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Sex, Sin, and Death: Christianity and HIV/AIDS

Picture this: A young woman, anxious and weeping, stands before her father, a very religious man.[1] Brokenly she tells him, "Father, I am HIV-positive." The father says nothing, but leaves the house with a resolute expression on his face. Some hours later he returns – with a coffin. He places the coffin in the living room. Then he speaks: "You have sinned, and the wages of sin are death. Now then, die!" Within two weeks the young woman is dead, her death undoubtedly hastened by the dramatic rejection of the patriarch of her family, a staunch Christian.

This terrible story is one of many such that I heard as one of the 36 Christian theologians from around the world invited by the United Nations sector with responsibility for AIDS (UNAIDS) to attend a consultation in Namibia early in December of 2003. It was the first time the UN had convoked a meeting of Christian theologians. Most of the historic churches were represented, as were all the continents – though Africans were more numerous, and rightly so: by far the greatest number of the world's more than forty millions living with HIV and AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa.[2]

The purpose of the consultation was to address the stigmatization of, and discrimination against, persons infected with this disease – a growing concern of everyone involved in the struggle against this pandemic; as the most recent report of UNAIDS and the World Health Organization states

> Stigma and discrimination undermine prevention by making people afraid to find out whether or not they are infected, and discourage people from adopting preventive measures – such as insisting on condom use during sex – that might be interpreted as an acknowledgement that they are HIV-infected.

Stigma and discrimination also create a false sense of security that undermines prevention efforts. Often stigma and discrimination build on existing prejudices and patterns of social exclusion. By associating HIV/AIDS with groups of persons perceived as 'outsiders,' people harbour the illusion that they themselves are not at risk of becoming infected. As a result, they may help to perpetuate risky behaviour (such as unsafe sex) because they believe that

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behaving differently would raise suspicion about their HIV status.[3]

The reality is that a major cause of the stigmatization and discrimination under discussion must be located in religion. To what extent is this true of the Christian religion, in particular? And if it's true, what resources are there in serious Christian theology and faith to *combat* and *alter* such misunderstanding and misuse of Christian belief?

That was the challenge to which, as Christian theologians, we were called to respond in our five-day deliberations among the ancient hills fourteen kilometres from the Namibian capital city, Windhoek. Have the churches contributed to the stigmatization that is preventing dedicated world agencies like UNAIDS from stemming the spread of this modern plague? And have Christians the means, perhaps hidden in neglected aspects of their own gospel, of correcting the "bad theology" that has led to such stigmatization?

The document that emerged from our meetings, which has been made public, answers both prongs of this question in the affirmative. It is entitled *HIV and AIDS Related Stigma: A Framework for Theological Reflection.* I will quote some segments of this Windhoek Document in what follows.

Sex, Sin, and Death

Johannes Petrus Heath, a young South African Anglican priest who for the past decade has himself been living with the HIV virus, gave the most stirring of the five addresses offered in plenary session of the consultation. Through the pain of personal experience, he has achieved a rare understanding of the religious sources of stigmatization and discrimination, thus demonstrating once more that the most pressing ethical problems of our time can be addressed cogently only by those who can speak out of a context of participation and solidarity. Advised at first to keep quiet about his condition if he wanted to retain his position, Fr. Heath eventually found, to the contrary, that his real vocation required that he reveal his physical state to his parish and beyond, for that vocation entailed making himself available *as priest* to others who must live with the same reality. Today he is the Coordinator of the African Network of Religious Leaders Living with and Affected by HIV and AIDS in South Africa.

Through reflection on his own and others' suffering, Fr. Heath has evolved a kind of formula to explain the warped logic of stigmatization and discrimination: "AIDS equals SEX equals SIN equals DEATH." The poignant incident with which I began this piece (and which was told by Heath) illustrates how the "logic" of the formula works for "true believers." The young woman who had contracted the virus, being unmarried, had engaged in illicit sex, was therefore a sinner, and deserved to die. For such "faith," the progression from sex to sin to death is almost exquisitely visible in the case of HIV/AIDS, since the "sinful act" contains within itself the actual means of its punishment. Quite possibly the poor young woman's father didn't even ascertain whether she herself had consented to the sex, and quite possibly – statistically speaking! – she had not, for a great many of those infected with the virus are women who are the victims of male domination and rape. She might also have been a victim, as many are, of dirty needles or infected blood transfusion.

What kind of theology of (1) sex, (2) sin, and (3) divine judgment is being assumed when such "logic" as this is applied by Christians? It is frankly (in the words of the Windhoek document) a "debased theology."

A Bad Theology of Sex

It's a bad theology of sex, in the first place, because it assumes that sex is an inherently questionable aspect of human nature even at the best of times – even perhaps in marriage, unless it is explicitly undertaken for purposes of procreation. It sees sex under the heading of human fallenness, the consequence and perpetuation of original sin, whereas biblical faith, while never assuming that human sexuality is without problems, insists (to quote the document) that

> God created us as sexual human beings in all our differences. This is to be celebrated, enjoyed and treated responsibly. The story of the Garden of Eden is partly the story of human beings' alienation from their sexuality. God's gift to us is the capacity to enjoy one another as sexual beings, and it is we who have squandered that gift. God created us for one another and for God, and wants us to celebrate the gift of sexuality through which God's Creation unfolds.

The negative and repressed attitudes towards human sexuality that have been fostered by sub-Christian denigration of the body generally are the greatest barriers to honest discussion of HIV and AIDS. As a medical doctor, N.M. Samuel, puts it, "If only the bite of a mosquito caused HIV/AIDS, then the Christian community would

be in the global forefront of the struggle for prevention and care."[4]

Christians do not have to become romantically naive about sex, overlooking its complications and ambiguity; however, when we are unable to affirm sex as integral to our very existence as creatures of God, we almost inevitably end up with an unbiblical split between body and soul, with the body as the problem. Instead of gospel, our message takes on the colour of a petty moralism that put sexual matters at the top of its catalogue of vices.

A Bad Theology of Sin

If the formula (AIDS equals SEX equals SIN equals DEATH) betrays a bad theology of sex, it displays an even worse theology of sin. I suppose one should not be surprised by that, because probably "sin" is the most misunderstood word in the Hebraic-Christian vocabulary. Almost universally, the profound biblical term sin has been reduced to "sins" – nasty little "thoughts, words and deeds" that can be listed, categorized according to their degree of wickedness, confessed according to this or that formula, and set straight ritually. In this way, conveniently for the self-assured, *people* too can be categorized on the basis of their "deviations" from the acceptable behavioural norms and stigmatized accordingly.

But this is the most egregious misunderstanding of sin, which in the Bible and the best theological traditions is understood as *broken relationship*. In the words of the Windhoek document,

> Biblical faith understands sin relationally, namely as the breaking of our essential relatedness to God, to one another, and to the rest of creation. Sin, therefore, is alienation and estrangement, and infects us all. Whether we have HIV or not, we are all sinners. As communities and individuals, we have fallen short of the glory of God. To stigmatize the other is to deny this truth.

Indeed, at base sin is a *gracious* concept, for it puts all of us into the same boat: "There is none righteous, no not one," says Paul (Rom 3:10), quoting the Psalmist. In fact, if sin is broken relationship, then the evidence of our proneness to it is far more visible in our exclusion or vilification of others than in the usual moral misdemeanours. As the Windhoek document puts it,

> The stigmatization of others is a sin far greater than most of the so-called 'misdeeds' on which HIV infection is often blamed. After all, the sinful attitudes most frequently identified by Jesus as being incompatible with His Kingdom were pride, self-righteousness, exclusivity, hypocrisy and the misuse of power: all of them ingredients in the deadly cocktail that causes stigma.

From Sex to Sin to Death

Perhaps most insidious of all, the false theology that moves from sex to sin to *death* betrays the very essence of our faith's conception of God by presenting God's attitude towards humankind as one of uncompromising and dispassionate judgment. That there is judgment in the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ none but sentimentalists would deny, but it is a *restorative*, not a *retributive* judgment. God does not desire the *death* of the estranged but their reconciliation and fullness of *life*. The whole thrust of the gospel is lost if the unheard-of compassion and grace of the God of Bethel and Bethlehem is replaced by a deity who favours the death penalty! Windhoek states,

> It is wrong to interpret HIV and AIDS (or other human catastrophes) as God's punishment for sin. This interpretation is damaging, because the judgmental attitudes that result are highly undermining to the Church's [and the world's!] efforts at care and prevention. It is also theologically unsustainable, a fact that is demonstrated powerfully in the Book of Job, and also in many of the healing narratives of the gospels. In reflecting on the connection between HIV transmission and sin, it is important to remember that many people who become infected bear no responsibility for their condition: namely babies born with the virus, abused women and children, and faithful partners of unfaithful spouses.

Refusing to follow the "logic" that leads from HIV/AIDS to inevitable death has also another, highly practical side: it has been amply demonstrated by now that contracting the virus and becoming HIV-positive *does not lead inexorably to death!* As the lives of many infected persons (including Fr. J-P. Heath) demonstrate, if the appropriate drugs and adequate nutrition are provided, carriers of the virus are able to live well beyond the predicted limits of earlier medical experience with this epidemic. Thus a more authentic theology, backed by better economics and the just distribution of global resources, can alter dramatically the future course of this whole episode in human history.

The economics of the situation are obvious, for it is no accident of statistics that the greater-by-far number of

those suffering from HIV and AIDS are found in the Southern hemisphere – and among groups in the North (like Canada's indigenous peoples[5]) who for various reasons are lacking in resources. But the quest for a better theology is not incidental to the analysis: until something can be done about the stigmatization of persons who are unfortunate hosts to this virus, many, fearful that theirs is a hopeless fate and wanting to avoid ostracism by their communities, will fail to seek help until it is too late.

Learning from the Windhoek Document

In a short article of this nature, I cannot give a full and adequate account of the deliberations in Namibia; the document from which I have quoted should be studied by the churches, and particularly by those responsible for theological education. It has, I think, one or two weaknesses – as might be expected of a consultation involving diverse ecclesiastical and geographic groupings. One weakness is its failure to tackle religious attitudes towards *prevention*, with particular reference to the distribution and use of condoms. Here, I think, the commitment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and others to theologies of sexuality that effectively exclude sexual activity as part of the sheer joys and necessities of creaturely existence, has resulted in a grave omission. It is wonderful that Christians are active in the care of the sick and dying, including the millions of children born with AIDS or orphaned by parents who have already succumbed to the plague. But... an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

Another lack has to do with the failure of the document adequately to address the association of HIV/AIDS with homosexuality. This may be excusable in the light of the fact that, in the developing world most often, and increasingly in the more affluent nations of the North as well, sexual transmission of the virus is through heterosexual contact. At the same time, if our concern is the stigmatization and discrimination of those infected, no one group is more stigmatized throughout the world today than are those oriented towards their own sex, and especially gay men. This is the case particularly in North America and Western Europe, but also, increasingly, in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Asia. Homophobia is undoubtedly the most blatant and militant form of sexual stigmatization, and it is perhaps even more insidious in those societies where traditional images of masculinity mask the homosexuality that is actually present.

In my view, the great strengths of the Windhoek document are these: (1) Its readiness to confess the theological failures and misconceptions of the churches; its boldness in naming "debased theologies" of sexuality, sin, and divine justice; and its quest for alternative and corrective understandings of central themes of Christian faith. (2) Its (largely implicit but nonetheless real) determination to base its findings, not on entrenched ecclesiastical dogma and practice, but on Scripture, as it must be viewed through the central claim of the New Testament that Jesus, in his teaching, his life, death, and resurrection, is the lens through which Christians may and must try to comprehend the world so as to act responsibly within it. In confronting the horrendous realities of the stigmatization of and discrimination against those who must bear the brunt of an epidemic by which we are *all*, church and world, confronted today. Christians could do no better than to meditate long and hard on the following sentences from the Windhoek report:

> In the Cross of Jesus, God enters the suffering creation to heal it from within. Jesus showed solidarity with us, and compassion. On the Cross Jesus died, stigmatized and outcast, beyond the city walls.

Douglas John Hall

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[1] A much-abridged version of this article appeared in the *United Church Observer* (March 2004).

[2] See *Aids Epidemic Update*, the joint report of the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva, December 2003.

[3] Ibid., 31

[4] Quoted in a forthcoming book by Donald E. Messer of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, to be published by Fortress Press in 2004 under the title *Breaking the Conspiracy of Silence*.

[5] The section of the UNAIDS and WHO report for 2003 dealing with the United States and Canada notes that "about 25% of newly acquired HIV infections have been attributed to injecting drug use," and that "In Canada...aboriginal persons are overrepresented among injecting drug users." (Ibid., 30)

HIV and AIDS-Related Stigma

The following is excerpted from the Windhoek Document, the product of a workshop called by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS, which is the main advocate for global action on the epidemic (see www.unaids.org.) This workshop, probably the first of its kind in UN history, took place in Namibia from December 8 to 11, 2003 (see Douglas John Hall's article on pages 1–4 of this issue).

The document is divided into eight parts: a preamble; God and Creation; Interpreting the Bible; Sin; Suffering and Lamentation; Covenantal Justice; Truth and Truth-telling; and the Church as a Healing, Inclusive and Accompanying Community. With the permission of Calle Almedal, Senior Adviser, Partnerships Unit, UNAIDS, we have reprinted the sections on Sin; Suffering and Lamentation; and Covenantal Justice. Readers who would like a copy of the whole text may contact David Seljak at dseljak@uwaterloo.ca.

A Framework for Theological Reflection

Background and Preamble

Churches and faith-based organizations have a key role to play in the struggle against HIV and AIDS. In many communities, worldwide, this moment is one of crisis and *kairos*. AIDS is increasing its deadly toll. Parents are dying, so that incomes disappear and there are growing numbers of orphans and desperately poor families. Incomes are further eaten away by the cost of caring for the sick. Young people are at greatest risk. In severely affected regions, our priests, pastors and lay leaders are stretched to breaking point by the increased burden of funerals, the support of dying people and their families, the care of orphans and those who look after them, and their efforts to provide a ministry to the sick. They are aware, meanwhile, that what they are seeing is only the tip of the iceberg. In communities, among church congregations, and among clergy themselves, HIV is silently advancing.

When people fear that they are HIV positive, but know that they will not be in a position to access treatment, there is little incentive for them to seek help or change behaviour. If they make such a move, they are risking the stigma attached to those who are known to be living with HIV or AIDS, and which spreads out, in waves, to their families, their survivors, and others who are close to them. Treatment may be available to prevent mother-to-child transmission, but pregnant women may not come forward to ask for it. Rather than risk the stigmatization and discrimination that will follow if they are discovered to have HIV or AIDS, they may prefer to take the risk of giving birth to an HIV positive child.

In this situation, says a South African priest, 'Our theological education and pastoral formation have left us feeling like a cricket team, sent out onto the field only to find that the bats we have been given are broken.'

If churches are to engage effectively with local, regional and international responses to the epidemic, then issues of stigma and discrimination have to be confronted, not just at the level of church organization and practice, but also by Christian theology itself: at the level of what is taught in seminaries, what academic theologians lecture, write and think about, what the faithful believe and do, and what values inform the pastoral formation of clergy and lay people. But this puts great pressure on those who teach in these contexts, who may know little or nothing about HIV or AIDS, and whose own background and training is unlikely to have provided them with the tools for reflecting theologically upon it.

As part of its strategy for meeting this need, UNAIDS organized an international workshop for academic theologians from different Christian traditions. Held at Windhoek, Namibia from 8-11 December 2003, the workshop had two primary objectives: to sharpen the response to HIV and AIDS-related stigma among theological educators and church leaders; and to develop a framework that might provide a useful basis for theological reflection in the contexts of theological education, church councils and synods, and pastoral formation. This document is one result of that process.

The group which produced the present document consisted of leading academic theologians from five continents and many church traditions, people living with HIV or AIDS, and clergy and lay people working at global and community level in the field of HIV and AIDS. The document represents their best efforts to grapple with the serious and complex issues related to stigmatizing and discriminatory reactions to HIV and

AIDS, and to discern the values and beliefs that underlie a justice-based response to such negative phenomena. Participants did not attempt to produce a consensus statement. They were similarly aware that, in some churches, doctrinal formulation rests with the competent authorities within their respective communions. They sincerely hope, however, that this framework will guide additional research, reflection and action in relation to the stigma and discrimination that regrettably characterize this stage of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Sin

Biblical faith understands sin relationally, namely as the breaking of our essential relatedness to God, to one another and to the rest of creation. Sin, therefore, is alienation and estrangement, and infects us all. Whether we have HIV or not, we are all sinners. As communities and as individuals, we have fallen short of the glory of God. To stigmatize the other is to deny this truth.

Understandings of sin, therefore, constitute an essential component of HIV- and AIDS-related stigma. Within this relationship, four main strands can be identified.

The sin of stigmatizing

The stigmatization of individuals is a sin against the Creator God, in whose image all human beings are made. To stigmatize an individual is to reject the image of God in the other, and to deny him or her life in all its fullness. This is not just a sin against a neighbor but also a sin against God.

The association between sexuality and sin

The stigmatization of people living with HIV and AIDS has grown out of the mistaken link, often made in Christian thinking, between sexuality and sin. It includes the widely held assumption that HIV is always contracted as the result of 'sinful' sexual relations, and the additional tendency to regard sexual sin as the gravest of all sins. So sex may come to carry the stigma of sinfulness, and is also stigmatized among other sins. Consequently, people living with HIV and AIDS are subjected to a deeper stigmatization that sets them apart from the so-called 'lesser' sinners.

It is true that HIV transmission occurs, in the vast majority of cases, as a result of sexual activity. But far from being inherently sinful, the responsible use of sex and human sexuality is part of God's Creation, to be celebrated and enjoyed. Within the context of faith today, there is a need to denounce the identification of sin with sex, as well as the stigmatization and the debased theology of sin that result from it. (It should also be stressed that HIV transmission does not result solely from sexual activity, and that unhygienic methods of collecting blood, failure by governments to screen blood donations, and the use of shared needles for injecting drugs can also cause HIV transmission.)

HIV and AIDS as punishment for sin

It is wrong to interpret HIV and AIDS (or other human catastrophes) as God's punishment for sin. This interpretation is damaging, because the judgmental attitudes that result are highly undermining to the Church's efforts at care and prevention. It is also theologically unsustainable, a fact that is demonstrated powerfully in the Book of Job, and also in many of the healing narratives of the gospels. In reflecting on the connections between HIV transmission and sin, it is important to remember that many people who become infected bear no responsibility for their condition: namely babies born with the virus, abused women and children, and faithful partners of unfaithful spouses.

Sin as failure to take responsibility

The threat posed by the HIV pandemic requires that human beings should act responsibly. We have a responsibility to be faithful in our sexual relationships. Those with HIV or AIDS have a special responsibility not to risk infecting other people. Those who screen donated blood have a responsibility to be vigilant. And those taking blood or injecting drugs have a responsibility to ensure that the needles are sterile. A wilful lack of responsibility in any of these areas is dangerous to other people and, on that account, sinful.

In summary, if we are to combat stigma effectively, we need a more positive Christian understanding of sexuality, focused upon faithfulness, kindness and the care and protection of families. If we have HIV or AIDS, we should expect that our churches treat us compassionately and without stigma. The stigmatization of others is a sin far greater than most of the so-called misdeeds on which HIV infection is often blamed. After all, the sinful attitudes, most frequently identified by Jesus as being incompatible with His Kingdom, were pride, self-righteousness, exclusivity, hypocrisy and the misuse of power: all of them ingredients in the deadly cocktail that causes stigma.

Suffering and Lamentation

As embodied and relational people we suffer. However, suffering has sometimes been considered a given, the unavoidable destiny of individuals. On other occasions, it has been regarded as a punishment for sin. Suffering may also be inappropriately exalted as a virtue. These interpretations have no place in Christian theology, which needs, rather, to emphasize the redemptive aspect of suffering, and to challenge those social structures that cause undue suffering and stigma. Jesus, after all, showed compassion for the suffering: a compassion that involved both strong feeling for suffering individuals and a determination to help and empower them. In the Cross of Jesus, God enters the suffering creation to heal it from within. Jesus showed solidarity with us, and compassion. On the Cross Jesus died, stigmatized and outcast, outside the city walls.

In gaining better insights into the nature of suffering and our response to it, we can seek to recover biblical texts on suffering, and in this context it is helpful to draw on the rich biblical tradition of lament. Lament primarily articulates the cries of the suffering, but it can also give voice to the cries of the guilty seeking forgiveness and reconciliation. Lament offers us language which names the suffering, questions power structures, calls for justice and recounts to God that the human situation should be otherwise. Lament also expresses hope and trust in God's compassion and willingness to deliver us from suffering. It is both an individual and a communal activity. Given circumstances which (in St John Chrysostom's words) are "grazed thin by death," how can we fail to lament? Thus lament can enrich Church liturgies and pastoral care and contribute to a more truthful and intimate relationship with God by naming the "un-nameable" to God.

Covenantal Justice

The biblical concept of Covenant implies a reciprocal, binding relationship between God and human beings, which should be mirrored in the relationships that human beings have with one another. Just as God has given us the grace to ask for God's friendship, human beings can justly ask certain things of the societies they build. However, the needs of the powerless are easily overlooked, especially if they are carrying the double stigma of poverty and HIV or AIDS.

It is no coincidence that HIV and AIDS are raging in the developing world. Of course impoverishment does not, of itself, cause HIV infection: the virus has manifestly affected both rich and poor in different parts of the world. Nevertheless, it does exacerbate the problem. It leaves people economically poor, hungry, illiterate and with inadequate access to health-care services. In this situation, the impact of HIV and AIDS stretches poor nations' already limited resources to breaking point and makes it less likely that prevention strategies and caring programs will succeed.

It is not enough to tackle the symptoms of poverty, although there are moments when such intervention is appropriate. In the long term, we must identify the root causes of impoverishment, which often lie in deliberately chosen political, social and economic policies. Unfortunately, rulers at local and national levels are often relatively powerless when it comes to taking on the banks and multi-national corporations with whom many of the strategic economic and political decisions lie. Nevertheless, political leadership should be challenged about the misuse of public resources, and this includes the disproportionate use of national budgets to acquire armaments, rather than allocating them to health, education and basic services for the poor. In a world disfigured by AIDS, we need especially to address political corruption.

Churches have tended to engage with the symptoms and condemn the causes, while failing to explore ways of addressing poverty's structural roots. For example, we are sometimes compromised because of our dependence, for support of our ministry, on those who make their wealth in poor nations. As theologians, we have not sufficiently promoted the Church's social teaching, or challenged the Church to rediscover its prophetic voice and ministry.

While some churches in the Global North have responded to the needs of their sisters and brothers in Christ in the South, there still exists a lack of global solidarity among those who claim unity in the Body of Christ. If we truly believe that HIV and AIDS are in the Church, then no part of the Body of Christ is left unaffected, regardless of the separations imposed by geography, culture or tradition. The theological challenge to the churches must therefore be to re-examine their priorities in terms of ministry and of budgets, as they seek to engage with this crisis, this *kairos* moment.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Clash of Civilizations

The Karl Polanyi Conference of 2003, held in Montreal on November 12-15, dealt with the topic of co-existence. One of the many panels dealt with the peaceful co-existence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Alexis Nouss, professor at the University of Montreal, presented a Jewish perspective; Gregory Baum of McGill University offered a Christian perspective; and Sahah Basalamah, a doctoral student and lecturer at the University of Montreal, proposed a Muslim point of view. The following is the paper written by Gregory Baum in preparation for the panel.

The Urgency of Interreligious Dialogue

According to Hans Küng's oft-repeated statement, there can be no peaceful co-existence of the world's nations unless the world religions learn how to live together in peace. That is why I planned a panel for the Karl Polanyi Conference that would deal with the peaceful co-existence of Christianity and Islam. I asked two Muslim acquaintances of mine, both professors in Ontario, to join me in discussing this topic in public. I wanted us to refute the dangerous "clash of civilization" theory of Samuel Huntington[1] which generated suspicion in regard to Islam and predicted a violent confrontation between the Muslim world and the West. I was also deeply troubled by the prejudice and discrimination to which Muslims in Canada and the United States have been exposed since September 11, 2001. Suspicion regarding Islam has been promoted by the anti-terrorist legislation in Canada and the US, which gives unprecedented powers to the police, allowing them to arrest people on suspicion alone, suspicion aroused by unusual clothes, a dark beard, or a foreign language. I was grateful to the Churches, including the Canadian Catholic bishops, who, after September 11, expressed their solidarity with the Muslim communities in North America and warned against discrimination inflicted upon innocent people.

What students of religion know so well, and what Samuel Huntington completely ignores, is the internal pluralism present in every great religious tradition. He believed that Islam and Christianity defined fixed sets of values at odds with one another. Early in the 20th century, the Protestant church historian Adolf von Harnack wrote *The Essence of Christianity* and the Jewish philosopher and rabbi Leo Beck *The Essence of Judaism*. Yet in our time, students of religious studies no longer look for such essences: they recognize 1) the many diverse trends within each religion and 2) the power of every religion to respond in novel ways to the challenges of history.

As a Catholic theologian I am keenly aware of the regenerative power implicit in religious traditions. In the 19th century the Catholic Church repudiated democracy, human rights, and religious liberty,[2] and a century later at Vatican Council II the same Church changed its mind and strongly supported democracy, human rights, and religious liberty. Similarly, every one of the world religions has to wrestle with the Enlightenment in one way or another.

A few weeks before the Karl Polanyi Conference I received a letter from my two Muslim friends in Ontario, telling me that they would like to withdraw from the panel. They felt that because of its secular tone, the Conference was not the right milieu for presenting their religious reflections. It has been my experience that some scholars from Asia and Africa are puzzled by the secular presuppositions taken for granted at Western universities. Since unbelievers constitute 15 per cent of the world population, these scholars look upon the secular university world as a sectarian movement, representing the perspective of 15 per cent of humanity, yet proposing ideas that demand universal acceptance. Some Asian and African intellectuals are disturbed by this disproportion.

While I regretted my friends' decision, I did not give up on the panel. I was able to find two scholars in Montreal who, upon short notice, were willing to cooperate with me on a panel now dealing with the peaceful co-existence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. I am grateful to Alexis Nouss and Sahah Basalamah for joining me in this discussion

The End of Proselytism

For the Christian churches the joyful recognition of religious pluralism poses a difficult theological problem. In the past, we interpreted the Church's mission as the proclamation of the gospel so that all humans be converted to the true faith and be saved in Jesus Christ. Can

the churches abandon their intention to proselytize? Can the churches learn to respect Judaism, Islam, and the other world religions?

Some Christians, like the philosopher John Hick,[3] think that the Church should give up the ancient creed according to which God's self-revelation is fully present in Jesus Christ. By relativizing its own tradition, the Church would then be able to look upon all the world religions, including Christianity, as so many distinct ways in which people reach out toward the incomprehensible divine mystery. Here all religions would be equally true. Yet this is not a useful proposal. Why not? Because a theology that abandons the central Christian doctrine will not travel very far in the churches. What the churches want is to develop respect for the world religions and at the same time remain faithful to their own tradition. I believe that this is a universal principle: in respecting other religions and engaging in inter-religious dialogue, Jews, Muslims, and the followers of other faiths also want to remain faithful to their own tradition. Dialogue does not imply compromise.

Religions move forward, change, and develop by re-reading their sacred texts under new historical circumstances. Sacred texts have many meanings. This is even true of great literary works. The plays of Shakespeare are reread, performed, and interpreted anew in every generation: they continue to shed light on contemporary issues. Pope John XXIII referred to the Church's task to reread its sacred text when he introduced the idea of "the signs of the times."[4] What are these signs? They denote historical experiences that are so important that without reference to them, we can no longer speak authentically of Jesus Christ. What we have to do is to re-read the sacred texts in response to these events.

A hauntingly negative sign of the times was the Holocaust. To remain faithful to God's Word, the Church had to rethink its relationship to the Jews, recognize, deplore, and overcome the anti-Jewish rhetoric in Christian preaching and reread the New Testament in search for deeper insights. The Catholic Church did this at Vatican Council II. On the basis of Romans 11, the Council recognized that God's covenant with the people of Israel has remained intact and, by implication, that the Church has no mission to convert the Jews to Christianity. Exploring this theme, a recent commission set up by the US Catholic bishops has again recognized God's redemptive presence in the Jewish worshipping community and concluded that there is no theological justification for institutional efforts to convert Jews to Christianity.[5]

Jewish-Christian Dialogue

This new attitude has encouraged dialogue, cooperation, and friendship among Jews and Catholics. On September 10, 2000, in response to this recent development, a group of Jewish scholars published a Jewish statement on Christians and Christianity entitled *Dabru emet,* which was subsequently signed by hundreds of Jewish intellectuals. Here is the statement's first paragraph.

> In recent years, there has been a dramatic and unprecedented shift in Jewish and Christian relations. Throughout the nearly two millennia of Jewish exile, Christians have tended to characterize Judaism as a failed religion or, at best, a religion that prepared the way for, and is completed in, Christianity. In the decades since the Holocaust, however, Christianity has changed dramatically. An increasing number of official Church bodies, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, have made public statements of their remorse about Christian mistreatment of Jews and Judaism. These statements have declared, furthermore, that Christian teaching and preaching can and must be reformed so that they acknowledge God's enduring covenant with the Jewish people and celebrate the contribution of Judaism to world civilization and to Christian faith itself.[6]

At the same time, Jewish-Christian dialogue has become more difficult in view of the divergent attitudes toward the politics of the State of Israel. Thus, after the outbreak of the second intifada after Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount on September 28, 2000, the leaders of the Canadian churches composed a short statement addressed to Christians at home and in the Middle East. When the Canadian Jewish Congress saw this text, it accused the churches of excessive sympathy for the Palestinians and of one-sidedly denouncing the occupation and the settlements on Palestinian territories. Since the Church leaders did not want to jeopardize Jewish-Christian friendship in Canada, they decided to modify their statement.[7]

On the other hand, Jews who oppose the occupation and the settlements and favour the creation of a contiguous Palestinian State lament that their voices are not heard, their articles not published in the major papers, and their books not reviewed in influential journals. They therefore plead with Christian social justice groups and centres to raise their voices in protest against the oppressive Israeli policies. Yet Christians tend to be cautious in their criticism of the Jewish State.

Why? Because the guilt over the age-old, anti-Jewish current in Christian preaching and the churches' complicity in the spread of anti-Semitism now, rightly or wrongly, condemns them to relative silence. It is my impression that Christians and Jews prefer to bracket the question of Israel/Palestine in their lively and fruitful dialogue.

Catholic-Muslim Solidarity

In the document *Nostra aetate*, which acknowledged the abiding nature of God's covenant with the house of Israel, Vatican Council II also recognized the echo of God's Word in all world religions, especially in Islam which shares with Jews and Christians reverence for Father Abraham. Yet these references to the world religions remain vague. Forty years later, Pope John Paul II has become more specific, especially in regard to Islam.

Searching for "the signs of the times" the pope focuses on the destructive impact produced by the globalization of the unregulated market, namely the widening of the gap between rich and poor continents, the undermining of the traditional religious cultures, and the advance of American military power to protect the exploitative economic system. For John Paul II, the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 and its aftermath are signs of the times that demand a re-reading of the sacred texts and the re-thinking of the Church's mission.

John Paul II opposed the bombing of Afghanistan and the pre-emptive war against Iraq; he recognizes that the root cause of terrorism is the humiliation, accompanied by growing poverty, which the wealthy North imposes upon the peoples of the South; he is profoundly troubled by the growing enmity between the Muslim world and the societies of the West. Re-reading the Scriptures in this historical context, he discovers that the Church's mission in obedience to Christ is to protect and promote humanity in this dangerous situation: to stand against violence, affirm human rights, foster social justice, and proclaim universal solidarity. His "Ten Commandments of Peace,"[8] published in January 2000, articulate the bold message of dialogue, co-operation, and solidarity, including the joyful acceptance of religious pluralism, for which there is no precedent in the Church's history. Here are the second, third, and fourth commandments:

> We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal co-existence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions. We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premises of authentic peace. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.

In response to the Huntington thesis of the clash of civilization, John Paul II emphasizes "the dialogue of civilization." In April 2000, he participated in a solemn liturgy of repentance in Rome, during which the Catholic Church acknowledged its transgressions before God, among which were mentioned "contempt for other cultures and other religions."[9] A year later, troubled by the intransigent movement within Islam, he expressed the Church's desire for fraternal cooperation with Muslims. Meeting with Muslim leaders in the Great Omayyad Mosque in Damascus on May 6, 2001, the pope said these words:

> Christians and Muslims agree that the encounter with God in prayer is the necessary nourishment of our souls, without which our hearts wither and our will no longer strives for good but succumbs to evil. Both Muslim and Christians prize their places of prayer, as oases where they meet the All Merciful God on the journey to eternal life, and where they meet their brothers and sisters in the bond of religion....It is my ardent hope that Muslim and Christian religious leaders will present our two great religious communities as communities in respectful dialogue, never more as communities in conflict.[10]

My interpretation of these texts is that the Church proclaims the gospel to convert religious seekers, the confused, and people caught in destructive ideologies, but that its mission to the world religions, especially Judaism and Islam, is to promote dialogue, friendship, and cooperation in the service of peace and justice.

Internal Pluralism

Internal pluralism is a social phenomenon existing in all religions, including the Catholic Church. The pope's commitment to the dialogue of civilizations and to respect for the world religions is not followed by all Catholic leaders, even among highly placed personalities in the Roman Curia. According to them, the pope's message is at odds with the Church's traditional teach-

ing. In August 2000, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the head of the Roman Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, published the declaration *Dominus Iesus* to counter what he called "the ideology of dialogue" and reaffirm the Church's mission to convert the members of the world religions to faith in Jesus Christ.[11] When I visited Germany last November, I heard speakers refer to this declaration as "*Dominus Joseph*"– Joseph being Cardinal Ratzinger's first name. What the declaration overlooks is the pope's theological method: that is, the reference to "the signs of the times" and the need to re-read the sacred text and the tradition in response to these signs. The pope recognizes that humanity is moving toward self-destruction through the exclusion of ever-greater sectors of the world population from the sources of life, through the violence of the powers that defend the present system and the terror exercised by the powerless in despair, and through the maximization of production that destroys the natural resources of the earth. In this spiritual and moral crisis, the pope argues, the Church's mission, in fidelity to Jesus who taught us that God's name is Love, is to serve the well-being of humanity.

This approach, defended by avant-garde theologians and John Paul II, is new. Many Catholics do not know about it. Conservative Catholic organizations even actively oppose it. They continue to look upon religious pluralism as a defective historical condition to be repaired by the ultimate victory of the Church over the other religions. We have our very own fundamentalists in the Catholic Church. At the same time, the Church's official pastoral policy is changing. Here is a paragraph taken from page 12 of the booklet *Proposing Jesus Christ Today* published by the Archdiocese of Montreal in 2003.

> The religious pluralism in Montreal can resound as a polyphonic expression of those who are seeking God. As this complex reality touches us, it can surface in us a desire to know better who we are, as well as, to become more familiar with the multiple manifestations through which God's Spirit can speak and inspire. The first effect of inter-religious dialogue is that it leads everyone to appreciate the best in each other; it highlights that which in each religion is most humanizing; and it can diminish that which is most intransigent. By being cordial and welcoming to each other, it may be possible to encounter the Spirit of God. Provided the various religions help human beings to grow, one can see in them authentic manifestations of God's care and concern. This does not take away the Christians' mission to proclaim the Gospel to all, since we believe that in Jesus Christ God has entered the human sphere and affected all of humanity.

The profession of faith in Jesus Christ is the ground of our solidarity with the entire human family, beginning with the poor and oppressed.

Gregory Baum

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1 *The Ecumenist,* 39 (Spring 2002) 12–17.

2 Gregory XVI, *Mirari vos* (1832).

3 John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973) and *God Has Many Names* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

4 See John XXIII, *Pacem in terris* (1963), 39–43, 126–129. The expression drawn from Matthew 16:3 was subsequently used by Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et spes*, 4 and Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) 76.

5 *The Ecumenist,* 40 (Spring 2003) 3–6.

6 Consult Boston College, Center for Christian-Jewish Learning www.bc.edu/research/cjl.

7 *The Ecumenist,* 39 (Summer 2002) 2.

8 *The Ecumenist*, 39 (Summer 2002) 1.

9 Gregory Baum, "An Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Event," *The Ecumenist,* 37 (Fall 2000) 16–18.

10 *The Ecumenist,* 39 (Summer 2002) 10–11.

11 *The Ecumenist,* 37 (Fall 2000) 1–3.

Pluralism after 9/11: Living with Difference and Instability

Introduction[1]

These early years of the 21st century certainly find the world in a situation one would not have anticipated a decade after the fall of European Communism. The events in the United States on September 11, 2001, and the aftermath have focused the world's attention on the threat of terrorism. Important as this may be, it is difficult to know how to respond to this fear without some larger frame in which to place it. Rather than taking terrorism itself as our starting point, it is much more useful to look at some of the larger movements that continue to shape our world, and then see how gauging the risk of terrorism fits into this picture. Instability is a poor point of departure for determining how to live in a consistent fashion. We are better served by larger understandings of ourselves and the world we live in.

I would like to begin by looking at three phenomena that shape our experience of the world today, especially within the frame of stability and instability. These phenomena are (1) the movements of peoples through migration and refugee resettlement, (2) the reactions of countries where this resettlement is happening, and (3) the effects of globalization on these first two phenomena. These three phenomena together – movement of peoples, multicultural societies, and globalization – constitute the frame of stability and instability within which we now live. In a second part, I proceed to how societies are living in this frame on the basis of one of two paradigms. The first paradigm highlights the importance of recognizing difference; the second affirms the centrality of sameness. The strengths and weaknesses of each of these approaches will be noted, with special attention given to how they shape living in unstable times and affect the quality of our life. In a final section, we will look at what this means for our immediate future, and how the resources of Christian faith can equip us better to meet its challenges.

The Increasing Plurality of Contemporary Societies

Life in contemporary societies nearly everywhere in the world now means having to cope with an increasing plurality. This is evident in the people we meet and interact with every day. Gathering so much difference into relatively small physical spaces makes what was once familiar increasingly disparate and even daunting. Three interlocking factors propel these changes: the movement of peoples, the reactions of the countries into which they move, and the compounding features of globalization of the economy and of culture.

The Movement of Peoples

Migration is as old as humanity itself, beginning as our oldest ancestors left eastern Africa and gradually spread out over the inhabitable continents of the world. The last decades of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st, however, have witnessed some distinctive features of those movements of peoples. Australian migration specialist Nikos Papastergiadis has referred to those features as the "turbulence of migration."[2] That is to say, migration has increased in intensity and may seem on the surface to be increasingly chaotic. But a closer examination of that intensity and apparent chaos yields some distinctive patterns.

Migration typically increases when technologies make travel and communication easier. The migrations out of Europe in the 19th century are an example of this. Prior to 1850, a trip across the Atlantic from Europe to North America on a sailing ship cost the average worker the equivalent of three years' salary and took the better part of a month's time. With the introduction of the steam ship, the cost dropped to a year's salary and could be done in a little over a week. The introduction of the jet airplane in the 1960s reduced both the cost and the time of long-distance travel dramatically. The average real cost of a trip today is actually less than it was 25 years ago. This makes migration open to large portions of the population in a way that was not the case a few decades ago. With that have come two important changes in what migration means in contemporary society.

First, migration has increased and created greater diversity. Already 20 years ago, Oslo, the capitol of a previously very homogeneous Scandinavian society, had more than 90 ethnic communities living within in its bounds. In any number of countries now, the second largest centre of its population is no longer found within its national boundaries. Thus, Berlin is the second largest Turkish city; Paris, the second largest Portuguese city; Chicago, the second largest Polish, Greek, and

Serbian city. Long Beach, California in the USA is the second largest Cambodian population centre outside Pnom Penh. There are now more than 400 cities on the planet with a population of more than a million people. Most of them are highly multicultural in character.

Second, because of the relatively low cost and ease of travel, citizenship is taking on a different meaning. Once upon a time, emigration meant leaving one's homeland and family forever. Inexpensive telephone and internet connections, as well as air travel, mean that bonds with one's homeland and family need not be sundered (unless, of course, one is a refugee). Emigrants keep in closer touch with their families and travel back and forth. For the first generation of immigrants, the new country may not make the same claim on their loyalty and self-image that was the case in earlier times. The weakening sense of the nation-state, under the influence of globalization, only reinforces this new attitude to citizenship. Indeed, many more countries now allow dual or multiple-country citizenship than was the case in the mid-20th century.

Refugees face special challenges in the movement of peoples. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that there are more than 120 million people who either have escaped or been driven from their homelands. Their hopes of quick return to their homelands may prevent them from committing themselves to where they are now located. What they experienced in their homelands, and the act of leaving itself, may often have traumatic effects, with psychological and social consequences for themselves and their children. There may be in turn severe problems arising between family members, as generations differ on the prospect of staying and returning.

All of these features, taken together, create the turbulence of contemporary migration. Thus, the contemporary world is marked not only by a denser experience of intercultural contact, but may feature a range of psychological and social problems added to the challenge of living together.

Reactions of the Receiving Countries

How do the countries receiving people on the move react to their new denizens? There are some marked differences between those countries who see themselves as homogeneous, stable societies and those who see themselves as being built on a continuing immigration. The countries of Western Europe are examples of the first. Although they have experienced migration throughout history, many of them see themselves as having relatively stable identities. The influx of much-needed workers to stablize decreasing and aging populations, as well as asylum offered to refugees, have challenged them to reconsider what it means to be French, German, or Dutch.

In reaction to the presence of people of different linguistic, cultural, and religious identities, xenophobic, right-wing political parties have sprung up in Austria, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark. Legal and structural approaches have been used to fix perceived problems, including requirements to learn the national language, regulations on appropriate attire in schools, and tighter control of immigration and residence. Policies that addressed issues in an earlier era do not deal with challenges being faced today. For example, German citizenship based on ethnicity (*Blutrecht*), established under Bismarck, has not responded to the phenomenon of third-generation descendents of "guest workers" unable to attain citizenship. The strict separation of religion and the state enacted in the early 20th century in France with the concept of *laicité* does not respond to the blending of religion and ethnicity of young Muslim girls wanting to wear the *hijab* in school. To say simply that my country is not a country of immigration (or a *Zuwanderungsland*, as some Germans are saying) does not solve the problem.

On the other hand, some countries have been built on the phenomenon of immigration, and therefore see themselves as subject to ongoing incorporation of peoples. Three of those countries – Australia, the United States, and Canada – are now the three most multicultural countries in the world. While Australia only embraced this identity after the Second World War, the US and Canada have longer histories with this. Toronto, for example, is now the most multicultural city in the world. Each of these countries has a different legal structure for recognizing and incorporating different ethnicities into the national fabric. Canada legislates and supports more cultural distinctiveness in its population than does the United States. (None of these three societies, however, has a good historical record in dealing with the indigenous populations displaced by immigration.) A closer study of each of these countries may yield some lessons for countries like those of Europe (or, in another way, Japan) that now struggle with changing identities. Interesting also is the fact that those countries that encourage immigration are maintaining the median age of their populations against demographic decline, an important feature of the economic and social well-being of modern societies.

Globalization

Globalization can be defined as the compression of time and space and integration of features of society brought about by advances in communications and transport technologies. The latest wave of globalization in the world, begun with computer advances in the 1980s, has indeed made the world a smaller place – at least for those who have access to these technologies. Globalization has acclerated the movement of peoples, increasing the amount of difference groups in any given place must negotiate. The integration of economies into a single, universal model has spurred the growth of wealth for some even as it has heightened the disparity in the distribution of that wealth. From a social perspective, those same communications technologies have homogenized cultural manifestations (in entertainment, food, and clothing patterns), but have also, paradoxically, heightened resistance at the local level to such encroaching sameness. An alarming number of the world's more than 6,000 languages disappear every year, decreasing the creativity of human expression. At the same time, resistance to the hegemony of English has breathed new life into some of Europe's 44 languages, such as Breton, Friesian, Ladino, and Sami.

Two Social Paradigms for Dealing with Plurality

The phenomena of movement of peoples, reaction of the societies to which these people move, and the compounding economic and social effects of globalization have created a new framework in which the phenomenon of multicultural societies and the challenges of coexistence, cohesion, and collaboration must be negotiated. The unwanted and unwelcome pressure for change can create tensions that bring groups and whole societies to a breaking point.

Terrorism, including the 9/11 attacks, is shaped by those same factors of movement, negotiation of change, and globalization. These international terrorist networks thrive on instant communication as well as the ease of movement of capital and people. Interesting also is how much contemporary terrorism is a middle-class phenomenon. The energy for terrorist activity in networks such as al-Qaeda derives from rage at the humiliation of Islam by Western modernity and exclusion from the benefits of modern society. Effective control of terrorism must go beyond containment of the movements of terrorists and restriction of their resources. The draconian measures to control access to countries like the United States will prove only partially successful and will have the added unintended effect of alienating many erstwhile friends and supporters of that country. Long-term eradication of post-9/11 terrorism will necessarily entail a greater equalization in the distribution of wealth and a more shared approach to the production of culture than is now the case in our globalized world.

That having been said, we need to look at the two major approaches to dealing with plurality and difference in the contemporary world, shaped as it is by demographic movement, multicultural density, and globalization. These two approaches are each predicated on their attitudes toward sameness and difference as the basis for cohesion in a society. Sameness has been the implicit – and increasingly, explicit – premise for constructing a society. More recent approaches have highlighted the importance of difference. I will begin here with the latter paradigm, that of difference. Then I will turn to sameness, in order to see how it has changed under more recent circumstances.

Difference as a Basis for a Multicultural Society

When difference is seen as something to be maintained and even promoted in a multicultural society, it carries with it a number of assumptions. The first of these is that some measure of difference is irreducible. That is to say, not all difference can be, or even should be, erased. Despite commonalities, human beings are never exactly the same. That lack of sameness may cause conflict, but it is also the source of creativity and the capacity to respond to new and unexpected circumstances. Difference is thus essential to my sense of sameness or selfhood.

Second, this model assumes that differences are not commensurate. A similar difference may hold a different place in different identities. Thus, a white person in the dominant culture in the United States or Canada may say that race or skin colour makes no difference to him or her – that they are "colour blind." However, for a person of colour, who experiences discrimination day in and day out in this supposedly colour-blind society, race and colour can never be peripheral to identity. It is constantly thrust to the centre even when it is supposedly marginal. Differences, therefore, are not different in the same way, and this is something that must be acknowledged.

Third, an increasing sense of difference is a natural consequence of a modern, liberal society. Such societies are based on a commitment to the individual rather than reinforcing commonality. Democracy, the political form

of choice for such societies, not only thrives on difference, but is also the best model we have to date for managing difference in the social sphere. The structure of modern societies supports social paradigms affirming difference and vice versa.

However, one can see some of the reasons why basing a society on a paradigm of difference is a good thing. It creates a social space for recognition of the other and for welcome to the other, and so addresses the plurality that cannot be escaped in society. The paradigm also creates an ideological basis for affirming difference. All persons, however different, are created equal. From a religious perspective, difference may be seen as God-given. Respecting and promoting difference allows a society to renew itself and to respond to changes over which it may have no control or to which it must adapt itself in order to survive. A paradigm based on difference can therefore manage plurality and turn it into an asset.

Difference as the basis for society has its limitations as well. The focus on difference can reify it by claiming that those who are different are, paradoxically, all different in the same way. This can lead to stereotyping, and to inaccurate and inappropriate generalizations about the other. Moreover, it can make differences "exotic" – the implication then being that difference is something that is not essential but rather entertaining. Furthermore, as Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby has pointed out, difference in itself does not provide a framework for social judgment: what he calls "mosaic madness" does not provide the necessary guidance for the common effort to determine how a society shall live, what it should value, and what it should resist.[3]

Difference as a paradigm for society flourishes best when there is security and access to resources for everyone. When things become unstable and some members of society experience exclusion, it becomes important to consider together what shall be the basic values that will inform our life together, even as we foreground the importance of difference.

Sameness as the Basis for a Multicultural Society

That societies had to have a great deal of sameness in order to maintain cohesion and survive has long been a premise for social order. Difference had to be carefully circumscribed and controlled in order for life together to be possible. Assimilation into the dominant pattern of social life was the accepted norm. Many people are reasserting this premise today. In retrospect, however, we can now see that assimilation was never the seamless process it was sometimes purported to be. Assimilation has always been accompanied by conflict and even outright violence. Moreover, even in the best schemes of assimilation, certain indices of difference (skin colour, language, custom) can remain irreducible or non-negotiable. Paradigms of sameness, therefore, will always have to accept some measure of difference.

Sameness nonetheless has its positive dimensions for creating and sustaining a society. Some measure of sameness is essential to any sense of identity (the word "identity" comes from the Latin word for "the same"). Sameness is a feature that must be sought in order to cultivate the sense of belonging that makes social cohesion possible. Even in the celebration of difference, sociologists and other observers of society have noted that there are limits to how much difference a community can sustain. Finding that equation is essential for the survival of multicultural societies. Although difference can be celebrated, it presupposes for its survival a belief in the fundamental dignity – and therefore a kind of sameness – of all individuals. As has already been noted, plurality does not automatically sustain itself in society; it requires agreement on basic, commonly held values.

Ways into the Future

So where does that leave us in the choice between difference and sameness in our life in a multicultural, mobile, and even unstable world? The most important thing to recognize is that we are not forced to choose between the paradigms of sameness or difference for our kinds of societies. These two paradigms should be seen rather as ends of a spectrum upon which the responses and policies of societies will move, depending upon circumstances. In times of stability and security, it is easier to affirm difference because difference poses less of a potential threat. A sense of unity – real or imagined – is essential when people feel that fundamental security and stability have been undermined. In both instances, leaders must be careful that neither extreme triumphs over the other. Such extreme positioning is a recipe for profound conflict and likely violence.

In order to negotiate changes and insure recognition of the need for both, a number of features of life in our kinds of societies will need closer attention. One of these is greater facility in intercultural communication, that is, the capacity to see how culture shapes our choice of values and our manner of behaving, and how then to move across cultural boundaries. A second is to foster patterns of multiple identifications in society; we must not allow

any one feature – ethnicity, class, religion, or race – to determine our identity and our capacity to relate to others. A third is to recognize the "push and pull" factors of society (security, belonging, chance for greater achievement, capacity for living with ambiguity) for shaping our response to difference and to sameness. A fourth and final factor that has begun to receive more attention is tracing the long-term effects of trauma on societies – traumas born out of conflict, loss of security, denial of human dignity, and experience of injury – in creating less discernible and less controllable reactions to change.

Religious responses

As religious people, we need to draw upon the spiritual resources of our traditions to help us in finding our way through the complexities of plurality and difference in multicultural and fast-changing societies. The concern for those on the margins, taught by the great Jewish prophets and by Jesus, is a place to begin. An important element of this has been our capacity to welcome the stranger and offer strangers a hospitality that they can understand. This begins with Abram and Sarai's welcoming the three strangers in Genesis 18:1-15. The central tenet of Israelite faith begins by a reminder that their ancestor Abraham was a "wandering Aramaean (Deut 26:5). In the parable of the last judgement (Matt 25:31-46), Jesus reminds his audience that doing charitable acts for those they do not recognize is an act of charity to Christ himself. In contemporary Catholicism, welcoming the stranger has become the first step toward approaching the other, as evidenced in the US Bishops' 2000 Pastoral Letter, "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity."

A second resource in our tradition is our awareness that the Triune God has not created a world that is monotone or uniform. What St. Paul called the "fullness" of God or creation (*pleroma*) (Eph 3:19; 4:13; Col 2:9) or what Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has aptly named the "dignity of difference" needs greater attention from Christians and Jews.[4] For Christians, that fullness of God bespeaks the love found between the Trinitarian Persons. In both Judaism and Christianity, the fullness of creation refers to its great multiplicity. For Christians, that multiplicity of creation mirrors the Triune nature of the Godhead. What this theological idea means practically is that we are not to see God's creation (read: our fellow human beings) as monistic. The plenitude of cultures we experience is not an aberration, but a sign of the richness of who we are in God's image. The Pentecost story in Acts 2 reflects that fullness. Sacks, in his treatment of the story of the Tower of Babel, sees the going out in diversity to fill the earth as a blessing, not a curse.

A third resource of our tradition can be found in the growing interest in the meaning of reconciliation and forgiveness in our societies and in our traditions of faith. This new awareness of the need for reconciliation and forgiveness allows us to acknowledge the conflicts, the misunderstandings, and even the injuries we have done to one another. But at the same time, the prospect of reconciliation and forgiveness means that things can be otherwise than they have been. In the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who chaired the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "there is no future without forgiveness."[5] Christians believe that forgiveness is possible, difficult as it may be. That is certainly an important resource as we try to make a different kind of future together.

It is precisely these spiritual resources that can help create the common values and a common discourse that will allow us to live in these first years of the 21st century. Every age, it seems, sees itself as a time of change. The acceleration of the rate of social change by migration and globalization only heightens our need to find a way to live together as a community of persons and groups, no matter how different or how much the same we are.

Robert Schreiter

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[1] This is an abridged version of the 2003–2004 Scarboro Mission Lecture, "Plurality and Differences in an Unstable World," given on January 23, 2004, at St. Jerome's University in Waterloo, Ontario, and on January 24 at the Scarboro Mission Centre in Toronto.

[2] Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Territorialization, and Hybridity* (London: Polity, 2000).

[3] Reginald W. Bibby, *Mosaic Madness* (Toronto: Stoddard, 1990).

[4] Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2003).

[5] See his *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

The Liberationist Theologies Today in a Liberal Protestant Church

On October 8, 2003, the University of St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto invited Rev. Gustavo Gutierrez, O.P., to give a public lecture. Prior to his public talk, Dr. Gutierrez participated in a panel with three other scholars before an audience of theological students, professors, and invited guests. The following is the talk given on that occasion by Harold Wells, an ordained minister of the United Church of Canada and Professor of Systematic Theology at Emmanuel College in the University of Toronto. As this talk by Dr. Wells was crafted to open a panel discussion, its tone is intentionally conversational.

It is an honour and pleasure to be here with Gustavo Gutierrez, whose work I greatly admire, and who has been a major influence on my own thinking and teaching.

I have been asked to speak briefly on "liberation theology today," but since we have Dr. Gutierrez with us, I will not presume to speak about Latin American theology, but rather will talk about what I call "liberation*ist*" theologies in Canada, from my own limited perspective as a member of a Canadian liberal Protestant church. By "liberationist" I mean that broad spectrum of theologies that operate out of the perspective of the "option for the poor," or, more broadly, for the oppressed or marginalized. As North Americans and Canadians, many of us are reluctant to appropriate a theological perspective developed for other, especially two-thirds world, contexts. Our senior Canadian liberationist theologian, Gregory Baum, prefers to speak of "critical theology," while Douglas John Hall speaks of "contextual theology of the cross."[1] What I call broadly liberationist theology can also be characterized as "praxis" theology, intentionally combining action and contemporary experience with thought and theory. Concerned with the practical, ethical, and socio-political implications of doctrines, praxis theology also looks at the intersection of Scripture and tradition with the contemporary context. It is a world-wide phenomenon of Christian faith, including Latin American liberation theology, of which Dr. Gutierrez is a prime example, but also Black American and Womanist, South African, Korean, Canadian contextual, post-colonial theologies, and most especially feminist theologies, as well as the newly developing gay-lesbian theologies. I think we may dare to speak cautiously about liberationist theology as a single, though certainly not a uniform, movement throughout the world. The question I pose is this: To what extent have the liberationist theologies influenced and shaped the preaching, teaching, and mission of the Canadian liberal Protestant churches in the last 30 years or so? I refer mainly to the United Church of Canada, of which I am a part, arguably the most liberal of the so-called mainline churches and perhaps the one in which liberationist perspectives have been most influential.

I would say that, since the early 1970s, the liberationist theological movement has had an enormous impact on the United Church of Canada, and this impact is continuing in strength into the new century. Not, to be sure, among all of our people, but certainly in our theological schools, among leadership figures in the Church, and among a substantial activist minority of our members.

The Social Gospel Tradition

Many liberal Protestants have identified naturally with the liberationist theologies because, I think, they evoke an important element in our own tradition. That is, they have helped to revive and deepen an older strand of the Christian passion for justice, namely the Social Gospel. That early 20th-century movement had roots in the 18th-century evangelical revival, especially in Wesleyan Methodism, noted for its heartfelt Christian commitment to the poor. We remember our heritage in the struggles against slavery and child labour, for the rights of labour unions, and on behalf of the minority democratic socialist movements. The Social Gospel found its liberal ancestry in the Enlightenment, with its affirmation of human autonomy, questioning of traditional dogma, and positive commitment to freedom of thought, including openness to the findings of the natural and human sciences as well as biblical criticism. Also basic to the Enlightenment, speaking very generally, was its optimistic faith in human progress. To various degrees, proponents of the Social Gospel shared this optimism.[2]

The Social Gospel can be seen as a precursor of the liberationist theologies in several ways. Like them, it operated out of something like the option for the poor. It

included something similar to hermeneutical suspicion – of classical doctrines, traditional interpretations of Scripture, and of Scripture itself. It included utopian visions of a just and peaceful world and was committed to building the kingdom of God in the economic and social structures of society. It imagined a poor Christ, a political Christ, emphasizing the prophetic teaching and example of Jesus. Social Gospellers thought of sin as rooted in social structures and of salvation as corporate and this-worldly. It encouraged biblical interpretation in light of a systemic social analysis and denounced the cruelties of capitalism.[3] It held up a social vision and hope for greater equality and justice, while fostering a political praxis. It encouraged political activism, helping to spawn and nurture the democratic socialist movement in Canada, namely the C.C.F. (Cooperative Commonwealth Federation) and its successor, the New Democratic Party, the political movement that provided powerful impetus for the welfare state. The similarity of much of this with the central ideas of Dr. Gutierrez is obvious.

From Radical Religion to Neo-Orthodoxy

What happened to Social Gospel theology is perhaps instructive for liberationist theology today. By the mid-1930s or so it was considered out of date. Faith in human moral progress toward the kingdom of God had been undermined by the dark events of World War I and the Great Depression. The colossal evils of the Second World War era deepened this disillusionment. The theology of Karl Barth and the so-called "neo-orthodox" theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and others reasserted older doctrines of sin and grace, together with classical Christology and eschatology. In Canada, especially in the United Church, a short-lived theological movement, sometimes calling itself "Religious Radicalism," appeared. Arising after the disillusionment of the First World War and out of the miseries of the economic depression of the 1930s, Religious Radicalism could be described as "post–Social Gospel." Its supporters were influenced in some measure by Neo-Orthodoxy but remained democratic socialists, calling for a radical "Christianization of the social order."[4] Before the end of the Second World War, the movement itself, and its organizational manifestation, the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, had lost its energy and died. However, the thought and inspiration of this movement, which had carried the Social Gospel impetus forward, still reverberates among us and partly accounts for the receptivity of the United Church to the liberationist movements three or four decades later. After the decline of the Social Gospel and Religious Radicalism, followed by the ascendancy of Neo-Orthodoxy, a mood of social pessimism and even of political passivity tended to reign in the Canadian Protestant churches, that is, until the dawn of the political theology of hope and the liberationist theologies of the late 1960s and 70s.

We may note that some (not all) of the liberationist theologies have important elements in common with Neo-Orthodoxy, originating as they did out of quite different contexts of radical systemic evil. Unlike most of the Social Gospel, the liberation theology of Gutierrez and others does not dismiss classical doctrines, but affirms and radicalizes them. It does not lose its Christological centre, or its foundation in grace, or its worship of the triune God. For this reason these theologies are perhaps not as susceptible as the Social Gospel often was to an easy faith in human progress. They are capable of appealing to rank and file Christians and of meeting their personal spiritual needs and concerns. They have the capacity to be not simply modern, but postmodern. Perhaps, because of their deep biblical and classical roots, they will have more staying power in the face of historical disaster.

Liberationist Theologies in the United Church

Feminist theologies too have roots in the Social Gospel, as well as, more broadly, in the women's suffrage movement and other movements for women's equality early in the century. For example, the bold biblical hermeneutics and Christian activism of Nellie McClung have been a prime source of inspiration for Christian feminists in Canada.[5] The theology of radical women, like the Social Gospel theology, also declined in influence for some decades, but surfaced again by the 1970s. Sharing many of the methods and attitudes of Latin American and Black liberation theologies, a broad spectrum of feminist theologies exists: some are very liberal, exhibiting reduced, de-centred Christologies, while others are explicitly Christ-centred and Trinitarian. Generally, Christian feminists have had an enormous impact on the United Church, which, though it has ordained women since 1936, has experienced a great influx of women into theological education, ordered ministry, and leadership positions in the Church since the 1970s. Predominant feminist commitments have become a kind of compulsory orthodoxy and indeed have become mainstream in many United Church

contexts, especially at the level of regional and national courts of the Church, at theological schools, and in some congregations. In my view it is a highly salutary development that not only the full equality of women with men, but other feminist attitudes have been widely (though certainly not universally) accepted: inclusive language, both for humanity and for God-talk; the criticism of hierarchies and domination of all kinds; serious attention to experience, especially women's experience, and the experience of other marginalized groups; the high priority placed on relationality and on embodiment; and respect for the religious "other."

Liberationist, including feminist theological perspectives, have become very influential, then, and even dominant among leaders in the United Church. It is difficult to imagine the appointment of any person to a United Church theological faculty who did not support feminist, and more broadly, liberationist theological attitudes. For more than 25 years, our Moderators and General Councils have consistently spoken out publicly on behalf of poor and marginalized groups in Canadian society, and have done so out of a recognizable liberationist inspiration. Lois Wilson and Bill Phipps come readily to mind as well-known public figures in Canada. Administrative divisions of the national Church have also spoken and acted out of liberationist theological commitments about Canadian social problems, including the concerns of aboriginal peoples, and about international issues, such as South African apartheid, conflict in Central America, the danger of nuclear war, ecological concerns, free trade, globalization, and, more recently, the ballistic missile defence. Protestant support for the ecumenical coalitions on Latin America, Africa, economic justice, and so on, has certainly been inspired and informed by a liberationist Christian vision. It is true that the declining numbers and diminishing finances of the churches in our increasingly secular society have meant reductions in support of such liberationist activity. But I would say that liberationist theology, in a general sense, has remained undiminished among United Church leaders through the 1990s, and now into the new century.

This has been manifested particularly in recent times by the United Church decision in 1988 to ordain gays and lesbians, and more recently by the support of the United Church for same sex marriage. The Church arrived at the decision about ordination after much Bible study and prayer; the process involved painful struggle and conflict. Since then, gay and lesbian, and so-called "queer" theologies, have arrived on the scene, sharing the basic methods and perspectives of other libertionist theologies.[6] The stance of large numbers of Christian heterosexual folk in solidarity with gay and lesbian people has not been merely a liberal attitude, not a kind of permissive "anything goes" approach to sexual ethics, and not merely an attitude of tolerance, or a modern affirmation of individualistic autonomy. Rather, it has been based in serious attention to the experiences and stories of homosexual people, as well as sociological and psychological insight into the nature of sexual orientation. While important liberal values of openness and tolerance have been operative, it has also been based in a biblically, Christologically rooted option for the marginalized. That is, it has been a liberationist attitude, opting for the well-being of a large part of the human population that has been excluded and oppressed almost everywhere throughout recorded history.

The Challenge of the Future

Liberationist attitudes have been very influential, then, on many fronts in this liberal Protestant church. However, we must face the fact that, until now, liberationist theologies (like the Social Gospel that preceded them) have failed to win the minds and hearts of anything more than a small minority of grassroots Church members. The opinions of academic theologians and Church officials are not as important as some of us would like to think. Local communities with large mainline Protestant populations have been known to vote overwhelmingly for right wing Conservative governments and so have ignored the call of our Church leaders to stand against the "war on the poor." Local United Church congregations become involved in charitable activity, such as food banks, AIDS relief campaigns and the like (very valuable and important as they are) but typically have just a few members whose lives and activities are informed by liberationist commitments to systemic social change. Outreach or social action committees of local congregations or regional conferences that adopt radical social stances have an uphill battle and are frequently only tolerated by other Church members. In fact, most congregants hold the dominant capitalist, competitive ideologies of the surrounding society.

Liberationist theology is still very much alive in Canada, but it has a long way to go if it is to seriously change our Church or society. Perhaps it will always be a minority, cutting-edge perspective, challenging the Church from the sidelines, or ironically, from leadership levels. Unfortunately, liberationist theology suffers from

certain unfair caricatures and perhaps such caricatures are fed by some of its proponents. Many people mistakenly believe that liberationists want to reduce all Christian faith to social and political activism. To gain a hearing with sincere and devout Christian people, liberationists will have to convince them that their theological vision is more than a religio-political moralism, that it is centred in the Christ, rooted in the grace and love of God, and faithful to the basics of their faith. Faithful Church people have to be convinced that liberationist theology is more than a political program, using the Church to promote various ideological agenda. Personal and spiritual dimensions of faith must not be neglected. The liberatonist theologies must be seen to be capable of informing a whole Christian life, and the whole life of a Christian congregation. Dr. Gutierrez' work offers ample evidence that he understands this well: he and most of his Latin American colleagues hold fast to a Christ-centred, Trinitarian faith. Moreover, personal faith and social activism must be held together dialectically, Gutierrez insists, "for it impossible to separate solidarity with the poor and prayer."[7]

At a time when thoughtful, observant people are suspicious of simplistic panaceas and utopian hopes, radical social and political stances are liable to be seen as naively optimistic. Liberationist theologies may and must, I think, hold the rich resources of Scripture and tradition together with contemporary social and cultural analysis, if they are to inform the churches and help them to address the horrendous dangers that face the world in the decades to come.

Harold Wells

Harold Wells is author of *A Future for Socialism?* (1996) and co-editor, with Gregory Baum, of *The Reconciliation of Peoples* (1997). His next book, *The Christic Center: Life-Giving and Liberating,* is scheduled to be published by Orbis Books in 2004.

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[1] Gregory Baum explains the concept of "critical theology" in *Religion and Alienation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975); see Douglas John Hall's recent work, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

[2] See Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914–1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

[3] See a prime example of Canadian Social Gospel theology, Salem Goldworth Bland, *The New Christianity* (1920) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

[4] See R.B.Y. Scott, Gregory Vlastos, *Towards the Christian Revolution* (1936) (Kingston: Ronald P. Frye, 1989). See a discussion of this movement by Roger Hutchinson, "The Fellowship for a Christian Social Order: 1934–1945," in Harold Wells and Roger Hutchinson, eds. *A Long and Faithful March: Towards The Christian Revolution 1930s/1980s* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1989).

[5] Nellie McClung, *In Times Like These* (1915) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

[6] For an example of lesbian theology, see Carter Heyward, *Speaking of Christ: A Lesbian Feminist Voice* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989). Richard Cleaver offers a male "gay" theology, *Know My Name: A Gay Liberation Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995); for "queer theology" see Ken Stone, ed. *Hebrew Commentary on the Hebrew Bible* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001).

[7] Gustavo Gutierrez, "Expanding the View," in *Expanding the View,* M.H. Ellis and O. Maduro, eds. (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1990), 19.

Book Notes

Terror and the Nature of American Hegemony

Benjamin R. Barber, *Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003, 220 pages.

Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003, 392 pages.

In a strong show of support for US security initiatives, the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi declared, "We will always be next to the United States in order to take part in this discussion [of security], going well beyond the attitudes of certain European states which still today have not in my opinion understood how the world has changed and how we should start worrying about the future." While this statement may sound like a post-9/11 endorsement for the US-led war on terror, in fact Berlusconi made these comments in July 2001, and the security defence that he had in mind was not the war on terror, but the National Missile Defense (NMD) system. In other words, Berlusconi was wrong. The world had not yet changed in the way he had thought, nor has "the future" of security been primarily a high-tech matter. To the contrary, security in a post-9/11 world has meant soldiers combing mountain caves in Afghanistan and trudging through the desert in Iraq, airport security officers frisking passengers, and intelligence agents working to infiltrate diffuse terrorist cells.

In late January 2003, as the US was making its case for pre-emptive war to European leaders and the U.N., President Bush was asked by a member of the White House press corps if he had always intended to invade Iraq. With British Prime Minister Tony Blair at his side, he responded, "My vision shifted dramatically after September the 11th, because I now realize the stakes. I realize the world has changed. My most important obligation is to protect the American people from further harm. And I will do that." With Berlusconi, Bush, and a slew of other world leaders using the dramatic rhetoric of "the world has changed," it is time that scholars pause and ask, "What, if anything, has actually changed?"

These two books do precisely this, though they do so from different points of departure. Benjamin Barber's book *Fear's Empire* is written from the perspective of an engaged political thinker who has a tremendous grasp of both US political history and international relations theory. Many readers will undoubtedly be familiar with his highly successful book *Jihad vs. McWorld* (1995), which was eerily prophetic in outlining the challenges that globalization and terrorism posed to democracy. To Barber, the world *did* change on 9/11, and predictably so, as the US hastily and anxiously adopted a foreign policy of empire to put down a global insurrectionist movement. By contrast, in *Captain America and the Crusade against Evil*, Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence draw on theological narratives and popular culture to explain the US response to the al-Qaeda attacks and the invasion of Iraq. While they do not want to diminish the seriousness of the terrorist attacks, Jewett and Lawrence see the events of September 11 as marking yet another chapter in an ongoing story – a story in which the US is once again called on a mission to save the world from the tyrannous forces of evil. Remarkably, while these two books approach the war on terror from completely different perspectives, both end up offering a cautionary, if not prophetic, argument concerning the Bush administration's characterization of both the terrorist attacks and America's role as the world's sole superpower.

The first part of Barber's book, entitled "*Pax Americana;* or, Preventive War," is devoted to outlining the Bush administration's theoretical basis for the war on terror. As Barber rightly argues, at the core of the US war on terror is the reality of American hegemony. While traditional advocates of Westphalian-style international relations may be scandalized, the fact is that the United States possesses a near-monopoly on the use of force internationally. This means that foreign institutions and state actions have fallen largely under the sphere of US interests – in effect, expanding US borders and, at the same time, knocking down foreign borders. Even before the al-Qaeda attacks and the war on terror, an expanding global market and the eagerness of US companies to gain access to foreign land, labour, and capital facilitated this opening of foreign borders to US interests in the 1990s. Since 9/11, the Bush administration has concentrated on security threats, real and perceived, by asserting a "contingent sovereignty" and the right of

pre-emption against any state that poses a threat to US security. In Barber's words, "If America can no longer insulate itself from the planet ... then it must, in effect, rule the planet."

Hegemony is not, however, a traditional American foreign policy strategy. But as Barber knows well, neither is it a novel idea in American politics. In 1947, responding to the geopolitical conditions that supported the so-called Truman Doctrine, Harold Laski, a British social critic, noted that "America bestrides the world like a colossus; neither Rome at the height of its power nor Great Britain in the period of economic supremacy enjoyed an influence so direct, so profound, or so pervasive...." Nevertheless, with the few notable exceptions of Wilson (post-1917), Roosevelt (post-1941), Truman, and Reagan, presidents in the 20th century have shied away from over-extending America's interests and expanding America's borders. The fact that so many presidents have adopted isolationist foreign policy strategies, despite America's often overwhelming power, is indicative of a tension within American politics that has always existed, that is, whether to follow the liberal rule of law or assert realist US dominance when needed and when possible. Traditionally, the US has opted for the former, at least in principle. However, in the case of the war on terror, Barber thinks that the Bush administration has increasingly succumbed to the temptation of governing the world, with the US acting as a realist-Hobbesian Leviathan who enforces peace rather than cultivates it. Still, in confronting terrorism, the White House has in fact wavered between appealing to law and undermining it – in essence, violating the very rules it seeks to uphold and implement in post-9/11 nation-building. To illustrate this tension, despite all the WMD bluster, the US ended up *not* making a pre-emptive war argument before the U.N. to justify an invasion of Iraq; rather, it finally made the legal case that Iraq had continually violated binding U.N. resolutions. Indeed, this action goes directly to the heart of Barber's thesis. By invoking a right to unilateral action, preventive war, and regime change, the US undermines the democratic framework of cooperation and law that is essential to wage an international war against terror and anarchy.

Perhaps the most insightful point in the entire book comes from the chapter "The War of All Against All." Here, Barber engages the recent work by the neo-conservative commentator Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (2003). Kagan's thesis is that sometime after World War II, the worldviews of America and Europe radically diverged. According to Kagan, as early as the 1940s, both still shared certain Hobbesian views of global politics, where politics requires power to avoid anarchy, brutality, and selfish violence (i.e., the state of nature). But Europe has increasingly turned away from realist-Hobbesian politics, Kagan writes, and "... is entering a post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity, the realization of Immanuel Kant's 'perpetual peace.'" By contrast, the US continues to operate from the politics as power framework, at this point out of necessity, based on the realist principles of sovereignty, force, and peace via forced stability.

At the core of Barber's critique is his contention that Kagan fundamentally misreads Hobbes. Barber argues that, by portraying Hobbes as a proponent of brute force to solve political crises, Kagan has in fact got Hobbes backward. In contrast to Kagan, Barber thinks that the state of nature functions as a state of fear – in Hobbes' hypothesis it is "a condition of constant anxiety and perduring warfare where violence and conflict are more or less the whole of the human condition." To Barber, then, this hypothesized state of nature was actually a tool indicating Hobbes' belief in the necessity of politics and the rule law. Moreover, the realist word adopted by Kagan and other neo-conservatives *is* precisely the kind of world that terrorists want to construct, for it enables them to play on fear. The mistake made by Kagan and other neo-con hawks, then, is that the assumed state of nature actually shifts the playing field in favour of terrorists, and fear is a battle terrorists always win. Barber writes, "It is the dark secrets of Hobbes' state of nature that the terrorists have discovered: in a world of fear and insecurity even the weakest can kill the strongest; fear of death can be more crippling than death itself; and to overcome insecurity, men [*sic*] may be tempted to forgo liberty – unless they can discover a formula in which they can abdicate nature's anarchy without surrendering their freedom." For Barber, this formula is the social contract.

In the second part of the book, entitled "*Lex humana*; or Preventative Democracy," Barber develops his social contract argument by proposing a cosmopolitan order of universal law rooted in human community, the so-called *lex humana*. Barber writes: "*Lex humana* works for global comity within the framework of universal rights and law, conferred by multilateral political, economic, and cultural cooperation – with only as much common military action as can be authorized by common legal authority; whether in the Congress, in multilateral treaties,

or through the United Nations." Terrorist threats, Barber concludes, are best confronted with a strategy of democratic states working together to strengthen and extend liberalism, what he calls "preventative democracy." This multilateral approach, in Barber's mind, checks the tendency of exporting McWorld to failing countries and calling it democracy – instead, democracy must be cultivated from the ground up.

Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, the authors of *Captain America and the Crusade against Evil*, would be rightly suspicious of the confidence that Barber places in liberalism. Jewett and Lawrence argue that American civil religion, even in its more subtle forms (which might include Barber's *lex humana*), always includes a tendency to spread American values abroad. In the extreme, this tendency becomes zealous nationalism, that is, a kind of nationalism that sees America as a "city on a hill," set apart by God from other nations, as a chosen people called to spread the good news of democracy, liberty, and recently the free market. This book builds on the extensive research that Jewett and Lawrence did for their 1973 book, *The Captain America Complex: The Dilemmas of Zealous Nationalism*. As in their earlier book, they use the metaphor of Captain America, a comic book character created in the 1940s, to characterize America's perceived role in the world. Jewett and Lawrence argue that at the heart of the war on terror is a paradox. On the one hand, America sees itself as Captain America's alter ego, Steve Rogers, a weak, everyday guy who tries to do right, but is constantly rejected by his peers and even the US military, due to a physical deficiency. On the other hand, when angered and called into action to defend the US and the civilized world from the forces of darkness, America becomes the mighty superhero, Captain America, who pulls out all stops and saves the world from impending doom. Indeed, this archetype remains prevalent in popular American culture, with the Rambo character perhaps being the most recent and obvious example. Jewett and Lawrence have documented US foreign policies, speeches, and initiatives that demonstrate this kind of logic. Indeed, it is their concern that the Bush White House has opted for Captain America and, in so doing, has failed to examine the dark side of their superpower crusading.

At the other end of Captain America is what Jewett and Lawrence call "prophetic realism." With appeals to Hebrew prophets Amos and Hosea, the authors argue that the biblical text contains clear and strong warnings against a superheroic crusading zealotry. Prophetic realism tempers the black/white, good/evil, us/them worldview of the zealot. Ultimate judgment resides in God's final judgment and not with a zealous leadership that brandishes "apostasy," or in political terms "you're either with us or against us," as a weapon of social and political control. Unfortunately, Jewett and Lawrence do not present what prophetic realism might look like in the war on terror – they seem enamoured by the Captain America metaphor. Yet, they adequately make the point that all human actions and institutions on earth are imperfect and ambiguous. In this way, they fall into line with the 20th-century's greatest Christian realists, Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, and critical theologians such as Gregory Baum and Jürgen Moltmann.

What both of these books recognize is this: Human beings commit horrendous acts of evil, and yet they remain human. This suggests an understanding of human beings and human institutions that is all but absent in a fear-filled foreign policy that dehumanizes enemies as "evildoers" and mounts an apocalyptic war against an "axis of evil." The alternative to this Manichean worldview is seeing human beings and human institutions as capable of doing both evil and good, and often at the same time. To their credit, these books recognize this ambiguity. When read together, these books make it clear that Fear's Empire is at the same time home to Captain America. While this may sound contradictory, it is not. Indeed, wars waged on evil are wars rooted in fear and driven by the hubris that one side – in this case, the United States – is the earthly embodiment of God's goodness.

Scott Kline

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