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Re-introducing the **ecumenist**

The purpose of *The Ecumenist,* which began publication in 1962, was the promotion of the ecumenical movement, especially among Catholics. Those were the hopeful years of the Vatican Council. Subsequently the orientation of *The Ecumenist* evolved. While it remained ecumenical in the wide sense, it focused increasingly on what I then called 'critical theology.' By this I meant theology in dialogue with critical thought and attentive to the voices of the powerless in an effort to uncover and explore the emancipatory power of the Christian Gospel. This orientation was related to my academic training first in Catholic theology and later, at the end of the sixties, in sociology and social theory. It was also related to my involvement over a period of twenty years in the international Catholic theological review, *Concilium.*

The articles in *The Ecumenist* came to be concerned in one way or another with theology, culture and society. Influenced by Latin American liberation theology and feminist thought, religious thinkers increasingly recognized the contextual character of all thought and values, including Christian theology. In the present phase of history initiated by the globalization of the free market economy and the neo-liberal ideology that justifie and blesses it, the context of Christian communities is both local and global. Christians want to interpret the Gospel in the context of the history of their own country and, at the same time, respond to the growing inequality produced by the globalization of the free market economy.

I am grateful to Paulist Press which published *The Ecumenist* from 1962 to 1991 and Sheed & Ward which published it from 1993 to 1996. At this time my thanks go to Novalis of Saint Paul University, Ottawa, which has decided to continue the publication of the review.

This issue of *The Ecumenist* reveals both the wide range of its concern and its singleness of purpose—the redemption of culture so that God's will be done. John McKendy, a sociologist, reports on an alternative, cathartic and peace-making approach to prisoners Eduardo Fernandez, SJ, reveals the evolution of Hispanic theological thought in the USA. My articles deal with the impact of the option for the poor on social scientific research and the contemporary debate, of concern to Christians, about the social significance of community economic development.

Gregory Baum

Note: Volumes 34 (1996) and 35 (1997) were published electronically. There were no issues published in 1998.

Transforming Power for Peace: Reflections on the *Alternatives to Violence Project*

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)[1] brings together in three-day workshops a wonderfully diverse mixture of people: individuals who are being held in prison and others who are on the 'outside,' women and men, poor and well-off, some highly educated and others illiterate, teenagers and septuagenarians, Christians, followers of the traditional ways of the Native peoples, adherents of other faiths, and many with no religious affiliation. What unites the participants is a simple conviction that there are *always* alternatives to violence, and that, in the long run, violence and intimidation can never get us what we truly need.

AVP evolved out of an experience in 1976 in New York State's Greenhaven Prison. A group of inmates agreed to work in an experimental program with delinquent-prone youth. To prepare for this undertaking they asked local Quakers to lead them in nonviolence training. Now the program has spread around the world. For several years, the focus was on reducing violence in prisons, but it soon became clear that the violence of prisons is merely a 'distilled version' of the violence pervading the whole society. Today workshops are sometimes held in the community, as well as behind prison walls. Even persons who have themselves never resorted to physical force can benefit from the AVP experience because, directly or indirectly, each of us is implicated in the violence of our world—as victim, perpetrator or accomplice—and each of us has a responsibility to do what she/he can to build a new foundation of peace.

An intensive experience, an AVP workshop is organized into seven or eight sessions, each consisting of a variety of activities. Many of these are familiar to people who have been involved in self-help or consciousness-raising groups: affirmation exercises, games designed to build community, role-playing of conflict situations, and practice in simple techniques for more effective communication. A few simple guidelines are emphasized: Look for and affirm one another's good points. Refrain from 'put-downs,' both of others and of ourselves. Listen with care to what each person has to say; do not interrupt or speak too often or too long. Volunteer yourself only. Observe confidentiality. Respect everyone's right to sit out any exercise or activity with which the person is uncomfortable.

Transforming Power

I continue to be amazed at just how easy it seems to be to bring out the best in the odd assortment of people who turn up for an AVP workshop. From the assemblage of familiar exercises there emerges something quite wonderful and extraordinary. No special equipment is needed—just sheets of newsprint, coloured markers and Mechano sets. Facilitators are not professionals but simply individuals who have themselves participated in a number of workshops and then volunteered to take additional training and serve a period of apprenticeship. The project is financed entirely through donations; the annual budget for all of Canada is well under $10,000 a year (an infinitesimal amount compared to the total annual costs of the Canadian justice system, estimated at $9.3 billion).[2]

Participants not only *hear about* "alternatives to violence," but directly *experience* a different way of relating to others and to themselves. I marvel at the acceptance, gentleness and good humour that build over the three days of a workshop and the wonderful variety of talents that becomes visible. My involvement in the program has reinforced my conviction that it is not 'human nature' that damns us to behave selfishly and aggressively.

Of course it needs to be said that an AVP workshop constitutes a short-lived and arguably 'artificial' community, an oasis of acceptance and compassion within the otherwise hostile and de-humanizing environment of the prison. For most of the participants, life goes on afterwards *more or less* as it did before; it would be foolish to expect that a single weekend could turn around a life previously defined by violence. Nevertheless, by shifting even slightly the balance of life-denying and life-affirming forces, the vector of a person's life can be changed. AVP smuggles into the darkness of the prison the "contraband of hope," the vision that there is a better way to live.[3]

Why does AVP work? As my involvement grows, so also does my certainty that the answer lies in the spiritual foundation of the project, conveyed through the no-

tion of "transforming power." Named by some God, the Creator or the Holy Spirit, and by others in terms of the goodness and potential of every person, transforming power is always available to those who are open to it. It gives us the courage and insight needed to transform situations of potential violence into non-violent ones. It does not require us to be passive or submissive, or to seek out suffering or martyrdom. Instead it calls us to respect ourselves, care for others, to think before reacting, to expect the best of ourselves and others, and always to ask for a non-violent solution.

An AVP workshop can demonstrate that it is relatively simple, inexpensive and painless to bring people together in ways that encourage them to show their best human qualities. Yet in our everyday lives, we often find it so difficult to continue to express ourselves peacefully and in life-affirming ways. Why is this? Addressing this question requires that we critically reexamine our understanding of the forms of violence that touch our lives.

Structural, interpersonal and state violence[4]

I recall vividly an experience I had in an early session of the very first workshop I attended. We were doing an exercise called 'concentric circles.' Individuals form themselves into two circles, one within the other. A person in the inner circle sits facing outward, directly opposite another individual sitting in the outer circle, facing in. One member of a pair is instructed to speak on a particular topic for three minutes while the other listens carefully, without interrupting. Then the speaker and the listener change roles. This time I was paired with a tall, muscular, menacing-looking man in his 30s, with most of the visible surfaces of his body emblazoned with tattoos. If ever there was a man who looked the part of the 'con,' it was Bill. If I'd seen him walking down the sidewalk, I know I'd have given him a wide berth, perhaps even crossing to the other side of the street. We would have had nothing to do with each other. But here we were, sitting face to face. We were asked to talk about "a happy childhood memory." I spoke first. I remembered out loud steering our 1951 Dodge on a backwoods road, along the Nepisiquit River in Northern New Brunswick, perched on my father's knee. I guessed I was about nine. It was a good memory. I went on to tell Bill that just that summer, I'd re-enacted that scene with my daughter, then about the same age, at the wheel. And I told him my father was dying. Bill listened quietly. When it came his turn to speak, he remained silent, slouched in his chair. Finally, haltingly, he admitted to me that he could remember *nothing* of his childhood. The frightening and tragic events he experienced as a youngster were so horrific and the good times so few and far between that his entire childhood memory was suppressed. Bill was serving a long sentence for murder.

Other faces and events from workshops come to mind: a young man describing the physical and sexual abuse to which he had been subjected as a child while living in an orphanage run by a religious order; another deaf from infancy, who never learned to speak, diagnosed as HIV+; a man who lived with severe physical and mental impairments, who talked about the taunting to which he had been subjected almost every day of his life.

By participating in AVP, I learned first-hand ("experimentally," as George Fox would say) things that I knew before, but only in an abstract way. There is really little mystery about why some men wind up in prison. Often their fate is overdetermined. Their childhoods are marked by extreme poverty, despair, drunkenness, beatings and sexual molestation. A familiar pattern is that of being shuttled back and forth between family, foster homes, psychiatric hospitals and reformatories. More than a few of the men I meet in prison are illiterate. Most are poorly educated. Many look much older than their years, ravaged by alcohol, drugs, poor nutrition and chronic health problems.

What should we make of the fact that so many of those whose actions bring tremendous suffering to others have themselves been victims of physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual abuse, both in their early and later years? Do we dare even think about this? I am aware of the moral and political dangers that await anyone who attempts to follow through the implications of these facts.

Our dominant discourse, enshrined in our legal system and lodged in our 'common-sense' thinking, is founded on the assumptions of liberal individualism. Individuals are deemed the authors of their own behaviour. While some allowances are made for those whom we judge incompetent (the very young, the mentally ill, the mentally handicapped), the overwhelming tendency in our society is to hold individuals responsible for their behaviour. Although sometimes we hear other versions of events, generally we are encouraged to see those who 'get ahead' as deserving of their greater wealth, prestige and power. Their success is taken as a reflection of their God-given intellectual and moral superiority. And so those who 'fail' must be stupid or lazy, or both—what else would account for their fate? As far as criminal wrongdoing is concerned, we apply the same logic. We

fear that if we take into account mitigating circumstances, such as poverty, unemployment, past abuse and so on, that the entire framework of our moral and socio-legal order will topple.

It would be foolhardy to absolve individuals of all responsibility for their actions, but it seems clear to me that we are not well served by the liberal conception of the individual as a fully rational, responsible and totally self-sufficient entity. Surely we know, on some very basic level, that we always create ourselves within a web of social relationships and institutions. While not determining everything about us, our gender, race and class background exert extremely powerful influences of who we are, what we do, and what opportunities we have to develop our talents in certain ways rather than others.

The discourse of liberal individualism we have inherited makes it exceedingly difficult to recognize and acknowledge the hurt in the eyes of the aggressor. It is as though to do this diminishes or belittles the suffering of the 'real victim.' It is as though the only choice were *either* to hold the offender fully and absolutely responsible, *or* to make his suffering somehow equivalent to or commensurate with that which he has inflicted on another. It is as though the harm *done to* the perpetrator might seem to cancel out the harm that he in turn has caused. But victimhood is not a zero-sum game! We urgently require new ways of speaking that will allow us to acknowledge the pain of the aggressor in ways that do not distract our attention from the terror and hurt of the person against whom his hand is raised.

Interpersonal violence is visible, dramatic, episodic and acute. This is what most people think of when they think of the 'problem of violence.' This is *all* that most people think of. We need to elaborate and refine the notion of *structural violence:* the non-dramatic, chronic violation of children, women and men that takes place everyday, as they grow up malnourished, live in inadequate housing, are denied the opportunity for an education which would nurture their talents and build their confidence and self-respect, are unable to secure meaningful employment and are thus rendered incapable of effectively participating in civil and political society. As Erich Fromm argued in *Escape from Freedom*:

> [T]he amount of destructiveness to be found in individuals is proportionate to the amount to which the expansiveness of life is curtailed... The more the drive towards life is thwarted, the stronger is the drive toward destruction; the more life is realized, the less is the strength of destructiveness. *Destructiveness is the outcome of unlived life.* Those individual and social conditions that make for suppression of life produce the passion for destruction that forms, so to speak, the reservoir from which the particular hostile tendencies—either against others or against oneself—are nourished.[5]

Those who suffer the greatest hardships and deprivations, because of the accident of their having been born to parents who were poor or otherwise disadvantaged, have minimal opportunities to build their self-respect. Unable to act purposively and positively, individuals experience frustration, shame and anger. Sometimes, particularly in the case of young males, such feelings fuel a rage that gets expressed violently. All too often the brunt of that violence is felt by those who are closest to the person: his wife, girlfriend, child, brother or neighbour.

To the cycle of structural and interpersonal violence a third element must be added: the officially sanctioned violence wielded by the state through the so-called "criminal justice system." This system is built on the assumption that punishment—the infliction of pain intended as such—is the appropriate response to criminal wrongdoing. Ruth Morris, a Quaker and leader in the movement for the abolition of prisons, calls this "misery justice":

> Misery justice looks at a problem and says, 'We won't do anything for the person or persons suffering, but we will bring justice by making someone else equally miserable.' Misery justice is what prisons and courts today are all about. They don't do anything for victims, for social inequity, for the causes of crime, or to change offenders, or to help the families of victims and offenders. They do make offenders more miserable, which is a lame pretence of justice for victims of crime.[6]

Of course the relationship between structural, interpersonal and state violence is complex. Not every act of interpersonal violence can be directly and fully explained in terms of poverty, exploitation, discrimination, and the cruelty of the corrections system. Not all evil can be accounted for in terms of the immoral, sinful structure of our society which, if altered, would permit the innate goodness of all people to blossom forth. Some may be entirely inexplicable, inexcusable and intracta-

ble. But must we not try to assay the volume of violence in our society, to determine the portion that is preventable, the result of social injustice, as against that about which little can be done?

The Contraband of Hope

We are only able to maintain the simplistic and self-serving 'good guys / bad guys' version of the world to the extent that we isolate individuals whom we make into the 'bad guys,' and have nothing to do with them. We expect that a murderer, a rapist or a child molester will be a monster. But when we sit face to face with him, we see a fellow human being, someone who acts out of his own pain and suffering, someone who craves understanding and respect. Looking into the eyes of this person we are shocked to see, not a monster, but a reflection of ourselves. The recognition of our commonality obligates us to struggle to replace fear and loathing with compassion and forgiveness.[7]

AVP is just one of a number of initiatives developed in the past few years by those who see that "misery justice" does not work and that realistic, non-punitive alternatives are possible.[8] Clearly, however, to effectively break the cycle of violence, fundamental change in political and economic structures are also needed. Peter Maurin, co-founder with Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement, put the matter simply: "We need to make the kind of society where it is easier for people to be good."[9] My joyful enthusiasm for the Alternatives to Violence Project comes from the glimpses it has given me of what that society might look like.

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1 For more information about the Alternatives to Violence Project, contact AVP-Canada, Box 157, Hastings ON K1L 1Y0 (email: mcmechan.avp @sympatico.ca) or AVP-USA, Box 300431, Houston TX 77230-0431 (email: avpusa@aol.com). For an internet listing of AVP regional contact persons, see www.webcom.com/~peace/PEACTREE/avp/avpcontacts.html

2 Ruth Morris, *Penal Abolition: The Practical Choice* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1995), Table 2, p. 6.

3 The phrase "contraband of hope" I borrow from Ruth Morris who used it in her keynote address to the International AVP Conference (Hamilton Ont., July 1996). Her talk "Transforming Our World: One by One, or Societally" was published in the newsletter of AVP Canada, *Transforming Alternatives* 5:3 (Fall 1996) 17-22.

4 Here I am relying on the work on David G. Gil, "Preventing Violence in a Structurally Violent Society: Mission Impossible," in *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 66:1 (1996) 77-84. Also Ronald C. Kramer, "State Violence and Violent Crime," in *Peace Review* 6:2 (1994) 171-175.

5 Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p. 206-207, emphasis added.

6 Morris, "Transforming Our World," p. 20. James Gilligan, in his book *Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and Its Causes* (New York: Grosset/ Putnam Book, 1996), provides an incisive analysis of crime and punishment: "the motives and goals that underlie crime are the same as those that underlie punishment—namely, the pursuit of what the violent person considers 'justice.' What is conventionally called 'crime' is the kind of violence that the legal system calls illegal, and 'punishment' is the kind that it calls legal. But the motives and goals that underlie both are identical—they both aim to attain justice or revenge for past injuries or injustice. Crime and punishment are conventionally spoken of as if they were opposites, yet both are committed in the name of morality and justice, and both use violence as the means to attain those ends. So not only are their ends identical, so are their means" (p. 18-19). See also the work of Nils Christie, *Limits to Pain* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982).

7 Roberts defines compassion as "the construal of a suffering or deficient person as a cherished fellow." See Chapter 8 of Robert C. Roberts, *Spirituality and Human Emotion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982).

8 For an overview of promising new initiatives, see the 1996 publication of The Church Council on Justice and Corrections, *Satisfying Justice: A Compendium of Initiatives, Programs and Legislative Measures*, 194 p. Available from The Church Council on Justice and Corrections, 507 Bank Street, Ottawa ON K2P 1Z5 Canada (phone: [613] 563-1688; fax: [613] 237-6129). See also the important collection by Harold E. Pepinsky and Richard Quinney, eds., *Criminology as Peacemaking* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991). This includes an article on AVP by Lila Rucker, "Peacemaking in Prisons: A Process," p. 172-180.

9 Maurin, quoted by Dorothy Day, "The Catholic Worker," in Kenneth Westhues, *The Working Centre: Experiment in Social Change* (Kitchener Ont.: Working Centre Publications, 1995), p. 89.

Social Analysis and 'the Option for the Poor' Can Social Science Research Be Engaged?

The social and economic sciences follow an objective methodology. They rely on empirical research, test their hypotheses, and offer arguments for their conclusions that can be verified by other researchers. Does this objective methodology demand that the researcher be detached and value-free? In this article I wish to show that social science practice inevitably involves a 'subjective' dimension, something derived from the social location, the talents and the options of the researcher. It is worth while to explore this 'subjectivity.' Engaged research, based, for example, on the option for the poor, is not at odds with the objective methodology to which social science is committed. To avoid being too theoretical, I wish to use as starting point concrete examples of social analysis offered in church documents dealing with social ethics.

Theological Ethics Calls for Social Analysis

Over the last decades, thanks to the influence of Liberation Theology and the pioneering Latin American Bishops Conferences at Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979), the Catholic Church has tried to recover the social meaning and power of the Christian Gospel. Christians have come to recognize that the sin of the world includes structures of discrimination, oppression and exploitation, and that the salvation promised by Jesus Christ includes the rescue from these unjust institutions. Faith includes the call to justice. The Latin American bishops have called this 'the option for the poor,' i.e. the readiness i) to look at society from the perspective of the weak and marginalized, and ii) to give public witness of one's solidarity with their struggle for justice.

Christians who follow this call and make this option are bound to enter into dialogue with the social and economic sciences. Pope Paul VI has urged Christians to engage in "social analysis,"[1] and Pope John Paul II, addressing a gathering of young Americans, made this appeal: "Within the framework of your national institutions and in cooperation with all your compatriots, you will want to seek out the structural reasons that foster or cause the different kinds of poverty in the world and in your own country."[2]

Since there are different trends in economics and the social sciences, Christians will want to choose among these trends the ones they find reliable and trustworthy. In their choice, Christians are guided, in part at least, by a theological criterion. I wish to show that they are likely to trust social science research guided by a 'subjectivity' that has an affinity with the 'option for the poor.'

The Scientific Study of Poverty

In their pastoral letter, 'Economic Justice for All,' the American bishops lament that a feminization of poverty is taking place in their country.[3] They propose as a demonstrable fact that poverty is growing in the USA and that among the poor, the percentage of women, especially women heads of households, is increasing. In the notes, they refer to several empirical studies that demonstrate this point. Here they rely on objective social science research.

While these empirical studies are objective and can be replicated by any researcher, there is also something subjective about them, something that depends on the talents and options of the sociologists. These studies are guided by '**the question**' the sociologists have chosen to raise. Among the many kind of questions that can be asked, they chose to ask about the growing impoverishment of women. In the history of the social sciences, attention to the fate of women is fairly new. In a conservative culture that inhibits the questioning of the established order, little attention has been paid to the lot of women and the poor. Feminist scholars have drawn our attention to this. Many sociologists now ask critical questions because an ethical commitment impels them to correct the omissions or distortions belonging to the self-understanding of society. Their research, while following an objective methodology, is carried by a particular '**intention**': they understand their effort as part of a scientific project to reveal an injustice that society has overlooked—in the hope that society will then correct itself.

What follows from this brief reflection is that social science research following an objective methodology (which is value-free) also contains subjective elements (which have value implications): namely 'the

question' chosen by the researcher and 'the intention' carrying his or her scientific effort.

The subjective dimension extends even further. After all, if one studies the spread of poverty, it is necessary to define what precisely one means by poverty. Yet there is no agreement among social scientists on how to define poverty. There are at least two different *'paradigms'* of poverty: the first, more commonly adopted, understands poverty in purely economic terms as lack of money, while the other sees poverty as a debilitating human condition, caused by lack of material resources and the break-down of social relations. In our society, material poverty tends to produce loneliness, anxiety, depression and increasing isolation.

The manner in which researchers define poverty leads them into different directions: it makes them look at different sets of data, and it produces different imaginations about how to overcome poverty. The purely economic paradigm focuses on the lack of monetary resources, pays no attention to the personal experiences of the poor, and without saying so, suggests the idea that poverty can be overcome simply by distributing more money. By contrast, the second paradigm, the socio-economic one, draws attention to the social impact of economic poverty on people, pays attention to what the economically deprived feel and how they are debilitated, and without saying so, suggests the idea that to help the poor to overcome their plight what is needed, in addition to money, is the creation of community.

This brief reflection tells us that facts are never simply facts. They are always carved out an endless chain of events by the activity of the inquiring mind. Facts are real, they are objectively given and exist outside the mind of the observer, but they are detected, gathered and organized following the paradigm in the observer's mind. The chosen paradigm guides social scientific research. If poverty is defined in purely economic terms, the researcher sees nothing but the lack of money; if poverty is defined in socio-economic terms, the researcher gathers much wider data, listens to the people whose conditions he or she is studying, and arrives at a different account of the facts.

From these brief remarks I wish to draw the following conclusion. The subjective elements (subjectivity) in social science research include the choice of the research-guiding 'paradigm' and the 'familiarity' of the researcher with the object of his or her study. The paradigm chosen has certain value implications, and familiarity is achieved by listening to people with empathy.

Summing up I conclude that one way of uncovering the 'subjectivity' operative in social science research is to examine

'the question' asked by the researcher,

'the intention' undergirding his or her research project,

'the paradigm' guiding the gathering and organizing of the data, and

'the familiarity' of the researcher with the people studied.

Disagreements among Scientists

The social and economic sciences are not only interested in *analysis*, they also want to discover the *causes* of social and economic phenomena. When scientists search for the causes of the plight in which contemporary society finds itself, the investigation touches very personal matters, namely the scientists' own relationship to society, raising many fears and hopes. Questions touching upon the causes of troubling social phenomena such as depressions or violent conflict cannot be solved by the application of the scientific method alone. Such questions in fact give rise to debates.

An example that the scientific method alone does not resolve these debates is recorded in the first draft of the American Pastoral Letter, 'Economic Justice for All,' already referred to above.[4] The American bishops wanted an answer to the question why unemployment and poverty were growing, why the gap between the rich and the poor was widening, why ever larger sectors of society were being pushed into the margin and excluded from participation. The bishops tell us in this draft that the social and economic scientists whom they consulted were divided on this issue. Some of them—I shall call them Group A—argued that major changes had taken place in the structure of capital and the orientation of the economy, and that for this reason repairing the damage and overcoming present injustices would demand major structural changes. Other scientists disagreed with this. I shall them Group B. They argued instead that the present decline was not dramatic, that it did not indicate a significant break with the past, and that it was simply due to unwise policies adopted by government and certain industries, and that it could therefore be incrementally overcome by the adoption of the appropriate measures.

The bishops mentioned another question which the scientists they consulted could not resolve.[5] The bishops wanted to know whether the economic collapse and the widespread misery in the Third World was pro-

duced by developments in these countries, to which North American society was simply an onlooker; or whether these conditions were produced by developments in Third World countries that were in some way related to the growing wealth and power of North American society. Here again the scientists consulted were unable to resolve the question, even though all of them followed an objective methodology and provided demonstrations based on empirical research. Because the scientists did not arrive at an agreement, the American bishops decided not to raise critical questions in the final version of their pastoral letter in regard to liberal or unregulated capitalism.

Needless to say, there are other crucially important issues over which scientific researchers are deeply divided, even though they all employ the same objective methodology and demonstrate their conclusions by the scientific method. Among these issues are, for instance, the benefits of free trade, the impact of structural adjustment policies, the social consequences of cutting welfare support, and the effects of immigration on society. How is it possible that research centres and think tanks in the United States and Canada, all of which rely on empirical research and employ the scientific method, arrive at such different conclusions? The answer is very simple: their research is guided by different subjectivities.

Resolving Disagreements among Scientists

The disagreement between the scientists of Group A and Group B that silenced the American bishops did not stop the bishops of Canada and Quebec from taking sides in their social teaching. Siding with Group A, they decided to offer a strong critique of contemporary capitalism. Here is an example taken from the First of May Statement of 1992, made by the Quebec bishops.

> What is most intolerable in the present economic order is how social and economic rights are losing ground before what can only be described as the dictatorship of the marketplace. We are witnessing a weakening of the democratic powers to the advantage of economic powers. The marketplace is imposing its laws: it has become worldwide, espousing free trade, and is marked by fierce competition. Transnational companies use blackmail to impose conditions for setting up operations on our territory...[6]

This analysis is confirmed in other pastoral statements made by the bishops of Quebec and Canada over the years. Why did the disagreement among the economic scientists did not oblige the Canadian bishops to remain silent? How did they and their staff decide that the scientists belonging to Group A were more reliable than those belonging to Group B, seeing that both groups were able to provide rigorous demonstrations based on empirical research and the scientific method? We can answer this question by looking at the subjective dimension of scientific research, described above in terms of 'the question' asked by the researcher, 'the intention' underlying the scientific project, 'the paradigm' adopted in the investigation and 'the familiarity' with the social object under study.

The 'question' regarding the present economic system asked by the scientists of Group A concerned not only the economic facts, but also and especially the impact of the economic system on people's well-being. Because these scientists payed attention to the human consequences of poverty, because they listened to the poor and were 'familiar' with the hardship inflicted upon them, they—the scientists—were keenly aware of the negative impact of the present system and hence, on ethical grounds, urged major structural transformations. They also may have wondered whether mainstream economics was not, consciously or unconsciously, carried by an intention to defend the existing order.

What was the 'intention' underlying the research done by Group A? It was to uncover new data, look at social phenomena usually overlooked, and correct the dominant view held by mainstream economic science. This intention was guided by an ethical commitment. It must be admitted, of course, that ethical commitment in doing scientific research can easily lead to bias or lack of methodological objectivity. If this happens, the research loses its scientific character and becomes a rhetoric of persuasion or even a form of propaganda. But ethical commitment in doing scientific research does not lead to bias or prejudice if the researchers follow an objective methodology, testing their hypothesis by rigorous empirical investigations.

Mainstream economics, represented by the scientists of Group B, makes use of a paradigm that imply a purely economic definition of the human being, the famous homo oeconomicus. What is here assumed is that human beings always act in order to improve the material conditions of their lives. In other words, people are oriented toward maximizing their own advantage so that their behaviour, especially their economic behaviour, is

predictable by science. Seen in this light, competition, which drives people to exert themselves and do better than their neighbour, appears as the motor force of the economy and even, as some believe, the engine of historical evolution.

By contrast, the scientists of Group A adopt a more complex paradigm of the human being: here it is assumed that people act according to a variety of motives, including economic utility as well as loyalty to family or community. While these scientists regard markets as important institutions, they also assume that collectivities, impelled by social solidarity, want to assume a responsibility for the economic well-being of their members. These scientists are therefore critical of an economic system ruled by market forces alone.

These brief reflections on the question, the intention, the familiarity, and the paradigm operative in social scientific research reveal that the subjective dimension or 'subjectivity' guiding the research of Group A has a certain affinity with Catholic social ethics and, in particular, the option for the poor.

When confronted by the great debates in the social and economic sciences, where each side presents positions based on rigorous empirical research, Christians are able to choose sides by examining the subjectivity operative in the various research projects. While all follow as faithfully as possible an objective methodology, they are guided by different questions, intentions and paradigms and have different degrees of familiarity with their social object,—in other words they operate out of different sets of values. Christians will have confidence in the result of social scientific and economic research if the research guiding values correspond to their social ethics.

The Canadian bishops applied this principle in their pastorals: they offered a systematic critique of neo-liberalism. The bishops of the USA, as we saw above, preferred to demand economic justice for all without analysing the dehumanizing effects of neo-liberal capitalism. The American bishops also affirmed the option for the poor, but they preferred not to take sides in the debate among economists. For them, the option for the poor simply meant that in its social policies the government must sustain the poorest and most marginal population groups and increase their participation in the wealth of society. One reason for this reticence, one supposes, is that free enterprise is part and parcel of American culture, while Canada has had a socialist tradition and hence enjoyed, in the past, a wider political spectrum than the United States.

Engaged Scholarship

Engaged scholarship is not at odds with the objective methodology practised by the sciences. In fact, the scientists who insist on the value-neutral character of scientific research cannot escape the subjective dimension involved in all scholarly investigations. If they do not reflect critically on the set of presuppositions implicit in their research, they tend to adopt the dominant values and preferred perspectives of the cultural environment to which they belong. It is, in fact, more scientific if researchers reveal the subjective elements that guide their work and deal with them in critical fashion. What is thus demanded to make the sciences more reliable is 'critical subjectivity,' i.e. a critical assessment of the values and vision implicated in one's scholarly project. If the above consideration are valid, Christian faith can act as guide in doing social analysis and scientific research.

Gregory Baum

1 *Octogesima advenies* 4 (1971).

2 John Paul II's address at Yankee Stadium, New York City: see *Origins* 9 (1979) 311.

3 See the first draft of "Economic Justice for All," in *Origins* 14 (1984) 363. The same material is contained in the final version of the Pastoral, yet the term 'the feminization of poverty' has been dropped: *Origins* 16 (1986) 429.

4 See *Origins* 14 (1984) 342.

5 See *Origins* 14 (1984) 370.

6 *L'Église canadienne* 25:7 (1992) 199.

"Reading the Bible in Spanish": U.S. Catholic Hispanic Theologians' Contribution to Systematic Theology

At a presbyteral ordination which took place recently in a small, old mission town in West Texas, a group of Mexican folk dancers adorned the liturgy with their presence. The joyfully sung Gloria, led by Mariachis, came alive as the dancers whirled in praise of a God who is often found in grace and color. In response to the first reading, the congregation prayerfully sang Psalm 34 as adapted by John Foley's "Cry of the Poor." Mexican shawls in hand, the women dancers, standing before the faithful, moved gracefully in dance and gesture. In unison these young women portrayed gently yet powerfully, a God tender and compassionate, a God incarnate in the suffering of humankind.

It occurred to me that two very different cultures, the Latin American and the North American, came together in that majestic dance. Together they helped to convey the power and compassion of a God who creates, loves, and sustains all, especially the poor. There is another dance being created today in the Church. Its choreographers are a new generation of U.S. Hispanic theologians who are attempting to weave together their Hispanic experience of Church with that of other non-Hispanic theologians.[1]

In this article, I shall use Fernando Segovia's definition of "Hispanic": "those persons of Hispanic descent, associated in one way or another with the Americas, who now live, for whatever reason, permanently in the United States."[2] Some of them have families which can be traced back to Spanish colonial settlements of the seventeenth century. Other Hispanics are more recent immigrants. María Pilar Aquino, in discussing Hispanic women, prefers the term "Latina" which she views as being more inclusive, especially in terms of the black and indigenous women in the Latin American Continent or the Caribbean.[3]

Although their presence goes back to a time even before the founding of the United States, it has only been recently that these Hispanic voices have started to be heard in theological circles. During the last twenty-five years, various theologians have begun to write about a theology seen from a Hispanic perspective, a perspective often characterized by poverty and marginalization.[4]

Among the most comprehensive articles written on the subject are the one by Fernando Segovia, Arturo Bañuelas' "U.S. Hispanic Theology" (*Missiology* 20:2 [April 1992]), and Allan F. Deck's introduction to *Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States* (New York: Orbis, 1992). The *National Catholic Reporter* (September 11, 1992) dedicated its fall book section to the works of Hispanic theologians. The article, by Dawn Gibeau, is quite succinct and interestingly speckled with quotations from the various authors.

Latin America's Theology of Liberation has contributed much to our understanding of perspective in theological methodology. Protestant Hispanic theologian Justo González, proposing a more contextualized biblical theology, calls this approach "reading the Bible in Spanish." He does not mean literally reading the Bible in a Spanish translation but bringing to the interpretation of scripture a particular perspective. He hopes that such a perspective will help not only Hispanics but also the church at large.[5]

This generation of Hispanic scholars has worked hard at bridging the wide gap between the Roman Catholic and Protestant Hispanic churches. Judging from their writings, one notes that they are familiar with each other's work. There has been a nuanced understanding of tradition as Hispanic Catholics have begun to recognize that they are not the only bearers of a particular type of cultural Christianity and Protestant Hispanics are becoming more aware of the Catholic tradition they still partake from.[6]

Other signs of hope for an increased ecumenical understanding between the churches are becoming more evident. Among the most notable are collaborative educational ventures among the numerous ecumenical theological centers throughout the country, for example, the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California; the establishment of a program to help train Hispanic ministers, the Hispanic Summer Program sponsored by the Asociación para la Educación Teológica (AETH); open collaboration in terms of journals such as *Missiology*; and finally, joint efforts for justice, especially in the case of inner city community organizing projects and Central

American causes.[7]

It is important to understand the historical perspective of different dialogue partners. The aim of what follows is to outline very briefly how U.S. Hispanic Catholic theologians, very much in dialogue with Protestant ones, are currently contributing to developments in systematic theology.

Some of the first Hispanic theologians were not as much concerned about making a contribution to the wider church as they were about developing a theology to help guide ministry to Hispanics. Many consider Virgil Elizondo, a Mexican American diocesan priest from San Antonio, Texas, to be the father of Hispanic theology. He first gained wide acclaim for his reflections on religion and culture.[8] Following his example, a handful of others have begun to create a theology rooted in the Hispanic experience of Church. The year 1974 saw the publication of two articles, one by Jesuit priest Allan Figueroa Deck and the other by Marina Herrera, an expert on multicultural catechesis.[9] Deck helped bring together these academicians to form the Academy of Hispanic Theologians (ACHTUS) in 1988.[10] Before discussing the emerging contribution of Hispanic theologians to systematic theology, a word should be said about the current state of affairs in terms of method in this branch of theology.

A Methodological Shift to the Human Person

Maintaining that the study of theology has now shifted from seminaries to universities, Thomas H. Groome and Robert P. Impelli depict a particular "turn to the subject" in our current method of theologizing.[11] Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan are credited for initiating this shift which they describe as an attempt to attend not only to Scripture and tradition but also to "the life and mind, the context and interests, of the persons doing theology."[12] This approach, a methodological shift characterized by a stronger focus on the human person, is particularly attuned to human experience and historical praxis as integral springs for doing theology.[13] Other authors, similarly responding to Vatican II's "signs of the times," view the starting point of theology as dipolar. Our contemporary experience is at one end, and at the other sacred scripture. These texts of the past embody the unique revelation and lived experience of primitive Christians. Crucial in this perspective is the notion that experience is always interpreted experience and therefore subject to human categories.[14]

Unfortunately, in the past, theology and scriptural exegesis became increasingly more separated, theology assuming a more rationalistic bent. Recent developments have restored scripture to its unique status, viewing it "not as a deposit of truths but as a culturally conditioned witness and interpretation of God's proffer of salvation in the historical Christ event."[15] With scripture assuming a privileged status, tradition is not another font of truth but, in the words of van Iersel, "the history of the effects of scripture."[16] Within this unification of scripture and tradition, one can begin to understand the role of systematic theology: to serve as a hermeneutic of the tradition which it confesses.

Systematic Theology and Hispanic Theologians

Just as Latin America's Theology of Liberation opened new horizons in terms of its systematic contributions, for example, in Christology and ecclesiology, U.S. Hispanic theologians hope to do the same by starting to write about such subjects as grace, sin, the Trinity, sacraments, Christian anthropology, Mariology, and ecclesiology—always within the context of persons who form part of a community with a living tradition. The great theological categories, therefore, are messages addressed to the life of the community, not simply the individual in isolation.

For example, Orlando O. Espín develops the Hispanic theology of grace in "Grace and Humanness: A Hispanic Perspective."[17] Here and elsewhere,[18] the proponents of Hispanic theology present a more positive interpretation of popular piety which has often been dismissed too quickly by a post Vatican II era which found it too susceptible to religious syncretism, superstition, or sentimentalism.

In general, Hispanic theologians are using the praxis approach advocated by Liberation Theology. At the same time, they are cognizant of the danger of importing uncritically what is most suited for another context. They are theologizing, therefore, from a unique cultural perspective, from the position within which they, as members of an oppressed people, experience God.[19]

This new group of theologians, of which a significant number are women, seems intuitively aware of the need to stay in touch with the theological environment which gave them birth. At the same time, they are responding to the challenge to dialogue with the tradition as presented by more mainstream or "academic" theologians. Given the existence of a theology from a Hispanic perspective, it is now possible to make comparative studies.

Claudio Burgaleta, drawing on such theologians as Virgilio Elizondo, Jaime Vidal and Orlando O. Espín, has written an analysis of certain aspects of popular religiosity.[20] Another work based on a current Hispanic theologian is Timothy M. Matovina's article, "Liturgy and Popular Expressions of Faith: A Look at the Works of Virgil Elizondo."[21] These pioneer theologians are convinced that a discussion of certain topics in systematic theology from a Hispanic viewpoint will help reveal certain values and experiences which are essential components of the tradition.

Besides the vast pastoral material written by such innovators as Marina Herrera and María de la Cruz Aymes, Hispanic women theologians are contributing much to the methodology of emerging U.S. Hispanic theology. María Pilar Aquino, Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango are beginning to speak of a "mujerista theology" or a "Latina feminist theology."[22] Their work combines cultural, feminist, and liberation aspects and joins that of other women theologians whose views have gone unnoticed in theological circles for centuries.

At first glance, it may seem that Hispanic theologians' greatest contributions have not been in the field of systematics. A closer look, however, reveals that they are setting the stage methodologically. The result, undoubtedly, will be a significant contribution to this new hermeneutic of the tradition, a tradition much wider than the Hispanic experience, yet deficient without it.

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1 This article first appeared in *Apuntes* 14:3 (Fall 1994) 86-90. A slightly revised version is printed here, compliments of the journal.

2 Fernando Segovia, "A New Manifest Destiny: The Emerging Theological Voice of Hispanic Americans," in *Religious Studies Review* 17:2 (April 1991) 102.

3 María Pilar Aquino, "The Challenge of Hispanic Women," in *Missiology* 20:2 (April 1992) 262.

4 An overview of this emerging theology is the topic of my licentiate thesis, "Towards a U.S. Hispanic Theology: A Study of a Current Bibliography," Gregorian University, Rome, 1992. The bulk of the thesis consists of a cursory analysis of a bibliography of most of the material written so far by U.S. Hispanic theologians. I am indebted to Arturo Bañuelas, whose seminar I attended at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley Calif. for the formulation of this approach.

5 Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990) 75.

6 For an insightful discussion of this mutual relationship between Protestant and Catholic Hispanics, see the Foreword by Virgilio P. Elizondo in Justo L. González, *Mañana*, p. 9-20.

7 See Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Ecumenism in Central America," in *Christianity and Crisis* 49:10 (July 10, 1989) 208-212. Radford Ruether notes the very different form which ecumenism takes in Central America, as compared to North America and Western Europe. Instead of dialogue by Catholics and Protestants focused on traditional faith-and-order issues, ecumenism in Central America is centred on radical agendas for today.

8 Virgilio P. Elizondo, "Educación Religiosa para el México-Norteamericano," in *Catequesis Latinoamericana* (1968), México. See also his *Christianity and Culture: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology and Ministry for the Bicultural Community* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1975).

9 Allan Figueroa Deck, "A New Vision of a Tattered Friendship," in *Grito del Sol* 4:1 (1974) 87-93. Marina Herrera, "La Teología en el Mundo de Hoy," in *Páginas Banilejas* (Julio 1974).

10 For a description of how ACHTUS was born, see Deck, *Frontiers*, Introduction.

11 Thomas H. Groome and Robert P. Impelli, "Signposts towards a Pastoral Theology," in *Theological Studies* 53:1 (March 1992) 127.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

14 William J. Hill, "Theology," in *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989), p. 1013.

15 *Ibid.*, 1014.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Roberto S. Goizueta, ed., *We Are A People! Initiatives in Hispanic-American Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 133-164.

18 Relevant works include Orlando O. Espín and Sixto J. García, "Hispanic-American Theology," in *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 42 (1987) 114-119, "The Sources of Hispanic Theology," in *Proceedings of the CTSA* 43 (1988) 122-125, and "'Lilies of the Field': A Hispanic Theology of Providence and Human Responsibility," in *Proceedings of the CTSA* 44 (1989) 70-90. Also noteworthy is Espín's article "Trinitarian Monotheism and the Birth of Popular Catholicism: The Case of Sixteenth-Century Mexico," in *Missiology* 20:2 (April 1992) 177-204. In the area of sacraments, popular religiosity and spirituality, see Arturo J. Pérez, "Baptism in the Hispanic Community," in *Emmanuel Magazine* 87:2 (February 1981) 77-86 and *Popular Catholicism* (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1988). Also helpful and quite illuminating from a women's perspective is Rosa María Icaza, "Spirituality of the Mexican American People," in *Worship* 63:3 (May 1989) 232-246. In the area of Christian anthropology, see Roberto Goizueta, "Nosotros: Toward a U.S. Hispanic Anthropology," in *Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture* 27:1 (Winter 1992) 55-69. In terms of Mariology, see Virgilio P. Elizondo, *La Morenita: Evangelizer of the Americas* (San Antonio: MACC, 1980), together with his more recent work, *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997).

19 See Deck, *Frontiers,* p. xviii-xix, for an interesting comparison between Latin America's theology of liberation and U.S. Hispanic theology.

20 See Claudio Burgaleta, "Can Syncretic Christianity Save? A Proposal for a Christian Recovery of the Syncretic Elements in Latin American Popular Religiosity Based on Rahner's Concept of Anonymous Christianity," STL thesis, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, 1992.

21 *Worship* 65:5 (September 1991) 436-444.

22 Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Mujeristas: A Name of Our Own," in *The Christian Century* 106:18 (May 1989) 560-562. Among her many other published works is a book she wrote in collaboration with Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988). Isasi-Díaz has also published *En La Lucha: Elaborating Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) and, most recently, *Mujerista Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), a collection of essays. María Pilar Aquino's works include "Doing Theology from the Perspective of Hispanic Women" in Goizueta, *We Are a People!*, "Perspectives on a Latina's Feminist Liberation Theology" in Deck, *Frontiers,* and "The Challenge of Hispanic Women," *op.cit.*

Christians and the Economic Debate

Modern society has entered a new phase. Such is the power of transnational corporations and the international financial institutions that national governments are forced to introduce free-trade legislation and surrender the national economy to global competition. Governments tell us that since they must obey international market forces, they are no longer able to protect the well-being of their citizens. Governments claim to be powerless as they see corporations dispense themselves from social responsibility and move their industries to parts of the globe where they can increase their profit margin. Since the new computer technology, the technical infrastructure of the globalized economy, enables the industries to lay off more and more workers, governments are willing to reconcile themselves with massive, permanent unemployment in their countries. Instead of taxing corporations and banks—in order to protect their competitivity—, governments put the burden for the economic decline on the most vulnerable, low-income people and people on welfare. The restructuring of the economy includes handing over to the private sector institutions serving health and education, previously regarded as endowments for the common good. Since global capitalism needs a small, flexible labour force, every effort is made to break the power of labour unions. The industries, content with a minimum of full-time workers, have begun to 'contract out' as much as possible of the productive process. Full employment has ceased to be a realistic ideal.[1]

Neo-Liberalism and the Christian Reaction

Guiding this social project, sustained by the economic elites, is the political philosophy called 'neo-liberalism' or, according to many American authors, 'neo-conservatism.' It is a return, under the new conditions of globalization, to the early phase of economic liberalism that looked upon the self-regulating market as the providential instrument, 'the invisible hand,' that steered the production and distribution of goods so as to serve the material well-being of all. According to this theory, the wealth produced by the owning and managing classes will eventually 'trickle down' to the lower sector of society. Neo-liberalism has become the new orthodoxy, even if though there is little evidence for the hidden hand and the trickle down effect.

Under these conditions, society has become divided into three sectors. The first, the economic and political elites plus the professionals in their service; the second, the shrinking sector of people, middle class and workers, who have secure and decently paid employment or an adequate income through their business or profession; and the third, the growing sector of the excluded—the unemployed, the working poor, the part-time or precariously employed, and the people on welfare. This third sector promises to be permanent.

This state of affairs violates fundamental ethical principles. In 1996 the Catholic bishops of Canada, Britain and France have published pastoral letters in which they describe the enormous human suffering caused by the neo-liberal policies and their detrimental impact on culture, fostering tough competitiveness and discrediting cooperation and compassion. Many other Churches have published similar pastoral documents. The United Church of Canada has accused the economic and political elites of waging "a war against the poor."

These church documents are, of course, not against markets as such. Markets are important. They play an irreplaceable role in the economy. A just society, as John Paul II reminds us, "is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the state, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole society are satisfied" (*Centesimus annus,* § 34).

The important question is now what should be done. How should people involve themselves in finding a remedy for the enormous suffering coming upon the world, massively in the Third World and substantially even in the developed countries? Christians who recognize the link between faith and justice ask themselves the same question. While mainstream economists, politicians and the mass media claim that the neo-liberal policies are necessary and scientifically sound, in other words, that there is no viable alternate choice, there does exist a minority of economists, political thinkers and

social ethicists, including Christians, who think about possible alternatives to the present system. They are engaged in the important economic debate of the present.

Christians participate in this debate. There are, of course, some Christians, including a few Catholics, who approve of the self-regulating market system and the universal competitivity engendered by it. They believe that the struggle for life makes people self-reliant and brings out the best in them, and they hold that people who cannot make it in the market or have been damaged by it should be helped by private charity. These Christians argue that we do not need the welfare state nor labour unions disturbing the law of supply and demand and that the free and untrammelled market works if accompanied by the generosity of the rich. There are only a handful of Catholic authors who defend this position. They argue politely against their Church's social teaching.

At present the important economic debate is between people who argue about how to respond to this new situation. The argument, as I see it, is between those who put the emphasis on political reform and hope for a return of welfare capitalism and those who put the emphasis on new forms of social involvement and hope for the creation of an alternative society. The first group are social democrats and the second social cooperators.

The Hopes of Social Democrats

The activists and authors I designate as social democrats hold that what we have to do is to say No to the collapse of the welfare state and support political organizations that favour a return to the Keynesian capitalism that has served society so well since World War II. John Maynard Keynes had argued convincingly that capitalism works much better if the government intervenes to protect industries in time of slackness, grants a legal status to labour unions, and introduces welfare legislation for people in need. Being made to serve the well-being of society, capitalism creates a social climate in which it will thrive: working people will perform better in the industries, and receiving better pay they will become good customers. Economists are not agreed upon why welfare capitalism was gradually replaced by neo-liberal or monetarist policies. Was it because high wages and welfare costs were so expensive that industries suffered and governments got into debt? Or was it because the economic elites, dissatisfied with declining profits, demanded lower taxes for corporations and thus forced the government to take on an ever-increasing public debt? Or was it the Vietnam War and the arms race of the Cold War that impoverished the American government? There are probably many reasons for the collapse of welfare capitalism.

Is a return to Keynesian economic possible at this time? Such a return is the hope of millions of Americans who involve themselves in the progressive wing of the Democratic Party as it is of Canadians who support the New Democratic Party, the Canadian equivalent of British Labour. These people think that with the right kind of government, society will be able to return to full employment. Labour unions tend to belong to this camp. They lament the massive loss of employment, they say No to the new laws that reduce their power, and they hope that a more social-democratically oriented government will again create full employment.

Many Christians adopt this position. The classical example is the pastoral letter of the American bishops, "Economic Justice for All," published in 1986. It calls for government involvement in the national economy to promote economic justice for all. It affirms, in the strongest terms, traditional Catholic teaching according to which the government must be an agent of the redistribution of wealth in society. The pastoral still holds out the possibility of full employment.

But is the return to a Keynesian form of capitalism a realistic possibility? We have seen that social-democratic or socialist parties elected to constitute national governments—in France, Australia and other countries—found themselves forced by the economic elites or, as it is usually put, by international market forces, to adopt neo-liberal policies. Governments are powerless because a national economy no longer exists: it has been dissolved into the global economy. The decisions that affect the well-being of nations are no longer made by their elected governments but by international economic actors, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and Transnational Corporations. The globalization of the economy undermines democracy.

More than that, because the new computer technology is able massively to replace workers in factories and offices, full employment has ceased to be a realistic goal. Even if countries experience a strong economic recovery producing wealth for the owning classes, it would not create many jobs. The recovery would be jobless. To avoid hiring full-time employees with a right to stability and benefits, corporations now prefer to distribute the process of production by making contracts with individuals to do specified work.

In the present situation, political action can be

successful only if it is international. In a recent article in The Ecumenist (April-June, 1996), the development economist, William Ryan SJ, offered the following examples.

> (1) We need an effective Economic Security Council in the UN to which the World Bank and the IMF are accountable rather than, as presently, to the rich G7 nations. (2) We also need an international agency to monitor effectively and discourage the speculative movements of short term capital that presently threatens to undermine public policy in many countries. (3) We need government also effectively to promote the adoption of a new, more truthful and reliable global measure of 'human development' to replace the standard of 'economic growth' as measured by the GDP (gross domestic product) that, in the present context, hides as much as it reveals... (4) We need government to help us find ways to curtail corporate colonialism and to hold corporations accountable for serving the common good.

An Alternative Proposal

Among the critics of neo-liberalism there are also people who emphasize social, rather than political activity. They attach great importance to the new vitality in the third sector of contemporary society, the sector of the excluded, the vitality that manifests itself in the ever-expanding network of self-help groups, cooperatives and non-profit organizations. These collective endeavours, sustained by a great deal of volunteer labour,[2] have political, social or economic purposes.

Some groups have political purposes: they are formed to exert pressure on city hall to protect a neighbourhood park, to demand the repair of dilapidated streets, to prevent the financial cuts in welfare and old age pensions, or to achieve some other ends by organizing public protest. Other groups have social purposes: to respond to local needs, they set up day care centres, shelters for abused women, educational courses for the unemployed, store front offices counselling uninformed citizens regarding their rights, circles helping newly arrived refugees in trouble with the immigration authorities, and many other such projects. Other organizations, probably the great number, have an economic purpose. They respond to local needs by setting up cooperatives, loan associations, jointly run stores, common kitchens, house repair teams, backyard gardening and other such collective initiatives. Some of these enterprises become large enough to create jobs. In Quebec, where I now live, the provincial government has set up centres of economic initiative in neighbourhoods of high unemployment, which try to bring people together, explore their as yet undiscovered potential and support them in economic projects that serve the community and provide jobs.

All of these activities are commonly called Community Development (CD). If these activities have an economic purpose and create employment, they are referred to more precisely as Community Economic Development (CED). Related to them are non-profit organizations offering professional and technical services such as health clinics, legal counsel offices, job training centres and chartered foundations offering support for community development projects.

All of these collective enterprises need some financial help from external sources, such as governments, chartered foundations, banks, corporations and churches. If these projects can rely on many volunteers, they require only little money. If they are larger and perform important services to the community, they need more substantial support. Yet what makes these enterprises different from social agencies created by government is their democratic character. CED operates on the basis of partnership: decisions are made by listening to the voices of the staff and the clients.

What is important about CD and CED is the impact it has on the consciousness and culture of the participants. The experience of partnership raises people's expectations regarding society as a whole and hence generates a critical attitude towards the dominant institutions of society imposing as they do their decision without participation. CD and CED, moreover, serve an important social purpose. They rescue people from isolation, stir up their energies and empower them to become actively involved. In this they differ from enterprises run according to capitalist principles. In CED economic activity reenforces and enhances community. Following the language of Karl Polanyi, what is taking place here is the re-embedding of economic activity in its social relations.

Is CED simply an emergency measure in bad times to help people damaged by the present economic decline? Is it part of a capitalist plot to pacify the growing number of people whom the market cannot help? Or is CED the harbinger of an alternative social project? Is CED, in other words, the entry into a new model for so-

ciety as a whole. This is today a great debate among progressive activists and thinkers.

The 'advocates' who see in CED the starting point for an alternative society offer a series of arguments. They believe that even if there were no new technology, no economic decline and no public debt, the capitalist welfare state would be in crisis. They speak of the end of 'Fordism.' By Fordism they designate a) an industrial system where management does all the thinking and workers simply follow the rules and b) a welfare system where the state bureaucracy does all the thinking and people in need simply follow the rules. These systems, they argue, have become too frustrating for workers, who want to have a say in the organization of labour, and for citizens in need, who want to be more involved in the projects designed to help them. People, the advocates argue, yearn for more participation. The invention of the welfare state was a great achievement, unique in human history, but it had its dark side, namely the rule of a bureaucracy that was increasingly distant from the people in need and had an isolating and passive-making impact on its clients. The welfare state as we knew it excluded participation.

The 'advocates' continue their argument by insisting that CED overcomes the weaknesses of bureaucratic welfare. First, CED responds directly to the needs as experienced by the local community and second, the operations of CED are set up by a process of social learning, involving help-givers, clients and volunteers. In this twofold manner CED differs from capitalist enterprises as well as public welfare organizations.

But does CED have a future? The 'advocates' recognize that CED remains in need of some external financial support. CED will not travel far simply on its own. What the 'advocates' propose is that various levels of government become involved in CED, not as master, planner or financier, but simply as a source of support for the infrastructure of CED, i.e. office space, equipment, and a small staff of facilitators. With this help from different levels of government, CED would thrive, create jobs, provide services, and involve people in the transformation of their own neighbourhood. Thriving CED would create a new culture of solidarity and cooperation among people and in the long run may even lay the cultural foundation for a new kind of political party.

Three Models of Society

In line with this perspective, the advocates argue that instead of struggling to save the welfare state and hope for the return of social democracy as we have known it, people should struggle for an alternative model of society, one in which government-supported CED, following its democratic principles, provide the serves previously offered by the welfare state. To clarify their position, the advocates of this alternative like to compare three different models of society, 1) Keynesian welfare state, 2) the neo-liberal society which we have entered, and 3) the new model of cooperative society.

Model 1 has the following characteristics:

1. a national market economy steered by the government
2. a strong, centralized state
3. the focus of attention is the nation
4. an orientation toward growth of production and consumption
5. a straining after full employment
6. respect for labour organizations
7. public welfare, i.e. a safety net for people who cannot manage
8. an ideal of the self-reliant person (and hence condescension toward people on welfare)
9. a political concept of citizenship.

Model 2 has the following characteristics:

1. the globalized free-market economy
2. a weak or subservient state
3. the focus of attention is the globe
4. an orientation toward growth of production and consumption
5. an acceptance of massive unemployment as a necessary sacrifice
6. a flexible labour force and hence opposition to organized labour
7. opposition to public welfare, an acceptance of massive poverty as a necessary sacrifice
8. an ideal of the shrewd self-reliant person (and hence contempt for people at the margin)
9. people are defined as consumers, rather than as citizens.

Model 3 has the following characteristics:

1. a plural economy: the private sector, the public sector, and an extended Community Economic Development
2. a supportive state facilitating local and regional development
3. the focus is on regions and their interrelation

4. an orientation toward sustainable development and a culture of self-limitation
5. full employment is replaced by full activity, including the self-mobilized people in CED
6. labour unions in solidarity with community development and cooperating with private and public sector
7. the bureaucratic welfare state is largely replaced by CED replying to the needs of the local communities
8. the ideal is the interdependent, cooperative person
9. people are defined by a social concept of citizenship.

There are several reasons why Model 3 appeals to many progressive people in the Canadian province of Quebec, where I am located. In Quebec, because of its national history, social solidarity is still strong. CED has already become in an important movement, in part because it has the support of the government. The major labour unions, moreover, have expressed their solidarity with the sector of the excluded and established 'solidarity funds' that invest in local industries and promote CED. Several political scientists who have studied the achievements of CED argue in favour of the new model.[3]

What are the arguments of progressive activists and intellectuals against the proposal of the third, alternative model of society?

1. These thinkers refuse to regard as outmoded the great achievements of the Keynesian welfare state, in particular full employment and state-organized public welfare. They argue, therefore, that the principal struggle today is a political one, namely to a social-democratic government.

2. In addition to this, these thinkers fear that a society embodying Model 3 would be deeply divided between a thriving capitalist economy serving the first and second sector of society, and a social micro-economy allowing the third sector to survive on hard work and low income.

3. Some of them are suspicious of communitarian or solidarity movements—populism, in other words—because these movements easily turn to over-simplified solutions, sometimes generate fanatical commitment, and easily express contempt for citizens who disagree with them.

4. These thinkers fear that governments will look upon the support of CED as their only effort of job creation. Moreover, if governments offer strong support for the social economy, they will end up by controlling it and thereby destroying its essence which is self-responsibility.

Christians follow this debate and involve themselves in it on both sides. The pastoral letter on economic ethics, written by the German Catholic and Protestant bishops, alludes to CED, volunteering and a new social understanding of citizenship. The letter speaks of the need for a new ësocial culture,í a culture encouraging involvement in the local community.

Gregory Baum

1 For a fuller development of this argument, see the Canadian Religious Conference, *Stone Soup: Reflections on Economic Justice* (Montreal: Editions Paulines, 1998) 19-40.

2 In my article, "Churches, Charity and Citizenship," in *The Ecumenist* 3:2 (April-June 1996) 33-37, I present critical reflections on the new turn to volunteering.

3 See the entire issue of *Économie et Solidarité* 28:1 (1996). Also Yves Vaillancourt and Benoît Lévesque, "Économie sociale et reconfiguration de l'État-providence," in *Nouvelles pratiques sociales* 9:1 (1996) 1-14 and Pierre Jean, "L'économie sociale: Entrevue avec Pierre Paquette," in *Nouvelles pratiques sociales* 9:1 (1996) 15-32.

Book Reviews

Marc H. Ellis, *Ending Auschwitz: The Future of Jewish and Christian Life.* Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/ John Knox Press,. 1994, 162 pages

Marc Ellis believes that the prophetic ethics of Judaism obliges him to be in solidarity with the occupied Palestinian people and protest against the policies of the State of Israel. In 1990 he published *Beyond Innocence and Redemption: Confronting the Holocaust and Israeli Power* (San Francisco: Harper & Row) and co-edited with Rosemary Radford Ruether the collective volume *Beyond Occupation: American Jewish, Christian and Palestinian Voices for Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press).

The present book is deeply disturbing for Christians as well as Jews. The author argues that one cannot separate the history of Christian anti-Semitism from the other cruel conquests of the Christian empire. It was no accident that the expulsion of the Jews and Muslims from Spain at the end of the 15th century went hand in hand with the invasion and conquest of America and the eradication of its population. Ellis's work as a teacher at an international Christian institution has brought him in contact with the Native peoples of the Americas and the colonized and humiliated peoples of other continents. The systematic humiliation, repression and extermination they have suffered has convinced him that the mass extermination of the Jews during World War II must be seen in tandem with 1492, the beginning of the conquest, rape and genocide imposed by Christian empires upon the indigenous peoples of the Americas.

Anti-Semitism and colonization are both related to the Church's understanding of the Risen Christ as Conqueror, Victor over his enemies and Ruler of the universe in favour of the Christian community. The Church, Ellis claims, has betrayed Jesus, the Jewish prophet and sage, who was mild and forgiving and extended his solidarity in particular to the poor and humiliated.

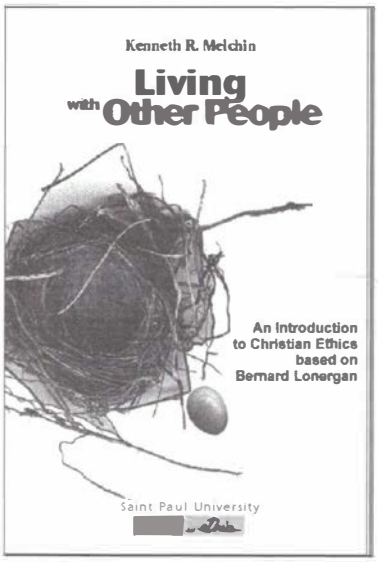
In the name of these victims, Ellis demands of Christians that they 'put an end to 1492,' i.e. cease to see themselves as a victorious, missionary community destined to embrace in its fold the whole of humanity. He believes that this is possible only if the Church returns to 'the Jesus of history' and drops the triumphalist image of 'the Christ of faith.' What the author does not discuss in this book is whether there may be a non-triumphalist manner of affirming 'the Christ of faith.'

The harsh stand taken by Ellis against the Christian Church assures the reader that his harsh stand against the Jewish establishment is not the result of an identification with the Christian religion. Ellis is a believing Jew. His thoughts on 'ending the Holocaust' were provoked by a visit to Auschwitz to which the Polish government had invited a group of Jewish religious thinkers, including Ellis himself. He believes that the horror of the Holocaust has been used by the Jewish establishment and its major thinkers to make the Jewish people blind to the fact they have become like Christians, that they have joined the persecuting empire, that they oppress and cruelly crush another people, the Palestinians, using all the methods of contempt, lying, myth-making, negation, imprisonment, torture and violence, which the Christian empire had used against Jews and the colonized peoples.

The Jewish State, Ellis tells his readers, has decided to dismantle the institutions that sustain the Palestinians in order to subvert their collective identity and make them disappear as a people. While a minority of Jewish religious thinkers believe that Auschwitz should make Jews more compassionate towards other persecuted and oppressed peoples, public opinion in the Jewish community, according to Ellis, appeals to Auschwitz as the justification for joining the persecuting empire. As it is high time for Christians 'to end 1492,' so it is imperative for Jews 'to end Auschwitz,' i.e. to stop using the Holocaust to defend conquest and repression.

This controversial book, hard on Christians and hard on Jews, is inspired by the author's passionate faith in the God of Israel, eternally intolerant of oppression, who sustains with divine power the poor and the humiliated. Because of the purity of its inspiration, the book deserves to be read even by people who may disagree with the author. No one can shrug their shoulders at the indictment, even if they should respond to it in a manner not envisaged by the author.

Gregory Baum



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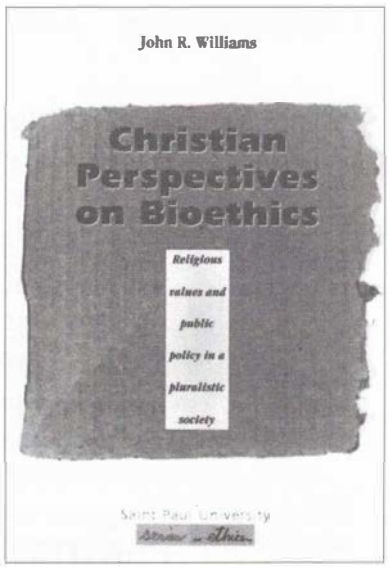

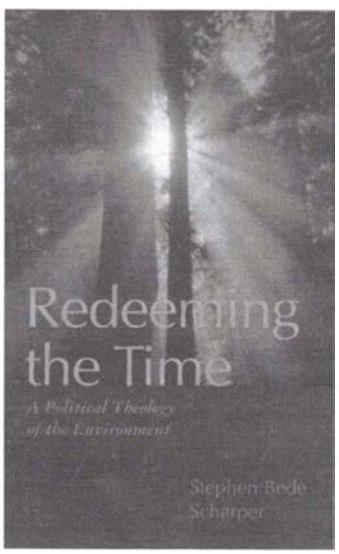

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