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Pentecostalism: Liberating or Oppressive?

An Essay in Pentecostal Critical Theology

The recent explosion of Pentecostalism in Latin America has generated widespread concern that a turn toward evangelical Protestantism might mean a turn away from liberation. This concern is supported by the sociological research which has found Pentecostalism to be primarily a bulwark of the *status quo*, a handmaiden of modernity, and a veritable opiate of the oppressed. While such sociological studies reveal much, they fail to grasp the liberating potential of Pentecostalism, and it is this liberating potential which I wish to highlight in the following essay. Before this potential can be fully actualized, however, it is necessary for Pentecostals to come to terms with the way their beliefs and practices have often legitimated social injustice. This paper, then, is also a call for Pentecostals to engage in critical theology and to become conscious of the structural implications of their faith. Naive, pre-critical theology – so characteristic of Pentecostalism throughout its existence – is no longer acceptable, not because it is unacademic but because it is an obstacle to an authentic Christian witness.

Sociological Research on Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism in America

Robert Anderson, in his book *Vision of the Disinherited* (1979), situates the birth and early development of the American Pentecostal movement, both geographically and temporally, in the context of depression and rapid social change. Pentecostalism arose in the South, achieving early success among impoverished farmers forced into the mines, mills or industrial cities (135). Thus the early faithful were characterized by both marginality and mobility. They were the new working poor, forced from their traditional way of life by a capitalist society caught in the throes of a transition from its competitive, entrepreneurial phase to its monopolistic, bureaucratic phase (224-25). Whenever members of this new class had a background in revivalistic-pietistic Protestantism (e.g., Methodism and the Holiness movement), they tended to adopt Pentecostalism as a response to the material and psychological crises which modernity brought them. According to Anderson,

> by fostering the experience of "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," Pentecostalism provided a catharsis for the troubled; by creating close-knit, primary religious fellowships, it restored a sense of community to the displaced and ostracized; by holding forth the promise of an imminent Kingdom, it offered hope and solace for the despairing. (235)

It is clear, however, that for Anderson these apparent benefits were part and parcel of a kind of "false consciousness" which was ultimately in the service of the *status quo*, rather than the liberation of the oppressed. What began as a protest against social injustice ended up as a mechanism for the integration of the protesters into mainstream society. Pentecostalism first "saved" the believer from the initial threat to his or her psychological

integrity posed by rapid social change. Then it served as a community of inculturation in which social protest and discontent were channelled "into the backwaters of religious ideology," and a new identity was created around the Protestant work ethic and a rejection of the world (239). As a consequence, Pentecostalism transformed the working poor into perfect candidates for the factories of urban-industrial capitalism. "Pentecostalism's rejection and condemnation of 'the world' in rhetoric and symbol, in effect, liberated the Pentecostals to adapt to that world in practice" (Anderson, 238). This "liberation," according to Anderson, was nothing other than a kind of alienation, since Pentecostals were only reconciled to their society at great cost to their own humanity.

Pentecostalism in Latin America

Christian Lalive D'Epinay, in his 1969 study of Pentecostalism in Chile, and Emilio Willems, in his 1967 study of Pentecostalism in Chile and Brazil, follow a similar analytical framework to that of Anderson. D'Epinay situates the explosion of Pentecostalism in Chile within the context of that society's transition "from a traditional and seigniorial type of society [dominated by the *hacienda*] towards a secularized, democratic society" (30). Owing to the economic stagnation, inequalities and massive internal migration which characterized Chile's modernization, popular protest gave rise to Marxist political parties on the one hand, and the Pentecostal movement on the other. As with Pentecostalism in the United States, converts were from the new working poor – i.e., either new arrivals in modernizing cities or those who remained on the land but found their traditional way of life completely destroyed. According to D'Epinay, Pentecostalism has been engaged in building a tightly knit community which can revive many of the features of traditional, seigniorial society even within the flux and *anomie* of a modernizing society. D'Epinay cites several characteristics of Pentecostal sects as being essentially similar to the paternalistic model of the extended family or the traditional plantation: "Teaching based on severance from the 'world,' organization based on personal face-to-face relationships, surrender of the individual to the will of the group, submission to those in authority and above all to the pastor... [and] filling up the whole of the church member's free time" (130). While the reproduction of this traditional form of organization may remedy the *anomie* of the working poor, it also has the unfortunate effect of inculcating a conservative ethic among its adherents and thereby defending the oppressive *status quo* (145) D'Epinay expects Pentecostalism to decline as the eco nomic processes of modernization finally succeed i Chile.

Willems (1967) traces a correlation between mod ernization and the rise of Pentecostalism (and Protes tantism in general) similar to D'Epinay, but Willems dif fers from D'Epinay in explaining the socia consequences of Pentecostalism. Whereas the early suc cess of Pentecostalism for D'Epinay was owing to it similarities with traditional society, for Willems its suc cess was due to its similarities with modern, libera democratic and industrial society (13). Pentecostalism' animosity towards Catholicism may be taken as a sign o its rejection of tradition, as can its belief in the "priest hood of all believers" and the lack of internal stratifica tion within its churches. More importantly, its Protestar ethic of sober living, hard work and economic thrift re builds the believer's personality to conform to th rhythms of an industrial city. Thus Pentecostalism, ac cording to Willems, may reconcile its adherents to mo dernity on the level of economics as well as on the leve of ideology, since the adoption of the Protestant ethi may significantly increase their standard of living (251

Despite their different explanations of the relation ship between Pentecostalism and modernization, bot D'Epinay and Willems explain the apparent protest an animosity of Pentecostalism towards the *status quo* to b merely symbolic, rhetorical and religious. Ultimatel Pentecostalism either adapts the individual to societ (Willems) or fosters a kind of personal escapis (D'Epinay). This perspective, however, does not appre ciate the importance of the symbolic dimension of soci life. Willems and D'Epinay (as well as Anderson) ar primarily concerned with the overt political and ec nomic activity of Pentecostal groups and individual They search for direct connections between membersh in a Pentecostal sect on the one hand and type of partic pation (or lack of participation) in politics, economic unions and special interests groups on the other. Yet the do not pay much attention to the *covert, implicit or sym bolic protest of Pentecostal worship practices and beli statements*. They view these as the products and produ ers of false consciousness and therefore as somethin the analyst must get behind or delve under. It is true th Pentecostal beliefs and practices have often served support an oppressive *status quo* quite without th awareness of Pentecostals themselves – indeed it is on of the main purposes of this essay to confro

Pentecostals with this fact. Yet it is not necessarily true that this is all that Pentecostal beliefs and practices have done or are capable of doing.

The Liberating Potential of Pentecostalism

Liberation activists and advocates of Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs) in Latin America have often condemned Pentecostalism as an incorrigible legitimizer of the forces of oppression. However, this condemnation is based only upon an analysis of the verbalized values and doctrinal statements of Pentecostal groups, which indicate a lack of interest in social justice. If the lived experiences of believers are analyzed, however, rather than official belief statements, then one notices that both BECs and Pentecostal churches foster experiences of renewal, religious reflection, community, revelation, empowerment and the union of religion with everyday life (Mariz, 76-81). Both groups share a vision of liberation which, although different in ideological content, is similar in its spirit and in the economic and political effects it generates (76).

Liberation, then, is not only a promise of social revolution, but it is also the experience of freedom and authenticity, here and now, in the light of the hope offered by this promise. The ideal of consciousness-raising so popular in the BECs is not just a training for a revolution of the proletariat; rather it is the constant construction and reconstruction of an identity centred around a utopian vision of reality (or, what amounts to the same thing, a utopian system of symbols). Without downplaying the importance of future structural change in Latin America, the vision of a more just society is religiously most significant as a utopian system of symbols which informs *all* a believer's thoughts and actions, not just those thoughts or actions directly related to structural change or political revolution. Liberation thus begins with a kind of conversion. Believers in both BECs and Pentecostal groups are taught to see their old vision of reality as a corrupt and inadequate symbol system, perpetuated by a sinful social imagination. They are then required to commit to a new symbol system, generated by the church community, and to reform their identity with reference to these new symbols of hope and renewed life.

> The requirement of conversion counteracts a fatalistic outlook on life by encouraging people to disagree with and rebel against reality as conventionally defined. It disposes people to believe that their lives can be changed. Even Pentecostalism, with its other-worldliness and its respect for constituted authority, fosters a critical, non-fatalistic outlook on life that can work against the movement's official posture avoiding involvement in "worldly" affairs. (Mariz, 77)

Symbol systems are the conceptual lenses through which one sees the world and understands how to act meaningfully within it (Geertz, 81). Those Latin Americans who have had their traditional system of symbols destroyed or rendered irrelevant by modernization require a new symbolic world in which to reorient themselves and reform their identities. Pentecostalism, due to the solidarity and high boundary maintenance of its groups, the sacred aura of its beliefs and the emotional character of its ritual practices, is an ideal setting for such a reorientation (Martin [1990] has called Pentecostal groups "protective social capsules" [284]). Anderson, D'Epinay and Willems have concluded that Pentecostal "social capsules" have served an ideological function (i.e., legitimating the *status quo*), yet they have overlooked the tremendous potential for creative social change inherent in any such charismatic movement. A charismatic movement "*articulates the alienation* of the community" and "*proposes a new imagination*" (or, what amounts to the same thing, a new symbol system) according to which oppressed people can relate to the world so as to bring about positive change (Baum, 170).

Pentecostal churches provide a supportive context for the development of skills of expression, organization, propagation and leadership which equip its members for authentic existence and creative participation in the emerging society (Martin, 231). Far from being a merely rhetorical venting of frustrations, Pentecostal practices of speaking in tongues, experiences of the sinfulness of the world and anticipation of the eschaton are elements of an alternative symbol system. Although they have yet to formulate a coherent program for political and social involvement, Pentecostal churches have always been concerned with an even more basic and fundamental project: the creation of a utopian social imagination – i.e., a system of symbols based on protest against oppression and alienation, and oriented towards radical change.

The Ambiguity and Variety of Pentecostal Social Involvement

As a system of symbols, Pentecostalism is ambiguous, complex and creative. While certain manifestations of Pentecostalism may emphasize an

apolitical stance which actually perpetuates an oppressive *status quo*, other manifestations may succeed in formulating a relatively coherent model for political and social activism. In the various manifestations of Pentecostal utopian potential, the structure of the movement's social context is a determining factor.

For White Pentecostals in America, the adoption of a Protestant work ethic often succeeded in securing an increased standard of living. Therefore, the factor of economic deprivation and protest was removed, and White Pentecostals began to concentrate almost exclusively on religious and psychological deprivation. The story of Black Pentecostalism in America, however, is quite different. African-Americans have suffered tremendous structural oppression throughout the history of America, and the collective consciousness that has emerged, especially with the Civil Rights Movement, has led many Black Pentecostal groups to investigate the *political* relevance of the gospel. The mere adoption of a Protestant work ethic could not combat the racism and massive poverty experienced by American Blacks, and so it is understandable that the enemy-orientation of their Pentecostal churches would eventually focus beyond the religious realm and towards the political and social realm. Walter Hollenweger (1972) reports that these groups "are organizing job training centres and low-income housing, not only for their own members but for all who need it...they believe that this work should be taken on as part of the missionary task of the church.... Black Pentecostals are not satisfied with the feeble attempts of White Pentecostals in America to understand social and political commitment as a task of the individual Christian (and *not* of the churches)" (469-70).

In Latin America, structural oppression is rampant as well. As Hollenweger explains of Chile, "the cause of poverty in Chile is not the personal inadequacy of Chilean workers. Its causes lay in the *structural* poverty brought about by the situation of the international market and the capitalist system" (472). Even with a strictly puritan and ascetic lifestyle, brought about by a conversion to Protestantism, capital accumulation and an increase in one's standard of living are not possible in this context. This fact alone gives reason to believe that more and more Pentecostal churches in Latin America, as congregations of the working poor, will come to recognize the need for collective social and political action.

In fact, there are signs that Pentecostals in Latin America are beginning to translate their religious activism into the public realm, but this transfer is ambiguous and varied. As an example, let us consider Brazil. As early as 1962, members of Brazil for Christ Pentecostal church cooperated to elect a fellow member to the federal Congress (Freston, 68). Almost as striking was this church's involvement in the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches. At a 1965 symposium, delegates from Brazil for Christ characterized their church by three qualities: it maintains solidarity with the poor, it does not confine itself to soul-saving, and it can only be effective in an ecumenical context (Hollenweger, 101). Clearly, these Pentecostals made a connection between social oppression and the evangelical task of the church. Manoel De Melo (the founder and leader of Brazil for Christ) proclaimed that "while we convert a million, the devil de-converts ten million through hunger, misery, militarism, [and] dictatorship" (De Melo in Hollenweger, 104). In his search for a solution, De Melo even went so far as to suggest transforming hundreds of churches into schools, associations or trade unions during the week (104).

More recently, an article by John Burdick (1993) has given some significant examples of Pentecostals involved in neighbourhood improvement, labour struggles and radical politics. Burdick reports that in one sprawling town, on the outskirts of Duque de Caxias, a Pentecostal couple felt called by God to form an association to fight the eviction notice which would have rendered many of the inhabitants homeless (25-26). Dalila, the wife, is recorded as saying, "When we don't have any electricity, no drainage, that's the work of the Devil, because God is light. From the moment we are concerned with improvement, I believe we are struggling against the Devil" (38).

Recent politics in Brazil demonstrates the ambiguity of Pentecostal involvement. On the one hand, the number of Pentecostal deputies elected to the Constituent Assembly increased from two in 1983 to eighteen in 1986 (whereas the historical Protestant churches only increased from twelve to fifteen) (Freston, 72-73). More importantly, the twelve deputies who belonged to the Assemblies of God were officially sponsored by their denomination, and their election was the direct result of a coordinated campaign by the ministers and administrators of the Assemblies in which brother was encouraged to vote for brother. Unfortunately, these deputies tended to be inexperienced in politics; they were uneducated, salaried pastors or evangelists rather than members of the working poor, and they tended to be markedly conservative and right-wing on most issues (75-77, 87). On

the other hand, the younger pastors in the Assemblies of God often possess seminary training, so they may have a more positive impact on Brazilian politics in the near future. Also, Burdick reports that, in the early 1980s, roughly one-tenth of the members of the Duque de Caxias branch of the Worker's Party were Pentecostals, including the president of the regional convention of the Assemblies of God (33-34). In sum, Pentecostal involvement in Brazilian politics has been increasing, although the impact of this involvement has not been entirely positive.

Conclusion

The ambiguity and variety of Pentecostalism across North and South America is a sign of its vitality and creativity. It is precisely this ambiguity which has enabled inhabitants of so-called developing countries to transform Pentecostalism into an expression of their respective indigenous cultures and a protest against the alienating effects of their modernizing society. Yet the ambiguity, flexibility and spontaneity of Pentecostalism may also allow it to drift away from its utopian, liberating potential. Pentecostalism may accommodate itself to modern culture or it may syncretize with such spiritualist cults as *Umbanda* in Brazil, thereby neglecting the social and political dimensions of its Christian witness. Consequently, Pentecostals must assume greater control over the evolution of their tradition by engaging in critical theology – i.e., by reflecting upon their symbol system and recognizing the call of the Christian gospel to a commitment to social justice. This is not a call for Pentecostals to adopt a more mainstream, intellectual or rational Christianity. In fact, it is a call for Pentecostals to recognize the value and potential of their charismatic worship, their strong sense of solidarity, and their intense commitment to the gospel and its revealed promise of the coming Kingdom. All these elements are rooted in a popular protest against alienation, and they may be cultivated into a coherent model for political or social involvement that is oriented towards the elimination of structural injustice.

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The World Bank's New Interest in Religion

The World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were created by the Bretton Woods Agreement after World War II to monitor the world economy, lend money to poor countries in urgent need and prevent financial collapse on the universal scale. The Bretton Woods Institutions increasingly followed the neo-liberal economic ideology that free trade and minimal government interference were the best recipe for the creation of wealth, ultimately to be of benefit to all. The self-regulating market was here seen as the engine that moved history forward towards universal well-being. When, in the early eighties, Prime Minister Thatcher of Britain and President Reagan of the USA implemented neo-liberal economic policy in their respective countries, the Bretton Woods Institutions were confirmed in their neo-liberalism and pursued it with greater vigour. (In English, these policies are often called "neo-conservative" because in Britain and the US they were introduced by the leaders of conservative parties.)

The Word Bank's Commitment to Neo-Liberal Policies

The neo-liberal policies had devastating effects on many of the poor countries of the South. To promote free trade and allow the free run of the market forces, the WB and the IMF imposed upon these countries the so-called "structural adjustment policies" (SAPs). These countries were to get no further loans unless they opened their borders to free trade and the entry of foreign corporations, deregulated the national economy, privatized publicly owned enterprises, reduced government spending by cutting social programmes and laying off government employees, and favoured production for export rather than production for local use. These policies increased hunger and misery in many countries. Instead of growing their own food and producing the goods they needed, people were obliged to produce for export – which increased their dependency on the world market. In the eyes of the WB and the IMF, this bitter medicine was necessary to contain what they judged to be irresponsible governments, discipline what they thought were lazy populations, and convince them that in the long run the self-regulating market system was the wealth-creating engine of world development.

The WB imposed these policies without mercy. Neo-liberalism became the new orthodoxy. Replying to their critics, the WB insisted that "there is no alternative." Yet alternatives had been offered. A well-known example is the 1989 Report of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, entitled "African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation," which, thanks to the pressure exerted by the WB, was never implemented.

There are signs that we are entering a new phase of human history. Central controlling power has moved to the international financial institutions and the transnational corporations (TNCs), none of which are accountable to the public nor to any supervisory agency. National governments have lost the capacity to promote the well-being of their people and protect them from TNCs that enter the country, destabilize the local economies and then invest the profits made locally in other countries. In the industrialized countries, neo-liberalism, as policy and ideology, has widened the gap between rich and poor; produced a growing sector of chronic unemployment; and promoted a culture of competitive individualism, devoid of social solidarity and self-restraint – a culture resisted only by minority movements of spirited people.

The World Bank's Concern for Global Governance

Criticism of the World Bank climaxed in 1994, the 50th anniversary of its foundation. The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in and for the Third World had organized a major campaign critical of the WB under the slogan "50 Years is Enough." This campaign informed the public of the destructive, undemocratic and unaccountable policies adopted by the WB and called for fundamental reforms of this institution. The campaign received massive support.

In 1994, under the new president, James Wolfensohn, the WB decided to listen to these complaints, enter into dialogue with the NGOs, and modify some of its policies. The WB cancelled its involvement in controversial projects; it admitted that in many

countries the debt was a serious problem and prepared measures to alleviate it; it made stronger its commitment to reduce poverty in the world; and, it began to hold meetings with the NGOs.

What the changes introduced by the WB mean is a controversial topic. Some commentators think that the WB has adopted a new orientation, more beneficial to Third World countries, while others argue that these changes are largely window-dressing and do not weaken the WB's commitment to SAPs and the neo-liberal logic that stands behind them.

Today the WB is deeply committed to "world governance." Governance, we note, is not the equivalent of government. Governance refers, rather, to the interaction of several factors, including governments and markets, capable of creating and sustaining order and peace in society, especially under the difficult conditions created by globalization and its social and cultural consequences. The governance-producing factors (besides governments and markets) are summed up in the concept of "civil society." Civil society includes professional associations, labour unions, religious institutions, schools and universities, non-profit organizations, citizens' movements, cultural centres, and – especially in the Third World – NGOs.

The WB's new concern for global governance may not only be due to the protest movement prior to its 50th birthday. After all, the WB shares the fear of all well-informed citizens that the globalization of the economy, which undermines subsistence economies, cultural cohesion and social integration in many Third World countries, is producing conditions of grinding misery and social chaos that could easily lead to violent explosions. Such explosions would cause great human suffering. Such explosions would also threaten investment and private property, inhibit the production and delivery of goods, and hence be detrimental to the expansion of the free market economy. For all these reasons, humanitarian and economic, the WB has decided to encourage and support good governance, i.e., the integration and pacification of society under conditions of poverty and dislocation.

In the name of good governance the WB now actively intervenes in Third World countries on several levels: it puts new emphasis on role of the state; it seeks cooperation with and offers financial support for NGOs and other organizations of civil society; and it recognizes and encourages the role of religion, ethics and spirituality.

The Role of the State

The World Development report, "The State in a Changing World," published by the World Bank in 1997, puts a new emphasis on the role of the state. The neo-liberal theory and practice endorsed by the WB had favoured minimal involvement of the state in society, non-intervention of the state in the economy and curtailment of national sovereignty in favour of deregulated international market forces. Did the 1997 World Development Report on the role of the state in the promotion of good governance represent a change of mind on the part of the WB? Has the WB softened its neo-liberal orthodoxy? On this question commentators are not in agreement. Most of them remain highly suspicious. According to the analysis in a study published by the British Bretton Woods Project, the WB has not substantially modified its position. Its World Development report of 1997 does acknowledge that the state has a role to play in "protecting the vulnerable" through social welfare programmes and that it is not enough for states "merely to deliver growth," but that they also have an obligation "to insure that the benefits of market-led growth are shared through investment in basic education and health." Still, when comparing these general remarks with the detailed prescriptions of how to deal with concrete problems and issues, it appears that the general remarks carry very little weight. The main task of the state, it would appear, is to assure that the SAPs be implemented under conditions of public order and social peace.

Support for NGOs

The WB's relationship to NGOs has changed dramatically. Representatives of NGOs are invited to attend the major WB conferences and a number of joint committees have been formed. The WB, pressured by NGOs and other social agencies, including the Christian churches, has decided to introduce a programme of debt relief for the countries most in need. Yet the conditions laid down in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) programme are such that a good many NGOs are disappointed and argue that the WB lacks the political will to work for debt remission, even in extreme cases. Yet progress is being made in the joint committees reviewing the impact of SAPs in various countries. This promising initiative, called SAPRIN, relies on the support and cooperation of the WB's president, James Wolfensohn. The NGOs participating in SAPRIN retain an open mind about its outcome. Yet the fact remains that despite the WB's willingness to listen to its critics, it continues to impose the SAPs on Third World countries.

While prior to 1994, the NGOs working in and for the Third World were united in their criticism of the WB, they have now become deeply divided. They differ in their response to the WB's offers of financial support for various kinds of self-help projects in poor urban areas. Since at this time the public funds financing the NGOs are shrinking, the temptation to accept money from the WB is very great. But is this money given so that the NGOs work among the poor to assure good governance under the conditions created by the SAPs? Does the WB want the NGOs to offer small-scale remedies for the large-scale misery produced by its own inflexible policies? Are the NGOs becoming instruments for making the globalization of the free market economy more workable?

Dialogue with the World Religions

Good governance includes support for an ethical culture that promotes social well-being. Inwardness or spirituality has social consequences. The world religions form patterned communities that sustain people in difficult times, strengthen them in their communal efforts, and create close bonds of friendship, cooperation and mutual aid. For these reasons, religious communities, as part of civil society, play an important role in providing good governance. It is not surprising that the WB, faithful to its new image after 1994, has revealed a special concern for ethics and religion. Associated with the WB is now the World Bank Spiritual Unfoldment Society under the direction of Richard Barrett. The WB has sponsored several international conferences on religion, spirituality and ethics in the hope that a better understanding of the aims of the WB will allow religious leaders and teachers of spirituality to make a more focused contribution to humanity's well-being. This new interest in religion must also be understood as a response of the WB to the denunciation of its neo-liberal economic policies on the part of the Christian churches, their ecclesiastical leaders as well as the network of their faith-and-justice organizations. Now the WB wants to hear and learn from the wisdom and experience of the world religions.

In this article I wish to comment on two such international occasions, the 1995 Conference on Ethics and Spiritual Values held in Washington, D.C., which focused on sustainable development, and the 1998 Conference on World Faiths and Development held at Lambeth Palace in London, England, which focused on cooperation between religions and the WB.

At the opening of the 1995 Conference on Ethics and Spiritual Values, James Wolfensohn, the WB's president, gave a keynote address entitled "New Partnerships." Here are some of his words:

> Development is not just a matter of looking at increases in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. In Africa I saw successful development in villages where people were pulling themselves out of deep poverty. Development is visible in people who, within the structure of their familial or tribal system, possess a sense of grandeur, a sense of optimism, a sense of hope; who talk with excitement in their eyes about their children's future. These people, living on next to nothing, feel a sense of progress that is more than economic. It encompasses recognition of roots and their spiritual and cultural values, which we (the WB) need to nurture and encourage. These values are what we should be developing.... The WB's central mission is to meld economic assistance with spiritual, ethical and moral development.
>
> It is not easy to explain to most people why I [James Wolfensohn] would leave a successful business practice to come and try to make the world a better place.... I came [here] because of a background that had, I believe, within my own Jewish religion some sense of ethical, spiritual and moral values that I have attempted to live by and that guide me.

The proceedings published by the WB give the names of the 34 men and women who were invited to address the topic. All the speakers agreed that ethics and spiritual values must be taken into account in formulating economic policy, especially related to sustainable development. Most of them lamented the indifference of economics to ethical considerations, but failed, with one exception, to articulate a critique of the WB's economic policies. Only Denis Goulet, the famous critical development economist, said in plain language that the economic globalization promoted by the WB undermined local economies and dissolved traditional values and that, therefore, under the conditions created by these neo-liberal policies, environmentally sustainable development was impossible.

My impression is that the World Bank Conference on Ethics and Spiritual Values remained on the surface. As we just saw, it did not offer a critical analysis of the

values and presuppositions implicit in the WB's economic policies. With the exception of Denis Goulet, the speakers did not relate their remarks to today's historical reality. The Conference, moreover, bracketed religion: there was no sustained reflection on the wisdom and the values of the world's great religious traditions.

The Conference on World Faith and Development was held at Lambeth Palace, London, on February 18-19, 1998. It was hosted by George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank. Participants were leaders from nine world religions, including the main traditions within these religions: Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jains, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Taoist.

The Conference at Lambeth Palace was preceded by a Round Table Conference on "A Christian Response to the International Debt Crisis," organized on May 16-17, 1996, by the Anglican Community Office at the United Nations. This latter Conference set forth the biblical and Christian foundations for ethical norms relevant to the economy. It assigned special significance to the Jubilee Year, mentioned in Leviticus, that demanded of the Israelites the remission of debts, the release of their slaves and the redistribution of land. The immediate purpose of the Round Table Conference was "to express uncompromising concern with the human impact of IMF and WB policies" and "to explore with the participants possible lines of practical action that might help alleviate the negative effects of (IMF and WB) policies on the poor and vulnerable." The Conference produced a series of policy measures which they urged the Bretton Woods Institutions to take into account.

One is allowed to presume that in response to the Round Table Conference, James Wolfensohn agreed to co-host with the Archbishop of Canterbury the 1998 Lambeth Palace Conference on World Faiths and Development. Here leaders of the world religions were engaged in sustained conversation with staff members of the World Bank. At the end of the Conference, the two co-chairs made a joint statement summing up in eleven points the agreements that had been reached.

Here is a brief summary of the eleven points:

- The religious leaders and the leading staff of the WB are at one in their deep moral concern for the future of human well-being and dignity.
- Human development must have regard to spiritual, ethical, environmental, cultural and social considerations.
- Human well-being includes both rescue from suffering due to poverty and spiritual and cultural expansion.
- It is important to listen to all the actors involved in development, including especially the local community.
- The WB and the major religious communities agree on the need to continue the dialogue.
- The religious communities will be allowed to influence the thinking of the WB.
- Several joint working groups shall be established.
- The WB staff wants more education regarding the world's religions, and the religious communities want more education regarding international development.
- The religious communities have already contributed much to development projects: they will continue to do so with the backing of the WB.
- A light and flexible steering group will monitor progress in this area.
- Governments and international agencies are exhorted to join the search for better understanding between religion and development.

Is the ongoing conversation between the WB and the world religions good news? At this time there is no sign that the WB has qualified its neo-liberal dogma in its practice. Will the ongoing conversation open the WB to human aspects of development it had previously overlooked? Will the WB try harder to reduce world poverty and help in the construction of a more just society? At the same time, we must ask whether this conversation will oblige the participating religious institutions, including the churches, to abstain from criticizing the WB in public. Will these institutions play their part in supporting good governance under the condition produced by the SAPs and thus making the world safe for neo-liberal capitalism and the accumulation of wealth at the centre of power?

Gregory Baum

Note: For detailed information on the World Bank's dialogue with religion, see web site www.worldbank.org/ and search under "Ethics and Spiritual Values" and "World Faiths Dialogue."

A Pastoral Letter of Zambia's Catholic Bishops

In light of oppressive debt and Structural Adjustment Programmes, Zambia's Catholic Bishops have called for debt cancellation, rather than forgiveness, in accord with the biblical notion of "jubilee." An abridged form of their statement is reprinted here. *Editor*

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, Greetings...
In a year and a half, many Christian denominations will be celebrating a "jubilee year" in memory of the birth of Our Lord and Saviour.

From the teaching of the Old Testament, we learn that a jubilee year was a special time for restoring the broken bonds of the community of God's people, as recorded in Deuteronomy 15 and Leviticus 23. It was a time for setting free slaves, redistributing land and cancelling debt. This is the time to draw attention to Zambia's external debt situation.

1) Of special relevance to the people of Zambia is the call for the cancelling of debt. As we are all aware, Zambia suffers heavily under an immense burden of external debt. Over US$ 7.1 billion is owed to donor countries and to international financial institutions (e.g., the World Bank, the IMF). That amounts to a debt of almost US$ 750 for every woman, man and child in Zambia!

We owe such a huge amount of money as debt for a variety of reasons. We borrowed heavily in the 1970s when copper prices went down and petrol prices went up. Our economy was hit hard by these external factors. There were also internal factors influencing the accumulation of debt, such as mistakes and mismanagement.

In a word: simply trying to pay the interest and retire some of the capital each year has become a tremendous burden for Zambia. For example, in this year's government budget, more money is spent on debt servicing than on all education and health expenditures combined. In a country where 70% of the population lives below the poverty line, the fact that money is spent on debt service instead of meeting the needs of the people has tragic consequences.

2) We leaders of the Christian community in Zambia welcome the efforts of our government, many NGOs and church groups in this country and elsewhere, and concerned people around the world, to work for the reduction of our external debt. This reduction can come about through two initiatives currently in progress:

The first is the programme organized by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reduce debts of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) through negotiated agreements that are related to our maintaining the direction of economic reforms under the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). This HIPC initiative would in the future bring down a portion of Zambia's debts.

The second programme is the dramatic call for cancellation of Zambia's debt through the global campaign called "Jubilee 2000." This initiative, organized around the world, calls upon the leaders of the richest nations and the lending institutions to cancel the debts of poor countries, so that we can *break the chains of debt*, a new beginning to celebrate the new millennium.

Zambia's total debt is clearly unpayable. Zambia *cannot* pay back because the debt burden is economically exhausting. It blocks future development. Zambia *will not* pay back because the debt burden is politically destabilizing. It threatens social harmony. Zambia *should not* pay back because the debt burden is ethically unacceptable. It hurts the poorest in our midst....

We wish to make three very important points regarding this campaign for debt relief for Zambia.

1) We are not asking for debt "forgiveness." To receive "forgiveness" is to acknowledge guilt. But Zambia has been, with considerable diligence and sacrifice, meeting its debt service. Our incurring of debt has not primarily been our fault, and hence "forgiveness" is not the proper word to use. Rather we ask for "cancellation" of an unpayable burden that is harming our people very much. It is not charity that we are seeking, but *justice*!

2) We recognize that Zambia must be responsible in the use of any monies made available through debt relief. For this reason we will hold the government accountable, and cooperate with government officials and civil society organizations to monitor the use of the money freed up if and when debt is canceled. We want to ensure that the newly available resources really do contribute to meeting the social and productive needs of the country.

3) We know that if Zambia is to move forward, honest and hard work is demanded of all of us. The experience of "jubilee" in the cancelling of debt can be for us a fresh beginning only if we commit ourselves to the culture of responsibility and accountability, and involve ourselves with dedication and sacrifice in working for the future of our children. *August, 1998*

An Unresolved Drama: Canada's United Church Seeks Reconciliation with Native Peoples

It is nine years since the violent standoff between Mohawks and Quebec and Canadian security forces at Oka. Some observers of that crisis ventured the opinion that it would mark a new era of visibility and assertiveness for First Nations in Canada who were pursuing redress for centuries of injustice. These observers have been proven right. The 1990s has turned out to be a decade of unprecedented success for Native groups seeking the return of land, compensation for transgressions of treaty rights and freedom to self-govern. Federal and provincial governments are following policies, albeit reluctantly, that would have been unthinkable just a few decades ago, and they are accepting the fact that old legislation, such as *The Indian Act*, and old budgetary expectations will have to be replaced. But it is not only our governments that have to surrender old ways. Communities and institutions across this country are coming to realize that their relationships with First Nations must be repaired, this time in dialogue with Natives as equal partners. This article examines one story of renewed relations: the story of ongoing conflict and reconciliation between First Nations and the United Church of Canada. In many ways this story serves as a microcosm of what is happening in other churches and throughout society as Canadians come to terms with the history, rights and aspirations of our Aboriginal peoples.

Bold Steps toward Reconciliation

Beginning in the early 1970s, the United Church of Canada began to rethink the place of Native members and congregations within the denomination. Native Christians were asking questions about their role in the church. Some Native elders completed a training program leading to ordination and full-time ministry. In 1977 the General Council (the highest court of the United Church, which meets every two to three years) initiated a thorough evaluation of the church's Native ministry. This evaluation process, including several Native-organized national consultations, produced two significant results. The first was a formal apology by the church to its Native congregations. The second was a system of self-government for Natives within the denomination.

In the periods between the meetings of the General Council, the United Church is guided by the General Council Executive. In the mid-1980s, a Native representative to that body, Alberta Billy, concluded the presentation of a report to the executive by saying, "It is time you apologized to Native people."[1] The agenda for the meeting was suspended and the executive took the time needed seriously to discuss the proposal. Pamphlets were sent to all United Church congregations informing them of the request for an apology and asking them to reflect upon it. The matter was brought before the 1986 General Council in Sudbury, Ontario. Native leaders requested the apology, and then all First Nations commissioners left the assembly to wait at the sacred fire outside. They waited for two hours while the rest of the commissioners discussed the matter. In the end, only twelve of the three hundred commissioners voted against the proposal. The assembly joined the Native commissioners at the fire and the Moderator of the church offered these words:

> Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your elders an understanding of creation, and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep and rich and to be treasured. We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ, we were closed to the value of your spirituality. We confused western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the Gospel of Christ. We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the Gospel. We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we are meant by God to be. We ask you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed.[2]

The Native elders' only formal response was to say, "We must go back to the people," but there was a celebration and dancing with a drum. Some of the elders

were very happy and responded positively as individuals; others were less sure that the apology signaled a real change of heart and policy by the church. They exhibited a wait-and-see attitude.

The formal response came two years later at the 1988 General Council in Victoria, British Columbia. Representatives of the newly formed All-Native Circle Conference (ANCC) acknowledged the apology, but did not accept it. Rev. Alf Dumont, the speaker of the ANCC, explained that, "In the native way, apologies are not 'accepted,' they are acknowledged. [This is because] an apology must be lived out if it's to be a real apology. The church is being asked to live out its real apology."[3] He pointed out that the church had been instrumental in oppression.[4]

Self-Government in the Church

The national Native consultations identified a need for (and a dream of) Native self-government within the church. A key element of this would be indigenous leadership. Two training centres run by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people were established to provide ministers and teachers for the more than sixty Native congregations. The organizational structure of the United Church moves from pastoral charge (parish), to presbytery, to conference (there are twelve conferences covering the geography of Canada), to General Council. The move to self-government began with the formation of Keewatin Presbytery, an all-Aboriginal presbytery in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Conference. More presbyteries of this kind were formed in other areas, and in 1988 the All-Native Circle Conference became the United Church's thirteenth conference. Unlike the other twelve, its boundaries are not defined by geography. It has approximately thirty-five congregations from Quebec to Alberta. They come together annually at what is called the Grand Council. The Native congregations in British Columbia Conference did not join the ANCC, but most of them come together as part of Prince Rupert Presbytery.[5] While the ANCC is considered a conference within the national structure of the United Church, its functioning has many unique aspects.

The ANCC operates through a consensus model of decision-making, and honours, through its model of meeting, both the traditions of Aboriginal spirituality and Christianity. At the centre of the circle lies the sacred bundle, containing the four most important symbols: the talking stick, the cross, the bible and the pipe. The Council of Elders, composed of representatives from the Presbyteries and the two elected Leading Elders (on male and one female), provides leadership in all matter A Council on Youth provides opportunity for participa tion in all aspects of the ANCC by the younger peopl There are four working councils with specific respons bilities: Council on Learning; Council on Respec Council on Resources; and Council on Healing.[6]

The apology to Native congregations and the fo mation of the ANCC have been important events for th United Church. They may be second only to the church extended debate over the ordination of gays and lesbian as formative happenings for the denomination in recer decades. There has been widespread pride within th United Church over its solidarity with Aboriginal peo ples. Native leaders have become important leaders fo the entire denomination, most visibly when Rev. Stanle McKay was elected to a term as Moderator at the 199 General Council in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Nativ spirituality and wisdom with regard to decision-makin and community-building have begun to inform the lif of the denomination in a growing number of contex and ways. All of this has led to a perception of increasin good will between Natives and non-Natives, and of a important role for the United Church as a body in sol darity with Aboriginal peoples as they pursue justic within Canadian society.

The Great Setback: The Residential Schools

This positive momentum has been seriousl threatened by recent developments pertaining to an un fortunate aspect of the United Church's history of inte action with the indigenous people – residential school

The Methodist and Presbyterian churches sa schooling as a key element in their mission to "the Ind ans." Beginning in the nineteenth century, most earl missions had day schools. Some had small residenti schools attached. At the turn of the century the feder government became involved, assuming a large measu of financial responsibility and some policy-making co trol. The residential school network greatly expande under a system of government and church cooperatio In 1923, two years before the creation of the Unite Church, the Methodists were operating five residenti schools for Native children, and the Presbyterians we operating seven. All but two of these were in Canada four western provinces. At the same time the Anglica Church was operating twenty such schools and the R man Catholics forty. In the 1930s, the United Chur reached its peak of thirteen schools. The numbers slow

dwindled over the following decades until 1967 when the denomination stopped operating residential schools altogether.

These schools played a central role in the efforts of Canadian society, governments and religious institutions to assimilate Aboriginal peoples and destroy their culture. In many cases officials from the federal Department of Indian Affairs and officials from the churches worked together to force reluctant Native families to release their children for education in these schools. Upon arrival, most of the children were not allowed to keep their language, their dressing and grooming habits, or their customs. Most suffered physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural abuse. Some suffered sexual abuse. Native resistance to the schools was unrelenting. It was expressed by parent boycotts, chronic absenteeism, runaways, dropouts and the burning of school buildings. The United Church's brief to the recent Royal Commission confesses that

> the Residential Schools were premised on a racist understanding of the superiority of European civilization as it was being transplanted in North America, and the inferiority of Aboriginal societies. This racist premise was reinforced by the churches in their theology and their attitudes to Native spirituality. Contact between these two ways of living in the world led to a rapid and often brutal disintegration of the Aboriginal way of life. Combined with the relentless economic and social pressure of expansionist European society, the effects of the Residential Schools dealt an almost fatal blow to Aboriginal societies.[7]

In recent years, because of petitions to General Council and lawsuits by former students of United Church-operated residential schools, the denomination has been forced to come to terms with this legacy. During the summer of 1997 there were significant developments. A former teacher at the Native residential school in Port Alberni, British Columbia, was convicted of numerous sexual assaults against students at that school during the 1940s, '50s and '60s. Sixteen former students (the number later grew to thirty) launched a civil suit against the United Church and the federal government. British Columbia Conference urged the church to settle out of court, and petitioned the 1997 General Council meeting in Camrose, Alberta, to apologize for the church's role in Native residential schools. Neither request was granted. Upon the suggestion of church lawyers, General Council decided to "repent" of the church's role in residential schools, but not to apologize, because an apology would jeopardize insurance coverage. Also, the church decided not to settle the lawsuits out of court, but to ask the court to make the issue of who was responsible for the abuses at the Port Alberni school – the church or the government (which denied responsibility) – a central issue in the case. This case is seen as a test for many further suits likely to be made against bodies that administrated residential schools. While some Native commissioners to the General Council agreed with the choice to repent, others were hurt by the refusal to apologize. Perhaps more damaging to good will between Natives and the denomination is the decision to see the lawsuit through in court. Rigorous questioning of former students by the United Church's lawyer during the case has hurt and alienated some Natives and non-Natives.[8] There is much discussion and questioning throughout the United Church at this time over the best approach to take. Some feel that the careful approach, formed through close consultation with lawyers and designed to force the federal government to accept its share of responsibility, is necessary, if painful. Others see it as a sellout to financial interests, and are concerned that the denomination is reversing important steps toward reconciliation taken at the time of the apology to Native congregations.

In June 1998, Justice Brenner, the judge hearing the Alberni Residential School lawsuit, ruled that both the Government of Canada and the United Church were vicariously liable for the sexual assaults committed by Arthur Plint. Shortly afterward, the General Council Executive decided to appeal the decision. The Moderator of the Church released a statement on the decision to appeal. In it he explained that the church was not backing away from its earlier statement of repentance, but that the General Council Executive believed there were a number of errors in Justice Brenner's decision.[9] Many within the church were confused by the decision to appeal. The major reason given by the General Council Executive for seeing the suit through in court – when settling out of court would have avoided the ugly scene of abuse victims being cross-examined by church lawyers – was the need to force the government to accept liability. Justice Brenner's decision had accomplished this goal.

Choosing Repentance Rather than Defensiveness

Following the decision to appeal, the Task Force on Residential Schools of British Columbia Conference

circulated a brief document called "Reflections on the Decision by the General Council Executive of the UCC to Appeal." It was written by one of the task force's members, Terry Anderson, and provided a helpful analysis of the church's dilemma. In it he asserts that, within the church, there have been two predominant reactions to the revelations of abuse at UCC residential schools and the legal implications associated with those revelations. For one group of church members the overriding feeling upon hearing the revelations was remorse – shame and regret over the sins of commission and omission for which the church stood guilty. Out of this complex of feelings comes a goal: "The prime goal of the church's response to its wrong-doing should be to acknowledge its responsibility, express sorrow, repent and seek forgiveness from and reconciliation with God and native peoples – especially those most directly affected. We might call this the 'repentance/reconciliation' goal." For another group of church members, the predominant reaction was alarm that their denomination was under attack. This sense of alarm was heightened by a general consensus that there would be more lawsuits like the Alberni one, and a perception that the church might ultimately have to pay a crippling financial cost. Out of this reaction comes a different goal: "The prime goal of the church's response to attack should be a defence that will minimize damage to the church. We might call this the 'defence' goal."

Anderson acknowledges that both reactions are natural and both goals appropriate, but he criticizes the position that the General Council and its executive are taking in relation to the two goals. Their position, according to Anderson, is that the two goals can be held together, that there is no fundamental incompatibility between the goals, and that both can be pursued at the same time. Anderson sees this perspective as flawed, and outlines a number of ways in which the goals are incompatible. His most convincing and evocative passage looks at power relations between the church and those who suffered as a result of the residential school system. Regarding the church's power vis-à-vis the victims and native peoples, the two goals lead in opposite directions. The defence goal entails seeking to maintain power over the victims – we must control or at least influence as much as possible the decision as to what is "owed" to whom, and remain as much as possible masters of our own destiny. The object is to minimize the church's vulnerability. This sets us as protagonists against the victims and their relatives. Of course, we pledge to use any such power we may obtain for good. As champions o the poor, we will help Native people to get the govern ment to confess, be an instrument to clarify the law re garding "vicarious liability," be generous toward the vic tims once our security is reestablished, and the like. Bu this tends to blind us to the central issue. Do we not se how absurd this must sound to the plaintiffs who are vic tims of the misuse of such power over them by thos pledged to pursue their well-being?

Anderson asserts that the church must ultimatel choose which of the two goals is to be given a greater pri ority, and argues that the General Council Executive' policy of holding the two goals together has led to a cours of action that displays a *de facto* prioritizing of the de fence goal. Speaking on behalf of the entire task force, h calls for a reversal of this prioritizing, and articulates disa greement and frustration with the national church.

Anderson's analysis reveals the excruciating di lemma of an organization that seeks to be true to the gos pel and at the same time manage itself as an institution Those who devote themselves to the gospel but als work for the institution are caught in a sometimes unten able situation. At a meeting in October 1998 the Genera Council Executive was willing to confront this spiritua dilemma and sought the theologically appropriate wa of responding to the residential schools situation. After two-day process of reflecting on the meaning of repent ance, it was decided finally to apologize for the church' role in the residential schools. The apology, issued b the Moderator, began in this way:

> I am here today as Moderator of the United Churc of Canada to speak the words that many peopl have wanted to hear for a very long time. On beha of the United Church of Canada I apologize for th pain and suffering that our church's involvement i the Indian Residential School system has caused We are aware of some of the damage that this cru and ill-conceived system of assimilation has pe petrated on Canada's First Nations peoples. Fo this we are truly and most humbly sorry.
>
> To those individuals who were physicall sexually and mentally abused as students of th Indian Residential Schools in which the Unite Church of Canada was involved, I offer you ou most sincere apology. You did nothing wrong. Yo were and are the victims of evil acts that canno under any circumstances be justified or excuse We pray that you will hear the sincerity of ou

words today and that you will witness the living out of this apology in our actions in the future. [10]

This apology has not been the same kind of watershed as the 1986 apology. Once again, the Native leadership within the denomination is being careful with its reactions. They are waiting to see if words will be followed by meaningful actions, and if the church is willing to become vulnerable in its relations with First Nations – and with survivors of a school system that all too often took advantage of its students' vulnerability. The next few years will be an important time of testing for relations between the United Church and Aboriginal peoples.

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1. Stanley McKay and Janet Silman, "A First Nations Movement in a Canadian Church," in *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*, Gregory Baum and Harold Wells, eds. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 174.
2. Ibid., 175.
3. "Brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples," 27 October 1993, 9.
4. McKay and Silman, 173-175. Also, Nicholas Tavuchis, *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991), 109-11.
5. McKay and Silman, 176-77; "Brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples," 10-11.
6. "Brief to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples," 10.
7. Ibid., 7.
8. "A question of repentance," *United Church Observer*, October 1997; "Residential schools on trial: A landmark civil suit probes liabilities and a legacy of suffering," *United Church Observer*, March 1998; "Emotions run the gamut as residential school trial drags on," *United Church Observer*, June 1998.
9. United Church press release, July 2, 1998.
10. United Church press release, October 27, 1998.

Book Reviews

Harold Wells, *The Future of Socialism? Political Theology and the "Triumph of Capitalism."*
Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996, 220 pages

In this book, Harold Wells, a Protestant theologian teaching at the Toronto School of Theology, asks whether the socialist tradition has come to an end. Has the collapse of Eastern European communism and the apparent triumph of capitalism on the global scale put an end to the dream of creating a socialist society? Wells' book offers a well-argued case for the future of socialism. In it he addresses Christians who are not specialists in theology or political science. Since the book is both readable and profound and could exercise an important function in the churches, I wish to offer a summary of Wells' carefully reasoned argument.

Wells begins by recalling that in the past many Christians have entertained a socialist perspective. They held that capitalism was an economic system based on competition, oriented toward the survival of the fittest, geared toward the exploitation of workers and productive of growing social inequality. These Christians, inspired by the ethic of the gospel, advocated a cooperative and egalitarian society, the introduction of democratic principles in the economy, and the restraining of market forces so that they come to serve the well-being of all. Wells recalls especially the story of the social gospel in the United States and Canada and the more recent development of liberation theology in Latin America and other parts of the world. Well-known European theologians have been socialists: Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Helmut Gollwitzer, Jürgen Moltmann.

What political theology has uncovered, Wells reminds his readers, is that faith, hope and love are always situated within a particular social and cultural horizon. Whether Christians realize it or not, their faith commitment always contains a political dimension. Faith lives within an ideology. Unless Christians are consciously critical of their social and cultural context, they will articulate and practise their faith in a manner that supports the *status quo* and overlooks the injustices operative in their society. This insight becomes dramatic in situations of extreme social sin, such as Nazi Germany and apartheid in South Africa, where it was impossible to speak authentically of Jesus Christ without at the same time denouncing institutional racism. But even in present-day society, fidelity to Jesus demands the recognition and denunciation of social injustice such as exploitation, massive unemployment and social exclusion.

In a section called "The Triumph of Capitalism?" Wells examines the collapse of Soviet communism and the present state of the capitalist economy. He cites the famous sentences written by Rosa Luxemburg, radical socialist thinker assassinated in Germany in 1919, who, right after the Russian Revolution, criticized Lenin's new communism for abandoning democratic principles, such as elections and free speech, and predicted that his communism would end up as a sterile and oppressive dictatorship of politicians. Is the failure of this catastrophic experiment sufficient reason for abandoning the vision of a truly socialist society? Should we now be content with the capitalism we have inherited?

To reply to this question Wells turns to John Kenneth Galbraith's analysis of the failure of contemporary capitalism. The famous economist and one-time advocate of Keynesian capitalism and social democracy has demonstrated in his recent work that the contemporary economy is being controlled by economic elites for their own purposes. The present economy is actually a distorted capitalism. The rhetoric of "the free market" and "no government interference" disguises the manipulation of the market by corporate power and the involvement of government in supporting privately owned enterprises by its fiscal and monetary policies, its extravagant budget for arms production and its investment in the infrastructure of industrial development. The rhetoric invoking "the power of the customer" disguises the massive impact of the billion-dollar advertising industry creating needs and desires in society that serve capitalist interests. The rhetoric of "the hidden hand" supposedly steering the free market to foster the common good hides the widening of the gap between rich and poor, the increase of structural unemployment and the ever-growing sector of the excluded, first the great masses in the Third World and more recently the marginalized people in the developed countries.

We need a more just, more democratic and more humane society. Wells argues that we should reread the

history of socialism to discover its originating vision, ultimately rooted in the biblical promises, and acquaint ourselves with the different forms socialist experiments have taken in the past. Wells recognizes that a utopian vision can become an idol and then justify the use of repression and violence. Yet with the advocates of liberation theology, he argues that the biblical utopia of a just and egalitarian society is only a partial realization of God's coming reign and hence can never be identified with the ultimate. The best society in history still stands under God's judgement. While conservative thinkers warn us of utopia, progressive thinkers, be they religious or secular, recognize the need for the utopian imagination: without it society becomes stagnant, caught in its own contradictions.

The socialist vision has produced many social experiments, some of which have deeply influenced the cultural aspirations of modern society. Wells describes Robert Owen's industrial reform, the cooperative movement, social democracy, syndicalism, worker-owned industrialism, the Nicaraguan experiment, as well as community development presently spreading in North America and the growing social economy based on forms of worker-management cooperation. Wells argues that since the socialist tradition is rooted in the biblical promises and the ethic of the gospel and since it has shown itself to be rich, diversified and ever generating new social projects, Christians should not abandon it, especially at this moment when the existing economic order reveals itself as gravely defective.

Gregory Baum

Craig M. Gay, *With Liberty and Justice for Whom? The Recent Evangelical Debate over Capitalism.*
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1991, 276 pages

Craig M. Gay, *The Way of the (Modern) World.*
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, and Regent College Publishing, Vancouver, 1998, 337 pages

Theologians of the mainstream have avoided reading authors who call themselves evangelical because they expected these authors to have a narrow interpretation of the Christian message and avoid dialogue with modern thought and social science. Yet evangelical theology has undergone an interesting evolution in England and, in a different mood, in North America, that deserves respect and attention. Contemporary evangelical theological authors take with utmost seriousness "the signs of the times" and draw upon the Scriptures in original ways to respond to the problems of today's society. Evangelical theology has become as pluralistic as theology in general: it is also deeply divided over the interpretation of the social conflicts that are causing human suffering all over the world. Craig Gay's first book, *With Liberty and Justice for Whom?* offers a detailed analysis of the debate over the ethics of capitalism taking place among evangelical thinkers. While public opinion supposes evangelicals to be ardent supporters of "the spirit of capitalism" and neo-conservative economic policies, Gay's research establishes that evangelical thinkers represent a spectrum of opinion, just as mainstream theologians, moving from commitment to the free market through recommendations for market controls to the radical rejection of capitalism itself. This book deserves to be read not so much because it sheds new light on the existing debate but rather because it liberates the reader from prejudice and the impulse to make quick generalizations about evangelical theology.

Craig Gay's second book, *The Way of the (Modern) World*, with the subtitle, *Why It Is Tempting to Live as If God Does Not Exist*, offers a Christian indictment of contemporary society developed from a critical dialogue with the social sciences. Here is an evangelical theologian who honours the sociological tradition. This is a book worth reading. Drawing insight from social thinkers regarding the political, technological and economic dimensions of society, Gay is able to bring out the social message contained in God's revelation in Jesus Christ. He shows that an individualistic interpretation of the gospel is already the result of the influence exercised by modernity.

As a Catholic, I may be forgiven when I detect a certain affinity between the papal critique of modernity prior to Vatican Council II and the sophisticated analysis of "the way of the world" presented by Gay. Yet while

the popes criticized modern society in the light of an idealized image of the past organic society, Gay turns in his critique to the major sociological thinkers. It is worth remembering in this context that classical sociology (Tonnies, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel...) tried to understand modernity by comparing it with traditional society, a procedure not foreign to papal teaching. As a Catholic carried forward by the teaching of Vatican Council II, I wonder whether Craig Gay is sufficiently sensitive to the redemptive and liberating dimension of the modern project. May one not argue that in every civilization God is graciously at work in a hidden way bringing forth spiritual fruit and generating an original critique of the cultural mainstream?

In my opinion, Craig Gay's books demonstrate that it is a mistake to bracket evangelical theology and disregard it.

Gregory Baum

Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements.*
Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998, 475 pages

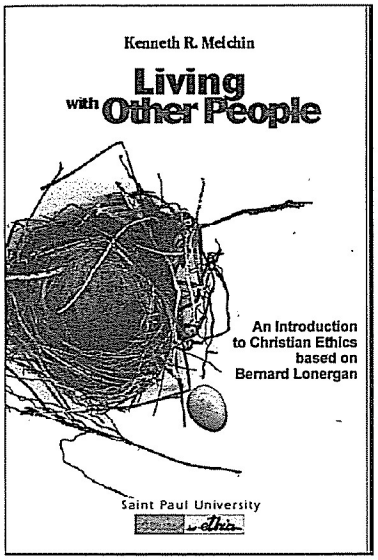
Before reading this book, I thought it would be just another volume on Catholic social teaching, beginning with Leo XIII and ending with the encyclicals of John Paul II. Yet reading the text, I discovered that the book offers a unique perspective on Catholic social teaching and makes an original contribution to the faith-and-justice movement in the Catholic church.

Since Marvin Mich recognizes that ideas do not fall from heaven, not even papal ideas, he looks for historical movements of socially engaged Catholics as the source of new ideas. The social teachings of popes summarize and synthesize ideas that have emerged among Catholic groups and Catholic thinkers struggling with concrete issues. For instance, the first chapter on Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum* (1891) has an introductory section entitled "Social Catholics in Europe", and the long second chapter with the title "Social Catholics in the United States" (until 1950) deals with social movements among Catholics and social theories proposed by Catholics in America as the historical context for the positions adopted by the bishops in their pastoral letters. To understand the strength and limitations of Catholic ideas the author situates them in the political situation in which they emerged; he also takes into account the status or location of the Catholic community in the particular country. The author demonstrates that the church's authoritative social ethics is not derived directly from Scripture or the classical theological tradition; it is rather derived from what the great truths revealed in Scripture and explored in theology mean to believing Christians as they wrestle with the concrete conditions of their lives. The Spirit guides the church through a dialectic interaction between people and hierarchy.

Marvin Mich's approach is original for another reason. While he respects the authority of papal social teaching and admires its practical wisdom, he also offers thoughtful critiques of the various encyclicals. What is the standpoint from which he examines the papal documents? He does not rely on secular social theories. If I read the author correctly, his critical remarks are drawn from the Catholic tradition itself. For instance, he is critical of a papal encyclical if it failed to look at an important issue that would be dealt with in subsequent papal teaching, but that had already attracted the attention of Catholic thinkers and activists at the time. Or, he would be critical of an encyclical if it offered a negative judgement of an idea that would later be accepted in papal social teaching, if at the time of writing there were already Catholic thinkers and activists who made a positive use of that idea. This approach again reveals the dynamics operative in the evolution of Catholic social teaching, a back-and-forth between people and hierarchy, in which the former rather than the latter are in dialogue with secular movements and secular thought.

The major part of the book deals with Catholic social teaching and movements since Vatican Council II. The author documents growing sensitivity of Catholic social teaching to economic oppression, racism, the subjugation of women and the devastation of the environment; he also documents the reluctance of the church's authoritative teaching to deal with these issues in a consistent manner. In my opinion, this book is an ideal text for courses at adult education classes, colleges and universities.

Gregory Baum



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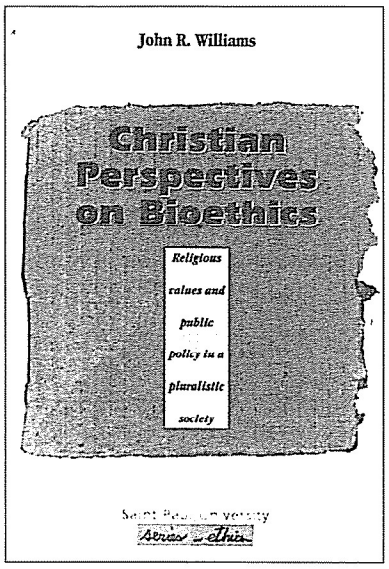

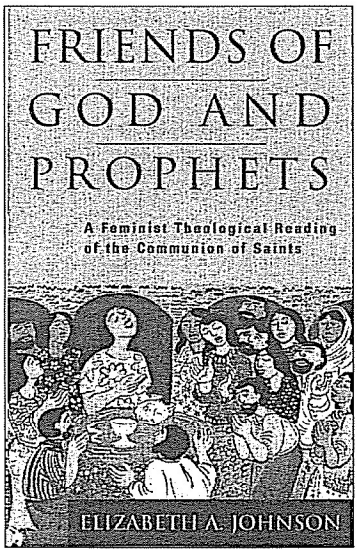

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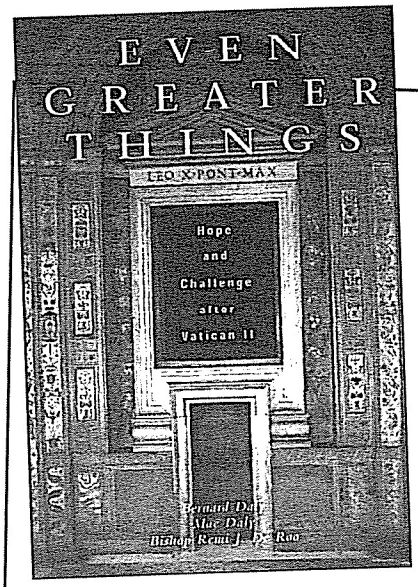

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