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# PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN A GLOBALIZING ERA

Max L. Stackhouse

## *The Issue*

**G**lobalization is, in some senses, new, and it is changing our ideas of political economy. Yet, the idea of *the whole world as one place*, as an inclusive field of spaces and peoples, is not at all new. The great world religions and not only the Hebrew prophets knew long ago of a single created realm where many peoples lived under a universal law, with hopes for a divine end. Further, when the Greek philosopher and scientist, Crates of Mallus (c. 150 BC) made the first globe to symbolize the geo-wide reality, concepts of *kosmos* had already signaled a mystical-mathematical view of a single universe, as we can find in Pythagoras, a spiritual-cosmological vision in Plato, a material-metaphysical perspective in Aristotle, and a socio-legal view of *oikoumene* in the Stoics — ideas which Christians quickly adopted, baptized (modifying them in the process), and universalized. Parallel ideas were present in some strands of Taoist, Hindu, and Buddhist thought. Even the view that modified these — the idea of one humanity in one world, under one heaven, which the one true God created and ordered — is old, even if not acknowledged everywhere. Yet it appeals to that reality, God, who is more universal, more globally encompassing than any *kosmos* or *oikoumene* could be.

The '-ization' part of 'globalization,' however, suggests not only that the whole can be conceived as a single sphere, a mathematical unity, an ontological whole, a metaphysical entelechy, a cosmopolitan universe, or a divine reality that transcends the earth itself, but that a historical process is taking place whereby some different whole comes into being. Not the repeated return to origins, but a turn to something new. The 'already' and 'old,' indeed, the *kosmos* and *oikoumene* themselves, are incomplete, flawed, unfinished, or distorted (even if indispensable to existence and sufficiently ordered to exist). Thus, a 'not yet,' something 'new,' is required, and that must be

rooted in God. When the two terms are joined, we find that the result points to a systemic alteration of what already is, in a manner and degree that brings a *novum* that has not been before. The ancient prophets anticipated this, and the New Testament conveys just such views with an idea of 'the world' as something that is, but which is fallen and thus is something to which we are not to conform. Yet, Christians teach, 'the world' is something that God so loved that it is being redeemed, and those who know God are sent into it to aid in the process of redemption and transformation, even as it groans in travail toward a new creation and a new civilization, the New Jerusalem. Those who receive the vision of this promised reign of God are to employ every moral means to make it actual. All salvation religions have a cosmic vision, a sense of time, and a hope for change to an altered state of being. In Christianity, it is central; and, thus, in some parts of the tradition, technology and the intentional restructuring of the world, selves, and society became a moral duty.<sup>1</sup>

A consciousness of the world as a whole needing change grew covertly for centuries, as explorers, traders, and missionaries circled the globe, using the new technologies. From the Old Silk Road over the sands, to the great sailing vessels over the seas, to the new flying machines over the air, and now by means of the phone, fax, and e-mail, over the web, connections between peoples, ideas, cultures, arts, technologies, and faiths allowed the discovery of commonalities and the formation of a new consciousness. That consciousness was given dramatic expression, in a modern key, at the Parliament of World Religions a century ago, at the Hague Peace Conference of 1899 and at the later Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, as trans-atlantic cables were laid. The awareness of dramatic change leading to a new commonality was on all hands. Indeed, at the World Missionary Conference of 1910, the great scholar of Indian religions J. N. Farquhar said: 'We have entered a new era . . . The nations have become one city; we buy each other's goods, . . . we think each other's thoughts, . . . we begin to hear the music of humanity.'<sup>2</sup>

Not everyone was happy with the prospect, however. The mix of peoples, cultures, and religions offended those who attached sacred meaning to their own 'blood and soil.' And the technologies that had made the new internationalism possible had also generated new possibilities of destructive weaponry and a new class of dislocated workers. They sought a new sense of their own destiny in the emerging theories of the proletariat. The 'music of humanity' of which Farquhar spoke was soon disrupted by a cacophony of military

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., D. F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention* (New York: Knopf, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the *Proceedings* by O. G. Myklebust, *The Study of Missions in Theological Education*, 2nd vol. (Oslo: Egede Instituttet, 1957), p. 2.

marches accompanied by the percussion of bombs and machine guns. The hopes for some providentially engineered automatic progress were dashed; the optimism faded. But the forecast was surely partly true: history has now become planetary, no culture is or can be self-contained, and no nation-state is or can be sovereign anymore; indeed, every war has already become worldwide in scope or effect. That *novum* too is globalization.

The word is often used to describe the effects of 'modernization' — a term developed by a generation of social theorists who thought that they knew the stages of development. They see in globalization a 'Western' modernization of the world, as if the Enlightenment would sweep the world. The world wars interrupted this optimistic expectation, but after the Second World War, it surfaced again in a set of plans for purportedly post-colonial, democratic and reformist 'development' managed by strong central governments through a new kind of mercantilism — which much of the developing world called 'capitalism.' Those plans, however, brought us both many authoritarian regimes and the debt crisis.<sup>3</sup> While many now believe that development can only be driven by neo-liberal capitalism, in which governments serve only as instruments of economic powers, many critics have published diatribes against this view, and see it as merely the export of an exploitative bazaar of greed where consumerism produces a 'MacWorld', supported by Western-dominated institutions such as the WTO and the IMF.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> We have treated some of these matters in some detail in my *Christian Social Ethics in a Global Era*, written with Peter Berger, Dennis McCann, and Douglas Meeks (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995). We did not treat the fact that this view is responsible for the debt crisis that besets many countries now. From the late 1950s through the early 1970s banks were pressured to loan money in massive amounts to new states, presuming that the states would be rational and non-corrupt in the use of the funds for popular development. However, it is a key finding of retrospective studies of those proposals that (a) states are not always rational, non-corrupt, and committed to the people's welfare, and (b) those states cannot repay their debts without a strong and viable economic sector distinct from government. While we need programs for debt forgiveness, we need also the critical judgment of the perpetrators of these proposals.

<sup>4</sup> Debates over these matters can be found in Richard Barnett and Ronald Muller, *Global Reach* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974); Herman Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989); Richard Barnett and J. Cavanagh, *Global Dreams* (New York: Random House, 1994); David Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (Denver: Kumeran Press, 1997); George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1993); Paul Hellyer, *Stop: Think* (Toronto: Chimo Media, 1999); and I. J. Mohan Razu, *Transnational Corporations as Agents of Dehumanization in Asia* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999). However, telling critics of the presuppositions which these volumes share can be found in Robert Benne, *The Ethics of Democratic Capitalism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981); James Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism?* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); J. L. Watson, *Golden Arches East* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); and David Landis, *An Inquiry into the Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

The ideology of *laissez-faire* economics, of course, needs critique; but in fact very few hold that view without qualification. Even fewer now hold to the once popular views of state capitalization. Thus, while 'deregulation,' 'privatization,' and 'open markets' are being tried everywhere, the World Bank, the IMF, and the more recent WTO are also being developed (or reformed) to regulate, by supranational law, finance, monetary, and trade policy. Most observers, within as well as beyond these organizations, agree that they need reform. They also agree that if we did not have them we would have to invent them, and that current protests against them are often so ideological that the criticisms are unusable in guiding the necessary reforms.<sup>5</sup> These are all manifestations of globalization. Are they the core reality?

An alternative perspective might be found in retrieving and recasting the forgotten insights of the radical Dutch theologian Arendt van Leeuwen (who was later discredited in a number of theological circles because of his turn to a more overtly Marxist view). This contemporary of the developmentalist theorists was a critic of them precisely because they, like the Marxists to whom he eventually turned, saw religion as little more than a cultural by-product of 'real' factors. In *Christianity in World History*,<sup>6</sup> his best work, he argued that this view was superficial. He foresaw the gradual adoption and adaptation of technology, democracy, and human rights by the East and the South as evidence of the spread of socially embedded, semi-secularized theological themes, of which many of the Western exporters and the enthusiastic importers of these ideas were unaware (although some adherents of other traditional religions suspected as much). These developments are, he says, inconceivable without the background beliefs of Christian theology, which would eventually have to be acknowledged by those who adopted them.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In 1999, Princeton Theological Seminary and World Vision, with an equal number of participants from ecumenical mission, aid, and development agencies, hosted the conference 'The Church and Globalization in a New Century.' A volume by that title is now available (Eerdmans, 2000). Here I want to note the interesting conversations with representatives of these organizations, the US State Department, and delegates from the UN, all of whom spoke 'off the record,' and repeatedly emphasized this point. The World Bank has also argued ('World Development Report 2000–2001') that the reduction in world poverty must become a priority, especially in regard to Africa and Latin America, even though notable progress has been made in Asia.

<sup>6</sup> New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964.

<sup>7</sup> Van Leeuwen did anticipate the fact that these ideas could be taken in the direction of a more comprehensive secular ideology that would play the role of religion. See Van Leeuwen, *The Critique of Heaven* and *The Critique of Earth*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1970). He did not see the ways in which other religions would themselves undergo reformations and draw on revised internal themes to employ in understanding these phenomena. See, e.g., Peter Berger and Hsin-Huang Hsiao (eds), *In Search of an East Asian Development Model* (New Brunswick, NJ:

*Other Views*

Although it has become extremely unfashionable to mention such ideas in recent years, since many scholars came to view all religions as socially culturally dependent, and, thus normatively equal and not relevant to the guidance or constraint of technological, economic, social, or political life, and others tend to view any religious (and not only cultural) transfer from West to East or North to South as an imperialistic new form of colonialization, there may be more to this theory than is acknowledged in most accounts of modernization.<sup>8</sup> Of course, the term 'modernization' continues to be associated largely with the efforts by 'underdeveloped' societies to achieve 'advanced development' by rationalizing the means of production and governance. Many view it as adopting the models which developed in the West since the sixteenth century — almost always without reference to the role that religion played in forming and constantly reforming the souls, societies, employments of reason, and group formations that brought these patterns into being.

Those who view globalization only as an extended form of modernization generally remain convinced that what we have is a product of post-theological developments, almost entirely driven by individualism and rationalism, as organized by the bureaucratic, sovereign nation-state. There is some truth to this insofar as the Enlightenment advanced these agendas (although in the hyper-modernism of the left, collectivism was substituted for individualism). Ironically, this view is shared by two groups. On the one hand, secularists (some liberal, some radical, some rightist, some leftist) are pleased to be beyond all that religious stuff, which they never believed made much difference anyway, since it was only a phantom epiphenomenon. However, their extremism is rooted in nothing less than the failure to acknowledge how much their own presuppositions depend on theological views, and how little they can prove their own foundations, as the postmodern anti-foundationalists have exposed. To be sure, there are traditionalists who hold that those who advocate the dignity of all persons, a reasonable faith expressed by an aversion to magic and miracle, and the morality of constitutional, democratic, secular governance distinct from religious organizations see the

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Transaction Books, 1988). Nor did he see the ways in which particular cultures would attempt to adopt economic techniques and material technologies without having their basic character altered, and wake up to find themselves in the midst of the shock of divided and alienating identities. See C. Fred. Alford, *Think No Evil: Korean Values in the Age of Globalization* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> These themes are increasingly well documented with regard to the global spread of science, technology, and education. See, e.g., Toby E. Huff, *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China, and the West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), with an extensive bibliography.

Enlightenment as a betrayal of faith. Historically, however, it was certain strands of the theological heritage that altered other dynamics in thought and society and shaped the Enlightenment more than secular opposition to religion formed it.<sup>9</sup>

The reference to governments also points to one reason why the term 'globalization' is often used rather than internationalization. That term acknowledges increased interaction between nations, but preserves the notion that the primary unit of identity and action is the nation-state (increasingly multinational and multicultural in its constitution).<sup>10</sup> However, the noted scholar Saskia Sasson is surely right when she argues that we are seeing not the end of national governments but their transformation. They will no more disappear than provinces disappeared when modern 'national state governments' were formed. Yet she argues in her *Globalization and Its Discontents*<sup>11</sup> that cities, and the clusters of corporations and communication channels in them, are becoming the ganglia in a global net of interdependence, and that nation-states will find that they are not the sovereign agents they once were. If nation-states do not provide a congenial environment, culturally creative artists, professionals, trained technicians and managers, research institutions, financial centers, and whole corporations will migrate to other locations, and workers will follow.

Sasson's interests focus on the laboring classes in the West who serve the 'cosmopolitans' — the educated technological and managerial elites who are constructing these new global networks of interaction (whom Robert Reich calls the 'symbolic analysts').<sup>12</sup> She is quite aware that the classes who provide goods and services to them are now, on the one hand, being drawn into the lower rungs of globalization processes and benefits, and on the other, finding themselves in competition with populations around the world who could do much of the work equally well at a much lower rate of pay. That draws wider ranges of people into the world processes of production, and thus into the world's expanding lower-middle classes. This also draws them into lifestyles different from

<sup>9</sup> This is a chief finding of my *Creeds, Society and Human Rights* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), written in response to direct encounters with the socio-intellectual histories of the United States, India, and Eastern European Marxism. The Enlightenment in Great Britain was not the same as that of Germany or France, and they all differed from that of South or that of East Asia. Each Enlightenment is built on a religious foundation that the Enlightenment philosophers themselves did not supply and cannot defend whenever they rule the grounds for their convictions out of the discussion, even if many of their convictions remain valid.

<sup>10</sup> This is one of the problems of the WTO. It is internationalist in design, something like the UN, although focused on geo-economics rather than geopolitics. But the system it is designed to regulate is global, not international, conducted by trans-national corporations that are not easily governed even by concerted national efforts.

<sup>11</sup> New York: SUNY Press, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

what their cultural backgrounds prepared them to face, and different from what the traditional elders approve. It also leaves wider gaps between the increasing range of classes and, at least temporarily, increases the distance between those who are richer and those who are poorer.

The context in which we now think, work, pray, and seek to carry out our convictions is increasingly a comprehending context, built out of this history. It includes many specific locales and subcultures much like the dynamic pluralism of the early Church. Life now, as then, is 'Glocal,' simultaneously global and local, ecumenical and congregational, in part because we live in a period of the 'compression of the world,' which is not only multipolar politically (with temporary hegemonies which others cooperate to restrain), pluralistic religiously and culturally, but increasingly linked technologically, economically, and in terms of the flows information and population migrations — with, to be sure, some left out.<sup>13</sup>

### *A Response*

What are we to think about such a situation? I would like to share with you what some of us are thinking about them. A team of eighteen scholars — Protestant and Catholic, men and women, some more liberal and some more conservative, most now working in the US but all with roots or extended involvements in other continents and cultures — are producing a set of volumes that seeks to treat the multidimensional reality we face.<sup>14</sup> Of course, each scholar will bring his or her own stamp to this effort, but as coordinator, I would like to share my view of the whole. Our project is based in a 'public theological' exploration into four areas much too neglected in contemporary thought:

1. A perspectival shift from orders of creation to dynamic spheres of relative sovereignty.
2. A theological analysis of global 'Powers' — Principalities, Authori-ties, Thrones, and Dominions.

<sup>13</sup> I am again indebted to Roland Robertson, 'Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,' in *Global Modernities*, ed. M. Featherstone et al. (London: Sage, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> I am delighted to serve as the general editor to *God and Globalization* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000, 2001), which consists of three volumes of essays by (in vol. 1) Roland Robertson, Yersu Kim, William Schweiker, Donald Shriver, Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, and David Tracy; (in vol. 2) John Witte, Allen Verhey, Ronald Cole-Turner, Jürgen Moltmann, Peter Paris, and Don Browning; and (in vol. 3) John Mbiti, Kosuke Koyama, Thomas Thangaraj, Lamin Sanneh, Sze-Kar Wan, Diane Obenchain, and Scott Thomas. I am now at work on the fourth volume, which will focus on a Christian theological treatment of the whole set, and which will be introduced by Justo Gonzalez.



3. An investigation of how great religions form, order, and sometimes transform civilizations.
4. A recasting of covenantal-federal thought as a mode of public theology for a global civil society.

### *The Spheres*

The idea that we live in various 'spheres of life,' each having its own sense of justice and its own set of purposes, is rooted in the older medieval notion of the 'estates,' and then the Reformation notion of the 'orders of creation.' Both held the view that from the beginning of the world, God established certain 'orders' in which humans are to live — generally stated as familial, political, and religious. After all, people are naturally sexual and social beings as well as seekers after meaning, and each area of life may become destructive. People need organized spheres to keep these dimensions of life in working order. Here was a divinely ordained theory of institutional life — presumably designed by God for our well-being. This ontocratic view has parallels in the classical Indian texts the *Artha Shastra* and *Dharma Shastra* as adapted also by Buddhism, and in other classical traditions, such as the 'Five Relationships' of Confucian thought, and, I understand, many ancient Druid traditions as well. The specific shape of such pieties leave deep legacies in the cultural genetic codes of all formed in such civilizations, whether all affirm these traditions or not.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, those who struggle against them are defined in substantial measure by that with which they contend.

The Western version of this ontocratic view was fatefully challenged by Christians on theological grounds which also generated new ranges of human association. Movements for the independence of religion, as well as of economic and cultural spheres, from statist and familistic control had long-range effects.<sup>16</sup> In the past century, the idea was developed, in different ways, by both theologians and sociologists of religion. The brilliant idea of spheres implies, as can be seen in the older 'orders theory,' that quite stable functional requirements of human living demand the participation in and maintenance of some viable institutions that are logically prior to the state and cannot be fully controlled by it. This stability only in part

<sup>15</sup> See the essays, for example, by Thomas Thangaraj, John Mbiti, Sze-Kar Wan, Lamin Sanneh, and Diane Obenchain in *God and Globalization*, vol. 4: *Christ and the Dominions of Civilization* (forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup> It is impossible to trace here the several developments of this point from the medieval monastery to the Reformation, and between the Reformation and the theologies of our times, but they are thick with implications for globalization, and have been indicated in *On Moral Business: Classical and Contemporary Resources for Ethics and Economic Life*, ed. M. L. Stackhouse, D. McCann, S. Roels et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995); and my *Covenant and Commitments: Faith, Family, and Economic Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1997).

derives from forms built into creation to which we must adhere. The spheres also change in number and contours in history; they expand or contract in role and importance depending on the total dynamics of a society. The theological traditions until the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not clearly see that culture and economics are spheres distinct from family, religion, or regime, for it was in these three institutions that culture and economic life were located — as they still are in traditional societies. People develop their cultural lives, intermittently, in households or villages and in communal festival. Economically, they produce for families (and the households of rulers), and consume in households or at religious festivals through gifts for the gods and priests.

It was only when cities develop that other spheres emerge. And most important is the corporation, for it becomes the house for other activities besides the traditional three 'orders.' For example, when an 'art company' is formed, dance, music, painting, theater move out from family-centered village, from worship-centered church or temple, or from court-centered salon to the commercial stage (or museum). Then 'culture' becomes 'independent' — a sphere governed essentially by its own standards. That is part of the historic significance, for example, of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. And it was only when production, distribution, and consumption shifted from household, temple, and palace to the factory, the bank, and the stock exchange that economic activity became independent of the family's purse, the priest's token, and the prince's coffers. Similarly, education develops various sciences that cannot be faithful to the quest for truth if it becomes only an instrument of patriarchy, tradition, or state ideology. A university is required. And, as many cultures have seen, if an economy is only run by the family, every relationship of love and loyalty becomes materialistic; if it is only run by a religious group, faith becomes commercialized; and if it is only run by the state, economics becomes the occasion for political corruption, and politics distorts economic wisdom.

Of course, the status of families, religions, and governments remains important, for people must be physically generated and nurtured, morally and spiritually formed, and both regulated and protected by a form of law and order. Thus, the development of institutions independent of the traditional familial, religious, or royal patterns marked the establishment of the 'social conditionality' not only of the Industrial Revolution but also of the communications era as much as did the newer technologies fostered in these new institutions. In fact, for technology to change society, it had to have an institutional base from which to operate. I do not here pause to treat history of the rise of the corporation in detail, for I have done so in several places.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> E.g., *Public Theology and Political Economy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).

However, we may here note, in short, that the root of the Western corporation is the monastery, which was outside the family, state, and ordinary church body, but which won the right to own property and engage in trade for its sustenance. The idea is also later found in the university, the hospital, and the independent towns that had a citizenry and their own law but no prince. Protestants abolished the monasteries but kept the legal notion of the *persona ficta*, the cooperative economic activity, found refuge in the independent cities, and coupled all this with theological ideas of stewardship and trusteeship. The legal history of the corporation is the repository of this part of this religiously shaped history.

I sketch such moments in the Western past because they illustrate the fact that in a changing and pluralistic world, economic and cultural activities tend to seek their own institutional base, a fact that has now become decisive for globalization. It also shows that the spheres change, that each responds to changes in other spheres, and that there is always something of a human construction about them. They are as much historical as creational. Even those that must be actualized for human survival do not have a totally fixed order about them. It also shows that institutional spheres that are strange to some cultures and demand both altered legal arrangements and personal habits of thought are disturbing when they are introduced as a foreign novelty.<sup>18</sup> However, it can be argued that something like the corporate mode of organization is potentially critical to the development of civil society in ways not always recognized. Indeed, one can argue that they had to be developed because humans are not only sexual, religious, and political creatures; they are also economic and cultural creatures. Each area of life has its own logic and needs its own sphere for the various capacities of human existence to be more fully cultivated.

It is not often that we speak directly of these differentiations in the academic or theological worlds, although we speak indirectly of them in highly specialized, secularized languages that sometimes obscure the moral and spiritual issues at stake. Indeed, we have

<sup>18</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Wealth* (New York: Free Press, 1995). On the basis of the comparative analysis of ten cultures, Fukuyama argues, convincingly I think, that some religious and ethical orientations tend to stamp persons with a capacity to trust those who are not members of their own familial, ethnic, or national group, and that these persons find it easier to form and sustain voluntary organizations, including corporations, and thus advance economically faster than others. We can see the implications of his work beyond the Euro-American and East Asian countries he studied if we examine the difficulties Russia has had after the fall of the USSR. Technology was highly developed, but without a legal and social base for independent institutional formation, it was only a 'mafioso capitalism' that was able to get started for some time — compared, for example, to Catholic Poland or Reformed Hungary, where the Church and other organizations distinct from the state had preserved the habits of trust and independency that allowed corporations to form, enabling rapid recovery.

built much of the social sciences on them. Psychology deals with sexuality and family development; political science with the structures and dynamics of accumulating, organizing, and exercising power; economics with commerce, business management, and corporate policy; 'communications' or 'the arts' with culture; and philosophy or the history of religions with faith. Indebted as we are to these sciences, since they help us to understand many of the structures and dynamics of life and to expose their dark sides, they have not yet shown that they can engender a viable social ecology. That is because these sciences have repudiated religion, its modes of reasoning, and its social influence. In their view religion fails to recognize the autonomy of their spheres. This charge is basically valid: the various spheres may each have an integrity and a relative independence, but from a theological point of view none is morally and spiritually autonomous. They are all under mandates of justice and virtue, law and purpose which they did not create, cannot avoid, and dare not ignore.

Knowledge of these spiritual and moral qualities is precisely what allows the constructive and reconstructive creation of viable institutions in the various spheres of life. In the midst of globalization, such a formative and reformatory orientation is needed. The Canadian scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith was surely on the right track when he wrote:

the task of constructing even that minimum degree of world fellowship that will be necessary for man to survive at all is far too great to be accomplished on any other than a religious basis. From no other source than his faith, I believe, can man muster the energy, devotion, vision, resolution, capacity to survive disappointment that will be necessary — that are necessary — for this challenge.<sup>19</sup>

### *The Powers*

The social sciences are marvelous companions to deeper thought.<sup>20</sup> They must be preserved and developed further, even if they finally fail. And they do often fail for this reason: they cannot fully grasp, constrain, guide, or bring into civilized order the 'Powers' that are real in life, and which the Bible calls 'Principalities,' 'Authorities,' 'Regencies,' and 'Dominions' on their own terms. They can, and they

<sup>19</sup> W. C. Smith, *The Faith of Other Men* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 102. See also idem, *Toward a World Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981).

<sup>20</sup> On this point, John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), not only presents a distorted view of what many social theorists have held but offers devastating advice when he calls for us to forsake the dialogue between theology and the social sciences in favor of a 'pure' theology of 'radical orthodoxy.' This form of pre-modernism gives us no guidance whatsoever for the global future.

do, help us engage in critical analysis, and thus in protest against or resistance to the powers that be. But they finally only analyze and oppose; they do not integrate and propose. This is the theme of the Enlightenment: critical thought and liberating action for the sake of maximum freedom. But when it overthrows some power, it unleashes others, for it really does not believe in moral formation as a duty or have grounds for spiritual reformation as a repeatedly necessary strategy because it does not believe that we live in a world of vital, intelligible moral and spiritual forces that were created to be servants of divine purposes, but who have rebelled against their holy purpose and become celebrants of their own potencies. Instead, they can recognize the 'social forces' of the world in a critical way, but they do not recognize that they are also 'demonic' in the sense that they grab and possess people and are in need not only of counter-forces but of fundamental conversion. The loss of a theological vocabulary to deal with such phenomena impoverishes our capacity to grasp part of social reality, a part that people know is real but do not know how to handle. (Both the primal religions and the neo-Evangelical and Pentecostal movements do deal with them, and often offer motivation for the moral and spiritual ordering of life, although usually in pre-modernist terms that do not fully meet the demands of the globalizing era. Still, they do so better than post-religious views, which is why many of the poor are making a preferential option for these movements.)<sup>21</sup>

In most cultures and sub-cultures, people seem to live in a world of enchanted powers — a world populated by spirits that can be invoked, demons that must be exorcized, or charms and curses that may be used. Elaborate systems develop around these concerns, and every religion has adherents who use their faith in such ways, even if the 'high' literary religions discourage it. To be sure, some 'super-personal forces of good and evil'<sup>22</sup> are identified in other terms by the modern social sciences. They speak of 'complexes' or 'stereotypes,' of 'totems' and 'taboos,' or of 'isms' and 'ideologies.' They come to dominate persons or peoples who do not know quite what they are or how they came to be dominant. Ordinary people also use terms from various religious traditions to express un-controlled dynamics in their lives. 'Fate,' 'fortune,' 'karma,' 'kismet,' 'God's will,' etc. suggest cosmic forces that seem to determine behavior. Today, genetics, social conditioning, and economic interests are favored explanations of the powers that make us do what we do. But they tend to tell us that we have no choice but to live out what these powers dictate. Concerns about the powers vary from person to person,

<sup>21</sup> See, especially, David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> The term is Walter Rauschenbush's; see *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1918).

culture to culture, and epoch to epoch; but they are always present. Social analysis must face the issues they pose; but only a critically analyzed religion — by a public theological ethics, I think — can touch the depths needed.

### *The Principalities*

In our time of globalization, a number of primal powers, which we call the Principalities, have already been rearranged in ways decisive for how we live. How we deal with these changes will be fateful for humanity. For instance, every society has to cope with the threat of violence within and from without. Organized violence is required to hold those threats in check, and people skilled in the arts of war and ready to kill and be killed are necessary. But it is always possible that they and their organizations can themselves get out of control, obsessed by their own importance, blinded to the limits of their roles in life, and tempted to identify their own powers as those that can rule the world — or worse, save humanity. Fed by a lust for power, or a desire for glory, they deploy death and destruction. They generate a fanaticism that in turn renders terrorism in our time — often unleashing unfettered reactions that become a terror too.

This kind of power, as the ancients knew, is 'Mars,' the idolatrous form of skilled violence to which rulers have built temples and monuments of great glory. The ruins not only of Sparta and Rome, but also of Babylon, Indian and Chinese dynasties, Angkor Wat, Inca temples, and the Valley of the Kings in Egypt testify to the futility of this as a regnant power. It may be always necessary, but it can only temporarily hold a civilization together, and even then it is also always a danger — today all the more so since weapons of mass destruction have reached a new level of capacity and firepower previously unimaginable. Mars may save us from some perils; but it imperils us also. It needs institutional constraint — around the world, beyond the power of any nation-state.

'Eros,' the symbol of sensuality and sexual desire, is a much more personal and intimate but also a more pervasive power. No family, no society could live without it for more than a generation. Yet persons and cultures can become obsessed with it. It can command lives far beyond its own sphere, partly because it can simulate the experience of religious ecstasy. Then it prompts the betrayal of familial loyalties and social duty; it identifies with political potency and image; it seduces business relations, penetrates educational relationships and judgments, exploits medical care and decisions, and invades religious entrustments and practices. When it is deified, much is distorted; it is best celebrated regularly and joyfully in a just, equitable marriage.

'Mammon' too distorts greatly. Money is a convenient means of calculating cost, value, and gain. It may take all sorts of symbolic

forms, from coinage to paper to electronic signals, and these symbols are important in life. It is better to have some reasonable access to these symbols than not — people die for lack of it, and people with more of it are freed from the calculations of subsistence to live for larger purposes. Yet, like Mars and Eros, money can easily be absolutized. It becomes Mammon when it is taken as the means of salvation, the source of security, or the purpose of life. The worship of the 'almighty buck' becomes easily an idolatry; it needs disciplined institutions of accountability. But these can no longer be controlled by any nation-state. To attempt to control them by state action cuts the people off from the opportunity to participate in abundant living. They will then subvert, depart, or overthrow that state.

And who can deny the power of the media today? The 'Muses' have long been definers of culture. The bard, the artist, the dramatist, the poet, the teller of tales have all been seen as the creators of culture, the refiners of social life, the articulators of identity; they are the conscience of humanity that not only exposes its foibles but clarifies its virtues and celebrates its approximations to them. No community is without its Muses; every culture has its distinctive forms of poetry and song, painting and sculpture, dance and ritual — its particular sense of beauty, and its temptation to worship its own creations, even if the arts are also a kind of universal language. With today's media, our collective consciousness is image laden. What is in our living rooms also reaches around the world and into the hearts of the young. Like Mars, it is ever a force; like Eros, it is ever present; like Mammon, it poses ever the temptation to become a glutton. In a global world it becomes virtual reality.

In most societies, it is religion that holds these Principalities together and under constraint. Dispense with religion, or subordinate religion to any one of these Powers, and each goes its own way, no longer drawn into a disciplined solidarity that restrains and guides them. Indeed, political science, psychology, economics, and cultural studies have all developed sophisticated ways of explaining religion — even explaining it away, as really something else — something actually caused by the Powers that these disciplines study. But what if, in fact, it is the other way around. What if these Principalities are in fact driven largely by unacknowledged moral and spiritual forces that have lost contact with their deepest roots? Then our social analysis in all the various fields requires the theological dimension that has been banished from academia, or else becomes dominated by forms of religious or ideological fundamentalism that cannot grasp the depth of their own field. It is likely that philosophy can aid us for a time, and sometimes the tensions between religions demand a retreat to philosophy. But philosophy, finally, may best seen as an aid, like social science, to theological ethics, which must engage the public issues of life at the most universal level.

*The Authorities*

In our time, in our global environment, it is not only these perennial powers that are a potential problem; various novel institutional powers also challenge us. The cultivated, classic professions are among the most honored and compelling Authorities in contemporary life. They are education (especially as guided by science), law, and medicine. These are among the most dramatic globalizing realities of our times. The experts for our world, especially when things go wrong, have increasingly become the professors and teachers, the judges and lawyers, and the doctors and nurses. To these we must add the more recently 'professionalized' area of engineering and management (the engineering of human relations for effective organizational accomplishment). Each of these is driven by a distinctive 'spirit.' That is, they were formed and stamped by theologically framed history, although many practitioners in these fields today may be largely unaware of it. The wider availability of education, much of it decidedly non-religious, some of it anti-religious in character, puts professionals in these spheres at points of high authority in the culture, but only rarely do they identify any connection between what they do and the history of the root doctrines that defined these vocations, even if many professionals have high standards of integrity and are personally religious. A major question is raised: can we expect generation after generation of specialists to sustain and refine the moral and spiritual bases for guiding their fields if they do not have in mind any sense of their roots in basic understandings of divine law and purpose?

In addition to these Authorities, we must mention several current 'Regencies' (a translation of *thronos*) that are playing highly influential roles today. One is the new set technical regulative institutions already mentioned — the UN, UNESCO, the World Court, the World Health Organization, the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, etc. These centers of regulation are not the powers in the world, but they are the support systems for those who do exercise power (the kind and mix of power is different in each of these). They are not rulers, they are the 'seats of power' on which rulers sit.<sup>23</sup> If we tried to destroy them, others can and would easily be built.

A second cluster of less official Regencies can be found in the movements that have worldwide support and find expression in the

<sup>23</sup> The nature of the World Trade Organization, its functions, structure, and relationship to other global organizations, including trans-national corporations, is carefully studied in Anne O Krueger (ed.), *The WTO as an International Organization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). For a view of these organizations that depends on a theological understanding of covenant, see Daniel J. Elazar, *Constitutionalizing Globalization* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), especially Chapter 7.



NGOs, non-profit religious and advocacy organizations. The churches are among the most effective in raising global issues, but the ecology groups are perhaps the most vocal, along with women's movements. So is World Vision, Amnesty International, and Church World Service. Such movements are somewhat fugitive, but they have enormous effects because they articulate moral principles for the larger population and exemplify the values that transcend particular cultures and represent symbols of morality.

### *The Dominions*

The ancient, perennial Principalities (family, religion, politics), with the also historic but more recently differentiated ones (the media and the corporation), reflect deep Powers that everywhere operate in human existence, almost always influenced by religion. The classic Authorities (the professions) were Powers that were rooted in theological developments, but have often shed that influence. The newer Regencies (technology, management, regulative agencies, and the NGOs) are very mixed in this regard. We do not yet know quite how to deal with them. But we do know that all of these are shaping and being shaped by globalization, and if we try to stop them, we would have to use draconian measures that would stifle freedom and shut down open societies.

The only power that has a chance of shaping, constraining, or reforming and guiding these Powers is religion — the kind of religion that cultivates a theological ethic informed by critical thought about and measured engagement with these Powers. Only this would allow us to know where and how to enter into their realities enough to inform them from the inside. But, of course, the question immediately arises: which religion? And which theology? The question is globally fateful and forces us again to take a new kind of look at the profound contributions and challenges of the great world religions. Christianity as a religion and, even more, as a theology and ethic, cannot fail to recognize that it is in simultaneous contention and cooperation with the world religions. They shape the Principalities everywhere; they support or challenge the Authorities and Regencies of cultures. Wherever they have done so, they have formed an enduring 'Dominion' (the Latin, of course, for a realm where a *Lord* — *kyrios* — reigns). In the great religions of the world, each has given a distinctive sociocultural pattern to the spheres in which these Powers operate. They have provided the spiritual and moral architecture around which all these Powers are ordered. Even where the more recent Powers were imported, they were adopted and adapted with distinctive socio-religious stamps. No known society has been able to flourish without an overt religious base — as we have seen in the USSR, and as is now being tested in the most secular parts of the West and, as I understand it, in China.

The point is this: if all these Powers are pressing toward something like a new world civilization, who, or what, shall have Dominion? And what kind of dominion shall it be? Of course, this poses a distinct problem for believers: If Christ (or Krishna, or Buddha, etc.) is not the Lord, will we structure our global society according to our best understanding of some other Lord? All the issues that have been debated for a generation about 'inclusivism, exclusivism, or pluralism' suddenly take on a different level of meaning.<sup>24</sup> I do not see any inevitable 'clash of civilizations' based on religious differences, as does Samuel Huntington;<sup>25</sup> but I do see fundamental questions about how theology and ethics can and should address the moral and spiritual architecture of an encompassing, comprehending civilization.<sup>26</sup>

A complex set of questions must be asked in regard, at least, to the great, civilization-forming religions — Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, as well as, of course, Christianity — for they have already long engaged the Principalities and Authorities, and some have had affinities with Regencies. We have to ask what kinds of civilizations they lead to (in principle and in fact) and what kinds of justice, cultural and intellectual vitality, and prosperity they foster, for no religiously shaped civilization says that it wants, or brings about, injustice, an absence of cultural creativity, or poverty. Special treatment must be made regarding tribal or 'primal' traditions also. They have both persisted in the face of other traditions, and have also frequently been taken into other traditions, influencing the inner content of their faith and morals.

Yet to pose these questions can be explosive. In part because of that, the commonly accepted study of religions is 'non-theological' and 'non-evaluative.' Indeed, the academic study of 'religion' or 'religions' — not unlike an enormous preponderance of popular opinion — wants the various religions to be viewed as if they were or are of equal worth in all respects. Thus, we have added a chapter on 'the secular study of religion.' The 'Enlightenment project' had a view of religion that has become an orthodoxy in itself. Further, denying any idea that any particular religion's Lord could be the universal Lord, Caesar often becomes the functional lord. However,

<sup>24</sup> For a summary of the debate on these issues see Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985); and the wider bibliography of materials related to this question in S. Immanuel David (ed.), *Christianity and the Encounter with Other Religions* (Bangalore: UTC Publications, 1988).

<sup>25</sup> *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remakings of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> These questions are debated by a number of contributors to this study. Key background resources for this are Stanley Samartha, *Living Faiths and Ultimate Goals* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974); Knitter, *No Other Name?*; and Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

this perspective has revealed, often in spite of expressed desires to be 'non-judgmental' and tolerant, that religions have very strong views about each other (and of other branches of their own traditions) regarding manners, morals, and social order as well as faith. Each judges what kind of persons the others tend to produce and how they live in marriage, politics, culture, economics, and professional life. Further, the comparative study of these traditions shows that they do, indeed, have distinctive impacts on civilization. Once this fact is recognized, it could well be morally wrong for a religion not to take responsibility for what it does to people and societies. Moreover, the religions studied on a comparative or historical basis tend to judge each other on the basis of the sorts of legal, economic, political, and cultural systems they engender, and how they act in the international arena. The question that this raises is whether it is possible to identify any more valid or less valid forms of religious belief, practice, and opinion, specifically as they shape the spheres and institutions of the common life.<sup>27</sup> People will make these judgments anyway. Can they be made wisely?

The religions are increasingly present to one another around the world. If they are to live together in peace, what can construct a civilization which is not marked by religious persecution, discrimination, and distrust, especially since each of them will seek to order, in its own way, the Principalities, Authorities, and Regencies of the increasingly common life? What can we do about all of these Powers that are simultaneously natural and historical, commanding of people's spiritual loyalties? Shall we avoid them; shall we attempt to destroy them; shall we simply recognize that they are part of the nature of society — at least of our society, as other kinds of angelic/demonic forces seemed to be accepted in other times by other peoples? In our day, the institutions and the spiritual and moral forces that frame and guide, confine and channel these Powers are fragile.

Some may simply have to be confined and contained by counterforces that hold them in check, even though they writhe in their bonds. But others may be drawn into the bonds of responsibility and accountability. For Christians, the issue is whether we can become instruments of Christ's Lordship to draw these Powers, these Principalities, Authorities, Regencies, into the domain of disciplined service to God and humanity. The Dominions too? If so, how?

The final contribution to this attempt to construct a theologically sound, publicly accessible, and practically viable social ethic will explore the prospects of extending the covenantal understanding of salvation history. I am convinced that this concept provides a model

<sup>27</sup> This part of our project is now under way, but quite incomplete. We have discovered that each of the world religions has a different set of 'charges' that are leveled at the kinds of persons and societies that Christianity tends to produce. These are being taken very seriously, especially in volume 3.

for living that extends from the moral vision of God's relationship to Adam and Eve and their relationship to each other as portrayed in Genesis, to the final vision of God's Kingdom, inaugurated by Christ, that is yet to come. My developing proposal in this area has been much shaped not only by Christian understandings of covenant as a basis for ethical renewal,<sup>28</sup> but by the work of the Jewish political theorist Daniel Elazar, to whom I am deeply indebted for the next several paragraphs.

Elazar has pointed out that there are different forms of covenant, implied already in the different terms in the Hebrew — *'bnai berit'* and *'baalei berit,'* for example — and in the ways they are translated and adapted into other cultural-linguistic contexts: *diatheke* and sometimes *syntheke* or even *mysterion* (Greek); *testamentum*, *compactum*, *sacramentum*, or *foedus* (Latin), in the New Testament and early Christian writings; and later in social, political, and legal thought as pact, compact, federation, confederation, *Bund* (German; 'bond' in English), *alliance* (French), and thus league, agreement, and promise, to name the most frequent usages in Western languages. Only when we attend to the frequency and social overtones of these terms do we begin to see how pervasive and thick with overtones or implications the idea is in human affairs, and if we expand into Asian and African languages, as some are now seeking to do, even greater richness may be revealed. All these terms refer to a voluntary, pledged bonding of persons, peoples, or groups that otherwise would remain in isolation or conflict into a matrix of peace, justice, mutual obligation, and care.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, it seems that in every genuine covenant, six elements are present: The Divine is disclosed in the midst of history. Promises are made. Community is formed. Duties and rights are accepted. Freedom and justice are made constitutional. A vision of a new, holy future for civilization is opened for all involved.

One of the most remarkable results of Elazar's research and writing is that he finds that one or another definition and social arrangement based on covenant-like conceptions to be present in every society he has studied.<sup>30</sup> The concept, and the reality to which it points, is not

<sup>28</sup> See D. Sturm, *Corporations, Constitutions and Covenants* (Philadelphia: Center for the Study of Federalism, 1980); J. Allen, *Love and Conflict: A Covenantal Model of Christian Ethics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984); and C. McCoy with J. W. Baker (eds), *Fountainhead of Federalism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1991).

<sup>29</sup> I do not pause to repeat what appeared in the several articles on this matter in regard to covenant in *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1996), to which Dirkie Smit also contributed.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel Elazar, *The Covenant Tradition in Politics*, 4 vols (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 1995–1998). The volumes are *Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel*; *Covenant and Commonwealth: From Christian Separation through the Protestant Reformation*; *Covenant and Constitutionalism: The Great Frontier and the Matrix of Federal Democracy*; and *Covenant and Civil Society: The Constitutional Matrix of Modern Democracy*. While Elazar treats some African and Asian cultures in volumes 3 and 4, he does not offer an extensive investigation of them. This still needs to be done. I am personally grateful

everywhere prominent or accented in the same way, of course, and it sometimes becomes subordinated to other conceptions and socio-political or cultural forces, but it is in principle a universal reality, for humans are all potentially covenantal beings — that is, relational, rational, and choosing persons seeking bonds where the elements of covenant can be grounded and sustained. Christian thinkers who build on the tradition that feeds Elazar's thought hold that people are therefore capable of finding new 'brothers and sisters,' a new morally and spiritually intimate household, among people to whom they are not otherwise related, and they are called into a new community of public discourse, an *ecclesia*, which is also a new just and peaceful 'kingdom' that forms a catholic ecumene more comprehensive than any political entity.

Such insights, I think, are especially important for current research into the global society that is emerging — ironically without either a single people, an *ethnē*, at its core, and without a *polis* or a regime governing its parts. When the idea of covenant is raised to prominence, or even to dominance, the prospect of a free, pluralistic society with new forms of constitutional democracy becomes a living possibility. Building on both his historical work and his encyclopedic knowledge of contemporary developments, Elazar turns, in his final book on the social and political meanings of covenant, *Constitutionalizing Globalization: The Postmodern Revival of Confederal Arrangements*,<sup>31</sup> to just this vision. It is a courageous attempt to offer a constructive proposal for the new directions that covenantal thought suggests in view of our present situation, and to revise some former definitions in view of changing conditions. It must be admitted, however, that parts of this book, like some parts of the last two volumes of his masterwork, are difficult to read and sometimes repetitive. I suspect that he anticipated the inevitable results of his declining health, and thus massive amounts of material seem almost dumped into paragraphs. Still, it is a major contribution, and to grasp the character of this proposal, which is the focus of my remarks, we need to recognize three things:

- (1) the basic typology with which he works;
- (2) his take on globalization; and
- (3) how these might be brought together.

Elazar has, generally, a social theory of politics rather than a political theory of society — a refreshing perspective for a political

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to Wati Longchar, editor of the *Journal of Tribal Studies*, and Dean Ezamo Murry and the M.Th. students at Eastern Theological College in Assam for identifying for me the key meanings of 'covenant' in the Lotha-, Ao-, Sumi-Naga, and Zo-Mizo cultures. This modest bit of research supports Elazar's argument with regard to non-Western cultures.

<sup>31</sup> New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.

scientist. And he knows that religion is always one of the key forces that shapes society, not necessarily because religious groups advocate this or that policy, but because the deep structure of a society is marked by its deepest convictions as they interact with the accidents of historical events. If others were saying, a generation ago, that we would face a resurgent set of religious renewals, from resurgent Islam and Hinduism to the Confucian revival and the massive explosion of Christian Pentecostal Evangelicalism, and that all these would change the face of political life around the world, most scholars did not hear them. This is the central truth of the postmodern perspective. Not natural entelechy, nor ontocracy, nor reason (pure, instrumental, or pragmatic) rules the common life, but the social and religious patterns that are deep in every context shapes the common life over time. We can now hardly avoid the fact that religion has and is reshaping society and will do so as far as we can look into the future.

Of course theologians know, as does Elazar as a political historian and theorist, that religion is high voltage; it can electrocute as well as energize. Thus, which religious ideas become dominant, how they become so, and how they are interpreted in relation to historical realities and to each other, are fateful for civilization. Yet the Elazar volume on which I am depending at the moment is not an overtly theological volume. What it does is spell out implications of covenantal thinking in ways that non-believers, believers in other religions, and even anti-religious scholars could adopt on practical grounds, although if they do their intellectual archeology on the basis for these ideas, they find that it is profoundly theological. It is one model of how to do public theology, and that is why I, as a Christian scholar, feel free to draw on it.

Elazar has recognized that one of the permanent legacies of the biblical heritage has been its insights about covenant. He also knows that it has sometimes been interpreted in tribalistic, nationalistic, or, as his preferred term has it, 'organic' ways (that is, as applying to a closed gene pool), and he knows that other peoples have used similar ideas in equally ethnocentric ways. But the covenantal model he wants to advance contrasts not only with organic ones but with two other models that have become decisive in the West and have varying parallels around the world. One is the hierarchical-suzerainty model; the other is the individualistic-contractual one. Both have elements within them that potentially overlap with the covenant idea, but finally they diverge. Covenantalism and its chief socio-historic form, federalism, resists the major alternatives — on the one side what Elazar identifies as the power pyramid or center-periphery models, both examples of elite domination, and on the other side the kinds of individualism that totally uproot persons from community. These are gravely perilous, unless the covenantal model can guide hierarchical-suzerainty toward subsidiarity and draw individualistic

contracts into forms of voluntary association that serve justice. Then some forms of hierarchical life will remain, and the exercise of human choice will be protected within a wider moral and socio-political framework.

Indeed, the three most comprehensive constructive frameworks to deal with the analysis and guidance of complex social systems in which we live are, in fact, the 'hierarchical-subsidiarity' model, most fully articulated in the West by the Roman Catholic tradition, with parallels to certain motifs in parts of Hinduism and Confucianism;<sup>32</sup> the 'contractual-associational' view that is most manifest religiously in the 'Free Church' traditions of Pietist Christianity, in some parts of Islam, and ironically among contemporary neo-liberals with regard to economic and family life — all of which advocate a voluntarist approach to associations;<sup>33</sup> and third, the 'federal-covenantal' view, most fully articulated by large parts of the Jewish and Reformation tradition, but also held by others.<sup>34</sup>

In the context of this background typology, which is both descriptive and normative, Elazar reads the current emerging situation.

Globalization is indeed upon us. While its extent and effects may be exaggerated from time to time, it is no myth. The benefits of globalization are touted widely and prominently — open markets,

<sup>32</sup> A set of papers on these matters will appear in a forthcoming *Ethikon* volume by John Coleman and me. The concept of subsidiarity was first posed in Catholic circles in opposition to the proposed declaration on papal infallibility by Bishop Dupanloup of France in the debates of Vatican I, as prompted by von Kettler and the Social Union (see Paul Misner, *The Social Teachings of the Catholic Church*, vol. 1). As is well known, the opposition failed. Infallibility was affirmed, accepted also by this bishop. However, in the face of the rise of the racist organic-hierarchical states at the hands of the European Fascists in the 1930s (the idea was taken over by Islamic Baathists, by the way), it was revised and related to the concept of 'servanthood' leadership by the Papacy. It then expressed something integral to the whole tradition, and the term 'subsidiarity' gradually became accepted in both church doctrine and political life in a way that affirmed hierarchy and also qualified both organic and suzerain themes. It is now an established principle of the European Union.

<sup>33</sup> The idea that religion is entirely individualistic and voluntary, that the free market must be allowed to work with as little constraint as possible, and that sexuality and family life should be treated as free market phenomena is held by one of the leading US judges, Richard Posner; see his *Sex and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). I have treated these views in some detail in my *Covenant and Commitments: Faith, Family and Economic Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1997).

<sup>34</sup> This point is made, if somewhat polemically, by James Hastings Nichols, *Democracy and the Churches* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), and more recently by William J. Everett in *God's Federal Republic* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988); and idem, *Religion, Federalism, and the Struggle for Public Life: Cases from Germany, India and America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). The noted historian Justo Gonzales has agreed to write an introduction to the fourth volume of *God and Globalization*, and we eagerly await his contemporary assessment of such motifs, especially in view of newer developments in the 'Two-Thirds World.'

free trade, greater prosperity for more people, the development of a common world culture, and greater respect for peoples no longer seen as distant and unfamiliar, greater regard for the human rights of individuals and groups . . . Yet, at the same time, the 'downside' of globalization has also become evident — the weakening, if not destruction, of local cultures and of local and national liberties by great international bodies, particularly private corporate commercial bodies, in the name of those benefits . . .<sup>35</sup>

Such developments, he goes on to argue, require an appropriate framework, and a greater level of consciousness to sustain it. That is, it must be 'constitutionalized' (built into the social infrastructure of the common life as well as written into a legal document that supports as well as articulates its fabric) if it is not to be entirely governed by power pyramids or center-periphery elites, degenerate entirely into individualist or tribalist opportunism, or become dominated by morally vacuous legalism. Already, he points out, new international organizations of all kinds are developing at extremely rapid rate. He cites the then most current evidence from the 1995–1996 *Yearbook of International Organizations*, which lists some 12,500 organizations that have membership or inter-governmental status beyond any state. (More recent evidence suggests that the number is now double that simply in terms of multi- or trans-national corporations and was closer to 26,000 for other NGOs by century's end.)<sup>36</sup>

All this means a great reversal of what he calls 'the thrust toward statism' that has dominated social life and political ideology for most of modernity. We now face a postmodern decentralization of power that is forcing every hierarchy to become more subsidiary. At the same time, more channels are available for people to become connected, so that individuals, if they are not swallowed in forces that they can neither manage nor control, can be drawn into networks, often multiple and overlapping ones. The idea of a single social contract as a center of identity cannot be sustained. This set of developments makes older models of nationalism and of world federalism obsolete, for membership in one group, with that group in federated relationship to a larger group, and that one to a still larger one, cannot tie particular identity to the whole.

In this context, Elazar argues that it is time for a rebirth of the 'confederation' model of covenant, one that usually became only a temporary league of convenience to defend the autonomy and sovereignty of the member groups.<sup>37</sup> At a deeper level, however, the promise of confederation has been theoretically recognized since, at least, Althusius, who preserved the deep sense of the duties of and

<sup>35</sup> *Constitutionalizing Globalization*, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> See the article 'The Non-governmental Order,' in *The Economist* (Dec. 11–17), pp. 20–21.

<sup>37</sup> *Constitutionalizing Globalization*, p. 203.



to the commonwealth as a 'consociality' of overlapping 'consocialities.'<sup>38</sup> In many ways, this puts a world of possibilities and choices before each person and local group; yet what distinguishes this confederated matrix from older federalisms is that no one of the more comprehending units can reach out to directly control the individual or particular group in any of these areas of life. They must work through the communities of which persons are a part. What makes this viable, says Elazar, is that

The new confederalism rests on three pillars: (political) security, economic integration, and the protection of human rights. Each of those pillars serves one of the major sets of actors on the world scene. The security issue serves the states . . . The economic basis serves the commercial and industrial interests of the major economic actors and the human rights pillar serves the individual citizens . . . and also the primordial groups (familial, cultural, voluntary, and religious) to which they belong.<sup>39</sup>

These basic pillars, however, are not the whole of the picture. Each one of the pillars must be internally organized on a more covenantal model, some more given to hierarchy-subsidiarity, and some more given to social contracts, yet they will all overlap each other in complex matrices of interdependence. Each sphere of society, in other words, will be both structurally independent from the others, but also able to influence the others — so that if any one begins to fail the others will not collapse, and if any need reforming the others have the possibility of influencing them. In every case we will find self-rule and shared rule, surpassing the common temptations to imperial domination or individualist autonomy. If the trends in this direction continue, and are embraced by the people, we can say not only will the covenantal model of life find a new arena of incarnation that has implications for the emerging global civil society, but that globalization, understood in its more complex meanings, could be 'for good' — both lasting and for human well-being.<sup>40</sup> It could promote a highly pluralistic global civilization with increased prospects for peace with justice. That is my hope for my culture and for yours — indeed for the common life that we shall all share.

<sup>38</sup> See Elazar's introduction to his edition of Althusius' *Politica* (1965; reprint. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Press, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> *Constitutionalizing Globalization*, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.