

SOLIDARITY, SELF RELIANCE, BASIC HUMAN NEEDS: Are Political, Economic and Theological Approaches Compatible, Complementary, Contradictory?

By Reginald Herbold Green

In as much as ye have done it
Unto the least of these my bretheren
Ye have done it unto Me.

I.

Is There A Topic?

The first question posed to anyone seeking to relate theology and political economy or the gospel and economic development is whether any valid interaction exists. Many - perhaps most - Christians and many - indeed certainly most - political economists would say no.

"Render unto Caesar" has become a justification for the church to retreat not merely from theocracy but from political economic thinking and action. That may well be a serious misreading of the text but it is a very common one.

Saint Paul's appeal to "charity" in the sense of Christian love has shrunk back to a maimed concern with charity in a narrow sense. More reminiscent of the Pharisees and of receiving one's reward in this world than of the Pauline text on the practice of Christ this may be, but it is what most now call Christian charity to be.

Incidentally, it provides the foundation for the further contention that if one pays taxes for state transfer payments (like the Pharisees' tithes) one has done one's "Christian duty" and need take still less human concern for the disadvantaged and the political economic system which disadvantages them.

The rise of economic science has led to a parallel rejection of the relevance of the gospel to the "real" world. Economics has come to be perceived as rational, enlightened, exact with no room for emotions, values, moral judgements.

Economists have tended to a concentration on how to maximize production. Achieve the Paretian optimum and all else shall be added unto you, has become a major intellectual creed.

An Historical Contrast

It was not always thus. Apart from the rather lonely figure of Aristotle, the first substantial body of writings in the history of political economic thought is that of the Scholasticists.

From Saint Thomas Aquinas through Saint Antoninus there is a body of applied political economic theory and precept of very considerable stature. Indeed some of the questions raised as to a "just price" and the morally appropriate division of output have again become highly topical and in a context in some ways intellectually less clear and advanced than that of the schoolmen.

The concern of these theologians was, of course, not with political economy as an end in itself. It flowed directly from a concern that the City of God's necessarily imperfect realization on earth be made less imperfect. That - to them - self evidently required consideration of secular social and economic forms in the light of sacred standards.

Adam Smith is usually seen as the founder of modern political economy. What is often forgotten is that he was a professor of moral philosophy whose economic writings are clearly informed by his moral standards. He did not laud competition for its own sake but because he held that businessmen seldom meet together even on social occasions but to conspire against the common good. He did not advocate maximizing the "Wealth of nations" as an abstract end nor without regard to distribution; but held that no nation can be strong or happy, the greatest part of whose people live in poverty and misery.

The Gospel Record

Evidently the Christ did not preach systematic political economy - let alone technical economic methodology - as such. That is very different from asserting that his gospel does not have political economic implications, standards and content.

There are numerous relevant passages. The 5,000 were fed before the sermon, man was said not to live by bread alone, the labourer was stated to be worthy of his hire, the rich man was shown as - at best - beset by temptations and dangers. In the synagogue our Lord preached of the "acceptable year of the Lord" which in Jewish theology included a complete redistribution of productive assets and accumulated wealth. In the Temple he drove out the commodity merchants and bankers.

In short, not simply, does the Gospel message advert to political economic issues it does so frequently and with a readily discernible overall thrust. To quote Father Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I. of the Sri Lankan Centre for Society and Religion:

For those of us who are Christians the values we cherish are found in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. He taught the message of sharing, truth, freedom and justice. His mission was a liberation of the oppressed and a setting free of the captives. He was unequivocally against the amassing of wealth by a few and the exploitation of the poor and weak by the rich and powerful. He established a community of his followers - the Church - who were to continue his way of life and his values ... For him there was only one criterion of participation in his community or Kingdom and that was service to the other in an unselfish manner. "I was hungry and you gave me to eat. Enter into my Kingdom..."

Problems of Translation: Literal and Constantinian

Political economy - especially in respect of institutional and particular policy aspects - is not out of time and space. It is very particular to its context. To attempt to apply the gospel message literally would be to misunderstand or to mock it.

Translation is essential.

Translation always raises problems of accuracy - perhaps particularly so in theology and political economy. There are two particular obstacles, **t**his has placed in the way of continuing Christian concern in political economy.

The first is that for some evangelical and literalist Christians the translation itself is a stumbling block. If one insists on a literal rendering of the bible and believes all other renderings to be erroneous in theology and leading to sin in application to everyday life, then the Gospel message is rather hard to relate to 20th Century economics - except perhaps for some almsgiving. At that ~~l~~ael Vineyards and fishes, family farmers and their occasional labour, shops in the Temple and a reference to the Torah are hard to relate to plantations and factory fishing, transnational corporations and "guestworkers", banks financing South African defence and International Labour Organization declarations in respect of basic needs.

A greater obstacle, however, is the Constantinian settlement. The Church in form converted the state and gained the freedom to preach but at a price. It usually became the establishment at prayer and therefore less than likely to wish to translate the Gospel to condemn the status quo or even to see that such a prophetic stance was needed. This is perhaps most evident in the colonial variant of the Constantinian settlement or in the mutated variants in which the state clearly controls the organized church's utterances but it is by no means limited to them. Too often churches and churchmen have seen this task as binding up the wounds of some victims and chipping away some rough edges but not calling into question the systems that wound, the structures that cut.

The mediaeval exception appears to have been vacuum filling - the state was so weak and fragmentary that the Church both was able to, and had to, set standards in secular affairs and to ponder in some detail on the intellectual basis for actions and institutions in order to set them. With the resurgence of the state system, institutional Christianity has come increasingly to support and to apologize for the basic political economic systems of the state in which it exists and to save its condemnation for actions beyond the secular pole or for evident secondary evils which also attracted substantial secular opposition.

Marxism, Christianity and Revolution

The loss of Christianity's revolutionary and critical edge was reinforced by the rise of Marxism. In principle there was nothing inevitable about this - Marx clearly started from value premises and ones centered on human beings not material objects.

The stress on alienation, on the injustice of capitalist exploitation and the need for a total transformation in early marxism were also far from incompatible with the Prophetic or Gospel traditions. They were, however, quite incompatible with the institutions and attitudes of the Constantinian Church and its clerical and lay leaders.

Because the organized church was part of the structure of oppression Marx condemned it. Because he believed that the basic element in organized religion was its manipulation to serve as a justification of the status quo he condemned it. Neither Marx nor Marxians have ever uniformly condemned religion - "opium of the people" is wrenched from a context which condemns organized religion for so mystifying and misusing its message - as perhaps most clearly elucidated in the writings of Gramsci on popular religion.

However, the organized church saw Marxism as a threat to itself - correctly in that it also perceived itself as a part of a divinely ordained world order which actually existed and was embodied in the extant secular order. That Isaiah, or John the Baptist or Christ would have condemned the secular order at least as harshly as Marx was not widely perceived and became still harder to perceive as radical change came to be equated with Marxism and Marxism with atheist materialism. The division of the Body of Christ from the Body of Revolution became well nigh absolute.

Neo-classicism in economics achieved a similar division - from Christianity and from radical change. Granted that its early great practitioners - e.g. Bentham, John Stewart Mill, to a lesser extent Marshall - did apply and indeed operate from value standards and that the use of human beings and values as standards for judgement never

totally vanished or became totally apologetic for the existing order, neo-classicism in economics (it rejected the title political economy) was dominantly a movement toward a value free analytical method which, especially when applied, accepted the goals and values of the existing order as parameters and beyond the range of proper inquiry and criticism.

Economics sought to become a science. It saw a necessary condition for scientific inquiry as escape not simply from statements of preference unbounded by material constraints but from values in general. To do this it had on the hand to erect maximum output (a concept logically meaningful only given a set of values, a point neo-classicism either ignored or treated tendentiously) as a value free goal and on the other to accept (overtly or, more frequently, covertly) the values of the existing order and thereby to become its official apologist.

Somewhat inconsistently neo-classicism (and its odd mirror image official Soviet Marxist economics for domestic consumption - an equally "value free", "output maximizing" system) also claimed that its science was revealed truth and its critics therefore the enemies of knowledge and willful obscurantists rather than adherents to different value judgements which might require different political economic institutions and policies whatever the appropriate methods of analysis or material constraints.

The Paretian optimum and the Constantinian settlement as they evolved in the century after 1850 did indeed exemplify the doctrine of the two swords of its most conservative. Organized church and organized political economy avoided each other's intellectual territory but stood shoulder to shoulder in the moral and scientific defence of the status quo.

II.

Rebirth of Christian Concern

Over the past five decades there has been a renewed Christian concern with political economic issues. The radical thrust of the Prophetic and Gospel messages has once again ceased to be of concern only to isolated individuals and oppressed minority churches and become an element in the mainstream thinking and acting of major elements in organized Christianity.

Three elements have been central in this rebirth of concern: socio-economic criticism arising out of perceived gross failures of existing systems; a renewed recognition of racism as a denial of the brotherhood of man and therefore of the fatherhood of God; a growing awareness that exploitation is endemic and systemic; not occasional and episodic.

The rise of the socio-economic criticism and attempts toward prescription came in the West during the great depression. The words of the Archbishop Temple and the commissions created under his auspices typify it. While this concern somewhat subsided in the 1940's and 1950's, confidence in the efficiency and justice of modern industrial society and ability to ignore the extent and degree of deprivation and alienation remained shaken. In the peripheral economies the criticism began rather later with the realization that neither the Gospel of independence nor that of economic development was leading to a just society or nations in which the poor were able to escape from their poverty. These two strands united in the 1960's and 1970's with renewed realization of the extent and tenacity of alienation and deprivation in virtually all societies and of abject deprivation in

states numbering a majority of the world's people (and quite possibly a majority of its practising Christians).

The condemnation of racism can be seen as a rebirth of concern. Certainly the Gospel teachings citing Samaritans, the citing of the many mansions and the Pauline Mission do have a clear enough relevance never wholly to have been denied. Equally Christians were in the forefront of the struggles to end slavery and the slave trade. However, it is also necessary to recall that slavery was often justified as a form of evangelism, that organized Christianity stood firmly behind the construction of the imperial world order that Europe made in the 19th century, that the doctrine of the Afrikaaner Church and state of no equality of black and white in church or state, before God or man, now or forever was more unusual for its clarity, honesty and simplicity than for its sentiments. The renewal of the struggle against racism as a sin - at least in the West - dates primarily to the late 1940's and the parallel rise of colonial nationalism. That nationalism of course was in large part informed by Christian teaching but far less frequently by any missionary intent to challenge the basis of the colonial order. A parallel impetus came from the intensified struggle for liberation of black Americans, (a struggle in which black churches had long played a major role) and the uncertain, uneven, and delayed but also powerful, traumatic and self-revelatory response of the basically white American churches.

Direct concern with exploitation as a systemic evil - not an occasional individual sin - arose from the first two concerns. If, after all, the social and economic systems produced alienation and deprivation for many and tended to entrench and defend rather than struggle against and overcome racism then there was reason to suspect that the continued existence of exploitation both lay - at least in part - behind these

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defects and, whether inevitably or not, was in some way built into them.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my bretheren ye have done it unto me" has come again to be seen as something very different from an anodyne blessing on careless charity. Like the related passages on little children it makes a major demand and carries a chilling obverse - inasmuch as ye exploit, deny and oppress the poor, the unorganized, the weak ye do that unto Him. From that basis flows a far sharper and far more systemic critique than that of the 1930's. To quote Father Balasuriya again:

Is not the principle of profit maximization at whatever cost contrary to the First Commandment of the Old Testament: "Thou shalt not have False Gods" and the teaching of Jesus Christ, Love your neighbour as yourself? The MNC's (Multi National Corporations) deriving millions of profit to the detriment of the poor make a god of wealth and vitiate the lives of entire peoples. They may give contributions to charitable causes but these are only a sort of cosmetic hides the far greater flows of wealth and resources from poor to rich. Should we not also reconsider our understanding of the Commandments: "Thou shalt not steal", "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods" and "Thou shalt not bear false witness" with reference to the activities of these corporations which unjustly pauperize the many for the benefit of the few, which do everything in their power to get ownership of others goods and whose advertising often distorts the truth and spread false values that further subjugate the minds and personalities of the people to their interests of profit maximization.

Or to cite a Christian less likely to be charged with seeing the world from an overly radical or Third World biased perspective, Pope Paul VI in an apostolic letter:

Under the driving force of new systems of production, national frontiers are breaking down and we can see new economic powers emerging. The multinational enterprises, which by the concentration and flexibility of their means can conduct autonomous strategies which are largely independent of the national political power and therefore not subject to control from the point of view of the common good. By extending their activities, these private organisations can lead to a new and abusive form of economic domination on the social, cultural and even political level.

Clearly these concerns are not shared by all Christians. There are churches in which other faiths are firmly depicted as lesser creeds without the law, other races as primarily victims of their own fecklessness, radical Christians as either disguised atheists or heretics. If we are both honest and inquiring and with ears to hear we can all recall instances. However, they are no longer fringe concerns or those of individual isolated clergy or laity.

Limitations and Advances

More directly relevant to the strength of the renewed Christian concern is the weakness of articulation of much of its political economic analysis. This is not to say that there is none or that it is inherently unsound as opposed to sketchy. Three quotations (the first from Father Balasuriya, the second from the Latin American theologian Gustavo Gutierrez and the last from Bishop Julius Xavier Labayan, O.C.D., Executive Chairman of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference) illustrate both the increased clarity of direction as to socio-economic priorities, poverty and form and the relative limitation of articulated analysis:

"On priorities":

- the means of production, distribution and exchange should be owned and controlled by the community, state or through people's organizations.
- "production" must be to satisfy the needs of all and not the luxuries of a privileged few.
- there should be no exploitation of one person by another in economic activity.
- the distribution of incomes, wealth, services and opportunities in a society should be egalitarian. The surplus should belong to the community.
- all the resources including human work, should be mobilized for the common good and for full employment.

- human rights of all be respected irrespective of race, creed or sex.
- that all participate in decision making in the social processes
- a social environment be created in which there can be the fulfilment of all persons by being liberated from injustice marginalisation and the alienations created by human beings.

"On Poverty":

Christian Poverty has meaning only as a commitment of solidarity with the poor, with those who suffer misery and injustice ... the evil which has resulted from sin and is a breach of communion. It is not a question of idealizing poverty, but rather of taking it on as it is - an evil - to protest against it you cannot really be with the poor unless you are struggling against poverty. Because of this solidarity - which must manifest itself in specific action, a style of life, a break with one's social class - one can also help the poor and exploited to become aware of their exploitation and seek liberation from it.

"On Form":

This awareness of the lot of the poor masses together with its corresponding demand for our identification with them is, I think the acid test of our commitment to human development, with whom do we really identify ourselves?
.... Development, at least in Asia, cannot be individualistic. It must be communitarian. It must embrace the entire community. What would militate against this aspect is the ... education of only one sector of society development must be rooted in the basic community: the family and the primal community (the village, the barrio, the long house, the Ujamaa.)
What would militate against this aspect is a parallel or super-imposed institution.

This thinking is very far from the Constantinian settlement, from comfortable disquisitions on charity or even from escapist pseudo idealism. Whether it adequately represents the Gospel's thrust is a matter of debate. What it does not yet do is either to build coherently on the micro (cell, community, individual) acts which have always been within the specifically Christian social outreach or to move toward a systematic enough set of political economic promises

and arguments to do effective intellectual battle as a critique or a force for reconstruction.

A parallel problem appears to arise on the side of political economists who are convinced Christians and who do seek to make their faith a guide to action. Their political economy and their Christianity are usually largely parallel with an inarticulate link rather than fully integrated. Two examples from recent experiences in Asia may illustrate this.

One relates to a layman active in World Council of Churches consultations on transnational corporations and a firm critic of inequity in socio-economic patterns and trends in his own country. At a recent meeting he queried two senior officials on why the strategy of growth they endorsed had led to increasing numbers and proportions of desperately poor people and what better strategy they had to offer now. In the context this challenge required courage and led to a rather heated dialogue. But to what extent the political economic thinking and the Christian concern ultimately behind it were interacting is less clear.

In the same country a visiting speaker gave a vehement socio-economic and political economic critique of a World Bank strategy paper on Urban "development" in poor countries and on the "people clearance" strategy practiced by a West African state. His introduction had cited his consultancy work with the WCC and its Ecumenical Institute. Afterwards a citizen participant came up and expressed his great surprise that there were Christians and church bodies whose concerns related to such topics. The point is not the surprise, but that the participant agreed with much of the critique.

was an active layman and was evidently contrasting his own Christian community's silence unfavourably with even tentative moves toward involvement.

III.

Political Economy: The Gods Are Dying

A few years ago "God is dead" was a popular theological (or at least asserted to be theological) opening gambit. Whatever its use in that context (or in its earlier version - 18th century Deism with its divine clockmaker), in political economy today is literally true to assert that the Gods are dying, the eternal verities disintegrating the faiths turning to shored up fragments amid a waste of rubble. The reasons - at least for the timing of this *gotterdammerung* if not for the corrosive questioning which had laid the old paradigms open to assault - lie in the parallel deaths of the world economic order, the golden age of Western industrial capitalism and the growth maximization model of development.

The world economic order built at Bretton Woods sought to recreate the imperial world that Europe made three quarters of a century earlier with defence mechanisms against the internal threats of inflation and depression and the external threat of the socialist economic order. For a quarter of a century it was largely successful as perceived from the North Atlantic (and its Pacific insular outposts in Japan, Australia and New Zealand). From 1970 on it began to crumble quite openly and with increasing speed until in the 1974-1977 monetary, employment, price and external balance crises it has become little more than an uneasy crazy quilt of temporary patches

Within the now dying World order, the industrial capitalist states experienced their most prosperous and least internal struggle torn quarter century. It was possible to believe that if one continued to maximize output all else would be added unto one. Growth did seem to solve unemployment, inflation, inequality - one prosperous nation seemed an attainable goal within the existing system. The triumph of neo-Fabianism was at hand; critics who pointed to continued deprivation and forces working to reproduce it or who suggested that a short term favourable set of circumstances were papering over, not solving, contradictions were easily dismissed. Reality does not appear the same today. Unemployment has increased; inequality has become both broader and more open and with the end of growth far more strife laden; inflation and balance of payments problems no longer appear to be readily soluble; faith in the ability of the existing political economic models guide or the existing systems to deliver humanly

acceptable development (even at the material level) is greatly diminished.

The belief that the West (or its industrial socialist variant) had the answers to development and that these could be summed up in "Maximize Gross Domestic Product" has been under fire in the periphery for rather longer. There it clearly did not work - in a majority of cases the growth did not come, when it did development rarely benefitted more than a small fraction of the population, even when most did benefit the non-material context usually gave cause for concern (to put it rather mildly). By 1970 neither Stalin nor Rostow, Feldmen nor Kuznets were prophets with much honour in the more alert and independent political economic circles of the Third World. Indeed even at the centre this work was increasingly queried on the grounds that their models did not deliver - a theme seized and hammered on from 1969 on by President Macnamara of the World Bank - and that even when they did do so materially the society they created was appalling - "We thought the correlation was industrialization and development now we see it is industrialization and torture" to cite the near despairing requiem for lost hopes of Professor Albert O. Hirschman in 1977.

Neo-classicism and its Keynesian mutant are now perceived as inadequate political economic faiths or models. The same is true of Marxism, at least of the orthodox Marxism of the industrial states of socialist Europe. The last of the growthmen may well be the official economists of Moscow but their words ring increasingly hollow even to their own political masters and much more to their Third World audiences. It is perhaps no accident that in the North Atlantic World today the most popular political economist is that elegant prophet of uncertainty and sardonic criticism - one is tempted to say our age's counterpart to Petronius - John Kenneth Galbraith.

Friedmanism may seem an exception to this picture of decline but that is doubtful. As a body of political economic activist tenets (as opposed to as the tools of intellectual inquiry, analysis and criticism built up by Professor Milton Friedman) Friedmanism is a desperate simplification to the point of caricature, a fanatical denial of failure so designed as to ensure that its adoption would deepen the failure. The record of its partial adoption in the industrial West and its attempted total adoption under Jorge Cauas in Chile of the Junta already show that its fruits are lower growth, greater inequality, enhanced social contradictions and a slide into "ungovernmentability" or repression.

The state of political economy today is cruelly reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's "Hollow Men":

Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star
In this hollow valley
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms.

Recently I revisited two southeast Asian countries after fifteen years. It was a grimly sobering experience. In the Philippines rapacious capitalist pluralism had failed to produce much growth or any stability and had been succeeded by modernizing, capitalist authoritarianism. There were indeed more impressive buildings and better roads but there were also more and poorer people and widening divisions with the very poor very often literally paying the price for the greater affluence of the rich. In Sri Lanka the scene was even more poignant. Here was a multi-party democracy with freedom of expression and a long standing (and acted upon) commitment to neo-Fabianism. It has come to the end of that road - the poor are perhaps not poorer but there are far more of them, the rich are not

notably restrained in affluence only in their means to it, the economy is unable to provide the growth to continue the strategy of transfer payments that has to date held the society together, communal tensions and an educated lumpen proletarian organized under a neo-fascist movement with a thin ultra-Marxist ideological window dressing threaten an early descent into violence far beyond past riots or even the 1971 insurrection.

Again it is necessary to warn that not all political economists would agree with this sketch. The "authoritative" journals and the serried ranks of officials and advisors by and large still proclaim the old creeds. But even there, doubts are more readily expressed and basic criticisms given more attention - the high priests of the faith are only too aware that radical reformation (at the least) is needed if one is to judge by recent British and American Economic Association Presidential Addresses.

IV.

Toward a Political Economy of Liberation?

Elements toward a new political economy have begun to take shape. At least one cluster can perhaps best be termed a political economy of liberation. Certainly it is far more concerned with justice, distribution and elements of life not readily encompassed in gross domestic product and less with maximum output, modernization and GDP manship than previous political economic credos.

Its three key themes are:

- satisfaction of basic human needs as a development strategy;
- self reliance as a means to self realization, self respect and self determination;
- solidarity as a means to achieving the other goals and as a human-

duty required by distributive justice.

These themes are worked out on two main levels -

- globally where questions of justice in exchange, exploitation, transnational corporations and the north/south struggle are prominent;
- at the level of the individual state in which class and social formation conflicts, distribution, participation and reconciliation of necessary ends and possible means are central.

These new approaches have had two basic origins: the failure of standard economic development strategies to achieve mass material welfare or decent societies on the periphery and the failure of relative material affluence at the centre to overcome alienation or deprivation. The strands are not entirely consistent at present - the latter is very often an upper middle class ideology with a romantic conservative thrust even in the hands of overtly radical left intellectuals (vide Johan Galtung) while the former is oddly poised between being on behalf of and of the peasants and workers it seeks to liberate. One of the more satisfactory approaches to a draft synthesis is What Now: Another Development, the 1975 Dag Hammarskjold Report.

These influences and concerns are not limited to the Third World! exploitation, destitution and alienation are not unique to Asia, Africa and Latin America. From his writings and talks as parish priest of Sophiatown (South Africa), Bishop of Masase (Tanzania) and Bishop of Stepney (London) it is clear that the Right Reverend Trevor Huddleston has seen and struggled with all three in each community and might well suggest that while exploitation and oppression were greatest in Sophiatown and destitution in Masase, alienation was most prevalent in Stepney. The denial of the humanity of our fellow human beings is not limited to those across the seas or of different pigmentation. What else is a management study which deals with

academic staff as human beings, administrators as a cross between people and platonic guardians, but when it comes to secretaries writes in terms which would allow the substitution of the words typewriter or office machine for secretary without marring the sense of the report? That happened on this campus not eighteen months ago. Certainly some of the academic staff in the concerned unit objected but only one or two in terms and tones suggesting that we saw a burning moral issue.

If most of my examples are from the Third World it is not - I hope - because I wish to escape from my neighbour nor to deny that he is probably oppressed, exploited and alienated. Nor is it because I am so naive, so insensitive or with such tunnel vision as to believe that basic material - much less basic human - needs have either been fully met in Europe, North America, Japan and Australasia or that failures to meet them are minor gaps in an otherwise satisfactory fabric. Rather it is because my thinking, my work, my living has largely been in and in relation to countries, communities and individuals in the Third World and that for me to try to concoct British examples and contexts would be to pretend to an expertise I do not possess and to hide whatever insights I may have.

Basic Human Needs

Basic human needs can provide an alternative to growthmanship as a political economic strategy. To do so their definition must go beyond purely material items and the means beyond (indeed largely other than) transfer payments. A number of extant variants of the strategy appear - at least to this author who is a protagonist and therefore hardly unbiased - to be defective in these respects.

As a total development strategy, basic human needs must include five components:

- a. universal ability to secure basic personal consumer goods - food, clothing, shelter, household furnishings;
- b. universal access to basic communal services - primary and adult education, preventative and simple curative medicine, pure water, transport and communication, environmental protection;
- c. full employment (including self employment) productive enough and fairly enough remunerated so that all families have the income to purchase (or the ability to produce) their basic personal consumer goods;
- d. universal participation at all levels in the taking as well as the implementation and review of decisions directly affecting individuals and communities;
- e. creation of the infrastructure - broadly defined to include intermediate and capital goods production, investable surplus generation and allocation, external trade as a means of indirect production and institutional/managerial capacity - to sustain a rate of increase in the level of productive forces adequate to attain progress toward the first four goals.

This is not a soft strategy. At least in poor countries (and probably in rich as well) it requires not just greater equality but ceilings on individual wealth, power, consumption, and status. For that reason, if for no other, the participation goal is integral as a means as well as as an end. Only the workers and peasants who will be the direct beneficiaries can be expected to provide the discipline to keep the decision takers and technocrats on course and only if they - the workers and peasants - really do build up increasing decision taking power.

Nor is it an illusory strategy ignoring material constraints. As sketched here it does not ignore the need to raise output as a means to reaching other, more basic, goals. In that respect it does not suffer

from the manic obsession with transfer payments (to the near exclusion of transfer of productive capacity or participatory power) which characterizes Fabianism and its relatives at least in their late 20th century variants.

A basic human needs strategy is not static; its concern is not simply with absolute deprivation. It is also relative with a commitment to joint community and society advances - "all boats float higher" - to the exclusion of increased (or even static) inequality. As initial targets are approached the dynamics of the system would lead to new ones beyond the minimum levels first set.

The practical reality of such a strategy would be heavily influenced by its context - historic, geographic, level of productive forces, social formations. China, Tanzania, Cuba, Vietnam are countries which have sought to articulate and implement strategies falling within the broad rubric of basic human needs primacy but their detailed decisions, policies, choices and institutions (and the relative emphasis placed on each of the clusters of goals) vary significantly.

Two more detailed presentations of this strategy appear in the International Labour Organization's Employment, Growth and Basic Needs and the Ecumenical Institute Bossey's Self Reliance and Solidarity In the Quest For International Justice.

Self Reliance

In the political economy of liberation, self reliance features both a means and as an end. As a means it turns on the simple fact that the only persons primarily concerned with welfare of a community or society are its members and that, therefore, only they can validly determine or effectively implement its goals. Equally self reliance

- at least in the social formation, communal, material or Third World senses in which it is used in the context of the political economy of liberation - involves the creation of countervailing power to cooperate or struggle, confront or negotiate with external forces whether human or material.

As an end self reliance is perceived as critical to self respect and self fulfilment. Copying, begging and dependence are neither materially nor humanly effective or desirable (and nor are their mirror images arrogant offering of models to copy, niggardly manipulative alms "giving", dominance).

Solidarity

Solidarity is in part related to self reliance in its countervailing power aspects. At the north/south level its two main variants are - to use Mwalimu Nyerere's titles - "Cooperation against poverty" and "Trade Union of The Poor". The former is joint struggle against material obstacles with limited intermediation by outside states and interests; the unification of the peripheral economies to confront and struggle with the central industrial economies (including the European socialist industrial economies) to achieve the opportunity to bargain for a more just world order.

However, solidarity is broader than that. It does stretch across national, zonal and social formation lines. The reality of John Donne's warning:

Ask not for whom the bell tolls
It tolls for thee

has never been totally forgotten nor the inoperative of the Commandment to love thy neighbour as thyself totally imperative. Most proponents of the political economy of liberation do lay emphasis (but secondary

emphasis as most are all too aware of the power of greed, self interest, envy, fear and/or original sin) on its fuller development.

As an end solidarity is a part of liberation from selfishness, of transcendence of self. Without it the only bond is that of self interest and that alone has never proven a stable, satisfactory or satisfying cement for any society whether at village or at global level.

A Cautionary Note

To assert that a fully articulated political economy of liberation exists today would - at the least - be premature. The basic elements appear to exist but their proponents and their implementers are far from agreed on major premises, sequences and patterns. Further - and potentially more serious - each key strand is in danger of cooption. Basic human needs is far too widely endorsed (usually under the titles minimum needs or basic needs) by those who at best see it as a safety net for the poor and at worst as a modern version of the Roman emperor bread and circuses - say black beans and football stadia or rice and basketball courts. Self reliance suffers both from Zealots who wish it to become a route to authoritarian autarchy and opportunists who wish to use it to deny the validity of external criticism and to brand all criticism as externally inspired. Solidarity for great powers and those aspiring to that status often seems to be the embrace of the octopus not the brother and for the weak it too often means a common front to reject criticisms of each others sins - as terrifyingly exemplified in the cases of Burundi and Uganda (albeit it is also relevant to note that in each case the earliest, most consistent and harshest critics have been Africans and African states).

These risks are all ones of denial of central concern with humanity, of rejecting Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's assertion that the end of develop

They are, therefore, risks to precisely those elements in the "new" political economy which appear to link it to the Gospel. That in itself might be taken as reason enough for Christians to be concerned with shaping its future development.

V.

How Much Chance?

What are the prospects for a political economy of liberation? Can it really be articulated in an operational way? Even if it can will its demands be consistent with material constraints? With socio political constraints (whether in terms of existing systems or the power to transform - or break-them)? With human nature? Perhaps the best approach - morally and practically - is summed up in a brief quotation from Gramsci:

Pessimism of the intellect
Optimism of the will.

The obstacles to success are many and potent. Powers and principalities, as presently constituted, cannot be expected to travel very far on this road. However, if it is the right road there is a duty to set out upon it and to believe it can be pursued. The belief in powerlessness is always self fulfilling.

Political economy has long been described as "the dismal science" and with some justice. Because it deals with the creation and allocation of material resources, political economy constantly adverts to constraints and choices. However, the nature of these constraints is not what it was in 1775 (when, let us recall, Adam Smith believed that a nation could and must have an economic system capable of freeing its entire population from misery and deprivation).

World output already averages over £500 per head suggesting that at one level distribution and social formation not technology and resources are the real barriers, especially in the industrial world. Some calculations suggest that given fairly rigorous assumptions as to equality and participation a just society capable of meeting basic material needs could exist on an output level of £150-200 per capita.

But then one thinks of Sri Lanka whose leaders have - even if imperfectly and with blind spots - really sought to create a society with at least minimal justice and material welfare for all. Visiting the south west lowlands where Sri Lankan modern economic development began a century and a half ago is not reassuring. It is only too evident to the naked eye - and much more to the historian who can make his sources live - that this society, these villages, these communities were materially better off a century ago than now. The welfare state does prevent starvation, nakedness and epidemics but it has not reversed the rising pressure of hunger, deprivation and pain. It is only too easy to recall the lines from the "Four Quartets"

Alone in a leaking boat
listening to the tolling of the bell
Of the last angelus

Certainly there are those who battle against this trend. Civil servants and politicians, professional intellectuals and committed churchmen - a potential saving remnant is visible, vocal and active. But with the clouds of Tamil separatism (and Sinhalese exclusionism) and of lumpen-educated neo Facism looming like the heralds of the monsoon it is easy to wonder whether they do not recall another image from the "Quartets":

The lone gull beats against the storm
Him the gulf claims.

Forward into Battle: Tanzania's Crisis Strategy

But again we can find some hope in the 1974-76 record of Tanzania. In 1973 and 1974 drought wiped out a third of its normal grain output. Over 1973-76 international price changes (capital goods, oil, grain) reduced the real purchasing power of its national product (of about £70 per person) by about a seventh. The voices of foreign friends and of a large body of civil service experts were raised for re-trenchment, caution, halting of attempts to reduce inequality or to extend basic public services.

Those voices were rejected - political leaders demanded a "do battle" strategy on the ground that to stand still would be to lose momentum and fall back. A section of technocrats fully agreed, one angrily answering critics with the retort that his proposals might lead to headlong plunge into a bridgeless ravine but that their's certainly amounted to walking to the ravine, tying a belt to a tree and the nation's neck and slowly stepping off.

The whole foreign exchange reserves were committed to buying grain. Over half that grain was distributed free to drought hit rural areas. Nobody starved.

Prices were raised - partly to maintain investible surpluses in public enterprises but equally to ensure that farmers' real incomes would be maintained when (as happened in 1975 and 1976) rains allowed them to achieve a normal crop.

Minimum wages were raised drastically to give parallel real income

protection to workers. For the higher wage and salary workers there were increases but ones well below the anticipated price increases. Indeed a Principal Secretary and a minimum wage earner received the same after income tax rise - £7 a month (40% for the minimum wage earner, 4% for the Principal Secretary).

Provision of basic services expansion was maintained or expanded. Indeed the breakthroughs to expanding rural access to pure water faster than rural population growth, to achieving basic medical facilities within reasonable walking distance of a majority of the rural population and (by adult education) of achieving over 50% rural literacy came in 1974-77.

Similarly, the moves to increase worker participation in firm management and peasant control over the officials serving them were pressed forward not put into cold storage. The most radical measure for transferring power to basic communities in Tanzania's sixteen years is the 1975 Village Self Government Act.

Nor was this at the expense of growth. The only escape from disaster was seen to be to produce more to justify the preserved incomes of the poorest and the enhanced basic services. In 1975 output rose over 4.5% and in 1976 probably somewhat more.

Finance was seen as a problem. Domestic revenues were raised - on income tax and sales taxes excluding basic foods. Foreign funds were sought to cover the payments gap caused by price changes until the output growth could bridge the gap. It took 12 to 18 months for "emergency" funds to flow - in late 1975 it looked as if that gamble (or act of faith in donor solidarity) would fail - but they did flow. Their level does require reduction but they were needed in the emergency.

and will be for at least three more hard, if less grimly catastrophic averting, years.

That strategy and the determined implementation that made it at least in large measure a success were acts of political, social and political economic faith. The decision to do battle - as opposed to the tactics and campaign strategy - was not taken on cold calculations of economic science but on the value judgement that a retrenchment approach entailing the reversal of efforts to meet basic human needs and to build a just society was unacceptable.

That type of faith - faith which seeks to transcend narrow calculation and hold to that which it is morally imperative to seek - should not seem wholly unfamiliar to Christians. Nor has it historically been the ruin of the Church, rather it has often led to its renewal and at least partial salvation.

One cannot in narrowly analytical terms be confident that a political economy of liberation can prevail. One can assert that there is reason to have faith that such an outcome at least in some communities and societies at some times is attainable. In a very different image one reverts to "East Coker's" Good Friday lines:

The dripping blood our only drink
The bloody flesh our only food;
In spite of that we like to think
That we are sound, substantial flesh and blood -
Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good.

VI.

Of Inscape and Outreach

If the Church is to seek to use the Gospel as a standard for judging

political economic thinking and reality what does this require?

Is Chandra de Fonseca of Freedom From Hunger too optimistic when he asserts:

The relevance to Religion (and perhaps Revolution) of these new orientations ... will be obvious. For the first time ways are being discovered to bridge the gap between Yogi and Commisar, to provide Religion with a scientific rationale, analytical tools and a terminology which can enable it to play a more meaningful and substantial role in the community of man. Within forces still at war with each other there exist widening areas of common ground, a narrowing convergence of common thinking, and increasing prospects for collaboration... ..what should be brought together are all those significant elements ... which have a common commitment to what Maslow called the "intrinsic Being values" of humanity ... it would seem that the task in promoting this collaboration falls most appropriately on Religion, in deliberate and continuing efforts to make development "conscious of itself" ... (because); it is a religio-ethical problem involving the values and ends of man.

Assuming that such an opportunity and such a duty for an outreach which remains true to the inscope (in the Scotian and Hopkinsian sense) of Christianity exists, the question of how remains a vexed one. Clearly creating a hash of bad theology and bad political economy is not a goal - easy as it is to achieve.

Equally for some Christians who are theologians and some Christians who are political economists with parallel concerns ^{to} discuss how they interact and how the two disciplines can be brought to bear jointly is a start but hardly enough. The recreation of Saint Thomas or Pico Della Mirandola may be an entrancing prospect but given the sheer bulk of knowledge (or at least data and methodology) today it hardly seems practical and even if it were would hardly affect most - if any - of us directly. Saint Thomas was not a typical mediaeval cleric nor Pico a typical renaissance scholar.

That theologians will with rare exceptions not be political economic experts and vica versa and that most Christians will be neither is almost certainly an inescapable parameter. The need is not for

uniformity but for mutual comprehension and understanding.

At one level this requires that Theologians (both Christian and those of other faith) enter into real discussion and dialogue with croyant political economists. A deeper knowledge of each others concerns, values, disciplines, approaches and problems is the foundation on which comprehension and interaction can be built and a consensus which is a genuine synthesis and transcendence (not a muddled shopping list) may be erected. This does not deny that the discussion and dialogue may well be centered on an immediate problem from the outset; it does perhaps suggest that some efforts to blend the Gospel and radical political economy seek the immediate secular answers without adequate asking of basic sacral or secular questions on either side.

The same principles hold in relation to many non-croyant political economists. In many ways it is fair to say that a radical agnostic or Marxian political economist diverges from a radical Christian theologian in principle largely on eschatological issues. Critical as these may be for ideology, they do not bulk large in political economy nor are they of central concern to issues of state, equity or revolution. Certainly not all political economists or their political masters are very hopeful candidates for such a dialogue - but that applies to the political economic theorists of apartheid who perceive themselves as staunch warriors of Christ as much as to those of the Kampuchea (Cambodia) politburo who perceive themselves as equally militant followers of an equally rigid and soul destroying secular creed. Its own inscope requires the Church to attempt outreach even when the chances of success appear slim - Saint Paul was, for example, never a probable convert nor (more ambiguously) was Constantine.

At a quite different level more discussion and dialogue is needed

within the Church. There are many mansions and many gifts - why they should be perceived as inconsistent or incompatible is unclear. Nothing in this paper is intended to criticize the Bishop of Central Tanzania who is consecrating a new church every week as a result of a surge of evangelism, to cast doubt on the work of Sister Theresa ministering to the destitute and the dying of Bombay or to call in question the small, immediate service projects for communities which in many parts of Africa are the hallmark of the White Fathers. Unfortunately, one cannot deny that evangelism, charity (in the Pauline sense), service at grass roots level, mysticism and committed political economic criticism and advocacy are often seen by their proponents not only as alternatives but as alternatives all but one of which is at best irrelevant and at worst a heresy. More honest dialogue, less papering over, more mutual comprehension of others callings, less secular type cobbled compromises and more evidence of grace and charity are urgently needed.

The retort may be made that all this is very elitist - how does, or can it relate to the man in the pew (much less the nominal man in the register but rarely if ever in the pew). That may be more a judgement on the theologians and political economists than on the laymen.

"If the trumpet give forth an uncertain sound ..." Certainly the type of concepts and approaches outlined in this paper have, when presented clearly by men and women committed to them, proved compelling to at least some laicity not previously notably committed to radical change or an activist perception of the Gospel. It is far from clear that the failure lies with the congregations so much as with those who have - or assert that they have - special competence in conveying theological and political economic questions and challenges to them.

VII.

Some Challenges And Obstacles

It would be idle to assert that the challenges inherent in the positions enunciated here are minor or the obstacles to acting on them trivial. The requirements that such thought and action would impose on Christianity and on political economists as they exist today are severe.

One, there is the problem of translating the meaning of Christianity for political economy. Political economy is not a field notable for internal verities at least as to the forms and means which actually affect people. The contexts of the Gospels and the Schoolmen now insulate the force of their message anaesthetizing many Christians and turning off most political economists.

Two, a change in perceptions of reality appears to be required. Many - probably most - Christian institutions and individual Christians still perceive their role as dispensers of charity, binders up of wounds, smoothers of rough edges but basically loyal allies of the secular system in which they exist. Most political economists perceive Christianity (and religion in general) as at best a minor physic and material safety net, escapism in general and as an obscurantist barrier to clear thinking and radical change at worst. So long as these perceptions (hopefully genuinely describeable as false consciousness) remain, the opportunity for a renewed Christian political economic and socio-economic concern cannot be seen or comprehended let alone grasped or approached.

Three, the roles and interests of organized Christianity and many of its members are deeply status quo oriented and deeply anti-revolutionary. The Constantinian Church - even in its diluted, post establishment form-is only too often the secular establishment at prayer. Similarly the lay leaders in many cases are the regime's practarians at work by another route. However genuine the feeling of Mayor Margaret Kenyatta (a leading lay member of a Kenyan Church Council) that something should be done for the poor of Nairobi she can hardly be expected to perceive, let alone act on, the realization that their problems are largely created by the state system of which she is a leader and beneficiary and, in particular, by their systematic exclusion from decision taking or control over their own affairs.

Much the same, of course, can be said of most political economists. The contours of the system within which one was born, socialized and educated tend to become the parameters (or walls) enclosing thought even when that thought is critical. That is, of course, one reason why Third/Second/First World interchange, interaction and dialogue (when on a basis of equality and openness) is potentially so fruitful, so explosive, so painful - it can knock down the walls as effectively as Joshua's trumpets.

Four, the questions of when to condemn, how to reconcile, when to seek unity and when struggle, how to integrate material and spiritual imperatives are rarely clearly posed let alone answered. There is a hesitation - not a wholly wrong one given the force of the words - for Christians and Christian bodies to say "Ye crucify again the Christ". Even the relatively radical All African Council of Churches has said it of Uganda only when an Archbishop was murdered, yet the nature of the Amin regime has been clear for years to him who had eye

to see and ears to hear. The need to seek reconciliation or conversion and to separate condemnation of actions from that of persons in error are valid but what happens appears to owe more to a misplaced secular diplomatic tradition of papering over gulfs with words and an even less laudable desire to avoid unpleasantness. The failure of most Christians and churches who could do so at little danger or cost to condemn the Southern African regimes (or for that matter Uganda before the Primate's death), to act on that condemnation and to seek to find an affirmation jointly with African Christians and others seeking a just society is a scandal - especially when contrasted with the faith and works of many Christians on the spot (perhaps most notably in Namibia and Zimbabwe but also in South Africa, Mozambique, Angola). They have asked for solidarity in the name of our common Master - have they received it ?

This is in no way to imply that the Church should take up bell, book and candle and wander the four corners of the globe seeking out evil to condemn as some type of sacral juridical commission. Indeed the reaction against passivity shows some danger of wandering off in that direction. Interaction with the political economy of liberation could increase the dangers of becoming either sacral camp followers or secular enthusiasms or Pharisees with pointing fingers glorying that they were not as other men. These problems have been posed by the Right Reverend Lakshman Wickremasinghe, Bishop of Kurunegala (Sri Lanka):

The basic insight in the Bible about contradictions in the human situation is expressed in terms of self-centredness ("I" consciousness) rather than in terms of oppression. Oppression results from self-centredness and operates on many levels - class ... interpersonal ... self ... of nature. Power in the human situation is expressed primarily either through love or through hate. ... Does the description of contradictions in the human situation in terms of class oppression do adequate justice to the basic insight of the

bible?

.... Does the description of the people of the Messiah or people who inherit the Kingdom as confined to those who belong to the oppressed class and those who consciously link themselves with this class, do adequate justice to the basic biblical imagery?

In biblical terms, the Kingdom of God is realized fully only beyond the dimension of human history The Kingdom does exercise its influence in concrete historical situations but it is only partly realized in them. Does the description of the Kingdom as equivalent to the new man in the new society resulting from the removal of contemporary class oppression, adequately convey the biblical insight?

In short does this ideology of liberation seeking to communicate biblical insight and inspiration in concrete situations where social realities are fully appreciated maintain sufficiently the dialectical tension between the human and the social perspective, and between historicism and transcendence? Is the desire for honest grappling with concrete issues sustained by a sufficient grasp of the human and transcendental vision of the Bible?

... service in the Gospel ... should be humble and self-giving service not only to friend but also to foe; and service to the oppressor whose entrenched evil must be opposed and removed ... If inward or personal liberation is described in terms of selfless service to the people and the basic forces of liberation does it do adequate justice to the basic insight of Jesus? Are those who seek to achieve liberation in society motivated by a sufficient grasp of the encompassing compassion of Jesus?

Five, what of violence? The first point here is a need for honesty and balance. Bertolt Brecht's query on why condemn the violence of the flooding river but remain silent as to the violence of the enclosing banks^{is} opposite. Most - perhaps all - revolutionary violence is in direct response to the institutional violence of entrenched oppression, a violence which unfortunately is often invisible to many viewers until the tide of revolutionary violence breaks against it.

Christ scourged the commodity brokers and bankers from the Temple. He denounced them in terms which were hardly parliamentary language. He paid no compensation. If the world is the Lord's and all that therein is, are not many property "rights" precisely the type of

wrong against which Christ directed violence?

The people of Namibia have sought for thirty years to secure their freedom: by negotiation with South Africa, by appeals to the World Court and the United Nations, by peaceful protests and by strikes. Among their major avenues of action and sources of inspiration have been their churches. The answer has been enhanced exploitation, harsher repression, desperate attempts to coerce and suborn men into serving as a mystifying puppet show facade for a continuation of the political economy of land theft and forced labour that has been the strategy of South Africa and (no matter how often they wash their hands and decry the system in which they participate and from which they profit) of its collaborators (e.g. AMEX, RTZ and the British Ministry of Power/Atomic Energy Authority) for over half a century. From 1960 onward more and more Namibians have turned to violence, still seeking negotiation but determined to force it or to recapture their land by force if that is the only way. What is the duty of their churches? Of ours? The Right Reverend Colin O'Brien Winter, Bishop of Damraskaland in Exile (personally a committed pacifist during the Second World War) has clearly seen his duty as a Christian and as a Bishop as standing with his people; he cannot and will not condemn their ultimate recourse to violence to defend and free themselves from the violence of others.

Namibia is not typical - at least not in degree and, one prays, not in kind. However, neither is armed revolt the only action which can be typified as violence. Strikes, boycotts, even mass demonstrations are sometimes so presented. What circumstances justify - or even require - them for Christians?

The ultimate problem of violence is what it does to the men who become its instruments. The contradiction between the perceived need for action adequate to achieve the end willed and the failure to perceive that the means can corrupt the end of Sartre's Dirty Hands and the realization that violence against oppression can destroy the liberator and make his victory hollow but with no answer to the imperative of overcoming evil of Camus's The Rebel is a real one and in concrete contexts it is no less a dilemma for Christians and the Church than for other men of sensitivity, conscience and human concern.

Six, the way of martyrdom may seem - intellectually at least - to be an easy answer to the previous dilemma. At a trite level the evident riposte is that the vast majority of men and women most assuredly do not see martyrdom as an easy answer.

More basically there is a real danger in sought martyrdom, the danger enunciated by Eliot's Saint Thomas in Murder In The Cathedral:

To do the right deed for the wrong reason
That is the last and greatest treason.

It is also usually practically ineffective
- the martyrs who have vanquished
their foes through death have usually
sought rather hard to avoid that culmination.

For the visitor or expatriate there is a further danger - that of conveying "donated martyrdom". He can speak out loud and clear without thought of consequences because for him they are almost certainly temporary unpleasantness and deportation. For his hosts they may be much more drastic. If - and only if - they wish him to speak out, to name "names we do not name" then he has an obligation to do so; otherwise the rationale of "no taxation without representation" surely is even more relevant to "no martyrdom without participation."

Seven, what is the proper role of the Church beyond criticism? Setting standards? Applying them? Backing action? Engaging in secular struggle? Making detailed political economic proposals? What is the interaction between action by organized Christianity (or fragments thereof) as such and between actions of Christians informed by the Gospel as sought out and taught by the Church?

These are not trivial questions with easy answers. Clearly a return to Mediaeval theocratic dominance on the intellectual - let alone the state - level is neither practicable nor desirable. On the other hand the Gospel message is not primarily one of criticism but of affirmation, not of prohibitions but of positive commandments. To reduce its thrust toward political economy to a sort of reductionist critical apparatus may well preserve the letter at the cost of the spirit. Further while the criticism of some activist Christian radicalism that it appears to be an odd assortment of works not much informed by faith is probably valid it remains true that faith without works is dead and that Christ's command to carry out the will of the Father cannot be adequately comprehended by manifestos.

To argue that official church political economic ideologies and methodologies and detailed church programmes for political economic action (or for armed secular revolution which in some circumstances comes to the same thing) are rarely, if ever, appropriate is doubtless correct. Its corollary that there may be a Christian duty on individuals to act in these fields is equally valid. However, this leaves a gap. How far should organized Christianity go? How should it inform the actions of the members of the Body of Christ? Provide a community for their actions?

Bishop Wickremasinghe has written on one aspect of this problem. While his immediate subject is the Sarvodaya Movement in Buddhism his

thoughts are opposite to Christianity as well:

In Sarvodaya writings the means of effecting changes in society has been limited, except for an isolated instance, to persuasion through right understanding and disinterested moral appeal. It has been the same in practice. But it is an undeniable fact that the elite groups whether managerial, political, economic, religious etc., not only tend to become corrupt, but also entrench themselves in power, and are not readily or easily willing to share or transfer their power. This is recognized .. but has not been taken seriously enough this far, either in the ideology or practice of Sarvodaya personnel. Thereby, this concept of non-violent revolutionary force tends to lose its relevance and inspirational power in the present situation, as it by-passes contemporary social realities The recent precedents has been in the nature of exercising political pressure to force concession or register protest, rather than to break down entrenched evil.

..... if the path of Right Understanding can be extended to include a right view of existing social realities, the path of Right Effort could be extended to include right and energetic striving, to get rid of such evil states that have risen not only within a man, but also within a family, any group or in society. A basis in the Buddhist Philosophical tradition is (then) provided for non-violent revolutionary action to remove entrenched evil from a society.

Envoi

That problems confront any serious effort to build a new interaction between the Church and political economy is not surprising. The way of the Church - if it is true to itself - is the way of the cross. The peace of God is not a package tour to a lotus isle. My father used to remark to his congregation whenever using one of his favourite hymns "The Son of God Goes Forth to War - Who Follows in His Train?" that he greatly feared the lines in that last stanza "Oh God to us may grace be given to follow in their train" were only too often read "Oh God to us may tickets be given to ride upon that train."

Nor are the questions - let alone answers - clear except to saints who have attained holy innocence or mystic revelation. Very few achieve those states - Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Theresa of Avila are not typical Christians - nor could most of us pay the price

of that simplicity and clarity. Further, holy innocence and mysticism are not, on the whole, self evidently directly relevant to political economy. That is no derogation, like Saint Paul we need to recognize that there are many talents and many levels of grasp of any one talent and seek not to homogenize but to purify and unify them.

It remains as it has always been necessary to think, to work and to pray for the vision and the strength to know and to act on -

In la sua voluntate
Es nostre pace.

- Chaplains' Dining Club
University of Sussex
Lent, 1977