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What's Going on in the USA? The Rise of an Imperial Triumvirate

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Karl Rove phoned James Dobson of the Christian Right group Focus on the Family, assuring him that President George W. Bush's Supreme Court nominee Harriet Miers, according to Dobson's own account of Rove's assurances, was an "Evangelical Christian" and "from a very conservative church, which is almost universally pro-life." Later, Dobson followed Bush in retracting support for Miers, agreeing that the Alito nomination was a much stronger one.

Pat Robertson called for the assassination of a democratically elected Venezuelan president. The Federal Emergency Management Agency placed Robertson's "Operation Blessing" high on its list of sanctioned outlets for cash donations to aid Katrina hurricane victims. Christian theocrats like Robert Upton of the Apostolic Congress have gained access to White House discussions about US policy toward Israel. Christians have organized "Justice Sundays" to craft their own moral agenda for the public square. Theocracy, even Christocracy, is in the plans of many.[2]

So, the Christian Right is on the rise. Sound the alarm. Yes, but let us not be deceived. The Christian Right – not to be confused with all US Christians or even with all conservative Protestants – is not an independent variable that by itself accounts for the state of politics in the country today. The Christian Right – with its best-selling *Left Behind* novels of apocalyptic terror, its moral agenda for one definition of "family values," its battle hymns for a new militant republic, its support for leaders who rationalize torture, its counter-factual arguments for "intelligent design," and its ever bolder calls to dismantle walls between Church and state – all this, dramatic as it surely is, does not account for the uniqueness of the political situation in the United States today.

I argue here that while the Christian Right is rising to new strength across the US social landscape, it is doing so through its alliances with other forces: a military planning elite (the neoconservatives) and key sectors

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of corporate America. This constitutes an "imperial triumvirate" – the imperial power in this case not being of three men (*virorum*) as in periods of Roman empire, but of a tridimensional ruling power (*trium-*) of cultural-political-economic forces. This essay underscores that "US empire," so frequently discussed today,[3] is not only a matter of flexing military powers abroad, but also of structuring discipline and order at home. To understand the complex workings of this imperial triumvirate, it is necessary to begin with a reading of the 9/11 event.

The 9/11 Mythic Moment

Politics and public opinion are still feeling the impact of the attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001. Invocations of 9/11 are still used to stoke citizen fear and uncritical patriotism, even while George W. Bush's approval ratings plummet. Political leaders and media outlets still feed this fear, and state surveillance powers grow in the name of national security and love of country. This is not simply because a cabal of political leaders is in power, manipulating the citizenry. No, these leaders, with the media's frequent help, exploit certain historical tendencies long at work in the US, which have been amplified by 9/11, which was experienced as not only a dramatic "historical moment" (with events and complex dynamics we still have not fully uncovered), but also as what I call a "mythic moment."[4] September 11 ruptured many US citizens' sense of mythic grandeur, a secure collective feeling that they occupied a veritable sanctuary between two oceans, a place of security (and indeed, it had been for many). As the myth went, though, this land between two oceans was also a garden for the cultivation of freedom, freedom that the rest of the world wants and awaits. This land of freedom, and this is part of the mythology of US "civil religion," is seen as a sacred gift and vocation.

In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan revived this mythology in many of his speeches in favour of Star Wars technology, the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). He argued that America's sacred land of freedom needed protection from attacks from the skies. Reagan, the "great communicator," deftly grafted this fear of missile attacks onto discourse from the Puritan founders, especially from John Winthrop's image of America as "a city on a hill," or, in Reagan's terms, a "shining city."[5] Sensibilities like these had powered many US citizens' visions of manifest destiny, animating US expansion and imperial vision.

The weapons used on the morning of September 11, 2001, hijacked commercial airliners, were not the nuclear missiles of Reagan's nightmare. Still, the attacks from the skies on 9/11 exploded with an impact that was momentous for Americans because of the way Reagan and so many before him had spun the myth of a protected and divinely sanctioned America. The sense of a protected, Edenic nation was further shaken for those steeped in the myth because the targets of the attack were the most visible public symbols of the nation's military and economic strength – the Pentagon and World Trade Center. The strength of the United States was buttressed – militarily, economically, and politically – by planners and organizations identified with those sites. When the towers came down in a repeatedly televised global spectacle of disintegration, the myth of US invulnerability and of its divinely blessed national vocation was publicly and dramatically ruptured.

The rupture, however, prompted massive resurgence of patriotism. This can be understood as not just intense love of country amid national crisis, but as a massive drive to restore an Eden-like sense of invulnerability. It does not matter whether the earlier invulnerability had been an illusion or that it cannot now be recaptured. The loss is nonetheless felt and expressed in many efforts of citizens to restore their sense of invulnerability. This felt loss accounts, in part, for the intense fear in US citizens. The fear is not only of terrorists who might soon be planting bombs in US neighbourhoods and cities. No, the more pervasive fear, I suggest, is a more deeply registered apprehensiveness resulting from the fact that the terrorist attack removed the sense of protection under the sacred canopy of US national greatness. A restorationist drive to recapture that myth of greatness, mingled with the fear of future attacks, is what governments can exploit, promising citizens a restoration of security, persuading them that government needs ever more powers of surveillance.

It is this restorationist drive, powered by fear and patriotic love of the homeland (note the name of the newly created Department of "Homeland Security"), which has been exploited by various powers after 9/11. The Christian Right is one of these powers, and they are joined by military planning and corporate elites. I stress that these powers are not new visitors to the American cultural landscape. They were etched deeply into US cultural life long before 9/11, however resurgent they may be now. Let us look more closely at these post-9/11 powers, beginning with the Christian Right.

The Christian Right

I use the phrase "the Christian Right" to refer to a group of Christians who feature three major traits. First, the Christian Right is a *politically proactive* group of Christians. Their religious life not only carries political meanings, but to a significant degree integrates those meanings into an overtly political agenda. Of course, other religious communities can and do share this feature. This feature alone, then, is not sufficient to define the Christian Right, but it is a necessary starting point, especially since the Christian Right may be the most politically proactive at the national level, among all religious groups in the US. As Esther Kaplan documents in her book, *With God on Their Side,* the Christian Right mobilizes its agenda through "an ornate and stable infrastructure of hundreds of national and local membership organizations," with budgets often exceeding the $100 million level, and radio and TV industries reaching millions of people.[6] For example, there exist whole networks of thousands of Christian churches and parachurch groups, strengthened by generously endowed think tanks and political action committees that cultivate links to Israeli nationalist groups in the US seeking to shape policy on Middle Eastern hotspots.[7]

Second, the Christian Right is marked by what I call an *explicit theocratic intention.* Regarding the political agenda it organizes, the Christian Right believes that it has a duty to enforce its religio-political vision. It does not just "have an agenda," as almost all religious and other groups do; it also has an intention to enforce it, to "rule." Hence, the commitment to "theocracy," rule by God.

There are hard and soft modes of this theocratic intention. Both are explicit in the sense of intending some notion of religious values as necessary for structuring political rule. The harder version, though, is found in the likes of Robert Upton of the Apostolic Congress who explicitly embraces the goal of theocracy, and in others who organize Christian colleges and institutions named "Regent," as with Pat Robertson's Regent College. These intend to implement God-based, Christ-ruled governance in America, and are expressive of "Dominionist" and "Reconstructionist" political agendas that long have been on the US cultural scene.[8] A softer version of the theocratic intention limits the intention to vaguer talk of rooting political life in "God's principles," "biblical principles," or "biblical foundations." They are not quite so explicit about an intention to rule, but they organize and vote out of a conscious sense that these religious principles are important guides for political life. The softer theocrats thus often support the harder ones. Whether hard or soft, though, the theocratic intention takes aim at almost all spheres of human life, from individual morality, to organizing family life, to society's sexual practice, social customs, and especially national policy.

This third mark of the Christian Right is *a piety of militarist nationalism.* The Christian Right fuses religious devotion with reverence for the US nation-state and often to its expansionist designs. Much of this nationalist fervour is driven by a kind of apocalyptic mindset, evident in the Christian Right's militarized fantasies of divinely willed world destruction.[9] Christian Right videos, such as *Faith is in the White House: George W. Bush,* show Christian Right leaders like Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention, and others, embracing the vocation of US "manifest destiny." This is grafted onto a sacred reverence for the "founding fathers" and key US Presidents, usually presented as exemplars of Christian piety. The Christian Right, then, often grants a sacral aura to unquestioning loyalty amid the aggressive nationalism of the Bush regime today. While many US evangelicals would not identify with the Christian Right, the Christian Right does benefit from the years of intentional work that evangelicals as a whole have done in allying their interests with the US military.[10]

These three features give the Christian Right prominence in governance well beyond its numerical strength in the population. The Christian Right should not be confused with all "conservative Christians," nor with terms like "evangelicals." The category of white evangelicals, according to a University of Michigan Study of 2000, constitutes only 23.1 per cent of the US population. Of this number, historian and contemporary analyst Anatol Lieven suggests only 7 to 12 per cent of the US population actually support the Christian Right's agenda.[11] That 7 to 12 per cent, however, is between 19 and 32 million people, more than enough to constitute 40 per cent of Bush's presidential popular vote. But even that percentage is not enough to put a nominee into presidential office and keep his agenda alive. Other powers are at work. We do best not to point only to the Christian Right to explain the political times in early 21st-century USA. The Christian Right is not an independent variable. So, what are the other powers? We can explore these by noting the links of the Christian Right to the neoconservatives and to corporate power. Let us consider each in turn and so begin to trace out the imperial triumvirate.

The Theocon/Neocon Alliance as Romanticism

Consider the relationship in the triumvirate between the Christian Right and the neoconservative Pentagon planners. We might call this the Theocon/Neocon alliance, understanding "Theocons" not as theological conservatives, a larger group, but as "theocratic conservatives," displaying the traits of the Christian Right noted above. Theocons' alliance with the Neocons is possible because they both share commitments to "American exceptionalism." They each tap into a long-running current of US American romanticism, the belief in the country's unique vocation to defend and carry freedom forward globally, often expanding and crossing national frontiers to do so. The romance centres on Winthrop's "city set on a hill," Reagan's "shining city."

Since 9/11, the Neocons' exceptionalism has not embraced a category as overtly religious as "manifest destiny," but they have its rough secular analogue in notions of "American greatness" and "American power."[12] Never mind that the Christian Right celebrates more the God-fearing presidents, while the Neocons prefer the heroics of a swashbuckling, charge-ahead guy like Teddy Roosevelt; they both drink from the well of political romanticism, pursuing visions of the nation's exceptional grandeur. In that shared romanticist milieu, both God-fearers and swashbucklers often mingle. Both are united in a project of revolutionary romanticism, an aggressive program for remaking the US in keeping with a collective triumphalist aspiration. Moreover, throughout US history, the greatness and expansion of the nation was most often forged in contestation with "racialized" others, with usually white champions of the nation having to prove themselves on some frontier of engagement with them. This racialized aspiration for greatness has extended, in numerous mutations, from the period of early North American settlers to the most recent depictions of US soldiers in Iraq as cavalry for US frontier stockades.[13] These romanticists of "America," Theocons and Neocons together, provide the political scaffolding on which the media often elaborates – further developing citizen fear and uncritical patriotism.

I use the word *romanticism* to characterize the alliance between the Christian Right and the Neocons because naming their shared interests as such enables us to go deeper, beneath the play of US public and global policies to discern the political anthropology and even a political ontology that are operative in this post-9/11 context. When exploiting post-9/11 fear and drives to restore mythic security, the Christian Right and Neoconservatives are not just growing strong through refurbished notions of manifest destiny and American greatness. Tracing those notions *is* important, but both of them are ways to exploit, toward distorted and destructive ends, some deep anthropological and ontological needs of a nation's residents. As romanticist moves, I am suggesting that the Theocon/Neocon alliance plays off of citizens' need for narrative structures that provide sense of belonging to a culture, land, and nation. Myths of a people and of their origins are often what provide this narrative structure of belonging. As Richard Slotkin has suggested, "The history of humanity gives us no reason to suppose that we will ever cease to mythologize and mystify the origin and history of our societies."[14]

It is important to understand how deep-running are the powers that are being tapped by the Christian Right and Neoconservatives. The kinds of romanticist forces at work today in the US have in other contexts generated dangerous chauvinistic nationalisms, leading to fascism, more ruthless racism, militarism, and war.[15] Many countries have learned the hard way that it is important to temper devotion to romanticist myths of a nation, or to formulate them and reformulate them in ways that respect other nation's narratives. The challenge we face in the US, amid the recent resurgence of romanticism in the Thecon/Neocon alliance, is to construct an alternative romanticism, or, at least an alternative narrative structure, that might satisfy US citizens' anthropological and ontological hunger for "belonging being." Such an alternative narrative might help resist the destructive impact of the present romanticizing powers that inspire people to accommodate totalitarian structures at home and imperial adventures abroad.

Christian Right/Corporate Power Alliance as Liberalism

Consider next the Christian Right's link to corporate power. Corporate powers may be more comfortable with the Neocons than with the Christian Right, because the Neocons' deployment of the US military system keeps them in continual interaction with the corporate structure and big businesses that drive the military industrial complex. Moreover, the Theocons, especially with their strong romanticist nationalisms, can seem to many corporate agents like eccentric cultural conservatives, lagging behind the transnational and cosmopolitan dynamism that corporate powers claim to prefer.

Nevertheless, corporate players know that the Christian Right regularly delivers a large number of compliant consumers, whose mix of piety and politics rarely allows analysis or critique of the corporate sector's inordinate control over national wealth and monetary policy. Especially after 9/11, with the spectacular display of the World Trade Center taking a direct hit, the economic system in the US also shuddered, as airline industries, hotel, and other sectors were hit hard. Uncertainty in the US political and economic domains does not help financial investor classes feel secure.

In such a context, corporate powers found two of many ways to capitalize on the 9/11 moment. First, they prevailed upon those in the US Congress who are especially supportive of corporate interests to rush through massive tax breaks for major corporations. Second, the explosion of nationalism made market exploitation of a whole host of commercial Americana a lucrative business in itself; we saw, for example, people selling old and new forms of national memorabilia as well as pasting flags on familiar products to give them greater marketability. Moreover, beyond these two particular ways of capitalizing on the post-9/11 moment, the intensified "war on terrorism" economy has created new wealth for the large number of corporate contractors in the US who provide military equipment and services.[16] An active military given a noble nationalist purpose is often a financial boon for corporate power. In short, Christian nationalism might sit awkwardly alongside cosmopolitan corporate transnationalism, but militarist nationalism under pressure can be good for business – especially in a time of threatening economic disorder. Corporate power can easily help to power an unchecked chauvinistic nationalism.

It is important to stress that when speaking of "corporate power" here I do not mean any person working for corporations or any one company or corporation. I mean the key groups among corporate classes, who are heavily invested in preserving what is often called a neoclassical or neoliberal global economic order.[17] Corporate power here names the economic and political structures of "globalization" that serve the interests of leading groups in the G-7 countries, regularly operating to the detriment of poorer nations, and often widening gaps between rich and poor within the richer nations. This group has an interest, in the US, in maintaining a domestic economic order in which the top one per cent of the population captures 70 per cent of all earnings growth.[18] That economic distortion is well served by corporate alliance with sustained nationalist fervour.

This has happened before. US businessmen sought war with Spain in 1898, for example, in part to defend economic interests and advances amid the pressure of labour disenchantment, growing populist movements, and surplus capital. They thus accommodated themselves to the jingoist patriotism and resurgent American romanticism of that period.[19] As another example, economic managers in 1930s Germany helped deliver power to the National Socialists, the revolutionary romanticists of that time, in part because holders of wealth trembled in the face of the genuine social reorganization that was needed and being called for by powerful protest movements and a system in crisis.[20] This does not mean that the compromise with war and nationalism is *only* worked by the corporate classes; quite to the contrary, populist nationalism spreading throughout all sectors of social strata is also crucial, often carrying the romanticist nationalism that corporate power exploits.

Theocons and CEOcons

Today, the Christian Right's "Council on National Policy" is one example of an organization maintained to coordinate Christian ties between Theocons and many leading CEOs of the neoliberal economic order.[21] We might term these the CEOcons (CEO conservatives, seeking to preserve and defend the present transnational economic order). The Bush regime today is a perfect host structure for both Theocon and CEOcon interests. This presidential regime combines a corporately connected, Bush family dynasty in the highest echelons of political power, with ideologies of theocratic conservatives. The Christian Right's Council on National Policy is just one way of nurturing this alliance. The Bush regime's effectiveness in hosting both theocratic and economic conservatives is dramatized by the enormous funds that have gone from Wall Street world of CEOcons to the administration most favoured by Theocons. *The Washington Post* has documented Wall Street's unprecedented level of giving to Republicans in the 2004 presidential campaign.[22]

The Theocon alliance with corporate culture, as with its alliance to neoconservatives, is again not just the work of an evil, ruling minority. The synergy playing between faith and consumption in the Theocon/CEOcon alliance also taps into deep-running cultural currents. The structures of economic gain, especially when baptized by faith, attain their public cogency because of a powerful

anthropology and ontology that they exploit. Corporate power clothes itself in promises of improvement for people. It exploits and distorts people's need for growth in wealth, to experience progress and improvement. People are oriented to living in expectation of some betterment in life – either as to wealth, opportunity, knowledge acquisition, educational and vocational advancement. This can lead to consumerist greed or lust for power, but this expectation, short of those distortions, is also a part of aspiring human being. This dynamic, future-oriented drive to grow toward the new means that humans are steeped in what I call "expectant being," in addition to the "belonging being" that gives birth to mythologies and romanticisms of the past.

Contractual Liberalism

This expectation is the heart of liberalism. It pervaded the "American enlightenment" culminating in the Constitution of the founding fathers. Speaking about the heart of the founders' interests, the young Abraham Lincoln gave voice to the core liberal aspiration when he intoned, "We proposed to give *all* a chance; and we expected the weak to grow stronger, the ignorant, wiser; and all better, and happier together."[23] Corporate power gains public support for itself by presenting its system of economic life as implementing this liberal aspiration. It may seem strange to say, but when the Christian Right allies itself to corporate power it is also wedded to a kind of liberalism, the liberalism that claims to champion liberty and progress, but largely through an uncritical support of the corporate market. (For example, Christian Right megachurch pastor Rod Parsley has a website that links his online "Breakthrough Covenant" ministry with advertising for a book, *Eat, Drink and Be Healthy*, as well as for major corporate credit cards.[24])

The tragedy and moral failure of expectant being in the US, even in the most sophisticated of liberal ideologies, is that the liberalism announced has in practice almost always been "contractual," and this in two related senses. First, it is a liberal vision carrying hidden contracts that often limit freedoms and access to improvement, accommodating patterns of discrimination that damage most severely peoples of colour, women, and others at structural disadvantage. Thus philosopher Charles Mills has written of liberalism's "racial contract" and political theorist Carol Pateman of its "sexual contract," noting how peoples of colour and women, respectively, have been routinely neglected or disenfranchised by liberal orders.[25] Here, hidden contracts function to limit the liberal promise. Liberalism is contractual, though, in a second sense, i.e. as a contracting, or shrinking, of the sphere of those who might realize liberalism's benefits. Liberal or neoliberal economic orders display this notion of the contractual when they shrink the economic sphere of liberal largesse so that it meets most the needs of a very few, the one per cent, who work atop the US economic order.

In fact, there is a danger today that the Christian Right, in the triumvirate with neoliberal corporate power and the neocons, is doing more than reinforce a limited, contractual liberalism. The triumvirate is also helping to create an anti-liberal modernism, a greater decay of the liberal proclivities in US civic nationalism, driving it back toward the brasher modernity that accommodated diverse and complex structures of domination. Anti-liberal modernism preserves liberalism's claim to develop, expand, and drive toward the new, but usually only as the technological creativity by which elites create an ever more efficient apparatus of social control. There is modern "progress" in terms of technology and bureaucracy, but these are distinguished neither by being shared nor by seeking a wider dissemination of goods among US or global residents.

What Is Going On?

What's going on in the USA? In sum, at the highest levels of national governance (with repercussions throughout all levels of the body politic), three forces – theocratic conservatives, neoconservatives, and corporate conservatives (Theocons, Neocons, and CEOcons) – have brought their somewhat divergent agendas together in a tridimensional governing regime, what I have termed an imperial triumvirate of cultural-political-economic forces. The power of this triumvirate resides in the ways it has tapped into the long-existing currents of American romanticism and liberalism. Amid the fear and restorationist patriotism of the post-9/11 milieu, Theocons with the Neocon war-planning elite have exploited the romanticism and exceptionalism of US mythology, harnessing people's human need for belonging, co-opting and distorting it for imperial adventuring abroad and disciplining at home. At the same time, Theocons with the CEOcon corporate elite exploit the liberalism of US civic history, harnessing people's human orientation to expectation (for progress, prosperity, and improvement), co-opting and distorting this to foster, again, a public sanctioning of US imperial ventures abroad and structuring at home. In the past,

social movements, civil rights organizing, international agreements, as well as a variety of constitutional amendments and legislation had placed some brakes on the the most sinister tendencies in these US currents. With 9/11, however, the public has been less attentive to those tendencies; in fact, they have often been ready to define their modes of belonging and expectation in modes that support leaders ready to exploit them for their own power. So, where might we go from here?

Dissolving the Triumvirate

Many programs, involving courageous leaps and daily small steps, will be necessary to counter the strength of the imperial triumvirate. As US policies of war in Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere become more destructive, as the Republican regime rationalizes greater levels of torture for racialized others, as it unbridles militarism and totalitarian control, as it increasingly neglects its own residents' social well-being, more drastic course corrections will become necessary – such as removing national leaders, presidential impeachment, or abolition of long-standing intelligence agencies. Whether minor or major in nature, we can assess these steps in terms of how they contribute to five larger aims that loom today as increasingly urgent mandates. The first three of these mandates concern links in the triumvirate's alliance; the final two direct us back to what might renew the best of our democratic visions.

1. **We need to at least slow the growing alliance between the Christian Right and the Neocon military planners.**

This means doing everything possible to disrupt the ethos that links Christian piety with US militarism. Fortunately, there are dissenting Christians who do not support the American exceptionalist agendas of the militant Christian Right. There are also dissenting military personnel who depart from the Neocon agenda of pursuing the "American greatness" of unrivaled military supremacy. Christian and military dissenters need to work together to expose ever more clearly the public danger posed by the Christian Right/Neocon alliance.

One of the reasons that Cindy Sheehan's anti-war protest outside Bush's Crawford ranch and on national tour – partly in memory of her son killed in Iraq – made such an impression is that her movement displayed US military and Pentagon critics of the Iraq war cooperating with US Christians who offered up their own protests, prayers, and even Eucharistic ceremonies. More efforts of that sort might help to break the Christian Right/Neocon tendency to fuse Christian and military fervour.

2. **We can also work to weaken the links forged between the Christian Right and corporate power.**

Again, there already exist dissenters who object to this linkage from both sides. There are Christians who do not understand their public witness to be primarily an implementation of the agenda of corporate power. These are Christians who view the spirit of Christ to be alive primarily in the agency of the activist poor, with whom others, including some of the wealthy, can enter into supportive relation. Christian voices like those of Ron Sider and Jim Wallis who speak from the evangelical left, together with Jewish voices like Michael Lerner, present religious practices that challenge the exploitative ways of corporate powers. Christians who critically engage Marxist and other critics of the economic order are also important. All of those voices are essential for weakening the Theocon/CEOcon alliance in the imperial triumvirate.

In the corporate culture itself there are also dissenters whose cosmopolitan, religious, or secular self-understandings lead them to object to the CEOcon/Theocon alliance. They often view the agenda of the Christian Right as a violation of global human values and, in a more self-interested manner, see it as blocking corporate growth.[26] Both Christian and corporate dissenters to the link between the Christian Right and corporate power need to expose the dangers of this alliance for the whole body politic and the way those dangers erode the positive impulses of religious faith and corporate practice that aid the peoples of the world.

3. **Lest we think that resisting the triumvirate means only focusing on the Christian Right, we must take aim also at the ways other forces help to cement the problematic alliance between Neocons and corporate powers.**

The Neocon/CEOcon link is not facilitated only by the Theocons' links to both. The Neocon/corporate alliance also has its own dynamics of fusion, linking drives for imperial grandeur with drives to accumulate wealth. A whole nation's people can become complicit in imperial drives and economic lust, but usually the architects and beneficiaries of that fusion are, as Michael Doyle argues in his book *Empires*, a "dominant domestic coalition" of elites who sit atop an increasingly neglected and restless multitude.[27]

That multitude, with its many organizations, movements, and leaders, must resist the Neocon/CEOcon

link as the elitist alliance it is, driving a permanent war economy that betrays the US body politic even while it claims to build it up. The recent failure of US governance to deal with its own people's needs in New Orleans and Mississippi in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, while pursuing imperial adventures abroad in Iraq and elsewhere, is just one example of how citizens get neglected at home when architects of imperial adventure and economic aggrandizement privilege their own plans.

4. **We need to reinvigorate the revolutionary American tradition that generated the US democratic experiment and strengthened both citizen freedoms and structures of justice.**

That tradition has consisted of what historians Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have referred to as "a motley crew" of activists and ordinary people resisting unjust structures. Leading up to the formation of US government in 1776–1789, decades of earlier organizing were fueled by revolts against slavery; by indigenous nations' attempts to resist, negotiate with, and contain white settlers; by sailors' protest against impressments into imperial navies; as well as the struggles of labourers, women, and youth in a variety of resistance efforts.[28]

Instead of the nationalist and militarist romantic fantasies of our day that have come to define US citizens' sense of belonging, we need a whole new kind of romance, a clear-eyed and sober reverence for our belonging to this "motley crew," the diverse multitude of peoples who continually experiment with new modes of governance, seeking those that serve us best. A deeper kind of national belonging roots itself in this diverse multitude that holds every government accountable to a teeming, sometimes clamorous, multitude of peoples.[29] Here is the founding force of American Revolution, behind, before, and often beyond the plans of those who are called "founding fathers."

5. **The revolutionary tradition mentioned above must come to expression today in a more radical liberalism, one that has yet to be crafted in US democratic life.**

If liberalism in the US has long been, and remains today, a "contractual" liberalism – liberalism functioning in obeisance to hidden and not-so-hidden racial, sexual, and economic exclusionary contracts – then it is long past time to break that liberalism free and return it to the many it has often excluded. Moreover, if liberalism itself is now being set aside wholesale – as some of the new brutal technocrats of modern empire do today – then it is a matter of the utmost urgency that a stronger, more radical liberalism be forged as a levee against any new flood of modern barbarity.

Such a radical liberalism will require honouring and foregrounding leaders of long-repressed groups who are at work today: i.e. those speaking for communities of colour that still suffer racism; for women whose structural disadvantage remains (especially when compounded with economic hardship and racial discrimination); for the sick, elderly, and disabled; for the 2.1 million incarcerated; and for the rural and urban poor who continually get locked out of programs that could better their lives, or who are enticed onto the ever-new killing fields of the American empire. These groups have their leaders and their own organizations. It is time to build the US future around their needs and visions for the whole body politic.[30]

Increasingly, though, if we want a radical liberalism consistent with our deeper and more worthy revolutionary tradition, we will have to construct forms of governance around such leaders of today's excluded and repressed peoples. Through acts of imagination and organization, let us begin to see them as *our* representatives, experimenting with ways of giving them opportunities for leadership for forging a new political future for civil society. Let us hold plebiscites, for example, on the issues and visions they set before us, and attend to these plebiscites with a civic virtue that excels what we give now to electoral processes in a system that so often fails us. Let us practise a shadow government, just as many held shadow conventions to challenge the major political party nominating conventions in 2000. This may all seem only a play of shadows. But such citizen performances also rehearse us in new patterns of civic virtue so necessary for new government to spring forth.

There will be no easy replacement of the governmental regime we have today, but something like this radical liberalism, re-energizing American revolutionary traditions, is necessary for staving off the imperial triumvirate consolidating itself anew today, thriving as it does on the old militarist romanticisms and on resilient, exclusive liberalisms. The hour is late, but it is still not too late to challenge the imperial triumvirate, to plant seeds for regime change in the US.

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[1] This talk was the first of three lectures given at St. Andrew's College on February 5–8, 2006, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The title for the event as a whole was "The Church, Empire and Post 9/11 Global Orders."

[2] Rabbi James Rudin, *The Baptizing of America* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2006), 11–19.

[3] Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities & Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), and Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic* (New York: Metropolitan, 2004).

[4] Mark Lewis Taylor, *Religion, Politics and the Christian Right: Post-9/11 Powers and American Empire* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 35–46.

[5] Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 23–25.

[6] Esther Kaplan, *With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House* (New York: The New Press, 2004), 72.

[7] Kaplan, *With God on Their Side*, 123–24.

[8] On these two traditions, see Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: Guilford, 1995).

[9] See the fine discussion of this apocalyptic mindset in Richard K. Fenn, *Dreams of Glory: The Sources of Apocalyptic Terror* (Hampshire, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

[10] Anne C. Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military, 1942–1993* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University, 1996).

[11] Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 140–41.

[12] Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 15, 17.

[13] On frontier language regarding Iraq, Thomas Donnelly and Vance Serchuk, "Toward a Global Cavalry: Overseas Rebasing and Defense Transformation," National Security Outlook, *AEI Online,* July 1, 2003. For the history of the racialized frontier, see the set of three volumes by Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (1973), *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (1987), and *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in 20th-Century America* (1992), Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.

[14] Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 654.

[15] On the threat of these developments in contemporary USA, see Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York: Viking, 2006), and Chris Hedges, *American Fascism: The Rise of the Christian Right* (New York: Free Press, 2006).

[16] Carl Boggs, *Imperial Delusions: American Militarism and Endless War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 29–31.

[17] For a fine summary of the politics and economic values of this group, see Rebecca Todd Peters, *In Search of the Good Life: The Ethics of Globalization* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 41–69.

[18] Kevin Phillips, *Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), xiii.

[19] Norman Etherington, *Theories of Imperialism: War, Conquest and Capital* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 7–24.

[20] Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Viking, 2004), 222–30.

[21] See www.policycounsel.org/18856/28356.html (Accessed June 9, 2006).

[22] Thomas B. Desalt and Jonathan Weisman, "Wall Street Firms Funnel Millions to Bush," *The Washington Post*, 24 May 2004, A04.

[23] From *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln,* eds. Roy B. Bashler, as cited in Richard Cowardine, *Lincoln: A Life of Purpose and Power* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2006), 26.

[24] http://www.breakthrough.net

[25] Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), and Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

[26] David Batstone, *Saving the Corporate Soul, and (Who Knows?) Maybe Your Own: Eight Principles for Preserving Wealth and Well-Being for You and Your Company Without Selling Out* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

[27] Michael Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

[28] On the motley crew, see Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 236–40, and Taylor, *Religion, Politics and the Christian Right*, 112–20.

[29] On the "multitude," see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 189–219.

[30] Taylor, *Religion, Politics and the Christian Right*, 129–41.

What Is Going on in Quebec? Public Religion and Democracy

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Mark Lewis Taylor's article "What's Going on in the USA? Rise of an Imperial Triumvirate" in this issue of *the ecumemist* inspired me to reflect on the role of public religion in Quebec. For many progressive thinkers, the union between neo-liberal or free-market economics, "neo-conservative" politics, and conservative Christianity in the United States only reinforces their insistence on a complete separation of Church and State, religion and politics. The dictates of modern democracy and efficiency, they argue, demand that society allow only rational – and thus "universally valid" – arguments to sway public policy. Allowing religion any place in public life would automatically mean discriminating against people of other faiths or none, impinging on the rights of individuals to freedom of conscience, compromising the autonomy of the state, and promoting inefficient and irrational ideas, values, and practices. The emergence of an alliance between "Theocons," "Neocons," and "CEOcons" that Taylor describes, many argue, illustrates the necessity of confining religion to the "private sphere" of personal choices, small-scale community worship, and family life.

The Quebec experience should force us to rethink this logic. It shows that the privatization of religion does not automatically promote a more fully just, rational or participatory society. In the former Soviet Union, for example, religion was almost fully privatized, but the state soon betrayed the principles of the Enlightenment upon which it was putatively founded. Frequently, the churches became carriers of those principles. In a similar way – but obviously in a very different context – the Quebec Church is often the protector of democracy, promoter of the common good, and ally of the oppressed in the face of the policies of the state and operations of the market. Moreover, Quebec Catholicism shows that religion is not always and everywhere the ally of conservative politics and the foe of participatory democracy. The prophetic dimension of religion allows people of all faiths to denounce injustice, promote solidarity with the victims of society, and commit themselves to the common good. (In the next issue of *the ecumenist*, we will highlight the Network of Spiritual Progressives organized by Rabbi Michael Lerner of Tikkun.) The Quebec Church, much more consistently than its counterparts in Canada and the United States, exercises this prophetic role in public life. The experience of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec provides us with a counter-example to the "Theocon/Neocon/CEOcon" alliance in the US. It demonstrates that the churches in Canada may confidently – although never naively – play an important part in social life.

The debate around the public role of religion has become so muddled by ideology, quasi-scientific theories, prejudices, and politics, that it is difficult to distinguish what is actually going on and what people believe is (or ought to be) going on. I will use José Casanova's 1994 book, *Public Religion and the Modern World*, to clarify the debate around secularization and the privatization of religion. Casanova's book has become so important to the Anglo-American sociological debate on secularization that one would be hard-pressed to find a book or article written on the topic after its publication that does not mention it. I have applied Casanova's theory to the Quebec experience before and have found it helpful.[1] I also found useful the work of several "outsiders" or non-Quebecers when looking at the religious development of the province. These outsiders, myself included, have looked at the Quebec Church and admired the way that it has reinvented itself since the 1950s, developing a new public role that does not violate the norms of modern democracy or pluralism. Since these writers work in English, readers will find their writing easily accessible.

Casanova and Secularization

Casanova argues that the traditional theories about secularization were a muddle of concepts and arguments that often confused three separate phenomena: 1) a conversion of individuals to a more rational and scientific mentality; 2) a decline in the public function and prestige of religion as part of the process of differentiation; and 3) the privatization or religion. Sociologists first used empirical data that supported one proposition to justify all three. Their critics continued the confusion, dismissing the entire theory by finding data that either showed that people are still religious but shun religious institutions (thus challenging the first proposition above) or showed that religion in many ways remains publicly important, as evidenced by the Solidarity labour union

in Poland and the rise of the religious right in the US (thus challenging the third proposition above). For both supporters and critics of classical secularization thesis, the refusal to distinguish among its three elements has led to conflicting conclusions.[2] This confusion continued, Casanova argues, because classical secularization theory was, in fact, more of a liberal prescription for modern societies than the neutral description its authors claimed it to be. Guided by a variety of secular utopias, sociologists in the 1950s and 60s wanted society to be more rational, scientific, efficient, egalitarian, pluralist, and democratic – and they saw secularization as the first condition of that project.[3]

Casanova contends that this ideological function of secularization theory convinced sociologists that secularization was a structural trend of the irresistible and irreversible process of modernization despite the exceptions to the rule, for example, Poland, Ireland, and, most notably, the United States. In the US, religious membership and attendance grew in step with industrialization and modernization. Sociologists dismissed "American exceptionalism," contending that American religion itself was "secular" or that America was "the exception that proves the rule."[4] In response, in his seminal *A General Theory of Secularization*, David Martin argued that what distinguishes the United States from Europe is that America never had an established church that supported an absolutist state.[5] Caesaro-papism, or the marriage between the absolutist state and the Church, almost destroyed the churches of Europe. In those circumstances, Casanova (following Martin) argues modernizers felt compelled to choose between their church and democracy, between religion and economic modernization. The trend should have been obvious to Europeans: Ireland and Poland never had state churches while Italy and France did.[6] As those societies modernized, Ireland and Poland became more religious while Italy and France became more secular.

For Casanova, secularization as a product of functional differentiation remained the "valid core" of the traditional secularization thesis. The resilience of personal faith and the irruption of politicized religion since the 1960s had disproved the propositions of a decline in religious mentalities and the privatization of religion. However, the increasing institutional autonomy of political and economic society constitutes "a general modern structural trend" similar to Tocqueville's democratization, Marx's proletarianization, and Weber's bureaucratization.[7] As long as societies continue to modernize, Casanova argues, we can expect the process of differentiation, led by actors and institutions in political and economic society, to push for the relegation of religion to the realm of private life. Naturally, some religious communities will resist this privatization while others will embrace it. Some forms of pietism and evangelical Protestant Christianity lend themselves neatly to privatization, focusing their adherents' attention on personal devotion and morality. These Christians embrace privatization in order to protect "pure" religion from political and economic distortion. Others, more used to a public role for their churches, protest privatization vigorously.

Modern Public Religion

Guided by the values of the Enlightenment, many define these protests as a reactionary refusal to accept the norms of democracy and the loss of historical privileges. However, Casanova cautions that, in societies that are neither perfectly rational nor enlightened, we cannot automatically assume that all participation in the public sphere by religious institutions and communities is a threat to democracy and modernization. Along with Wolfgang Schluchter, he asks if there is a legitimate resistance to secularism that is more than a refusal to accept the consequences of the Enlightenment or if there is legitimate religious resistance to de-politicization, a resistance that is more than a clinging to anachronistic, pre-modern privileges.[8] Casanova argues that since some secular worldviews can betray the Enlightenment ideals that inspired them and some religious worldviews can act as carriers of those same ideals, a public modern religion is possible. For example, in the early 1980s, the labour union Solidarity was inspired by Polish Catholicism to resist the atheistic communist state. In this confrontation, it was Polish Catholicism and not communist secularism that carried the Enlightenment values of liberty, self-determination, and democracy. In other words, it was the Church, and not the secular state, that protected the autonomy of civil society, that sphere of free public activity necessary to all modern democracy.[9] Religion, Casanova writes, "has often served and continues to serve as a bulwark against 'the dialectics of the enlightenment' and as protector of human rights and humanist values against the secular spheres and their absolute claims to internal functional autonomy."[10]

Casanova lists three conditions that justify the deprivatization of religion:

a) When religion enters the public sphere to protect

not only its own freedom of religion but all modern freedoms and rights, and the rights of a democratic civil society to exist against an absolutist, authoritarian state....

b) When religion enters the public sphere to question and contest the absolute lawful autonomy of the secular spheres and their claims to be organized in accordance with principles of functional differentiation without regard to extraneous ethical or moral considerations....

c) When religion enters the public sphere to protect the traditional life-world from administrative or juridical state penetration and in the process opens up issues of norm and will formation to the public and collective self-reflection of modern discursive ethics.[11]

Under the first condition, modern public religion serves to protect the very conditions of a liberal political and social order by protecting public life from complete control by the modern absolutist state. Under the second and third conditions, public religion reveals, questions, and contests the very limits and structures of the liberal political and social order, including the social construction of an arbitrary line dividing public from private and the definitions of those spheres.

Case Studies of Public Religions

In his book, Casanova focuses mainly on case studies from Spain, Poland, the United States, and Brazil to illustrate the adaptation of religion to modern conditions. The Spanish experience is one, he writes, of classic disestablishment and privatization. However, the Spanish church itself played an instrumental role in the democratization of that society.[12] As in the Spanish case, the Polish and Brazilian Catholic Church opposed the absolutist, authoritarian regimes protecting their own freedom and autonomy but also organized social movements to resist state control. In the United States, the American Catholic Church of the 1980s protested the nuclear arms race and the claims of actors in political and military institutions to be operating according to the logic of their own sphere of operations, outside of the realm or control of the Church or any other external moral force (*Realpolitik* and military "science"). Moreover, in its pastoral letter on the economy of 1986, the Church denounced the inhuman consequences of runaway capitalism and questioned the right of economic actors and institutions to insist on operating according to the rationality of the self-regulating market without considering questions of ethics and justice.[13] Finally, in the US, the public mobilization of conservative Protestants and Catholics around the question of abortion strengthened civil society by encouraging people to participate in an important public debate rather than allowing the state and judiciary to move unopposed into a realm previously held to be beyond their penetration. Whatever one thinks about the abortion issue, Casanova argues, the important point here is that broader democratic debate is welcome and state regulation of the most intimate areas of human life is not unambiguous.

Of course, not all public participation of religion fulfills the conditions that Casanova sets out. For example, he contrasts the political style of the American Catholic bishops' public interventions on peace and economic justice and those on sexual morality, birth control, and abortion. In the first instance, they intervene as responsible members of American civil society, respecting the integrity of individual consciences and the autonomy of political society. In the second, they return to the authoritarian position of the past, making blanket declarations that they expect the faithful to accept without debate. They also seek to impose their particular morality on the whole of the body politic, resurrecting the social establishment of a certain type of Christianity that secularization had undermined only in recent decades.[14] While he welcomes the first type of participation, the second he sees as a remnant of the Church's patriarchal and anti-democratic past.

For the social theorist, this example illustrates the complexity of the deprivatization issue. Not every church community wants to exercise a public role. For example, the Catholic Church in Spain, like many Pentecostal churches in Canada, have for the most part reconciled themselves to their relegation to the private sphere. Other churches wish to maintain a public presence, but rather as free actors in a democratic civil society and not as state-sponsored monopolies. Finally, some churches act like modern public religions on some issues, while returning to an "establishment" mentality on others. Moreover, the churches will change their stance over time, stepping in and out of the public square. For example, while largely practising a privatized form of Christianity, Pentecostal churches in Canada have mobilized around the same-sex marriage debate. Whether they will continue to be active in the public sphere once this issue has retreated from public debates is another question.

Modern Catholicism

Finally, Casanova's writing on the evolution of the Roman Catholic Church provides a clear analysis of the development of Quebec Catholicism's public role. He argues that during the Second Vatican Council, the Church accepted a voluntary "disestablishment," renouncing historical privileges in countries with a Catholic majority and even refusing to establish or sponsor official Catholic political parties that could forward the interests of the Church. The new position required a fundamental change in the Church's self-definition. He writes:

> Most importantly, the Catholic Church has largely renounced its own self-identity as a "church," that is, as a territorially organized, compulsory, religious community coextensive with the political community or state. This change in self-identity, stimulated by the further secularization of a modern state which no longer needs religious legitimation, has led to a fundamental change in the location and orientation of the Catholic Church from one centered and anchored in the state to one centered in civil society.[15]

In other words, as the Church changed, so did attitudes in secular societies. People came to see that their secular institutions were neither fully rational nor fully enlightened. Many lost confidence in the rationalist projects of secular redemption; they have rediscovered the validity of religion and recognized the positive role of the Catholic Church "in setting limits to the absolutist tendencies of the modern state."[16] When the Church adopts elements of the Enlightenment agenda (for example in its defence of democracy during the Second Vatican Council and its adoption of the faith and justice movement), even secular people welcome its contribution to public debates.

Public Religion in Quebec

The most pertinent element of secularization theory for study of the Catholic Church in Quebec remains its connection to differentiation. In two articles that remain stunning in their clarity and continuing ability to predict developments in Quebec, Franco-Ontarian Hubert Guindon in the early 1960s described the Quiet Revolution as part of the process of structural differentiation. Guindon explained that the Revolution did not assume or promote atheism or anticlericalism. Instead, it unfolded in the name of democracy and "efficiency." Increasingly socialized into rational bureaucracies and democratic values, Quebec technocrats, members of the famous "new middle class," protested the betrayal of meritocracy that put clerics in charge of the public bureaucracy.[17] The Church's control of the education, healthcare, and social services also violated their values of efficiency and efficacy. After the death of Maurice Duplessis, these bureaucrats demanded that the state take over these functions in the name of fairness and efficiency.[18] Guindon pointed out that Paul Sauvé's famous "*desormais*" signaled that the post-Duplessis Quebec would allow the rational state bureaucracy to differentiate itself from the Catholic Church and that bureaucrats in each field could begin to operate according to the logic of its own operations rather than that of the conservative Catholic culture.[19] Jean Lesage's Liberal Party actually put into place the legislation and policy changes necessary to the social disestablishment of the Catholic Church. The rapid secularization of Quebec and a strong push for the privatization of religion were the results of this dynamic.

The structure of Quebec society before the Quiet Revolution – especially the semi-established status of the Catholic Church – helps to explain the very rapid secularization of Quebec society in the 1960s. Despite early analyses of this phenomenon, the secularization of Quebec did not involve a rapid decline in religious mentalities; millions of people did not become rational atheists overnight. Indeed, a number of studies indicate the continued vitality of religious belief and practice in Quebec, even if this belief and practice continues to be increasingly pluralistic, private, and de-institutionalized. However, the role of the Catholic Church in supporting the Duplessis regime in the 1950s and its resistance to functional differentiation in the areas of public education, health care, and social services do explain a lingering hostility to the Church in Quebec. They also explain the lower rates of mass attendance for Quebec Catholics over their English Canadian counterparts (20 versus 32 per cent).[20]

Gregory Baum applied Martin's analysis to Quebec to argue that French Quebecers shared with the Irish and the Poles a loyalty to their religio-ethnic identity in the face of an external power that differed from the people both religiously and ethnically. After the Quiet Revolution, Baum argued, the Quebec experience followed the Belgian model: both Catholics and secularists acknowledged each other as legitimate founders of a unique society and learned to cooperate.[21] The coincidence of Quebec's political modernization with the

Second Vatican Council facilitated this transformation. The Council allowed Catholics to accept the autonomy of the state and political society, the integrity of individual consciences, and the social disestablishment of the Church in Quebec. Even clerics and bishops accepted the change with relative tranquility.[22] In Quebec, after the 1960s, Catholics and others learned to cooperate and consequently no political issue forced people to choose between their religion and modernization.[23] Catholics, as much as anyone else, could reconcile themselves to the new secular nationalism of the Quiet Revolution despite its hostility to the old Catholicism and the old Quebec.

In Quebec, the Church did not accept the privatization of religion. Instead, it sought to define for itself a new public role. This public role was complex. The development of this position was not linear, nor was it without conflict and ambiguity. Four examples speak to the options taken by the Catholic Church. 1) Reaction: a minority of Catholics rejected the new Quebec and new Catholicism. However, acceptance of the new realities of society and the post-conciliar Church by the great majority and church hierarchy has greatly hampered these Catholics.[24] 2) Privatization: the retreat of the Church from control over education, healthcare, and social services represented an instance of the privatization of religion. The personal spiritual needs of Catholics now monopolized most the Church's resources. 3) Public service: even though legislation and administrative regulations controlled the Church's activity in education, healthcare, and social services, it maintained a lively public role in these areas. While declining in membership and resources, religious orders still maintained hospitals, hospices, daycare centres, immigrant and refugee community centres, and other social services. In education, Bill 118 replaced the confessional school board networks with those based on language. Even so, the Church dedicates much energy to providing personnel and resources to Quebec schools. 4) Social justice: the Quebec Church regularly participated in public debates on the economy, the treatment of immigrants and refugees, aboriginal issues, the environment, women's issues, poverty, and even national sovereignty.[25]

To use Casanova's vocabulary, Quebec Catholicism has, for the most part, evolved into a modern public religion. The Church has redefined itself as a member of Quebec's civil society, free to participate in Quebec's public debates and to contribute to Quebec society but within the limits imposed by the democratic culture ushered in by the Quiet Revolution. Indeed, in some debates the Church has turned out to be more interested in democracy than the Quebec state. On issues of poverty, support for immigrants and refugees, unemployment, redistribution of wealth, and the environment, the Catholic bishops' social teaching – and not government policy – serves democracy, pluralism, and progress. (See, for example, the May 1, 2006 statement "The Common Good: Our Action and Interaction" issued by the Social Affairs Committee of the Assembly of Québec Catholic Bishops and reprinted in this issue of *the ecumenist*.) This is a public religion that critical theologians can embrace and celebrate!

Conclusion: Pluralism and Democracy

While Casanova's analysis of public religion in the modern world provides a valuable theoretical framework for the analysis of religion in public life in modern, liberal, Western societies like Quebec, his account does not adequately address broader questions. It provides a useful framework for asking if a particular religious intervention in public debates is democratic or anachronistic or if a particular religious community has reconciled itself to the new Quebec. It cannot provide answers to broader questions, such as, is Quebec itself an injustice? For aboriginal peoples, conservative Christians, as well as members of Quebec's religious and cultural minorities, these questions are pertinent. In a future essay in *the ecumenist*, I will look at the critique of Casanova by the famous anthropologist Talal Asad who challenges the idea that differentiation is the core of secularization. For Asad, secularization is a cultural battle with winners and losers.[26] Asad wants to ask if religious people could not challenge the very division of society into public and private. Does not such a division automatically disallow the validity of the claims and life-ways of various groups a priori? He asks if religious speakers can enter the public realm and leave its secularity intact. In fact, because public space is created and defined by certain elites, religious speakers may have to disrupt the public space created just to be heard. While defending religious liberty, Asad believes that religious speakers should be able to persuade people, that is, to address them at the level of the "private" consciences.[27] Asad's critique of Casanova allows us to see the hegemonic sub-structure of our modern liberal democracies within which Casanova's model works so well. It also warns us against applying Casanova's analysis uncritically both to Western societies and especially to others. In a post-colonial context, such an analysis of democracy

may, in fact, devolve into a liberal legitimation of the negation of the culture (and especially the religion) of the colonized other, adding another episode to the sorry betrayal of the Enlightenment. As we will see, Casanova sees this danger himself.

Asad's critique of Casanova reminds us that, while the redefinition of Christianity as a "modern public religion" in Quebec and Canada was a real moral achievement, it does not settle the issue of the public role of religion once and for all. As Quebec and Canada become more religiously and ethnically diverse, groups are more likely to press for more recognition and greater freedom to participate in the public sphere *even if* this should require challenging the secularity of Canadian public life. Our response to these demands will determine what kind of democracy and what kind of pluralism Canadians will define for themselves in the decades ahead. Will we adopt the classical Enlightenment view and simply forbid all public religion as a threat to democracy and pluralism? Will we allow only those forms of public religion that leave the secularity of the public sphere intact? Or, as Asad might ask, will we allow these diverse communities to challenge the very structures of our liberal democratic society in order to make Canada more participatory, free, and just?

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[1] See for example, "Catholicism's 'Quiet Revolution': *Maintenant* and the new public Catholicism in Quebec after 1960," in *Religion and Public Life in Canada: Historical and Comparative Perspectives,* 257–74, ed. Marguerite Van Die (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) and "Resisting the 'no man's land' of private religion: The Catholic Church and Public Politics in Quebec," in *Rethinking Church, State and Modernity: Canada between Europe and the USA*, 131–148, ed. David Lyon and Marguerite Van Die (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

[2] José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 211.

3 David Martin, *The Religious and the Secular: Studies in Secularization* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1969).

[4] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 28.

[5] David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

[6] Casanova suggests that although this connection had been made by both Alexis de Tocqueville and Karl Marx, European scholars ignored it because the Enlightenment had provided them with an ideological explanation, that is, the myth of rational progress. See Casanova, *Public Religions*, 29.

[7] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 212.

[8] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 37.

[9] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 106–7.

[10] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 38. The Frankfurt School of critical theory uses the term "the dialectics of the enlightenment" to describe the betrayal of the humanist agenda of the Enlightenment by the institutions originally founded upon its ideals. For example, the betrayal of liberty and self-determination by communist regimes created to protect the rights of workers.

[11] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 57–58.

[12] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 75–91.

[13] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 187–92.

[14] Casanova, *Public Religions,* 192–96.

[15] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 62.

[16] Ibid.

[17] "The Social Evolution of Quebec Reconsidered," in *Quebec Society: Tradition, Modernity, and Nationhood,* 3–26, ed. Roberta Hamilton and John H. McMullan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, <1960> 1988), 24. The fact that the management ranks of large-scale businesses in Quebec were almost all in the hands of English Canadians and Americans meant that the private bureaucracy was already closed to them.

[18] Hubert Guindon, Hubert. <1964> 1988. "Social Unrest, Social Class, and Quebec's Bureaucratic Revolution" in *Quebec Society: Tradition, Modernity, and Nationhood*, 27–37, ed. Roberta Hamilton and John H. McMullan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

[19] "The Social Evolution of Quebec Reconsidered," 23–4.

[20] Reginald Bibby, *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2002), 73, table 3.4.

[21] Gregory Baum, "Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec," *The Church in Quebec* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1991), 30–47. David Martin argues that the religious experience of Canada parallels that of Australia and New Zealand almost exactly with the obvious anomaly of Quebec. See his essay, "Canada in Comparative Perspective," in *Rethinking Church, State, and Modernity: Canada between Europe and the United States,* 23–51, ed. David Lyon and Marguerite Van Die (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 27.

[22] See David Seljak, "Catholicism's 'Quiet Revolution'" and "Why the Quiet Revolution was 'Quiet': The Catholic Church's reaction to the secularization of nationalism in Quebec after 1960," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Historical Studies,* Vol. 62 (1996), 109–24.

[23] Gregory Baum, "Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec," *The Church in Quebec* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1991), 38–47.

[24] David Seljak, *The Reaction of the Roman Catholic Church to the Secularization of Nationalism in Quebec, 1960–1980,* Ph.D. dissertation (Montreal: McGill University, 1995), 251–358. These conservative Catholic groups are described by Jean-Guy Vaillancourt and Martin Geoffroy in Vaillancourt, "La droite catholique au Québec: Essai de typologie," *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses*, Vol 25, No. 1 (Winter 1996), 21–33.

[25] For examples of this type of social teaching see Gérard Rochais, ed., *La justice sociale comme bonne nouvelle: Messages sociaux, économiques et politiques des évêques du Québec, 1972–1983* (Montreal: Éds. Bellarmin, 1984).

[26] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

[27] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 185–6.

The Common Good: Our Action and Interaction

Social Affairs Committee of the Assembly of Québec Catholic Bishops

On May 1, 2006, the Social Affairs Committee of the Assembly of Québec Catholic Bishops released a statement entitled "The Common Good: Our Action and Interaction". Rooted in Catholic social teaching about solidarity, the common good, and the universal destination of all goods, it offers an alternative vision to the dominant neo-liberal ideology of our day. *The Ecumenist* presents the pastoral letter with permission of the Assembly of Québec Catholic Bishops.[1]

> No sort of scientific teaching, no kind of common interest, will ever teach men to share property and privileges with equal consideration for all. [...] Everywhere in these days men have, in their mockery, ceased to understand that the true security is to be found in social solidarity rather than in isolated individual effort.
>
> *F.M. Dostoevsky,* The Brothers Karamazov[2]

1. With its May 1st message (International Workers' Day), the Social Affairs Committee of the Assembly of Québec Catholic Bishops wishes to engage the entire population in discussions about our common future. In a world that is increasingly dominated by market pressures, what will become of the common good, which along with our human dignity is the basis of our lives together? What conditions must exist so that the common good is recognized as "a fundamental norm of the State and that the aim of a just social order is to guarantee to each person, [...] his share of the community's goods?"[3]

2. The common good can refer to the notion of public interest, neither of which can be monopolized by agenda-driven lobbyists. The common good is a continually evolving concept that calls for social transformation and cannot be defined by a dominant minority. "Inclusion of all in the life of society, access to the benefits of creation and ability to participate in the effort to improve the world...."[4] We recognize that these conditions are essential components for life in society and they must be available for the "whole human race," without excluding anyone.[5] The notion of the common good also includes people's good will and community involvement, in order to create a "We"[6] that is collectively responsible for a common life. This "We" becomes the collective We, which must scrupulously evaluate the motivation and rationale for future social practices.[7] The concept of the common good includes material resources necessary for the preservation of life and the personal well-being of present and future generations: nourishment, water, lodging, environment, etc. This finally refers to intangible benefits and social conditions[8] that are indispensable to personal growth, fulfillment, and "the development of each man and of the whole man":[9] social structures, institutions, laws, public services, culture, values, memory, traditions, and peace, etc. Realizing that We will share these benefits with the present and future inhabitants of our planet intensifies the urgency to safeguard the essence of the common good, which is our world's greatest asset. It is present in each society and era through the work of people who promote its growth.

Accelerated Undermining of the Common Good

3. Since the 1980s, we have experienced global economic conditions that have reversed or canceled the potential advantages of market exchanges. The result is that powerful people have free rein to make potentially brutal economic and financial decisions and are able to lobby successfully for supportive government policies. The powerful have cornered the market and designed it to mirror their interests. As in the 19th century, they have proposed blind dependence on market conditions as the solution to the challenges we face in the 21st century. This warped view has shrouded our common values and limited our capacity to live and work together. Claiming not to have a choice, the State has been pressured to eclipse its role as guardian of the common good while it compromises its duty to redistribute wealth. The State has also provided the legal framework and resources that this unrestricted market requires. The race for easy money, incessant over-consumption, and a culture of winning at all costs, have promoted individualism and even fostered a culture of indifference toward the powerless. How do we initiate and provide support for projects that will benefit society and act in solidarity with others when the pressures of such a disjointed economic system have upset the social structures unique to countries or regions? How is it possible to live together

under a legalized totalitarian model that pits people, businesses, and groups against each other in permanent economic warfare? The total freedom afforded capitalism has deceptively transformed expectations of social development and participation in the common good that we were assured would result from economic growth. Everywhere in the world, anxiety is growing over the next advance of a neo-liberal agenda that conflicts with economic justice, democracy, social solidarity, and environmental viability – in short, the components of the common good.

4. The pressure from shareholders to safeguard their capital and demands for higher returns on investments incite even more competition. These conditions produce an unstoppable vortex that damages working and living conditions through restructuring and job losses. According to Statistics Canada, the manufacturing sector alone lost 145,000 jobs during the period from January 2005 to January 2006. Of these, 33,300 were in Quebec.[10] Social programs have suffered because businesses have been allowed to diminish their fiscal commitments to their employees. Economists have provided data that proves that neo-liberal globalization has aggravated inequalities in every society, particularly between the rich and poor countries where structural adjustment policies have made life almost impossible for many.[11] In a frenzy that demands profit at all costs, the market is colonizing sectors that previously were untouched: public services, culture, access to clean water, etc. Even our genetic plant, animal, and human heritage is in the process of being patented and subsequently governed by rules that favour privatization and commerce.[12] Neo-liberalism has produced a minority class actively engaged in appropriating what was considered our common good, which we once believed to be unlimited, depriving the majority of the essentials needed for life and personal integrity. Our own humanity is at risk!

Hunger and Thirst for Change

5. The world no longer appears united. In creating an inhospitable world, neo-liberal globalization has not only lost its credibility but also its air of inevitability. What we see is a thirst for change and for participation in decisions concerning our future. This is good news![13] These unexpected reactions have rekindled hope and the impetus to create alternate ways to structure our society. Concern for our children's future, our society and our planet has motivated people throughout the world, particularly our youth. How can we remain insensitive to opinions expressed by such distressing graffiti: "Is there life before death?" In the face of the normalization of this inhumanity as it casts its shadow across the world, there is great urgency to find a common starting point whereby we can move from protests and indignation to a pro-active willingness to live together.

6. This "We," this third option, offers a radical contrast to the neo-liberal one-track mindset that dismisses all alternative proposals as "unrealistic." This *civil* society, this pro-active coalition of stakeholders that exists alongside the market and the state, promotes initiatives that would create alternate world structures, which are not only "possible" but also absolutely necessary.[14] In Québec, the autonomous community movement, spurred on by the solidarity coalition of the victims of neo-liberalism, has more than 9,000 organizations and networks in all sectors of the economy and constitutes a presence unequaled in the Western World. Some examples are the movement for legislation to eliminate poverty, the anti-war protests "*chec à la guerre*" or more recently, the province-wide student strikes and protests that emphasized solidarity issues. To this, we can add widespread concern and public participation in debates concerning daycare issues, school reforms, the legal battles for pay equity and environmental safeguards, and the declarations: "Pour un Québec lucide" and "Pour un Québec solidaire." The Québec Social Forum in June 2006 will be the next local venue for planetary resistance to neo-liberal policies.

A Market-Driven Society or an Interactive Citizenship?

7. We live in a world where conflicting concepts of life and the realities of living together are jostling for space. Relationships with other people is essential for our identity and fulfillment. We create bonds through recognized horizons: family, language, country, customs, etc.[15] and these experiences are the foundations of modern democracy. As human beings, citizens must be recognized as free and equal before the law and in that they are all heirs of a political community. We must be legitimate participants who will fine-tune the definition of the common good and who will make laws that respect our common horizons. As participants, We must be committed to honour the agreed-upon social contracts that promote solidarity. This inclusive, social, and political We must define what constitutes the common good. Without this intervention, the laws of a self-regulating marketplace will degrade people to the status of pawns

and actors, the latter of which would promote only their self-interests. Left unchecked, these laws would draw battle lines that would destroy both our solidarity and the search for the common good. Without a strong We-consciousness, in whose name and for what purpose could we limit the demands of an unrestricted market?

Social and Reciprocal Ties

8. In the Bible, the God of Moses and of Jesus is clearly a God of grace, a Provider. In the spirit of the Jubilee, the grace that we receive must be shared with others. The result is reciprocity, the social bonds of solidarity whereby our love for God and our neighbour becomes a single force that embraces all human beings. A modern example of solidarity can be found in the recent television series *Donnez au suivant* (Pass It Forward).[16] All of these considerations acknowledge the concrete realities of people's lives with the goal of improving their living conditions and access to what we consider the common good. In the biblical tradition of the Jubilee, there is a demand to limit the procurement of land, the servitude of debt, and the over-exploitation of land and workers. The first Christian communities clearly understood that their faith required them to share their goods in order that "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34). In the fourth century, the Fathers of the Church affirmed a universal right to the common goods of the earth, thus indicating that private property is ordained to promote solidarity. We should always be involved in paying down this "social mortgage" (John Paul II).

9. To recap, from the point of view of witnessing to the Christian tradition, and of the new way of living together that it implies, the plans for society proposed by neo-liberalism do not ring true. The "god of the marketplace" is not a provider; it makes unceasing demands on the lives of the most vulnerable. The "other" becomes nothing more than a commodity – a renewable resource that can be abandoned on the side of the road once it has outlived its usefulness. All measures that would limit the power of private acquisition or any course of action that would permit universal access to the common good remains foreign to its purposes.

Conclusion

10. The situation poses questions for all of us. How can we overcome our abandonment of the common good? How can the heads of state distance themselves from the dictates of the marketplace and lobbyists and regain their legislative power in order to give priority to the common good and ensure a just redistribution of wealth? Is not the common good an inviolable concept? How do we integrate a social We whereby every individual's worth and dignity is *priceless,* particularly those who are abandoned and forgotten in a seller's market? What are the conditions required for living together that would take into account our common humanity? Are we merely paying lip service to the concept of justice for all? What tangible means can each of us undertake to repair and re-weave the torn threads in our social fabric?

11. Just like those previously mentioned women and men who are passionate about humanity and already involved in these collective struggles, we are also summoned to leave our comfortable homes and join them as we strive to restore hope for a just society. No discussions, debates, and initiatives are too modest to be counted among the initiatives that will enable us to live in a world that is more hospitable. At the end of the day, what we are proposing is to reinstate universal access to the common good.

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[1] The document may be found at: http://www.eveques.qc.ca/aeqdoc_cas_2006_5_1_e_0.php. The French version is also found there.

[2] F.M. Dostoevsky, 1879. *The Brothers Karamazov,* Part 1, Book VI, Chapter 2. Translated by Constance Garnett.
http://www.ccel.org/d/dostoevsky/karamozov/karamozov.html

[3] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter: *Deus Caritas Est,* December 25, 2005, 26.

[4] Commission for Social Affairs, CCCB, *The Common Good or Exclusion: A Choice for Canadians,* Open Letter to the Members of Canadian Parliament, February 2, 2001, 11.

[5] Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,* 26.

[6] In French intellectual circles, the concept of a community with a strong "We-consciousness" is often referred to as a "Nous." There is no exact English translation.

[7] Jean-Paul Jouary, "Le bien commun : une quête dépassée?", *Virtualités,* Vol. 3, 4, April-May 1997, p. 33. (free translation)

[8] *Catéchisme de l'Église catholique,* Concacan Inc., 1906–1912, Ottawa, Ontario, 1993, 676.

[9] Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio,* To the development of 'each man' and of the 'whole man', 14.

[10] " Emploi : Saignée dans le secteur manufacturier," *Le Devoir,* February 11, 2006, C1.

[11] Éric Desrosiers, "La mondialisation n'a pas tenu ses promesses," *Le Devoir,* October 24, 2004, 1, 8.

[12] Josantony, Joseph, " Breveter le vivant: une menace pour le bien commun," *Development and Peace,* 2001, 4.

[13] Guy Paiement, Michel Rioux, Collectif des journées sociales du Québec, "Une bonne nouvelle pour le peuple," *Le Devoir,* January 5, 2006.

[14] Peter Leuprecht, "Contraindre le fort pour affranchir le faible," *Relations,* No. 705, December 2005, 18.

[15] Dany-Robert Dufour, *L'art de réduire les têtes. Sur la nouvelle servitude de l'homme libéré à l'ère du capitalisme total,* Paris, Denoël, 2003.

[16] *Donnez au suivant* was a reality television program on Télévision Quatre Saisons hosted by Chantal Lacroix. The show traced the chain reaction of a single act of generosity or kindness.

Marriage: Contract or Covenant?

Michael Lawler's new book, *What Is and What Ought to Be*,[1] deals first with the relation of theology and sociology and then applies principles derived from this relation to the Church's evolving understanding of married life. Michael Lawler is the director of the Center for Marriage and Family Life at Creighton University and the author of a previous theological study, *Marriage and Sacrament* (1993). In the present book he argues that dialogue between theology and sociology is necessary to gain an understanding of the evolution of Catholic teaching. Finding itself in new historical circumstances defined by a different culture and different values, the Church's magisterium is challenged by new ideas, summoned to reread Scripture and tradition, and obliged to formulate anew its ethical teaching. The evolution of Catholic moral teaching has been a process involving controversy and confusion in the community and producing uncertainty in the ecclesiastical magisterium. The following are two famous examples.

Two Famous Examples

Usury or the taking of interest on money loaned among members of God's people was forbidden in the OT. While the NT makes no reference to this prohibition, the Church in the patristic age condemned the taking of interest – first for the clergy, at the Councils of Arles (314) and Nicea (325) and later for all Christians at the First Council of Carthage (348) and the Council of Aix (789). Solemn condemnations were pronounced by the Lateran Council (1179) and the Second Council of Lyons (1274). In the Middle Ages, money was regarded simply as a medium of exchange for articles of consumption so that the person who loaned the money was thought to be adequately repaid by the return of the same amount. Yet with the emergence of a capitalist economy, European culture began to change. Since money allowed merchants to expand their trade and increase their profit, it seemed reasonable to many Christians that persons who loan money to such merchants should be allowed to accept interest as a share in the profit of the enterprise. The Catholic Church resisted this cultural evolution. Even Luther and the 16th-century Anglican divines refused to change the traditional teaching. Calvin was the first theologian who permitted the taking of interest within certain limits. The new economy eventually affected the whole of European culture, and the churches, including the Catholic magisterium, changed their ethical teaching. The word 'usury' now came to be used only for excessive interest rates.

Another dramatic story in the evolution of Catholic teaching is the slow realization of the magisterium that the institution of slavery is essentially immoral. For many centuries, the popes distinguished between licit and illicit slavery. It was licit to posses slaves under certain conditions: either if they had sold themselves into slavery to pay their accumulated debt or if they were non-Christians captives in a just war, i.e. a war of a Christian nation for a good and honourable cause. The strong condemnations of slavery by the popes after the invasion of Africa and America by European powers denounced the enslavement of entire populations and the capture of humans as merchandise for the slave market. To this day, readers of these condemnations do not agree on whether they only indicted illicit slavery or whether they rejected the institution of slavery as such. The ambiguity of these declarations allowed Catholics to keep their slaves in good conscience. In Canada, the heroic Jeanne Mance and several archbishops of Quebec possessed slaves. As late as 1819 Archbishop Joseph-Octave Plessis took a black slave with him on his visit to Britain and France. In the 19th century, the papacy still distinguished between licit and illicit forms of slavery. It was Leo XXIII who in his encyclical *Catholicae Ecclesiae* of 1890 pronounced the definitive condemnation of slavery in all its forms.

A New Cultural Context

In his book, Michael Lawler offers the analysis of a more recent drama, the wrestling of the ecclesiastical magisterium with the changes in the cultural understanding of marriage. In the Canon law of 1917, marriage was still defined as a contract (can. 1012), the object of which was the exclusive and perpetual right to the body of the other (*ius in corpus*) for acts suitable for the generation of offspring. Canon law recognized as secondary object of the contract mutual help and the remedy of concupiscence. This definition of marriage, handed down over the centuries, reflected a culture in which marriages were often planned by the parents of the spouses and not necessarily the result of two people in love deciding to make a binding commitment. Yet this culture changed. In Western society after World War I,

people increasingly experienced themselves as called to self-determination, as persons responsible for the choices that define their future.

In 1930 the Anglican Lambeth Conference[2] declared that "the conditions of modern life call for a fresh statement from the Christian Church on the subject of sex" and of marriage (Resolution 9). The teaching of Jesus on married life must be read in the new cultural context that attaches great importance to "the sacredness of personality and the more equal partnership of men and women" (Resolution 10). The Lambeth Conference recognized that the end of marriage was procreation, yet it put equal emphasis on the affection between the spouses and their loving sexual intimacy. The Conference decided that for good reasons, not driven by selfishness or self-indulgence, Christian couples were allowed to use appropriate methods of birth control (Resolution 15).

In partial reply to the Lambeth Conference, Pius XI wrote his encyclical *Casti connubii* in 1932, in which he moved beyond traditional Catholic teaching in two ways, both of which are carefully examined by Lawler.

Casti connubii: Step 1

Pius XI approved of the new cultural context and agreed with the Lambeth Conference that the nature of marriage included the mutual love between the two spouses. This mutual love, proved by loving actions, has "as its primary purpose that husband and wife help each other day by day in forming and perfecting the interior life... and above all that they grow in true love of God and their neighbour."[3] So important is the mutual love and life of the spouses, Pius XI argued, that "it can, in a very real sense, be said to be the chief reason and purpose of marriage, if marriage be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of children but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and the sharing thereof."[4] Pius XI no longer uses the discourse of *ius in corpus*. While the primary end of marriage remains procreation, its secondary end – the communion of love – shapes the common way of life of the spouses.

Two German theologians, Dietrich von Hildebrand and Heribert Doms, encouraged by this shift in papal teaching, decided to introduce what they regarded as a more humanistic and interpersonal theology of marriage.[5] Reacting against the spread of biological materialism and the trend to interpret the human being as belonging to the chain of evolving animal life, the two authors moved beyond the biological or procreative concept of marriage and defined its purpose as building up the loving and fruitful communion between the spouses. The two authors thought they were supported in this by the new theology of *Casti connubii*. Yet because they disregarded the primary end of marriage as defined by the magisterium, including *Casti connubii*, their books were put on the Index. In the '40s and '50s, the Roman magisterium reaffirmed more than once that, however important the secondary end of marriage may be, it always remains subject to the primary end: procreation.

After a vigorous, extended debate on the council floor, Vatican Council II decided to drop the legal language referring to marriage as "a contract" and to redefine marriage as "a covenant," an expression of biblical resonance that has interpersonal meaning and suggests that the promised communion includes God's gracious presence. Vatican Council II also dropped the distinction between the primary and secondary end of marriage. According to present-day teaching, the two ends of marriage, procreation and loving communion, are not in a hierarchical relationship. Two persons who cannot have children or who, for good reasons, do not intend to become parents, can enter into marriage, fulfill its holy purpose, and become religiously, socially, or culturally fruitful. Von Hildebrand and Doms were the prophets who helped to bring about this evolution.

According to Michael Lawler, this new teaching raises many questions that have not yet been answered. The covenantal understanding of marriage which allows a couple under certain circumstances to bracket procreation, opens the door to new reflection on the marriage of same-sex partners – an institution that has become legal in Canada, was recognized by the United Church of Canada, and has been strongly condemned by the Catholic hierarchy. The author of this book does not raise this issue.

Lawler turns to another thorny issue. The covenantal understanding of marriage, he argues, calls for a new look at the traditional teaching, going back to the Middle Ages, that a marriage becomes permanently valid only when it is consummated. According to the Catholic Catechism, "the marriage bond has been established by God in such a way that a marriage concluded and consummated between two baptized persons can never be dissolved." But when is a marriage consummated? When marriage was defined as a contract, as *ius in corpus*, 'consummation' referred to the first sexual intercourse. Yet when marriage is defined as a covenant, as a binding interpersonal communion of spousal love, then

'consummation' is not something that can be achieved by a single sexual act: consummation is then a gradual process of faithful living invigorating the bonds of love. If we use this definition, we become aware that there are many couples, married for several years, who have never consummated their union: they have remained strangers to one another, possibly even competitors, each pursuing his or her own projects. Such non-consummated marriages, Lawler suggests, could be dissolved by an ecclesiastical court.

In this context Lawler recalls that in the tradition of the Orthodox Church, a marriage disrupted by separation has sadly lost its substance: the holy spousal covenant no longer exists. The Orthodox Church looks with sorrow upon a marriage that has died just as it does upon a marriage where one spouse has died – which means that the now single person can marry again under certain circumstances. Lawler reports that participants at the Council of Trent wanted this Orthodox practice to be condemned, yet the Council refused to do this. It respected the alternative practice. Responding to today's widespread pastoral problems, the 1980 World Synod of Bishops decided, by a vote of 179 – 20, to ask Pope John Paul II to take the Orthodox tradition into consideration,[6] a request repeated by many bishops individually and in groups.[7] So far the Vatican has refused to rethink its position. Michael Lawler argues persuasively that the covenantal understanding of marriage, endorsed by Vatican Council II, has as yet not been consistently applied by the ecclesiastical authorities.

Casti connubii: Step 2

Pius XI did not want his concession in *Casti connubii* to the interpersonal understanding of marriage to weaken the traditional teaching that marriage is oriented toward procreation. He therefore introduced a new teaching in his encyclical – according to Lawler, an entirely new teaching – namely that every single sexual intercourse must be open to procreation. The Pope thus opposed the position adopted by the Lambeth Conference. Even if the shared communion of love shapes the daily life of the spouses, they cannot escape the duty of procreation: each sexual embrace between them must be open to the generation of offspring. Many Catholics experienced this ban on any kind of birth control as a heavy burden.

A few years later the question emerged whether Catholics may use periodic continence with the specific intention of avoiding conception. After the question was debated for many years, Pius XII ruled in 1951 that such actions were moral as long as there are "serious reasons" of "a medical, eugenic, economic or social kind." Lawler reports that the statement of Pius XII was not accompanied by any arguments. The ruling was obviously in contradiction to the teaching of Pius XI that every sexual act must be open to procreation. If engaging in sexual intercourse with the intention of avoiding pregnancy was perfectly moral under certain conditions, then it is no longer true that every sexual intercourse must remain open to the generation of offspring. By allowing the so-called rhythm method, the magisterium seems to be in contradiction with itself.

Non-reception

Lawler has studied the relevant theological and ecclesiastical texts, but has also paid careful attention to empirical studies of what Catholics believe about married life and human sexuality. Polls over the last decades have asked Catholics: Do you believe a person can be a good Catholic if he or she disagrees with the Church's official teaching on a series of issues related to marriage and human sexuality? The results have convinced Lawler that the Church's official teaching on these issues has not been "received" by the faithful in North America. The *sensus fidei* (the sense of faith) of the believing community has not brought forth an assent to certain positions proposed by the magisterium. Is this non-reception an expression of reprehensible disobedience? Or does this hesitation have positive theological significance? Lawler reports that several theologians look upon the non-reception by the faithful as part of the Spirit-guided evolution of the Church's official teaching. This bold proposal, which does not have the support of all Catholic theologians, makes Lawler's study an interesting and controversial book that deserves wide attention.

Gregory Baum

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[1] Michael Lawler, *What Is and What Ought to Be* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

[2] www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/archive/1930/in1930.htm (accessed April 7, 2006)

[3] *Casti connubii*, n. 23.

[4] *Casti connubii*, n. 24.

[5] Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Marriage* (London: Longmans Green, 1942); Heribert Doms, *The Meaning of Marriage* (London; Sheed and Ward, 1939).

[6] Michael Lawler, 153.

[7] Michael Lawler, 163.

Enough Is Enough! An Open Letter to the Quebec Bishops

On Sunday, February 26 of this year, a group of 19 priests from Quebec published an open letter to the Canadian bishops protesting the bishops' opposition to the proposed law recognizing same-sex marriages, as well as the Vatican's recent document on the admissibility of homosexuals to holy orders. The priests' letter was published in Montreal's *La Presse*, the largest French-language newspaper in the province. It is reproduced in translation below.

Two recent Church documents commented on people of homosexual orientation: one concerned civil marriage of persons of the same sex here in Canada, and the other dealt with accessibility to the priesthood and came from the Vatican. The first case concerned the submission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) to the Legislative Committee on the proposed Bill C-38; the other document came from the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome. In both cases, the overall attitude expressed and the arguments used provoked in us – and in many others – confusion and protest.

Perplexed by the Negative Tone

The Second Vatican Council brought to light a fundamental truth: the Church loves the world. It welcomes the world with its treasures and its miseries. It is ready to accompany the world on its journey. The Church wants to contribute to the life of the societies that constitute the world, and expects in turn to be enriched by this contact with them.

What a difference in attitude can be found in the submission to the Legislative Committee on gay marriage! It is as if you are giving a lecture in law and anthropology to our political representatives. You denounce the pitiful state of marriage in our country and predict a further deterioration if Bill C-38 becomes law. Unfortunately, you make us think of those "prophets of gloom" recalled by John XXIII at the opening of the Council.

How distant we feel from the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World! There we read: "The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of this age... these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."

Is there even a trace here of the compassion that infused every work of Jesus on earth? Not a paragraph, not a sentence in your submission takes into account the historical discrimination against homosexuals or the tragedy of the profound social and religious exclusion experienced by a large number of them. Nevertheless, every project for the recognition of the gay movement in its many expressions is rooted in this human suffering. Is there not reason here to be confused?

This same attitude is found in the Instruction of the Roman Congregation regarding the admissibility of homosexuals to holy orders. According to *The Tablet* (November 27, 2005), Timothy Radcliffe, the former Master General of the Dominicans, recently said about this document, "I have no doubt that God does call homosexuals to the priesthood, and they are among the most dedicated and impressive priests I have met.... And we may presume that God will continue to call both homosexuals and heterosexuals to the priesthood because the Church needs the gifts of both."

He concludes, "We should be more attentive to whom our seminarians may be inclined to hate than whom they love. Racialism, misogyny and homophobia would all be signs that someone could not be a good model of Christ."

Disagreement with the Argument

We find the entire argument behind these texts unconvincing. They speak of "natural law" as if it were a fact, as unchanging as it is self-evident. We believe that humans never finish searching for and discovering their "true" nature. We only grasp the human condition by the bias of a particular culture, which never stops evolving through time. Thus, what is "natural" in one civilization and in one past era can appear unacceptable today. Naturally, this evolution extends over long periods of time, and one must speak of it in terms of centuries rather than years. For example, slavery was seen as natural, even in the Church, for many centuries, but now it is seen as "against nature."

The responsibility for the exploration and definition of natural law is incumbent on everyone since it concerns the common condition of humanity. The Church can draw from valuable sources of inspiration, some of which are unique to it. However, the Church is in solidarity with all humanity and participates in this world. Is it possible that the Church alone holds all the keys that open the doors to the authentic human project? Does the Church necessarily have the last word on the mysteries

of political, social, familial, and sexual life?... Does it have "the whole truth" about human beings? History and common sense would show otherwise. In these matters, the official teaching of the Church has erred more than once.

In this matter, we wish the whole Church would consider itself a participant in the human adventure. May the Church be authentically itself, with its own treasures and limitations, without undue hesitation or undue pretension to "the" truth. May the Church show solidarity and confidence! It seems to us that it is in this spirit and in these attitudes that John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council invited the people of God to open themselves to the "signs of the times."

Everyone Is Affected

Why have we chosen to publish an open letter? First, we want to announce aloud to the many Christians of this land who reject the approach and language of the Church authorities on this subject, "You are no less Christian for your response!" In our view, the essentials of the Christian faith are not challenged by this debate. Your disagreement will not result in excommunication. Please don't exclude yourselves from this important discussion!

Secondly, we would like a dialogue in the Church on all questions concerning homosexuality. Unfortunately, this type of dialogue, especially one that would encourage diverse points of view, is not the standard practice in our churches. This is especially the case given that Rome has already declared its position on the subject. We would like to see Christians begin to listen to the life experiences of their homosexual brothers and sisters, whether this be in their local parishes or in the context of larger consultations with their bishops. We hope that our bishops will discuss this issue among themselves and open the debate in their parishes. Furthermore, we hope that theologians will be asked to contribute to these encounters. It matters little if these meetings are formal or informal, public or private, open or closed. What matters most is that a free debate, an open and authentic expression of views, be encouraged.

We have taken the time to meet with those who witness to the reality of being homosexual in the Church, and we have decided to make public our preliminary reaction. The André Naud Forum[1] is expanding, as is the range of subjects we discuss. We publicly proclaim our desire to make real the great project of evangelization envisioned by Vatican II. Above all, we do not want to return to the nineteenth century: the time of ultramontanism is over! In the Church community, responsible dissent is possible. We want to exercise this right because we love the Church of Christ and we believe in the fulfillment of its mission in the world today.

The priests who signed the letter and their diocese:

André Anctil, José V. Arruda, Jean-Pierre Langlois, Claude Lefebvre, Claude Lussier (Montréal)
Éric Généreux, Raymond Gravel, Bernard Houle, Pierre-Gervais Majeau, Guylain Prince, Claude Ritchie (Joliette)
Jean-Yves Cédilot, Jocelyn Jobin, Alain Léonard, Lucien Lemieux (St-Jean-Longueuil)
Benoît Fortin, Michel Lacroix, Claude St-Laurent (Gatineau)
Jacques Pelletier (Gaspé).

Information: forum.andre.naud@sympatico.ca

Translated by David Seljak, St. Jerome's University

[1] André Naud was a courageous Roman Catholic thinker from Quebec. Readers of *the Ecumenist* will remember Gregory Baum's article "André Naud's Bold Theological Proposal," *The Ecumenist*, 39 (Fall 2002): 12–15.

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