate their members and to involve them in concrete actions.

## *2. Educational efforts*

The decision-making process must be complemented by educational efforts.

Using Bible study materials to build economic literacy is a key tool for strengthening commitment among Christians and churches. Different ways to express commitment need to be further clarified. Bible study materials should also focus theologically on where the post-Constantinian and imperial traditions went wrong. Emphasis might be put, for example, on themes like community versus individualism; the people of God as God's economic and political alternative; the spiritualization of the church in ways that leave economic structures of oppression, exploitation and exclusion untouched; forgiveness of sins, including structural sins, for a new beginning in structural terms, etc.

Most churches centre their liturgies around the church year. We should develop an agenda with prayers, songs and texts linking the economic issue to various phases of the holy year. The birth of the Messiah as counter-image to the birth of the emperor; Good Friday as a means to recapture the economic and political implications of the cross; Easter as the rebellion of life against death; Pentecost as the means to make authority democratic and to create just relations for overcoming poverty, as shown in Acts 2 and 4; the Eucharist as a means of celebrating economic justice, etc.

Churches are involved in all kinds of formal educational efforts, such as Sunday school, confirmation classes, schools, seminaries, etc. Creating curricula and pedagogical materials could be the most important long-range task.

## *3. Coalition-building*

It is obvious that social movements and alternative faith communities are more advanced in the struggle for economic justice than the mainline churches. Coalition-building is crucial for mobilizing commitment within the Christian

communities. This is not just a tactical question. Milton Schwantes has shown that the prophet Amos fulfilled his prophetic task in close cooperation with the peasant movement of his time. Jesus in the parable of the good Samaritan states that a foreigner can be a model for the people of God. In Mt 25.31ff, people who defend the hungry are accepted by God even if they do not know Jesus, while those claiming to follow Jesus are characterized as not belonging to God. Thus, response to the basic needs of people is the criterion for righteousness and for belonging to God.

Therefore, while we commit ourselves to a very special faith, let us learn from and cooperate with all other social movements and faith communities that work for global economic justice.

FAITH COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS  
FACING GLOBALIZATION

THE COLLOQUIUM 2000 DECLARATION

How can people take their economic lives into their own hands? What are the strategic entry points for alternatives to capitalist globalization and the role of faith communities?

These basic questions ran through all stages of Colloquium 2000. More than one hundred and fifty social and political activists, theologians, pastors, economists, and environmental scientists from many cultures and approximately 50 countries assembled at the Evangelische Akademie in Hofgeismar, Germany, June 9-16 2000.

The gathering, under the title “Faith communities and social movements facing globalization”, was organized by a group of church and mission organizations as well as ecumenical initiatives in Germany,<sup>1</sup> in cooperation with Pax Christi International, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches. Its goal was to energize the struggles of faith communities and social movements to find alternatives to the dominant globalization project.

As part of the worldwide ecumenical movement, we share the vision expressed by the World Council of Churches at the end of the eighth Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998, of the unity of humankind and the whole inhabited earth as a counter-vision which challenges the logic of current globalization. We recognize, however, that we too in the ecumenical movement need to face the urgent challenge to deepen our theological reflection in relation both to economics and ecology, and to elaborate our vision more clearly.

Since our meeting had a Christian basis, we reflected on the links between biblical faith and economics and socio-political analysis. We discussed with partners from social movements the strategic options and concrete steps to be taken and listened to stories of resistance and hope. We were also challenged by representatives of other faith traditions (Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim) as we explored together the values and visions that we share. More than just seeking a comprehensive definition of globalization, we were concerned to understand the present world economic system and to find alternatives and strategies for action.

Analysis of the problem

The term “globalization” is used to refer to a variety of phenomena, positive and negative. On the one hand, the revolution in communications is bridging

the distances between countries. On the other hand, the new technologies have contributed to the development of an economic system characterized by the domination of capital. Financial capital has replaced industrial capital as the leading determinant of the global economic process. This phenomenon has been made possible within the framework of financial instability in which financial deregulation, the liberalization of financial domestic markets, and the opening of national financial markets to international transactions have been institutionalized to promote financial speculation. The development of new information technologies has accelerated the process of integration of the financial markets. This is what we mean by “globalization”.

At present, the world economic system is dominated by financial capital. Willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, we all participate in the historical process that has led to this system, which excludes any mechanism of supervision or control. The financial markets dominate over every other type of capital, industrial, commercial, etc. Mutual funds, pension funds, hedge funds and investment funds are part of these activities, as are banks and other financial institutions. We are living under the dictatorship of financial capital which tends towards a capitalist, androcentric economy.

Financial capital works mostly in speculative and highly risky ways. It can, and often does, undermine entire national economies as it zips through the circuits of global money markets at the touch of a computer button. About US \$1,650 billion (*virtual* money, of which less than five per cent is used for production) race around the world every day. Foreign exchange transactions are sixty times larger than the world trade in manufactured goods.

Under the power of the market economy, arms exports and increased military budgets have assumed priority. The militarization of economies and the development of nuclear competition have left all countries vulnerable to breakdowns in democratic structures. This has led to increases in the defence budgets in many countries, at the expense of social budgets. The new concept of NATO and the building of the military-industrial complex are closely related to unregulated financial capital.

In a world transformed into a global casino, life has become unpredictable. Social relations between individuals, social classes and groups, and between nations are regulated by financial interests. This has in turn affected family, religious, and cultural values, especially among marginalized people, women, children, etc. Globalization is not only undermining local, indigenous cultures (e.g., the Dalits of India, the indigenous people of Chiapas) but is also spreading a culture characterized by self-centred individualism, materialism and hedonism. By the subordination to financial markets, globalization ruthlessly pushes the world into a unipolar, barrierless “global society”. The burden of international debt is devastating many nations. Especially in the South, financial capital has become destructive of the material basis for human life.

### Experiences under globalization

The devastation caused by globalization is repeated in varying degrees throughout the South. Negative experiences also include ecological damage and social disintegration in the rich North. The role of transnational corporations cannot be underestimated. They are unleashing major ecological disasters and causing great social upheaval. Globalization fosters racism and xenophobia.

Powerful financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and others have put countries of the third world in the death grip of debt for the last two and half decades. This has forced governments to restructure their political and economic structures through structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). Compared with what governments spend on the poor, debt servicing is disproportionately high.

Imposed policies have unleashed trauma, suffering and devastation on various sectors of life.

On the one hand, subsistence farmers are being forced off their land; education, health and social welfare are experiencing severe cuts; environmental degradation is rampant; and there is wholesale privatization of essential services and national resources such as water and forests.

On the other hand, defence spending and imports of luxury goods are on the increase; millions of people are being displaced and made homeless; poverty and unemployment are at record levels; traditional agriculture patterns are shifting from growing subsistence crops that feed the nation into growing cash crops for export and foreign exchange earnings. Increasing child labour, child sexual abuse, women in prostitution and sex tourism are traumatic experiences in these societies.

The above negative consequences of globalization are found throughout the South, from Asia to Latin America and the Caribbean.

The peculiar situation in which Africa finds itself after 500 years of domination and exploitation was noted by the Colloquium. Africa is poorer today in every measurable and imaginable respect than it was at the end of colonial occupation. The double dose of global capital and the debt burden has rendered Africa even more vulnerable and politically weak, unable to protect its people from the effects of globalization. In India the government services a debt burden to the extent of US \$20 million daily in interest payments alone to international financial institutions. In Brazil, over US \$64 billion has to be paid in the year 2000 alone towards debt servicing. In the last ten years, the country has already paid more than US \$200 billion and still owes about \$240 billion.<sup>2</sup> Governments in the third world are under pressure to take bread away from their hungry citizens in order to meet their debt obligations. This raises fundamental questions about the theological premises and ethical justification of this system that has brought such devastation in countries of the third world and many places in the North.

## Theological insights

In the midst of this critical situation, we read the Bible and listen to our faith stories searching for orientation. The cries of the people and of creation lead us to say: The time has come for a radical change of the dominant economic system. The time has come for a committed process of progressive recognition, education and confession regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction.

The ideology of the free market captures and dominates all sectors of societies and all dimensions of people's lives, even our bodies and deepest desires. It promises good life for all, but in reality it destroys the lives of many.

Under neoliberalism, capital has become an *idol* – a false god. It asks for unconditional surrender and for sacrifices, claiming that this is the only way of being. It denounces interventions of governments and social movements which aim at political control and social justice.

We read in the Bible: “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6.10). Jesus says: “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Mt 6.24). Therefore we ask: Who is our God? What is the “good life” that the triune God provides for us?

We believe: The earth is God's and all that is in it, the world and all who dwell in it (Ps 24.1). The common *oikos* as the household of life is the model and vision of the ecumenical movement (*oikoumene*) as well as of our understanding of economy (*oikonomia*) and ecology (*oikologia*).

Through Jesus Christ, God gives life in abundance to all people and the whole of creation (Jn 10.10). We reject the notion that there is no alternative to the neoliberal model of economy. We draw orientation from the image of the *oikos* (house): an economy that enables life for all and is guided by the principles of equality and inclusiveness, justice and solidarity, care for people as well as for creation. It can be measured by its relevance for poor women. This *oikonomia* is being realized in peoples' struggles for alternative local economies and for life-enhancing responsible international structures.

Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and people of indigenous faiths share key principles with regard to “good life” and to economy. These are life-centredness, respect for nature, an option for the poor, justice to be brought about through sharing and prophetic work, the concept of “enough is enough” (simple living), and the recognition of people as subjects of their lives.

The Jewish and Christian traditions are shaped by God's option for the poor. Islam emphasizes that “the meek shall inherit the earth”. In Hinduism the values of justice, love (*bhakti*), devotion and tolerance are affirmed.

Through our common reflection and action, we want to continue to discern our various strategic options: making a prophetic critique and the legal taming of power and wealth, resistance to unjust structures and living out alternatives.

At the same time we are aware of the contradictions, failures and temptations in which our churches and communities and we ourselves are entangled with

the economic system – historically and at present. We too are in need of liberation, repentance and renewal.

In contrast to the ideology of unlimited accumulation and growth and the theology of prosperity, we affirm the theology of grace. We do not live from our own deeds, but from God's gift and grace. We affirm this theology of self-giving love to counter the ideology of competition and the culture of complacency, privatism and indifference. There can be life in abundance for all. Human beings are gifted and limited at the same time. We are part of creation, not gods. Therefore we need democratic political institutions and movements working for the social responsibility of private property, for social justice and for the preservation of nature.

The Holy Spirit inspires and empowers us to live and work towards the vision of the *oikos*! In many places of the world, and on a global level, people are developing and practising a diversity of alternatives and strategies. Women in rural areas in the South are setting up alternative credit systems. Young people in the North are working for the political regulation of the international financial system.

There are many more stories of hope to be told and heard. Let us fill the marketplace with alternative political demands and economic models, with our songs and dances, our prayers, visions and poems!

### Strategic options

In order to find ways to put our faith into action, Colloquium 2000 formed ten groups. They discussed such strategic issues as the ideological dimensions of economy; production, work and unemployment; poverty and exclusion; ecology in relation to science and technology; the role of culture and media in globalization; alternatives in local economy; and interreligious aspects of globalization. The reports and results will be made available in the documentation.

Beyond single issues, we were confronted with the question of which strategic direction should be followed. We heard strong arguments that the economic system has to be challenged *in toto*. After decades of neoliberal globalized economy, it is clear that the major problems of poverty, ecological destruction, inequality, unemployment, lack of democratic participation have not been solved but on the contrary have been aggravated, both in the South and the North. If we wish to have alternatives, we must begin with alternative local economies. There are already well-established examples of functioning networks of alternative local economies, both in the North and in the South, both rural and urban. Women's alternative ecological and economic knowledge can be shared.

Analysis from Africa and elsewhere in the South demonstrated, on the other hand, the need for consistent economic growth to ensure minimal living

conditions for all. That contradiction could not be resolved. However, two observations point towards a solution. The very high standard of living and the concentration of power in the hands of elites in the North demand a radical approach to systemic changes there. On the other hand, the often desperate situation in the South requires immediate changes using possibilities within the system, which may depend on a strengthening of the state for the sake of the common good. Both types of change will only come about through concerted and wide-ranging efforts at the national and global levels. It is incumbent upon us to build a network and to form strategic alliances in the framework of civil society.

We see the starting point for transformation in our calling as faith communities to locate ourselves on the periphery. Sustained commitment for economic justice has to be built up from below. Whoever works at the national and international levels must listen to and strengthen the local voices of those who struggle. That was one of the guiding convictions expressed by the symposium on the consequences of the globalization held in Bangkok in November 1999.

### Our response

We affirm:

- We affirm that we have been called to live and to celebrate the abundant life and that the present world situation is a complete denial of that call.
- We affirm that people come before money and life before profit. Money is a means and not an end.
- We affirm that land, labour, and the riches of creation are abundantly given to fulfil human needs and not as a tool of oppression and an instrument of the powerful and the rich.
- We affirm the witness of the prophetic minority in the churches and their spirit of hope and solidarity.
- We affirm the voices of the oppressed poor of the South who are calling our attention to the pain of poverty, and their initiatives to reclaim their dignity and sovereignty.
- We affirm the struggles of social movements, trade unions, the ecumenical movement and others for the sake of justice and one habitable world.
- We affirm the jubilee vision and the struggles for the cancellation of external debts, especially the voices from the South in the jubilee global movement who are raising questions about the interconnectedness of debt and globalization.
- We affirm a market with social controls in which all activities are responsible, ethical, and oriented towards the common good and local needs rather than the self-interest of the powerful and the greed of the wealthy minority.

- We affirm the right of persons to take charge of their economic lives, especially the primacy of the poor, who are emerging as subjects of their own liberation.
- We affirm one world and, at the same time, many diverse worlds of many cultures, faiths and systems (cultural and biological diversity).
- We affirm a move towards the reconstruction of the social subject - a local, a regional, a global *We* - able to support the common good by bringing together trade unions, social movements, and new groups to impose national and global regulations for work and economy through legislation.
- We affirm the need of repentance, confession, acknowledgement of our limitations, and a life of sharing.

We resist:

- We resist the assumption that the world economic system should be primarily oriented towards the accumulation of wealth for the benefit of a small minority rather than towards the satisfaction of the basic needs of all human beings and the nurturing of God's creation.
- We resist the idolatry of capital and the new religion of consumerism, which defines the purpose of life in terms of material possessions.
- We resist the subsidizing of the North by the South in the name of structural adjustment programmes which impose on the poor nations, with the consent of their political class, drastic budgetary reductions in education, health, housing, and retirement programmes and other social services.
- We resist the closing of doors and denial of equal rights to migrants and refugees.
- We resist the assumption that fair competition is possible in a world dominated by mammon, where transnational realities transcend national regulatory mechanisms and the powerful impose the rules of the economic game, with the unavoidable result that the rich become richer and the poor become poorer.
- We resist ecological irresponsibility based on the capitalist assumption of endless economic expansion in a finite material creation.
- We resist the discriminatory production and trade policies of the industrialized countries, which foster the international consumption of products that are forbidden in those countries because of ecological and health reasons.
- We resist the capitalist employment system, which involves increasing unemployment, the deterioration of the quality of work, the absence of the right to work and social laws .
- We resist the lack of adequate regulatory measures for international corporations and financial investments, and the transformation of local governments into puppets of the international economic order.
- We resist the temptation to adapt religion to the requirements of marketing.

- We resist hypocrisy, the application of double standards (also in the church) when questions related to profit and to the use of money are at stake. The art of self-criticism is underdeveloped in the global village!

We commit ourselves:

### Political action

1. We commit ourselves in the political realm to strengthen grassroots democratic participation, and national and international institutions in order to regulate the economy and to support social sector developments (e.g., global minimum wage and labour standards). Democratic international legal institutions are needed to regulate global economic activity (e.g., an international insolvency law). We call for the implementation of the Tobin tax (a tax on international financial transactions).
2. We commit ourselves to putting women and young people at the centre of the economy. We urge an increase in opportunities for women to have employment with just wages and social security, and to be recognized for their contribution in a caring economy. We suggest gender conscious tax systems, and a claim on the Tobin tax to reward the contributions of women.
3. We commit ourselves to unmask the fundamentalist religious adherence to neoliberalism and global androcentric capitalism. We call for economies that support and sustain all life and operate through just and equitable methods.

### Education

1. We commit ourselves to create forums for the discussion of faith, theology and the critical social and environmental sciences.
2. We commit ourselves to participatory research and education that works with the “victims” of globalization, lifts up and supports alternative local economies, and encourages peoples’ self-education, so that communities can become agents of their own economic, cultural and political lives and enjoy a spirit of solidarity.
3. We commit ourselves to develop faith resources further in order to encourage economic literacy and social wellbeing for people of all ages and in different vocational roles (worship resources; educational resources for children, adults, and religious leaders).

### Religious and social movements

1. We commit ourselves to making a critical assessment of how our religious and social movements are part of the problem of economic globalization, as well as being contributors to life-enhancing economic developments.
2. We commit ourselves to seek the use of faith community economic resources

for the increase of responsible investment, support of alternative financial institutions, use of properties for noncommercial and human development applications. We recommend that 5 per cent of the budgets of religious institutions be allocated to life-enhancing economic development (production, distribution, consumption).

3. We commit ourselves to intensify and consolidate multifaith actions at the local, regional and international levels as a means of sharing in emerging alternatives to economic globalization.
4. We commit ourselves to ask the churches to engage in the following actions:
  - To set up local ecumenical coordination centres to overcome globalized capitalism and find life-enhancing alternatives to its structural and cultural violence – in cooperation with organizations of the unemployed, homeless, and marginalized, with social movements, progressive political parties, critical consumer movements, and with other faith movements.
  - To mobilize people and groups in our regions to participate in ongoing initiatives to build a global coalition for economic justice and faith, as supported by the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Pax Christi International and others.
  - To launch synodical bottom-up decision-making processes on alternatives to neoliberal globalization. To contribute to making transnational financial capital and the international financial institutions democratically, socially and ecologically accountable and responsible, concentrating on the Tobin tax, fighting tax flight and encouraging experiments with local community currencies.
  - To disinvest their money from commercial banks and transnational corporations that engage in speculation and tax evasion, and re-invest their money in alternative banks and responsible ethical funds as a first step.
  - To engage fully in the international ecumenical processes and programmes to overcome economic injustice, violence and ecological destruction, e.g., by strengthening Urban-Industrial-Rural Mission and the work of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.

### Networks

We commit ourselves to develop our links and networks further, through local, regional, and international gatherings and communications. We commit ourselves to initiate a transregional media fund to support international cooperation and justice.

Let us sing and celebrate:

God calls all people to a new life,  
Walking along together hand in hand.  
The time is ripe for changing,  
The moment is now. Let's walk together.  
No one can go alone. So come and join.  
Get in a circle with all the people, come!  
Your hands and hearts are important, come!

### **Brazilian song**

### Notes

1. Ev. Akademien in Deutschland, Ev. Akademie Hofgeismar, Ev. Kirche von Kurhessen-Waldeck, Ev. Missionswerk Südwestdeutschland (EMS), Gossner Mission, Institut für Theologie und Politik, Kath. Arbeitnehmerbewegung (KAB), Kairos Europa, Kirchlicher Dienst in der Arbeitswelt (KDA), Missio München, Missionszentrale der Franziskaner, Netzwerk Afrika-Deutschland, Ordensleute für den Frieden, Pax Christi, Pro Ökumene, Kath. Akademie Rabanus Maurus, Reformierter Bund, Südwind e. V., Vereinte Ev. Mission (VEM), Amt für Mission und Ökumene der Ev. Kirche in Hessen und Nassau.
2. According to a recent report by the United Nations Development Programme, one billion people have to live on one dollar a day. Paradoxically, US \$30 billion a year would be sufficient to cover their basic needs, while the Japanese spend \$35 billion a year in recreational games, the Europeans spend \$50 billion a year on cigarettes and \$105 million a year on alcohol beverages, and the world spends \$400 million on drugs, \$780 billion on weapons and \$435 billion on advertising.