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Editorial

We perceive that the world today lives under the shadow of an oppressive empire, wrote the 2004 WARC General Council delegates to the congregations of all the churches which belong to the WARC fellowship. And they went on to unpack their statement: by empire “we mean the gathered power of pervasive economic and political forces throughout the globe that reinforce the division between the rich and the poor”. At the same meeting, they urged faith-based resistance to the global empire and recommended that the future work of the World Alliance in the area of justice include further reflection on “empire”.

That General Council recommendation was implemented through a WARC consultation held in Manila, the Philippines, in July 2006. Its theme was “Theological Analysis and Action on Global Empire Today”. The papers presented at that meeting, and published in this issue of *Reformed World*, attempt first of all to discern the emergence of the global empire as a sign of our times. They seek, on the other hand, to discern the emergence of an ecumenical and interfaith-based vision of new communities of life as a sign of resistance to the global empire.

These papers together with the document that came out of the Manila consultation are offered - not as definitive official declarations of WARC - but as study texts which their authors are contributing to the debate within WARC member churches.

The term “empire” has entered current usage in recent years. It has been widely used by “conservatives” and “progressives”, by the “right” and by the “left”. It has lost its original ideological bias. Notwithstanding, it is far from being consensual among Reformed Christians. It gave rise to lively discussions during the 2004 WARC General Council.

It is therefore important to keep the “empire” debate going in order to prevent Reformed Christians in different parts of the world from coming to the point where their ways of talking about the world in which they live is so discrepant that they lose sight of the vital need to listen in dialogue to what the Spirit is saying to the churches about the proclamation of the gospel in and to today’s world. We hope that, controversial as it might be, this issue of *Reformed World* and the outcomes of the Manila Consultation will stimulate mutual exchange, mutual understanding, and mutual accountability within the WARC family.

Odaïr Pedrosa Mateus

This issue of *Reformed World*
is dedicated to the memory of

Milan Opočenský
1931-2007

**Minister of the Evangelical Church
of Czech Brethren, Czech Republic**

**Professor at Charles University,
Prague**

**Former General Secretary
of the World Alliance of
Reformed Churches**

The global empire: an overview

Ninan Koshy

The United States is by circumstance and design an emergent global empire. The Empire has its military doctrines, ideology and economics. The military doctrine is a mandate for the pursuit of permanent military superiority. The ideology is one of world hegemony. The Empire claims the right to act preemptively and unilaterally against potentially threatening states or organizations. The Empire has also an audacious agenda for world economic dominance. It is an empire of military bases. The global empire wants to maintain “global sovereignty” and “global freedom of action” by military might. Dr. Ninan Koshy is a specialist on international affairs and was formerly Director, International Affairs, World Council of Churches, Geneva. He is the author of several books including The War on Terror: Reordering the World.

The use of the word “empire” in relation to American power was once controversial, more or less restricted to left-wing critiques of US hegemony. But now in the mainstream media and in political discourse the concept of “empire” and “*Pax Americana*” are mentioned frequently and prominently.

“The military victory in Iraq seems to have confirmed a new world order”, Joseph Nye, Dean of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, wrote in *The Washington Post* (25 May 2003). “Not since Rome has one nation loomed so large above the others. Indeed the word ‘empire’ has come out of the closet.” Respected analysts on both the left and the right are now referring to “American empire” approvingly as the

dominant narrative of the twenty-first century. Michael Ignatieff wrote in what is considered the seminal essay on empire:

Ever since George Washington warned his countrymen against foreign entanglements, empire abroad has been seen as the republic’s permanent temptation and its political nemesis. Yet what word but “empire” describes the awesome thing that America is becoming? It is the only nation that polices the world through five global commands, maintains more than a million men and women at arms in four continents, deploys carrier battle groups on watch in every ocean, guarantees the survival of countries from Israel to South Korea, drives the wheels of global trade and commerce and fills the hearts and minds of the entire planet with its dreams and desires.¹

The discourse on the global empire

Essentially the use of the term “American empire” is an attempt to give expression to the concept that America is no longer merely an exceptional super, hyper or hegemonic power. What is needed is a “gorilla of geopolitical designations” (Jonathan Freedland, Rome AD ... Rome DC, *The Guardian*, 18 September 2002) – the empire in other words. The shift in terminology from “dominance” to “hegemony” to “empire” is significant, above all, because it highlights the classic concept of direct political control by an imperial centre. It is a question of indefinite dominance. The rhetoric, concept, strategy and policy of the empire camp are not new. The difference is that they are now in power.²

Richard Falk says, “USA is by circumstance and design an emergent global empire, the first in the history of the world.” Prior empires had frontiers and boundaries, although occupying large expanses of territory, and exercised control from a distant centre that due to available technologies of communication and transportation were further away in time than is any part of the global empire from Washington.³

There is a vigorous debate on the “empire” in the United States – remarkably more than on the war on terror. Today, “American empire” is a term of approval and optimism for some, and disparagement and danger for others. Neoconservatives celebrate the imperial exercise of US power,

which is a modern version of Rudyard Kipling’s “white man’s burden”. For them it is a liberal force that undercuts tyranny, terrorism, military aggression and weapons proliferation. Critics who identify an emerging global empire meanwhile worry about its corrosive effect on democracy, its implications for the rest of the world, especially the weaker nations, and the threat it poses to international institutions, many of which were initiated by the US and secured US national interests.

Deepak Lal maintains that “If the US were to accept its identity as an empire – and act accordingly – the entire world would benefit”. He argues in his book, *In Praise of Empires: Globalization and Order*, the starting point must be to recognize the US not merely as the world’s hegemon, but as an empire. “Today the US maintains or seeks an indirect empire in large parts of the world.”⁴

In *The Sorrows of Empire*, Chalmers Johnson advances the claim that the US has consolidated its Cold War era, far-flung military base system, in the last decade, into a new global imperial system. Driven by a triumphalist ideology, an exaggerated sense of threats, and a self-serving military role, this juggernaut is tightening its grip on much of the world. The Pentagon has replaced the State Department as the primary shaper of foreign policy. Military commanders in regional headquarters are modern day pro-consuls, warrior-diplomats who direct the United States’ imperial reach.⁵

The Director of the neoconservative Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University, Stephen Peter Rose, who worked in the Department of Defense, the National Security Council of the USA and was a founding member of the Project for the New American Century, summarized the basic assumptions of this new military view of the world in mid-2002 as follows: "The United States has no rival. We are militarily dominant around the world. ...Our goal is not combating a rival, but maintaining our imperial position and maintaining imperial order... Planning for imperial wars is different from planning for conventional wars. ...The maximum amount of force can and should be used as quickly as possible for psychological impact - to demonstrate that the empire cannot be challenged with impunity. ...Imperial wars end but imperial garrisons must be left in place for decades to ensure order and stability. ...Finally, imperial strategy focuses on preventing the emergence of powerful hostile challengers to the empire: by war if necessary, but by imperial assimilation if possible." (Quoted by Rainer Rilling, *op. cit.*)

On the other side, Niall Ferguson too agrees that the United States is indeed an empire and has been one for a long time. To Ferguson, however, it is a liberal empire that upholds rules and institutions and underwrites public good by maintaining peace, ensuring freedom of the seas and skies and managing a system of international trade and finance.⁶ In other words, the world needs more of the liberal

American empire. The current international order needs enlightened leadership; the wider system of sovereign but failed states especially need constant supervision. In vast swathes of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, national self-determination has led to much grief: "the experiment with political independence - especially in Africa - has been a disaster for most poor countries." Therefore, the extension of empire into these regions (even involving some form of colonial rule) is necessary, as they require the imposition of some kind of external authority. And, it goes without saying, only Washington can provide this benevolent authority.

Of course, the mechanics of implementing empire today are different from what they have been in the past: vulgar territorial conquest has been generally - but not always - replaced by security guarantees, treaty obligations, forward deployments, small wars, and open-ended peace-keeping and nation-building operations. Yet the underlying logic of empire remains the same. Empires operate, not in terms of conducting relations *with* states, but in terms of prevailing over the relations *among* states; that is, empires try to abolish the structural anarchy of the international system by assimilating states into an overarching order.

Michael Mann warns of a dangerous, and ultimately unsustainable, imperial turn in US foreign policy. This new imperialism, he argues in *Incoherent Empire*, is driven by a radical vision in which unilateral military power enforces US rule and overcomes

global disorder. Mann believes that this “imperial project” depends on a widely inflated measure of American power. The US may have awesome military muscle but its political and economic capabilities are less overwhelming. This imbalance causes the US to overemphasize the use of force, turning the quest for an empire into “overconfident and hyperactive militarism”. Such militarism guarantees what Mann calls “incoherent empire”, which undermines US leadership and creates more, not fewer, terrorists and rogue states.⁷

A project for the global empire

The question that Americans can no longer dodge or evade is not whether the US has become an imperial power. The question is what sort of empire they intend it to be. The theme is taken up by Michael Ignatieff, who calls for an understanding of the imperial role as a “burden” - a term that inevitably reminds one of Kipling - that is the consequence of its pre-eminence in the world. Ignatieff gives empire a potentially favourable glow arguing that “the case for empire is that it has become, in a place like Iraq, the last hope of democracy and stability alike”.⁸

This kind of claim for the American role did not begin with the presidency of George W. Bush. Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 there have been strong statements based on a new America-dominated power structure, including celebrations of “a so-called unipolar moment”, and assertions that the US is “the

indispensable nation” (Madeleine Albright). There were more extreme neoconservative voices arguing that the end of the Cold War presented the US with an extraordinary opportunity to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union for the benefit of the world. There was no choice but to make use of American power, as enhanced by an expanded global military capability. This was forcefully presented in the report of the *Project for the New American Century* entitled *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, published in September 2000. It said:

The US is the world's only superpower, combining pre-eminent military power, global technological leadership and the world's largest economy. ... America's grand strategy should aim to preserve and extend this advantageous position as far into the future as possible. ... The process of accomplishing this transformation was likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event - like a new Pearl Harbor.

What was to become official policy within a few months received little attention at the time of publication of the report.

In the same period, some centrist figures in the US were articulating alternate versions of a reconstructed world order. Joseph Nye suggested that American superiority in the increasingly important domain of “soft power” would allow the establishment of a more stable and beneficial world order that was anchored in

multilateralism and patterns of cooperative international problem solving. The debate over “hard power” and “soft power” was, however, overshadowed during the 1990s by the preoccupation with economic globalization as the defining reality of a new era of international relations in which market forces associated with trade and investment assumed priority over security concerns, especially in the absence of serious strategic or ideological conflict among leading states. It was not recognized in the West at that time that economic globalization was beginning to be seen and felt in the developing countries as a form of political and cultural domination with imperialist tendencies.

The September 11 attacks occurred against such a background and almost immediately moved the global security agenda back into the centre stage of world politics. But what became clear almost from the first response of the US government was a decision to frame its response to megaterrorism in terms that incorporated the extreme neoconservative conception of a future world order. September 11 provided the “catastrophic and catalyzing event” for which the Project for the New American Century was waiting. The enlarged conception of the war allowed the Bush administration to shift the focus of the American response from the al Qaeda presence in Afghanistan to the “axis of evil”, countries that had essentially no connection with megaterrorism but were definitely standing in the way of the American

espousal of global dominance as a goal to be actively pursued. This is what brought the issue of “empire” into the open. As early as November 2001 Stanley Hoffman warned: “A determined project of ridding the world of all rogues and terrorists is a dream that would be seen abroad as a demonstration of rabid imperialism”.⁹

The Bush administration’s war on terrorism, invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, expanded military budget, new military doctrines and the controversial 2002 National Security Strategy have thrust American military power into the light of the day as that of an empire - and in doing so deeply unsettled much of the world. It is evident that the basic move of the Bush administration is to adopt and implement policies that anchor the imperial project in a military approach to global security. While maintaining the ideological precepts of neoliberal globalization, the Bush administration places its intense free market advocacy intertwined with imperial security.

The new Rome

At the beginning of the war against Afghanistan, Scott Peterson wrote that the “borders of a new American empire appear to be forming”.¹⁰ Max Boot in “The Case for an American Empire” said at that time: “Afghanistan and other troubled lands today cry out for the sort of enlightened foreign administration once provided by self-confident Englishmen in jodhpurs and pith helmets.”¹¹ When his history of America’s

“small wars” (*The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, Basic Books, 2003) appeared, its title was taken from Rudyard Kipling’s notorious poem “The White Man’s Burden” (*Take up the White Man’s Burden - The Savage Wars of Peace*) written in 1899 as an exhortation to the USA to turn the Philippines into an American colony. In 2003 Boot called for the establishment of a “colonial office of the USA”.

With the occupation of Iraq, the borders of the empire are expanding. There are many elements of classical empire building seen today: military occupation, regime change, and direct control of economic resources. The new empire cannot any longer be called non-territorial. Comparisons are inevitably made with the British, and more so with the Roman, empire: “So Americans may be more Roman than we realize, with garrisons in every corner of the globe. But there the similarities only begin. For the US’s entire approach to empire looks quintessentially Roman. It is as if the Romans bequeathed a blueprint for how imperial business should be done and today Americans are following it religiously”, writes Jonathan Freedland.¹² Lesson one in the Roman handbook for imperial success is: it is not enough to have great military strength - the rest of the world must know the strength and fear it too. The US has learnt a second lesson from Rome, realizing the centrality of technology. For the Romans it was those famously straight roads, enabling the empire to move troops or supplies at awesome speeds - rates that

would not be surpassed for well over a thousand years. Today these highways find their counterparts in the information superhighway - the Internet also began as a military tool devised by the US Defense Department.

But it is not just specific tips that the US seems to have picked up from its ancient forbears. Rather it is the fundamental approach to empire that echoes so loudly. Rome understood that if it is to last, a world power needs to practise both hard and soft imperialism, the cultural and political tricks that work not to win power but to keep it. No wonder the US talks about bringing democracy to West Asia. The US dominates the world through its military force. American garrisons encircle the world. This vast network of American bases in every continent except Antarctica actually constitutes a new form of empire.

The military doctrines of the empire

The official policy of the USA is called the “transformation of the military establishment”. When pressed on the meaning of “transformation” Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his associates speak of the need to abandon long-standing strategic assumptions and to organize US forces for combat against unfamiliar enemies in unexpected circumstances. While alluding to this shift, Pentagon officials speak of replacing the “threat-based strategy” that long governed US military planning with what they describe

as a “capabilities-based approach”. This means that the Defense Department will no longer organize its forces to counter specific military threats posed by clearly identifiable enemies, but instead will acquire a capacity to defeat any conceivable type of attack mounted by any imaginable adversary at any point of time - from now to the distant future. Put differently, it is a mandate for the pursuit of permanent military superiority.

It is important to note that the fashioning and formulation of military strategies and doctrines for building the empire was already in process before September 11. They were all in place before the attack on Iraq. On 20 September 2001, nine days after the terrorist attacks, the Bush administration released the 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Review*. Obviously this was prepared long before the attacks. While generally following the earlier review, the document did signal a critical shift in US defence strategy and policy with clear potential for empire. As Carl Cornetta explains:

The critical difference is that the new *QDR* puts a distinctive emphasis on war fighting and war-fighting capabilities bringing maximum war objectives to the fore. Beyond seeking decisive victory, it aims for the decisive defeat of adversaries. This it defines ambitiously in terms of “changing the regime of an adversary state” and “occupying foreign territory until US strategic objectives are met”.¹³

After September 11, US security concerns have tended to sprawl in two directions: first

geographically, and second, functionally, or across the threat spectrum.

The Pentagon is moving at breakneck speed to re-deploy US forces and equipment around the world in ways that will permit Washington to play “Globocop”. Donald Rumsfeld grandiosely describes it as the biggest restructuring of America’s global forces since 1945. While preparing sharp reductions in forces in Germany, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, military planners are talking about establishing permanent or semi-permanent bases along a giant swathe of global territory - increasingly referred to as “the arc of instability” from the Caribbean basin through Africa to South and Central Asia and across to North Korea. *The Economist* commented on 28 May 2004: “American officials say it is a good time to review America’s place in the world, because the rationale for doing it is widely understood. But because of Iraq, this may be the worst, as well as the best of times, to redesign the American empire.” The planned redeployments, the most sweeping since the onset of the Cold War more than 50 years ago, are all part of a global strategy to build, in Rumsfeld’s words, “capability to impose lethal power, where needed, when needed, with the greatest flexibility and the greatest agility.” This explains the functional dimension of the new security approach.

The classified Nuclear Posture Review of the US (details of which appeared in the media in the second week of March 2002, revealing the Pentagon’s ambitious nuclear battle plans), redefines the role of nuclear

weapons as fundamental to US defence policy, places new emphasis on the utility of nuclear weapons in US military doctrine and strategy, and changes the very notion of deterrence. For the first time, the US is sending strong signals that it is considering new uses of nuclear weapons. “First use” and “first strike” are written large on the nuclear agenda of the US. For more than half a century, the Americans have claimed that the sole purpose of possessing nuclear weapons has been to deter a nuclear attack - never mind that the only time such weapons have been used, they have been used by the US against Japan, a country that did not possess atomic weapons. Now, however, even these claims have changed. The *Review* describes a plan to develop a new class of small nuclear weapons for a nuclear strike force. The readiness of the US to use nuclear weapons “in the event of surprising military developments” is ominous in the context of the war on terror with its changing and expanding aims and targets.

The ideology of the empire

Admittedly what may be described as the Charter of the US Empire is the *National Security Strategy of the USA (NSS 2002)* presented to the Congress by President Bush on 17 September 2002. The document insists that “the President has no intention of allowing any foreign power to catch up with the huge lead the United States has opened since the fall of the Soviet Union more than a decade ago”. The document

argues that while the US will seek allies in the battle against terrorism, “We will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively.” The doctrine of pre-emptive strikes and unilateral action and the scorn for the United Nations and its Charter represent a fundamental threat to the very global order that the US did so much to bring about in 1946.

In President Bush’s opinion, the US represents universal principles. He summons them in the word “freedom”. As humankind’s beacon of political right, the US must remove obstacles to freedom around the world. Accomplishing this task is associated in the President’s mind with using American military might. Even before September 11 he informed the Congress that the “Department of Defense has become the most powerful force for freedom the world has ever seen”.¹⁴

A large number of American political intellectuals, including many writers on American foreign policy, have been promoting what may be called an ideology of empire. The already available ideology of empire helped remove any inhibition the President might have had about an interventionist foreign policy and helped shape his reaction to the attack on September 11. The President moved to embrace the idea of armed world hegemony. The attack on America could have elicited a much different reaction, such as a surgical and limited response; instead it became the occasion and justification for something

grandiose. Many of those who had previously argued for an imperial role for the US came to prominent positions in the administration when Bush came to power. They took full advantage of the nation's outrage over 9/11 to advance their drive for empire.

Reflexes developed by American politicians and commentators during the Cold War have boosted the imperialistic impulse. Many cold warriors now lacking the old enemy of communism, see in the goal of a better world for humankind another justification for continued and extensive use of American force. The most conspicuous and salient feature of their approach to international affairs is its universalistic and monopolistic claim. If America is the instrument of universal right, the cause of all humanity, it is only proper that it should be diligent and insistent in imposing its will.

They typically use "democracy" as an umbrella term for the kind of political regime that they would like to see installed all over the world. Bringing democracy to countries that do not yet have it ought to be the defining purpose of US foreign policy. One may call this the ideology of "democratization". It has been espoused by many academics, James David Barber prominent among them. "The US should stand up and head the world democracy movement", he wrote in 1990. "We have made democracy work here, now we ought to make it work everywhere we can with whatever tough and extensive action that takes."¹⁵ In the major media one of the early

and most persistent advocates of the assertive American foreign policy was the columnist and television commentator Charles Krauthammer. In 1991 for example, he urged a "robust interventionism". "We are living in a unipolar world", he wrote. "We Americans should like it." "Where our cause is just and interests are threatened, we should act - even if ... we must act unilaterally."¹⁶ This point of view would eventually become official.

The NSS 2002 declares that America's strength and influence in the world is "unprecedented" and "unequaled". The United States, "sustained by faith in the principle of liberty and the value of a free society", also has "unparalleled responsibilities, obligations and opportunities" beyond its borders. It calls for possessing such overwhelming military power so as to discourage any other power from challenging American hegemony or developing weapons of mass destruction. It overturns the old doctrine of deterrence and containment. Committing the US to a much expanded understanding of security, it argues that the US must reserve the right to act pre-emptively and unilaterally against potentially threatening states or organizations. In many respects, the character of the document is in keeping with what might be described as America's image of exceptionalism; that the US always uses power for good, that it has selfless purpose. It also reflects the belief that global security and liberal order are based

on the US - that “indispensable nation” - wielding power as the global empire.

The economics of the empire

A close reading of the Bush administration plans in *NSS 2002* reveals an audacious agenda for world economic dominance. Its opening remarks, in the words of the President, boldly proclaim that “the United States will ‘use this moment of opportunity’ [i.e. the war on terrorism] to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets and free trade to every corner of the world”. The document proceeds from the general to the specific. Section 4, amusingly entitled “Work with others to defuse regional conflicts”, outlines selective economic exploitation plans for particular geographic areas. The economic agenda that will follow the flag in the quest of what is called a better world is clearly spelt out. “The concept of ‘free trade’ arose as a moral principle even before it became a pillar of economics”, the document claims. Already the National Security Strategy for a New Century, December 1999, had declared: “The twenty-first century will be an era of great promise. Globalization - the process of accelerating economic, technological, cultural and political integration - is bringing citizens from all continents closer together (...) A growing number of nations around the world have embraced America’s core values of democratic governance, free-market economics and respect for fundamental human rights...”

The implication is clear. There is an

integral relationship between American-style free market economics and American security in the world. Globalization and imperial security go together. Global capitalism, enforced militarily if needed, is integral to empire building. Having achieved a “pre-eminence not enjoyed by even the greatest empires of the past”, the US is focused on using the power globally, through both military and market intervention. America’s War on Terror or “war for freedom” is at one with the expansionary goals of the market: open invasion in some places, open markets everywhere. Successive US administrations have used the rhetoric of economic freedom and opportunity to describe this policy: free trade, liberalization, deregulation and globalization.

President Bush linked war and trade in his commencement speech at the University of South Carolina on 9 May 2004. After trumpeting victory in Iraq, he revealed his plan to create a Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) within a decade, the proposed goal being “to bring the Middle East into an expanding circle of opportunity, to provide hope for the people who live in that region. ... As trade expands and knowledge spreads to the Middle East ... all peoples of that region will see a new day of justice and a new day of prosperity”. Quite simply, imperial America needs to deliver the Middle East to free trade. The planned military deployments appear designed to ensure that the US could indeed enforce a *Pax Americana* based on its ability to exert military control over the production and flow of energy resources from

Central Asia, the Gulf region and the Gulf Guinea off the west coast of Africa.

The emerging Pentagon doctrine, founded mainly on the work of Admiral Arthur Cebrowski, chief of the Pentagon's Office of Force Transformation, and Thomas Barnett of the Naval War College argues that *the dangers against which US forces must be arrayed derive precisely from countries and regions that are "disconnected" from the prevailing trends of globalization* (emphasis added) (Jim Lobe, www.commondreams.org, June 15, 2003) . Barnett's term for the areas, which present the greatest threat is the "Gap" areas, where "globalization is thinning or just plain absent". As he wrote in *Esquire* magazine in early 2003, "If we map out US military responses since the end of the Cold War, we find an overwhelming concentration of activity in the regions of the world that are excluded from globalization's growing Core".¹⁷

An empire of bases

The empire is built on increasing and expanding military relationships of various kinds with a very large number of countries as well as the stationing of hundreds of thousands of US troops around the world. However, even in the 21st century with jets and space travel, the world is still a large place. The division of the world into military fiefdoms or what US military planners call the Unified Command Plan, requires something very old fashioned - overseas military bases. Chalmers Johnson writes about "America's Empire of Bases":

This vast network of American bases on every continent except Antarctica actually constitutes a new form of empire - an empire of bases with its own geography... Without grasping the dimensions of this globe-girdling Baseworld, one can't begin to understand the size and nature of our imperial ambitions or the degree to which a new kind of militarism is undermining our constitutional order.¹⁸

These military bases, numbering hundreds, are today's version of the imperial colonies of the world. Washington may call them "forward deployment" but colonies are what they are. On this definition there is no place outside America's military reach. Pentagon figures show that there is a US military presence, big or small, in 132 of 190 member states of the United Nations. To quote Johnson again:

Of the insensitive, if graphic, metaphors we have allowed into our vocabulary, none quite equals "footprints" to describe the military impact of our vocabulary. Establishing a more impressive footprint has now become part of the justification for a major enlargement of our empire - and announced repositioning of our bases and forces abroad - in the wake of the conquest of Iraq... They [the planners] have identified something they call the "arc of instability" which is said to run from the Andean region of South America [read Colombia] through North Africa and then sweeps across the Middle East to the Philippines and Indonesia. This is, of course, more or less identical with what used to be called the Third World - and perhaps

no less crucially it covers the world's key oil reserves.

Global sovereignty of the empire

The National Defense Strategy of the United States, March 2005 is a reaffirmation of the Pentagon's "Globocop" role. While the first of the four "strategic objectives" listed in the document is securing the US from direct attack, the second is to "secure strategic access and retain global freedom of action".

There is virtual rejection of international law and multilateral institutions and mechanisms. Under "Vulnerabilities", for example, the Strategy states, "our strength as a nation state will continue to be challenged by those who employ a strategy of the weak using international forums, judicial processes, and terrorism." Here international forums, judicial processes and terrorism are equated. Proponents of international law are equated with terrorists. The document also makes it clear that Washington intends to ignore or demand changes in international law if they constrain Washington's "global freedom of action".

The Strategy suggests that Washington will not be reluctant to send its forces into other states that, in its opinion, do not "exercise their sovereignty responsibly" or that "use the principle of sovereignty as a shield behind which they claim to be free to

engage in activities that pose enormous threats to their citizens, neighbors, or the rest of the international community". No wonder some US commentators call this document fascist.

This raises some questions on sovereignty. The strategy of preventive war (pre-emption) is closely bound up with the new vitality of the "hegemonic international law nihilism" (Norman Peach) that is exhibited by the present US administration. It is rooted in the idea that only the USA will be entitled to global sovereignty in the future world order. This notion of global sovereignty means that the USA will lay down international rules (for example, through the formation of alliances or blocs), determine what constitutes a crisis (a state of emergency), distinguish between friend and foe and make the resulting decision on the use of force. Only the USA is competent to use force anywhere in the world. This is one of the pillars of the new grand strategy, which is exemplified above all else by the concept of an exclusive right to preventive military intervention all over the world. Commitments to international alliances, and in particular to the United Nations, are rejected as constituting a restriction of the freedom of the US to act. (Rainer Rilling, *op. cit.*)

The global empire retains "global sovereignty" and "global freedom of action" by military might.

Notes

- ¹ Michael Ignatieff, "The Empire, the Burden", *New York Times Magazine*, 5 January 2003.
- ² Rainer Rilling, "American Empire" as Will and Idea, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Policy Paper 2/2003.
- ³ Richard Falk, "Will the Empire be Fascist?", The Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research, 24 March 2003.
- ⁴ Deepak Lal, "An Imperial Denial", *YaleGlobal*, 6 January 2005.
- ⁵ Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic*, New York, Metropolitan Books, 2004.
- ⁶ Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of American Empire*, New York, Penguin Press, 2004.
- ⁷ Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire*, New York, Verso, 2003.
- ⁸ Michael Ignatieff, "The Empire, the Burden". It is not clear if he still holds this view after the war and occupation.
- ⁹ Stanley Hoffman, "On the War", *The New York Review of Books*, 1 November 2001.
- ¹⁰ Scott Peterson, "Terror War and Oil Expand US Sphere of Influence", *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 March 2002.
- ¹¹ Boot's article appeared in *Australian*, 15 October 2001.
- ¹² *The Guardian*, 18 September 2002.
- ¹³ Carl Cornetta, "The Pentagon, New Budget, New Strategy and New War", *Project on Defence Alternatives*, 25 June 2002.
- ¹⁴ Statement to the US Congress, 18 January 2001.
- ¹⁵ James David Barber, "And Democracy needs Help", *Washington Post*, 25 January 1990.
- ¹⁶ Charles Krauthammer, "Bless our Pax Americana", *Washington Post*, 22 March 1991.
- ¹⁷ See www.countercurrents.org/us-lobe120603htm.
- ¹⁸ *Common Dreams News Center*, 15 January 2004.

The American empire in historical perspective

Muto Ichiyo

Japanese activist-writer Muto Ichiyo contends that to grasp the global hegemonic situation, we need to use as our conceptual tool the American empire that wants to control the whole world as a single market rather than imperialisms characterized by mutual rivalry to redivide the world. While the empire emerged following the end of World War II, it failed to be truly global because of the Cold War. Only after the demise of the Soviet Union could it belatedly achieve its global status. Neoliberal globalization is rooted in the nature of the American empire. Overcoming this empire with dynamic global people's alliances, therefore, is the historic challenge that takes us beyond confronting merely the post-9/11 Bush type of rule. A former professor of sociology at the State of New York University (USA), Muto is a founding member of the Asian Peace Alliance and a campaigner for peace and against militarization of the Asia-Pacific region. He is also one of the founders of PP21 or People's Plan for the 21st Century. He has authored several books in Japanese and contributed English writings to various publications.

When we talk about empire, we usually talk about the American empire. Moreover, in many cases, people talk about the American empire pointing to the post-9/11 American domination of the world, linking it to George Bush and his neocon strategists. But this assumption, if plausible, should be critically examined if we want to define the tasks with which we are faced from the point of view of practice.

Imperialisms and empire

My basic contention as regards empire is that empire is the appropriate concept to help comprehend the global situation since

the end of World War II. In other words, the American hegemony under which the post-World War II world was largely shaped should be characterized as imperial hegemony, instead of imperialist hegemony. This requires some explanation.

Imperialism as a historical construct implied three things: (1) strong powers subjugate the majority of the world population under them as their respective territorial colonies, (2) they fight each other for the redivision of their spheres of control, thus bringing about armed conflicts, and eventually major wars as in the case of the two World Wars, and (3) out of this struggle,

one of them will always emerge as the hegemonic power laying down rules for everyone and serving their common interests in order to keep the oppressed people subjugated. But the era of imperialism in this sense ended with the rise of the United States to the hegemonic position towards the end of World War II.

Traits of American hegemony

When it arose towards the end of World War II, the American hegemony, unlike the preceding British hegemony, had little interest in expanding American territorial colonial rule, but rather directly sought to integrate the whole world, hopefully undivided, as the single American market. Though characterized as free trade imperialism, Britain was nevertheless a colonial empire with the vast exclusive territorial colonial domains as the pillar of its global domination. The Dutch, French, Japanese and other colonial domains were constituted as mutually exclusive territories.

In contrast, the post-war US had little interest in carving out certain territories as its own except as strategic spots instrumental to its global domination. It was more interested in the whole world as a single unit from which to benefit. This characteristic was due to (1) the peculiar American understanding of the state as defined only by ever advancing frontiers (not demarcated by definite national borders agreed upon with the neighbouring countries); (2) the American mode of production (mass production) that produces

enormous quantities of goods that require mass consumption by multitudes of people beyond national markets; (3) the rising movement in imperialist colonies that made territorial imperialism obsolete and untenable; and (4) the American ideology that America had the mission to spread throughout the world its values of free market and freedom which it regarded as universal.

Formal and informal empire

The post-war US empire is a dual empire with both formal and informal aspects. It was designed as a formal empire when the United States' hegemonic position was institutionalized in the Bretton Woods system where the dollar was given the privileged position of the world's key currency. Besides, the United States was itself also constituted an empire within its territory, subjugating ethnic minorities of different historical origins.

But the US behaved and worked as an informal empire too, by exercising its control over the world as the strongest nation-state. In that status, the US carried out the Marshall Plan which was meant to revitalize capitalist growth in Europe, originally proposed to cover Eastern Europe too, and also introduced for the first time the idea of development aid for the third world, all purporting to expand the global market from which US business would benefit directly.

In this design, the independence of the colonies of imperialist powers, if pro-America and with doors open to America, would be more beneficial than their staying as

colonies since, once independent, each of them would be open to goods and investments from all other countries, of which the US would be the largest beneficiary. Politically, the US was determined not to allow any country to challenge its global hegemony in this sense, but was tolerant towards diversity insofar as it did not go against the US's hegemonic assumptions. Where the limits of tolerability lay was a delicate matter, but the United States was definitely not to accept any social revolution from below that would disrupt the rule of global capitalism.

Post-war failure of global empire and Cold War

The post-war ambition of the United States for a global empire was not fulfilled as the Kremlin rebuffed the Marshall Plan and began to carve out its own politico-ideological imperial sphere, while in Asia the Chinese revolution shattered the US dream of securing a vast capitalist China.

Instead of a single global empire, two empires thus emerged, confronting each other and dividing the world between them.

The Soviet Union, inheriting the Tsarist Russian empire, was in itself a formal empire and expanded as a semi-informal empire as it subjugated its East European client countries. In the late 1940s the Soviet empire made it clear that it would stand politically and militarily outside of the US empire.

The world was therefore divided territorially, politically and ideologically by the two antagonistic empires and thus the

Cold War set in. Unlike the previous era of competing imperialisms that divided the world into their respective territorial domains, the world came to be divided basically into the Free World and the Communist Camp.

The emergence of non-alignment as well as the later walkout of China from the Soviet empire, not only did not alter this bipolar structure but was a by-product of it.

Thus the Cold War began as a long period of crippled American hegemony, where the US exercised its power only over the two thirds of the world that was called "free world". But the essential characteristics of American hegemony already asserted themselves in this demi-empire period.

1. Power as economic empire: economic Americanism (free enterprise, mass production, mass consumption, American way of life) had its own momentum of expansion and extension, penetrating the other imperial domain, and after the 1970s it increasingly undermined its social and economic basis; a single global market under the US aegis prevented Stalin's two parallel world markets from emerging.

2. "Development" and development assistance as new imperial concepts: "development" (industrialization, modernization, GDP growth), as assumed goal for the expansion of the borderless global market (two "development decades", from ISI to EOI in Asia in the 1960s); neoliberal globalization in three stages - the hop (1970s, Second Development Decade, Green Revolution), skip (1980s, structural

adjustment programmes, Reaganomics), and the jump (1990s, World Trade Organization).

3. Formation of global power centres with the US as the built-in core and enforcer: networks and mechanisms of collaboration of formal and informal economic and political powers, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the multinational corporations, the leadership of the most industrialized countries (G-8), the World Trade Organization, and the Washington Consensus.

4. New usefulness of nation-states as the formal coercive authorities; many nation-states become agencies of the global power centre to impose the latter's decision on their own people.

5. Informal empire: military alliances, bases, wars - Korea (using the United Nations), Vietnam (by itself).

6. East/West as proxy representation of South/North: the real issues in each of the two empires were blamed on instigated subversion by the other empire - Vietnam and Nicaragua as products of Moscow, and Warsaw as a product of Washington - resulting in nuclear confrontation.

Anachronistic return to global empire

In this all-out confrontation, the US empire won. The Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s and the Cold War was ended.

With this, the United States made a historic return to the long dreamed-of position of full global hegemony, that is,

global empire. From then on, America has come to face the real problems of world society. As Communism was gone, it now had no alien body on which to blame the hot, knotty and very serious problems of the world. The choices were either tackle them seriously in order to resolve them or suppress them with violent responses.

The return to the position of global empire was anachronistic, however. If it had been in the 1940s, it would have been much easier for a global American empire to rule the world. But in the 50 years of its demi-empire, the world became utterly uncontrollable precisely because the dominant pattern of capitalist development (now dubbed neoliberal globalization), though it had won the battle over the statist "socialist" practices, had spread inequality and injustice all over the world and also generated entirely new problems that could prove fatal to the sustenance of human civilization.

US and the informal composite global centre of power

Neoliberal globalization had been promoted by, and also created in the process, an informal composite global power centre, consisting of Northern states, multinational corporations, private and intergovernmental financial interests. Major decisions determining the fates of millions of people are made by these bodies without any mandate from the people. The devastating effects of the utterly undemocratic nature of the world structure

began to be felt in the 1980s, widening the gap between the rich and the poor and destroying the environment (the debt crisis and the structural adjustment programmes). More importantly, people's resistance to this power centre emerged and began to grow in multiple forms in the same period.

The United States certainly has been, and is, the core of this whole process and its empire is there to protect this system of domination. But that does not mean that the US is going to police the world on the basis of a mandate from all the constituent members of the global power centre, let alone the people of the world. The US, without ceasing to be a nation-state, has appointed itself, within the global centre, the single privileged entity claiming to have the legitimate power to control the fates of other nation-states.

Peculiar difficulties of the post-Cold War empire

This claim became alarmingly evident in the form of unilateralism under the Bush administration after 9/11, particularly in the Bush doctrine of 2002 that declared the American right of pre-emptive war, and the Iraq war launched on the basis of that doctrine. This Bush neoconservative breakthrough of course is very important for its blatant attempt to make America's private decisions automatically the world's public decisions. The US holds in contempt international law, the United Nations Charter, the Hague and Geneva treaties and conventions. America is the law. And

America enforces the law with its nightmarishly colossal military machinery to spread freedom and free market.

However crucial the Bush-introduced stage, we should not miss the American imperial continuity from the end of World War II and in that perspective the state of the post-Cold War empire. It was not 9/11 that turned the United States into an empire. The basics of the current imperial strategy were already laid down clearly in the middle of the 1990s under the Clinton administration, especially in such a strategic concept as "full-spectrum dominance", presented in the Pentagon's document "Joint Vision 2000", and "Shape, Respond, Prepare" (cf. the 1997 "Quadrennial Defense Review" document) against asymmetrical enemies, including "uncertainty" (Joseph Nye). The post-Cold War empire finds itself in a peculiar situation characterized by the following.

1. The difficulty about the enemy to defeat. After Communism is gone, what is the enemy? Conveniently, 9/11 helped set terrorism as the alternative enemy, hence the war on terror. That served as a temporary rallying point for most countries (Afghan war) but lost validity in Iraq. When many countries coalesced at the call of Bush to attack Afghanistan, they already undermined international law and violated democratic and human rights norms domestically (Patriot Act and a series of anti-terrorist legislations). In this sense, it was a kind of coup d'état by the global power centre of the strong. But the Iraq invasion by the

US and its followers constituted another coup within the global power centre itself, causing serious rifts and conflicts within the centre. But the Bush government managed to get the *fait accompli* accepted by the mainstream international community.

2. It is by now clear that all have ended in failure as victory is undefinable and therefore unattainable. So, fake goals - democracy and free market - are introduced for a “long war”. “War” has now become a descriptive term of the existing global realities. In fact, what all this amounts to is the US will to place the global situation under its full control in the foreseeable future without changing the rules that make the world uncontrollable. This is an impossible task until and unless the basic neoliberal perspective is fundamentally reversed. But the “long war” - not a figurative war but a real war - is the only means the US can think of. This entails the militarization of all activities - political, social, and cultural.

3. The loss of the external. In the Cold War period, the US was countervailed by the Soviet military power. The two empires were symmetric in military terms, the Soviet Union serving as a humbling element relativizing the US as one of the contending parties. The Soviet military power, so to speak, was a measure to gauge the American military stature. Now this external measure is gone, and America only has to gauge its stature with its own. This means that there is no external factor to delimit America’s military build-up. The US gears its military directly to its cravings for an absolute and

single-handed control of the whole world where no American rivals are allowed to emerge.

Challenges and our alliances

We need to face this whole situation squarely. Here are some points:

We, as a social movement for justice and peace, face the full American empire for the first time and therefore we must set a clear historical perspective of overcoming it. We need to identify the nature of this task and take our position accordingly. By this I mean that we are not just to overcome the post-9/11 Bush mode of empire, but the regime of global capitalism that emerged in the form of American empire and was anachronistically completed after the end of the Cold War. This means that we are confronting not only the politico-military domination of the empire but also the so-called “neoliberal globalization” of economy, or the regime of creating and dominating a single global paradise of capital in the name of free enterprise, free trade and free market. Militarization and free enterprise are the two faces of the single empire.

This means that we need to help form broad alliances of the people to address the problem complex and bring about processes through various groups of people who are now divided and often set against one another so that they may interact with one another, acquire new shared visions and create their own order, and thus bring about alternative global governance and order to replace the empire that only perpetuates

chaos, disorder and wars. We may call this a people's charter-making process. There is a crude revival and spread of the "civilization versus evil" discourses, including racism, jingoism and various fundamentalisms. The alliances we envisage will require very serious efforts to overcome these discourses.

This process has been under way for some time already. The anti-neoliberal globalization movement since Seattle in

1999 and the antiwar movement that culminated before the Iraq war merged in the World Social Forum after 2003. The Zapatista movement of the indigenous people in Chiapas opened up an entirely new perspective about ways to undermine the globalization regime while Bolivarismo has caught the imagination of more and more people in South America.

But we are only at the beginning of this huge historic task.

Under the guise of the war on terror: empire in Asia

Carmencita P. Karagdag

According to Karagdag, “a worldwide paranoia cultivated by the military-industrial complex and its neocon allies in the Religious Right has opened up the ground for more intensified US militarism, interventionism and the project of re-colonization”. Under the guise of the war on terror, “an increasingly blatant American military, economic and political presence has been justified in practically all parts of the world, but especially in the oil-rich Middle East”. In Asia, it is in the military field that the reality of the empire is most clearly ascendant. A former Secretary for Education and Nurture of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Karagdag is the Coordinator of Peace for Life, a non-governmental agency in Quezon City, the Philippines.

Scanning the global environment and the signs of the times

Today we live in a world bedeviled by terrorism and fundamentalism. We speak here not only of Bush's state terrorism and Osama Bin Laden's deadly suicide bombings that have plunged the world into chaos and violence, but also of neoliberal terrorism that has brought unprecedented ruin to entire economies and God's creation. In a similar vein, we speak here not only of religious fundamentalism, both of the Christian and Islamic variety, that has fuelled and sanctified vicious imperial as well as counter-imperial wars, but also of market fundamentalism that has legitimized the boundless greed and mendacity of global capital.

Events since September 11 have seen the lone superpower flexing its muscles in every corner of the world, sowing terror, death and destruction in its wake, trampling human rights and the sovereign rights of nations with unprecedented impunity. This is not without cost to the coalition of the willing under the aegis of the lone superpower, which to date has lost more than 2,500 troops in occupied Iraq alone.

A worldwide paranoia cultivated by the military-industrial complex and its neocon allies in the Religious Right has opened up the ground for more intensified US militarism, interventionism and the project of re-colonization. Under the guise of the war on terror, an increasingly blatant American military, economic and political

presence has been justified in practically all parts of the world, but especially in the oil-rich Middle East.

True to form, the world's remaining superpower has arrogantly rejected multilateralism and flouted international law, the cornerstone of world peace and civilization since the establishment of the UN. It has launched pre-emptive strikes and wars without end or borders in order to effect regime change and ensure its control of the world's oil and other strategic resources. It has demonized nations, religious communities and national liberation movements which have dared move away from its hegemonic grasp, labelling them rogue states, members of the "axis of evil" and terrorists. It has unleashed its own jihad, with equal if not greater ferocity and capacity for death and destruction, against the new heathens of the world.

This terrifying chain of events is unfolding against the backdrop of an ever-deepening crisis engulfing the entire world, wrought by neoliberal globalization. The signs are all too familiar: unbearable poverty, widespread unemployment, pauperization of peasants, dislocation of indigenous peoples, outrageously high rates of infant mortality, violence against women, and swelling ranks of migrant workers. Economies face unprecedented devastation due to astronomical foreign debt, bankruptcies, loss of food sovereignty and demise of nascent national industries. Also ominous is the surrender of national sovereignty, erosion of social services and dismantling of the

social welfare system, fragmentation of communities, cultural homogenization, and the wholesale destruction of the life support system.

Indeed, the tragedy of September 11 has simply provided the superpower with the ideological weapon and quasi-religious justification to consolidate its control at home and abroad, resuscitate the military-industrial complex, and establish an unparalleled hegemonic rule with a global reach far exceeding that of past empires. Today's unrivalled global behemoth is much more powerful and totalizing, touching and distorting every realm of social and cosmic life. So encompassing and menacing is the reach of empire that Malaysian analyst Chandra Muzaffar describes US military might as aiming for "total spectrum dominance" and extending "from the depths of the ocean to the outer reaches of space".

While some analysts are wont to speak of empire today in less explicit terms, referring not to a single power but to a larger constellation of powers, the records and statistics speak for themselves. The US accounts for only 5% of the world's population, yet it generates nearly a quarter of the world's gross domestic product and owns nearly half of its financial wealth. It is home to the world's largest multinational corporations and enjoys virtual control of all three powerful financial institutions - World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization - whose lethal conditionalities and structural adjustment prescriptions are imposed on

the already enfeebled economies of the South. The superpower's formidable military strength is unparalleled in history, with its annual military budget of US\$400 billion being larger than that of the next nine militarily powerful countries put together, its military strength exceeding that of the next 14 military powers combined, and its 800 military bases and base rights spread across the globe.

The reality of empire in Asia

US political and military presence in Asia-Pacific has deepened in the past decade due to the aggressive drive for market integration and untrammelled expansion of capital, underscoring the inextricable nexus and symbiotic relationship between military expansionism and economic globalization. Asia has been under siege from corporate-driven globalization since the debt crisis of the 80s which strengthened the grip of transnational corporations and global financial institutions on the economies of the region. The Asian crisis of 1997 saw the much-touted Asian tigers unravelling under the pressure of unregulated speculative capital, tearing to shreds effusive claims of prosperity and poverty eradication peddled by the gurus of neoliberal globalization.

But it is in the military field where the empire is most clearly ascendant. Though it has never abandoned its geo-strategic interests in Asia, traditionally dubbed as the "American lake", the US had taken a relatively low-key presence in the region for

several years following its humiliation in Vietnam. This would change in the aftermath of September 11. The war on terror gave the Pentagon's military establishment a much-needed shot in the arm, providing it with the opportunity to reassert and enhance its military presence in the region.

Thus relics of the Cold War persist and are especially evident in Northeast Asia. Washington and the Pentagon have targeted North Korea as part of the "axis of evil", while at the same time renewing pressure on Seoul to support missile defence cooperation with the US. This has served to escalate the arms race and tensions in the already heavily nuclearized subregion. Plans are underway to build a new base in Henoko in Okinawa where sprawling US military facilities continue to be stationed. Under the empire's patronage, Japan has embarked on a project of remilitarization, deploying Self-Defence Forces to Afghanistan and Iraq in contravention of the "no war" provision of its constitution. Where foreign bases have been dismantled or where public opposition to overt military presence or deployment of foreign ground troops is strong, the Pentagon has resorted to secret bilateral and multiple access arrangements.

After lunging into Afghanistan in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, the superpower lost no time in opening the second front of the war on terror in Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines. This paved the ground for the re-entry of

American ground troops and special forces under the guise of joint military exercises in a country that once played host to its largest overseas military installations. Despite continuing public furore since 2002, thousands of foreign troops have since been deployed in different parts of the country, particularly in sensitive areas suspected to be strongholds of Muslim and communist rebels. All-out war against so-called terrorists has led to the bombardment and hamleting of entire villages, especially in Mindanao.

But the war on terror has of late taken a more sinister turn. A government blueprint of counter-insurgency, heavily funded by Washington and the Pentagon, envisages the systematic massacre of the legal or non-armed segments of the national liberation movement, including those perceived as leftists or communist sympathizers. This explains the escalation of human rights abuses and politically motivated killings that are now occurring with almost daily regularity. Priests, pastors and church workers have not been spared, with WARC member church United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) alone losing four pastors or 13 church workers altogether, slain with utmost impunity by paramilitary death squads let loose by a government bent on holding onto power amidst widespread allegations of massive electoral fraud.

Moreover, the Pentagon continues to rely on the Philippines as the linchpin of the US security framework in Asia-Pacific. Historically a staging ground for projecting US military power to the Pacific region, the

former American colony is considered particularly valuable in serving its former colonial master's policy of containment - a cold war vintage - vis-à-vis China, perceived as the main strategic rival of the global hegemon for suzerainty in the region. Also strategic is the country's proximity to long-standing flash points of conflict: the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan straits. And with strong Islamic nationalists firmly entrenched in other parts of Southeast and South Asia, the superpower needs a reliable and militarily equipped vassal, with an oil-rich Mindanao to boot, to secure its geopolitical interests. In return for its unabashed loyalty to the empire, the Philippines - now a full-fledged surrogate for implementing state terrorism - has become the world's fourth largest recipient of foreign military financing and Asia's biggest recipient of the International Military Exercise and Training Programme. US military assistance to the Philippines is said to have increased tenfold since the war on terror.

More aggressive reassertion of American military power in the Philippines, which gives the hegemon a strategic foothold in the rest of the region, has been justified by claims that Southeast and South Asian countries are providing refuge for Islamic extremists linked to Al Qaeda and the Indonesian-based Jemaah Islamiah. But not to be forgotten is the lure of strategic resources which abound in the region. Southeast Asia's oil and gas reserves have yet to be fully tapped and exploited. Indonesia alone accounts for 20% of the world's liquefied

natural gas exports. Nearly half of the world's trade, including oil supplies from the Middle East to the oil-dependent countries of East Asia, pass through the Strait of Malacca and Lombok. Chalking up a combined GNP of US\$700 billion, Southeast Asia is the fifth largest trading partner of the US.

The rise of religion as an ideological force

We are witness today to the phenomenal rise of religion as an ideological force, a phenomenon often associated with the emergence of revivalist and political Islam. This is best summed up by François Burquat, in his *Face to Face with Political Islam*, which asserts that Islamism is the “incarnation of an older Arab nationalism, clothed in imagery considered more indigenous”. He adds that Islamism, as “the language through which the Arab World articulates its opposition to the West, characterizes the wave of exorcism that is now sweeping across the former territories dominated by the West”. Islamic revivalism has roots in the failure of the secular elites installed in power after independence from colonial rule to get rid of age-old injustices and social inequalities. In his illuminating book, *Jihad, the Trail of Political Islam*, Gilles Keppel elaborates: “By promising to re-establish social justice on the model of the first state of Islam set up by the Prophet Mohammed in Medina, the Islamists held out a vision of utopia. They also gave expression to the populace’s visceral hostility toward regimes gnawed by corruption,

bankruptcy (both economic and moral), and authoritarianism.”

Also at the centre of Islamic radicalism are the subjugation of Muslim Palestine and the ensuing dispossession of the Palestinians as the Israeli expansionist drive has relentlessly escalated under imperial prodding and protection. To exacerbate the already volatile situation, the US went on a rampage following the assaults on the World Trade Center, killing tens of thousands of Muslims and blasting away essential infrastructures and priceless cultural relics in Afghanistan and Iraq. Specially galling to the Muslims is the long-standing US policy of propping up corrupt and abusive despots in the Gulf States. Saudi-born Osama Bin Laden cannot be more explicit, warning that the occupation of the “territory of the Two Holy Places”, in reference to the US bases in Saudi Arabia, justified a defensive jihad, similar to the one aimed at the Soviet Union after its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. In the article, “The Geopolitics of War”, author Michael Klare puts the blame squarely on US policy in the Persian Gulf, particularly its overt and covert operations to guarantee the continued grip on power of the increasingly isolated Saudi Arabian royalty, in exchange for unimpeded access to the world’s largest petroleum reserves, “the single most valuable geopolitical prize in the world”.

But aggravating this situation and further pushing most Muslims to desperation is Western-driven globalization which has not only deepened poverty and imposed a

monoculture repugnant to Islamic religiosity, but has also uprooted whole communities from their traditional moorings. All this has generated growing disenchantment and spiritual alienation, prompting people to search for an authentic alternative often supplied by religious utopia. Stephen Zunes, in his article, "US Policy Toward Political Islam", published in the journal *Foreign Policy in Focus*, makes the following case: "When a people have lost their identity - whether it be due to foreign occupation, war-induced relocation, the collapse of traditional economies or other reasons - there is a great pull to embrace something that can provide a structure, worldview and purpose through which to rebuild their lives."

The whole issue of religious revivalism has assumed even greater significance in our era of terrorism and war on terror. In the striving for religion and in the assertion of people's cultural identity in the face of a globalizing and homogenizing Western culture, exclusionary and sectarian communal attitudes have often prevailed, with all the potential for deadly sectarian conflicts and fratricidal war. The US's obsession with radical Islam and its terrorist fringe is understandable. It knows only too well that given its unchallengeable military superiority, any serious threat to its security can only come from highly motivated opponents employing thoroughly unconventional, if hideous, methods of attacks.

Yet behind the Bush war on terror is

the new dominant force in American geopolitics, the Christian Right and their neocon allies who are known to have instigated the invasion of Afghanistan and then Iraq, both allegedly giving sanctuary to terrorists and enemies of Israel. This is grounded in the religious belief - of indubitably fundamentalist mould - that Israel's enemies will need to be vanquished in order to pave the way for Israel's glorious triumph before the return of the long-awaited Messiah. Together with Zionists, they have lobbied for aggressive policies intended to drive away Palestinians from their homeland and establish a "Greater Israel" in territories they consider biblical lands. For his part, Bush, himself a quintessential representative of the Christian Right, has mastered the art of using religious rhetoric and symbols to legitimize the project of empire.

Indeed religion today has become a major force for justifying competing socio-political and economic agendas. Political groups on both sides of the Christian and Muslim divide have claimed inspiration or authority from religion or religious texts, casting their political demands and striving for power in religious language and metaphors. But also dangerous is their appropriation of texts in a highly selective fashion which are then propagated as absolute truths and inerrant doctrines. It is in this sense that the US war on terror has become itself a religious war, a modern-day crusade that targets its

enemies as devil incarnates against whom divine fury, fused with imperial military might, must be mercilessly unleashed.

Conclusion: responding to the signs of times

The theme of our consultation “Theological Analysis and Action on Global Empire Today” harkens us back to ancient biblical times. Then an incipient religious movement in the aftermath of Christ’s crucifixion, Christianity had begun to take roots in scattered communities. The faithful would soon draw the ire of powers and principalities for repudiating Baalite idolatry and rejecting socio-political and economic paradigms that feed on oppression and exclusion. But imperial Rome in this period had already started on the path of strategic decline, besieged as it was by nationalist struggles in its colonies and threatened by barbarians from the northern lands of occupied Europe. Widespread protests had erupted in the occupied territories over Rome’s agricultural policy prohibiting grape growing, curtailing the production of vegetable oil, and restricting the cultivation of wheat meant to protect the profit margins of Roman wine makers, oil and wheat dealers, and landed patricians. A few centuries later, imperial Rome would adopt Christianity as its official religion, beginning the process of building Christendom alongside *Pax Romana* in hopes of averting the further waning of imperial power.

Like today it was a time of grave crisis and great opportunity. It was and is now

kairos, that singular moment when Christians are impelled by their very faith to respond with firm resolve, courage and conviction.

Like today’s Philippines where death squads have been let loose to butcher the defenceless and where extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, torture and mayhem go not only unpunished but rewarded by the empire, repression and persecution of martyrs and prophets was the order of the day. Like today when oil and other strategic resources are wantonly pillaged to feed the insatiable lust of global capital, precious resources in biblical times were siphoned from distant lands and shipped to the imperial capital by the merchant fleets of the world. Like today when globalization has become outrightly militarized, unleashing wars on terror and wars of plunder and occupation, peace in classical imperial times was but a brief interlude in the never-ending cycle of wars.

Yet in the midst of so much suffering and pain, we discern unmistakable signs of hope, strengthening our faith that the God of justice and liberation has not abandoned the poor and the oppressed, the underside of history. We are sustained by the conviction that with resistance to global hegemony reaching new, unprecedented heights in many parts of the world, the present empire - like past empires - will not last.

We are empowered by the courage and heroism of resistance fighters in Iraq and Afghanistan who are in the forefront of the global struggle against empire. We have

witnessed the massing of millions, if not tens of millions, in peaceful protests against the invasion and occupation of Iraq in the very belly of the beast and in the major capitals of Europe. We draw inspiration from the new wave of economic nationalism sweeping Latin America that has brought to power mass-based political parties and leaders like Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales, giving voice to the once disempowered workers, peasants and indigenous peoples. We are emboldened by the prospect of peace and a radically transformed society in the tiny nation of Nepal after the people's movement, led by Maoist rebels in alliance with seven parliamentary parties, dismantled empire-backed monarchical despotism not too long ago. We draw courage from the militancy and creativity of throngs of Korean farmers who converged in Hong Kong in December last year to defy the WTO, even as we laud the massive demonstrations that have invariably accompanied WTO meetings and scuttled previous rounds of trade liberalization since Seattle. We are pained, yet inspired, by the martyrdom of many activists in the Philippines - among them our very own priests, pastors and church workers - who, by taking up the cause of the poor, dared to live on the edge of, if not outside, empire.

Finally in this age of religious revivalism amidst globalization and the war on terror, progressive Christians and Muslims are called to address our common victimization

and draw on our common spiritual heritage to create life-enhancing alternatives and pave the way for the New Jerusalem. We are beckoned to harness and mobilize our vast and largely untapped spiritual, theological and other religious resources for radical transformative action directed against the death-dealing forces of empire. Indeed, faith communities are challenged as never before to build and strengthen interfaith solidarity as well as alliances with social movements and people's organizations to transform the world and make all things new.

Let me end by quoting from the Covenant of Self-Understanding and Purpose issued by Peace for Life, a new solidarity network of peace advocates rooted in faith communities and social movements who are engaged in various forms of resistance to empire: "With a global war that is being fought militarily, politically, economically and culturally with the support of the American Religious Right, a faith-based resistance particularly directed against imperialist machinations becomes critical and urgent. The fundamental ethical values of justice, equality, human dignity, human rights and integrity of creation represent an essential resource in peace-building and one that plays a specific role in the global anti-imperial front. It is incumbent upon faith communities to harness this resource, targeting US empire building as the single, most formidable force today that impedes the realization of these values."

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Asian initiatives towards a new vision of a community of life

Sister Mary John Mananzan, OSB

This article describes the formation of an interfaith community that confronts empire in Asia, a continent that has suffered for centuries from the colonization of most of its people. Asia is characterized by a religious, cultural and linguistic plurality which colours its resistance to empire. The struggle against empire is expressed in national liberation movements and in micro-alternatives that are launched by multi-sector groups such as women's groups, consumer protection groups, environmental groups, church communities and schools. Sister Mary John Mananzan is the present Prioress of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of the Philippines. She served for eighteen years as National Chairperson of the biggest coalition of women's organizations in the Philippines - GABRIELA. She was co-founder and Secretary General of the Citizens' Alliance for Consumer Protection. She served for six years as the General Secretary of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and for six years as President of St. Scholastica's College, Manila, the Philippines.

The theological womb from which I make this reflection is the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) which, ever since its general assembly in Nairobi in 1992, began focusing its attention on the empire under different themes such as: In Search of a New Economic Order, Globalization, Weaving the Threads of Hope, right up to the latest Asian Theological Conference in Sri Lanka entitled "Interfaith Praxis in the Face of Globalization".

The Asian context

Envisioning a new ecumenical community of life in Asia necessitates an

understanding of the main characteristics of the Asian situation.

According to Aloysius Pieris, Asia is characterized by the realities of overwhelming poverty and manifold religiousness. These, according to him, "constitute in their interpenetration what might be designated as the Asian context, the matrix of theology in Asia".¹

Poverty in Asia Although poverty in Asia cannot be reduced to purely economic categories, it is nonetheless very economic. It is a poverty that is rooted in injustice: the very inequitable distribution of resources from within and exploitation from without.

First of all, the history of most of the Asian nations is a history of foreign domination. The coming of colonizers disrupted the development of the countries' economic, political and sociocultural systems and created a local elite that continued the exploitation of the people after they had left. For the most part, new values and new concepts were introduced which caused cultural alienation.

In a wave of resistance movements Asian countries fought for and won their political independence, but although no longer directly ruled by colonizing powers they came under some form of neo-colonialism. After the victory of Vietnam, the communist threat led the economic powers to develop what Kitazawa Yoko calls "development dictatorship".² This is a development from above and from outside and maintained by military governments aimed at eradicating poverty in order to maintain domestic order. Japan was able to achieve high economic growth by shifting its industrial sectors to Asia. Newly industrialized countries also emerged: Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea. But even for these latter, only the elite actually benefited from the economic progress. The other Asian countries accumulated foreign debts which have caused inflation, deficits and a chronic economic crisis, thus leading to an exodus of migrant workers from their homes.

In order to maintain economic order, many Asian governments have resorted to dictatorial rule and militarism. There is a

great deal of human rights violations, and political corruption is rampant.

The prevailing phenomenon in Asia today is globalization. This has given benefits to the elite in some countries, but it has actually widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Farmers have been dispersed due to land conversion, workers have lost their work security because of flexibilization of labour, indigenous peoples have been robbed of their ancestral lands. More women and children have become victims of sex trafficking, and migration to first world countries has intensified in the last decade. The so-called blessing of global technology and communication has brought not only foreign goods into the different countries but trends, values, practices and vices that threaten their cultures.

The religio-cultural reality of Asia I will draw heavily from Aloysius Pieris's characterization of this aspect of Asian reality. According to him the three distinctive features of this religio-cultural dimension of Asia are: a) linguistic heterogeneity, b) the integration of the cosmic and metacosmic elements into Asian religions and c) the overwhelming presence of non-Christian soteriologies.³

Language is a way of experiencing reality and the linguistic heterogeneity in Asia shows the many different ways of perceiving this. It is an index of cultural, religious and sociopolitical diversity. The tragic thing is that, unlike in other continents, Asians can only understand each other in a non-Asian language - English. This has theological and

missiological implications.

According to Pieris,⁴ “the institutional framework within which Asian religion operates is composed of two complementary elements: a cosmic religion functioning as the foundation, and a metacosmic soteriology constituting the main edifice”. By cosmic religion, he means the religion of the people found in Africa, Asia and Oceania, which colonizers would call “animism”. In the cultures of these continents, a distinctive form of religiosity develops around the mysterious forces of the universe and of life.

These forces merge into the world of invisible powers which appear in various guises in various regions: *devas* in indianized cultures, *Nats* in Burma; *Phis* in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, *Bons* in Tibet; *Kamis* in Japan; and *Anitos* in the Philippines. In most places this religiosity included the worship of ancestors and the worshipful awe of nature expressed in rites and rituals and a class of mediators like the shamans or the *babaylans*. These have mostly been assimilated into the metacosmic soteriologies - Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. In places like the Philippines, where this cosmic religion was not integrated into a metacosmic religion, it was easier for the Spanish colonizers to convert the people to Christianity.

Envisioning a new interfaith community of life in Asia

To confront the empire in Asia, one cannot confine oneself to an ecumenical

community. Because of the religious pluralism in this continent, an inclusive community has to be interfaith, which not only means the world religions but also the numerous indigenous religions in the area.

This community is involved in and supports varied forms of resistance: from liberation movements to peoples’ organizations to local and global civil society. Even if it has for itself made an option of non-violence, it respects those groups who feel they have no other alternative. In fact, in the Philippines one has to admit that it is still the left-wing liberation movement that remains a great deterrent to the abuse of the military, especially in the countryside. It is the one with the widest and most organized constituency among the masses and is indefatigable in its advocacy of national issues such as extrajudicial killings, oil price hike, visiting forces agreement, mining and logging, demolition of the urban poor, etc. It is also its members who are the focus of the extrajudicial killings of the military with 690 reported and unreported cases since 2001, 71 of which are women.

This community engages in an interfaith theology of struggle which takes as its starting point the ongoing struggle of the poor - workers, peasants, urban poor, women and indigenous peoples - for justice, for the defence of their rights and for a better quality of life. From a primary focus on economic and political struggles, it has now included gender, ecological and ethnic issues and is being enriched by the

many insights gained by theologizing from this holistic perspective.

Signs of hope – concrete sectoral initiatives

Teilhard de Chardin had a theory which is very helpful in our present situation. He said that there are radial and tangential energies. Radial energies are those that are at work silently and continuously building up to a critical mass which, when triggered by a tangential energy, can make a quantum leap to a qualitatively new stage.

I believe that there are many groups today in Asia that are slowly but surely building up this critical mass in their micro-alternative projects in order to confront the negative effects of globalization. There are many little Davids that are preparing to hurl their stones at the Goliath empire.

In his article “God or Mammon: Economies in Conflict” (1996) Ulrich Duchrow advocates micro-alternatives. He writes:

Every person, household, neighbourhood, group of friends, congregation, church, mission and charity organization, etc. has a certain freedom, a niche, to introduce life-serving financial and economic micro-alternatives. To make it quite clear from the beginning: small-scale alternatives are not the whole solution but a start, the humus, signs of the new vision. Yet as such they are highly important to break the taboo of the idolized system paralysing the people by saying that there is no alternative.⁵

Let me give some examples, mostly from the Philippines.

Women’s groups A women’s organization SAMAKANA, belonging to GABRIELA, has set up alternative daycare centres and primary health care centres in poor urban communities. Small credit projects have been initiated which give moderate loans to vendors. Small trading projects (buy and sell) run by women’s unions have been established. A poor urban community in Iloilo has set up a successful business of banana cues⁶ which they are exporting to Switzerland. Because of the high cost of medicine, women have resorted to alternative healing. There has been a return to traditional herbal medicines. Many herbal gardens have sprung up in the country and groups of women are engaged in selling herbal medicines and biodegradable soap; some are engaged in acupuncture, acupressure, reflexology, crystal healing and panic healing.

The Peasant Women’s Organization, AMIHAN, undertook a land occupation project in Mindoro where they planted on land that had not been in use for 20 years. They were able to sustain this for several years until the landlord and the military put a stop to the project. Such attempts are being made in many other parts of the Philippines with greater or lesser success.

Another women’s project was the alternative marketing initiated by the Okitama Women’s Network in Japan with organic banana growers in Negros,

Philippines. The project was assessed as follows:

These Japanese consumers are consciously paying for both healthy bananas and a healthier community in Negros. Alternative marketing CAN work with consciousness-raising efforts towards both producers and consumers. It provides an opportunity to grow, eat and create together. Alternative markets like this create people-to-people trade that can replace the present system which is having detrimental effects upon communities - both farmers and consumers. This is just one idea of how to work to change the system, beginning at the grassroots level. This example is a small effort, but if everybody in the world starts this way - small - we can build many networks of alternative marketing WITH and FOR people and their communities.⁷

Consumer protection Consumers are most vulnerable to globalization propaganda. For example, to promote import liberalization, consumers are told: You should promote import liberalization, because this will ensure your having many products from which to choose, and because of the competition you will get things more cheaply. Consumers who are short-sighted fall for this seductive promise. However consumers who are socially aware argue that, on a short-term basis, this is true but in the long run import liberalization will kill local industry and will make people depend on foreign goods for their basic necessities. This will not insure sustainable consumption. This is very crucial, especially

in the area of food security. And although all are consumers, women as consumers are the more affected because in our present family set-up women not only buy for themselves but for the whole household. This is the reason why women take an active part in consumer protection.

In the Philippines, women constitute the majority of the members of the Citizens' Alliance for Consumer Protection, which is one of the civil society organizations that monitors the effects of globalization on the Filipino people. Lately this has been reorganized and has changed its name to: Citizens' Alliance for Consumer Power. It has made consistent educational efforts to enlighten the citizens about such topics as food security and food availability, the rice crisis, energy crisis, water crisis, but most importantly it has disabused the minds of the people about the seductive promises of import liberalization regarding choice and cheaper prices of products. It has launched campaigns against oil price hikes, smoking, junk foods, banned drugs, baby food advertising. It has mobilized other consumer groups in the country around these issues. Together with other NGOs in the Philippines it has joined nationwide general strikes that have succeeded in winning a rollback of oil prices or of a restraining order from the Supreme Court against oil price hikes.

An example of a successful action by women consumers was with respect to their electric bills. One of the conditions of the Structural Adjustment Fund is the removal of government subsidies for basic services

such as electricity. Already suffering from the rise of their electric bills, women consumers noticed that this was aggravated by anomalies in the billing. So about a hundred women resolved to monitor their electric bills for a year and to pinpoint unexplained increases. They prepared a well-documented presentation of their case using an overhead projector and made an appointment with the president of the Manila Electric Company (Meralco). They won their case.

The Pacific Island Women's Consumer Education Resource Book, *Behind our Smiles*, likewise documents an alternative action to solve the growing dependence of the islanders on imported food, which was regarded as "the single, most dramatic consumer problem identified in the Pacific Islands".⁸ The project is called the supsup garden and is described as follows:

A creative solution to the complex problem of dependence on imported food is the supsup garden. Supsup is pidgin English for soup. The recipe is simple: boil up any vegetables available with what fish or meat you have on hand and you have a nutritious and tasty meal. The key is to cultivate your own garden.⁹

Several supsup gardens have been established in Honiara, Solomon Islands. These gardens use mixed cropping, recycling of waste, composting and natural pest control methods. No pesticides or chemical fertilizers are used. In the centre of each garden a kitchen is constructed where the soup is cooked. Many groups visit the gardens

to learn how to start their own. The writers of the Resource Book evaluate the supsup garden project thus:

The supsup garden provides a simple, effective and practical solution to the problems of poor nutrition and dependence on imported foods. In place of canned fish, rice and salted beef people are encouraged to eat more fruit and vegetables. People can be taught to establish small gardens in difficult environments such as on coral atolls, where "gardens in a bucket" using old tins or tyre casings are grown. The supsup garden is an important means of ensuring that nobody starves in Paradise.¹⁰

Sustainable agriculture One of the more successful alternative projects engaged in by an increasing number of groups is the cultivation of small, sustainable biodiverse farms. At present, globalization has reduced land areas for food cultivation by turning them into golf courses, real estate or commercial complexes. And those that are cultivated are used for monoculture cash crops using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Farmers who till this land never rise from their poverty and indebted existence. A visit to one of the alternative, biodiverse farms gives hope to the possibility of families becoming self-sustaining.

The farm we visited is a three and a half hectare plot of land in a *barrio* in Bayambang in the province of Pangasinan, Northern Luzon. It is cultivated by a family and is named Geo-farm. Five years ago this land was a flat rice field with hardly any

trees. Now it is full of trees and contains varied plants. The objectives listed in its brochure include:

- Natural food production - The farm applies the biodynamic concept and organic approach featuring home gardening, agroforestry, agroecology and permanent culture.

- Alternative/renewable energy - The farm runs with alternative power from biogas, solar and wind energy.

- Total waste management - Human, animal and plant waste are transformed into biogas that runs the kitchen's refrigerator and some lights.

- No pollution - On the farm there is no air pollution, no water pollution, no soil pollution, no social, cultural or technological pollution.

- Promotion of health and wellbeing - Through the use of herbal plants, organic food, clean air and good relations, people living on the farm live in a healthy manner and in harmony with nature.

- Combating of malnutrition - The farm has a spirulina culture, which is an algae that has complete food nutrients in the proper proportion and can be the answer to malnourishment and an undernourished population.

- Technology transfer - The farm provides seminars in which it shares the vision and the practice and skills of sustainable biodiverse farming.

Since its beginnings in 1992, the farm has been visited by hundreds of groups and thousands of people both from the

Philippines and abroad. All who take the seminars are converted to healthy, nutritious food and some have even started their own biodiverse farms. They have seen for themselves that the family has developed from food security to poverty alleviation and then to 80% sustainability. It provides a possibility as a "termite strategy" to gradually undermine the false claims of globalization with regard to the provision of basic necessities.

The school as agent of social transformation When people today speak of civil society as a force to confront globalization, they do not usually include schools and yet schools, when properly oriented, can be one of the most effective agents of change. I give as an example, St. Scholastica's College, a school for women run by an all-woman administration in Manila. It has 6,500 students and three departments: grade school, high school and college. German Benedictine nuns founded it in 1906. It soon became an elite school that educated the daughters of prominent Filipino families. In 1975, confronted with poverty, injustice and oppression under martial law, the school launched a re-orientation of its vision towards education for justice. It revised its curriculum, its methodology and its policies according to this vision. In 1985, it added the gender perspective, not only mainstreaming women's studies in its curriculum, but likewise establishing an Institute of Women's Studies that gives alternative courses for women and publishes women's books. Its

social orientation has also adopted an ecological approach, establishing an Institutional Project Team for Environmental Concerns (IPTEC) in order to ensure the continued awareness and practice of environmental conservation by the academic community.

In 1997, in the annual orientation talk of the college president, she announced the special study focus of the whole academic community, namely: globalization and its impact on the Filipino people. This topic was incorporated in the syllabi of the faculty as well as in the co- and extracurricular activities of the different departments and became the topic of convocations, symposia and fora.

An example of an institutional activity was the health food campaign. A Health Food Committee initiated a series of lectures for all sectors: teachers, staff, maintenance, students, parents and canteen concessionaires. By the end of the campaign, healthy food preparation became the policy of the canteen concessionaires and all junk foods and soft drinks were removed from the school canteen.

The Institute of Women's Studies acquired a 1.2 hectare lot which was developed into a biodiverse farm and became the home of the Women and Ecology Wholeness Centre. It features, besides sustainable and organic farming, holistic healing and ecofeminist spirituality. It is now a seminar house that provides seminars on ecofeminism, creation-centred spirituality, etc. It grows organic vegetables,

has a butterfly sanctuary and makes use of alternative sources of energy like a biogas digester and solar lighting. Its cuisine provides only healthy foods and has banned junk foods and soft drinks on its premises. It dreams of opening a garden café that will provide healthy snacks and alternative entertainment such as indigenous music and dances. In its own little way this could be an alternative to the globalized Coke and McDonald's culture.

The college students have been significantly involved in the struggle of Hacienda Looc, an area of 8,650 hectares of beautiful land in Nasugbu, Batangas, home of 10,000 farmers. The gist of the problem is:

Ten thousand peasant families are about to be displaced from their land and their rights as land reform beneficiaries forfeited as Fil-Estate Harbor Town transforms their nature-endowed coastal villages into an exclusive playground for the rich. When completed, Harbor Town will include four golf courses, a five-star hotel, beach resorts, a marina for yacht anchorage and neighbourhoods of luxurious homes.

Tension has begun to grip this once placid farming and fishing community, Fil-Estate's security guards have already killed two members of the local peasant organization. Of late, military troops came into the area under the guise of conducting training but this is believed by the local population to be another attempt by Fil-Estate to sow terror and fear among them.¹¹

The involvement of the students at St. Scholastica's College began when four students majoring in social development

through community organizing carried out their required practicum in Hacienda Looc. They made a study of the situation. They lived with the farmers for a year and in the many meetings they had with them, these resolved to fight Fil-Estate. They staged pickets and rallies both in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Fil-Estate offices in Manila. They called for a press conference and the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* assigned a special reporter to cover the whole process. When Fil-Estate started bulldozing the place, human barricades were set up. When Fil-Estate cut down a tree, the women of the community went to the place and celebrated a ritual of atonement. Two of the students who have graduated continue to work in the area as volunteers of the school's Work-a-Year Programme. Due to the people's vigilance, as of this writing Fil-Estate has not been able to continue with its "development" project in this area.

Conclusion

Globalization continues to seduce the governments of developing countries to integrate it into their fold. Meanwhile, the great majority of the people of many countries, both in developed and developing, are suffering from its ill effects. This should provide a more solid basis of international solidarity, since First World people are no longer just commiserating with the miseries of the Third World people, but are somehow experiencing the same negative effects of globalization, even if not to the same degree. There is no blueprint for an alternative to globalization. The different efforts, different forms of resistance, and initiatives to provide alternative systems such as the ones described in this paper must be encouraged, shared and coordinated in some way. Out of these radial energies a tangential energy could make a quantum leap to something qualitatively new and bring about a fundamental societal transformation.

Notes

- ¹ Aloysius S. J. Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, New York, Orbis Books, 1988, p.69.
- ² Kitazawa Yoko, "Geopolitics in Asia", in *Proceedings*, CCA-URM Committee Meeting, Hong Kong, CCA, 1995, p.39.
- ³ Aloysius Pieris, op. cit., p.70.
- ⁴ For what follows in this paragraph see Pieris, op. cit.
- ⁵ Ulrich Duchrow, "God or Mammon: Economies in Conflict", in *Mission Studies*, 13(1-2), 1996, p.70.
- ⁶ Banana cue is saba (cooking banana, similar to plantains) rolled in brown sugar and then deep fried.
- ⁷ From the report of a rural women's workshop sponsored by ISIS, Manila, in Rome in 1996, p.1.
- ⁸ *Behind our Smiles*, Pacific Island Women's Consumer Education Resource Book, New Zealand, South Pacific Consumer Protection Program, 1994, p.17.
- ⁹ Op. cit., p.16.
- ¹⁰ Op. cit., p.17.
- ¹¹ From an unpublished loose-leaf Situationer on Hacienda Looc, no author.

A new ecumenical vision for a community of life in Africa

James Buys

The process of economic globalization as promoted by the neoliberal ideology of the free market economy creates profound inequality, poverty and ecological destruction. It is promoted and defended by economic, cultural, political and military power constituted as a system of domination led by powerful nations called "empire". By defining a new vision of community of life in justice and peace one seeks to present an alternative to the neoliberal project. Visioning, however, is not the sole prerogative of the Christian community. Visioning happens in a multicultural, multidimensional and interdisciplinary framework. The Christian contribution to the new vision emanates from its confession of God and how its encounter with God informs its vision. Justice, community and peace emerge as indispensable values that determine the scope of a Christian vision. Rev. Buys is the former moderator of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa.

What is a new vision of the community of life in justice and peace? An ecumenical alternative vision should be spelled out here.

This article is structured in the following way: It defines the scope, looks at globalization from an African perspective, presents perspectives on a new vision, reflects on ecumenical thinking, defines the Christian values informing the vision and describes a vision with special reference to extracts from the collective visioning collated by the Workgroup on Solidarity Socio-Economy (WSSE).

It attempts to bring together thinking within the ecumenical movement and, *inter alia*, the collective visioning about an

alternative economy. Within the framework of the WSSE this alternative model is called Solidarity Socio-Economy (SSE). Methodologically, my approach to this section will be descriptive and analytical without necessarily attempting to research or indicate the integration of theological/ecumenical analysis and values within this model. Furthermore, the paper does not in any way attempt to systematize the framework given to the collective vision.

Within the literature reviewed nothing substantial has been found with regard to military power in a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests and the way in

which the collective vision of solidarity socio-economy comprehensively addresses this issue.

Despite the specific assignment for this section, this paper does not deal explicitly with a subsection on ecumenical response in the context of the whole movement for the new vision but has integrated the dimensions of such a response within the body of thinking.

Scope

The scope of visioning in this essay relates mainly to a framework linked to critical thinking and the analysis of the nature of neoliberal economic globalization, international trade, transnational corporations, international finance, labour, the market and the convergence of economic, cultural, political and military power in a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests.

A variety of titles are used to define a new vision of alternative economics such as alternative global economy, global justice, globalance, human economy, social economy, solidarity economy, solidarity socio-economy, popular economy, proximity economy, etc. In attempting to make a contribution to the debate of a new vision, I will not endeavour to give a title to such a vision in recognition of the ecumenical (defined in its broadest terms as referring to all who contribute to this vision) contributions to the process of visioning. It is premised on the principle that “another

economy is possible, in which the dwellers of the house become once again the ultimate goal of the building of the house and its management is shared among all dwellers” (WSES 2003, 1).

Globalization and the African context

Creation today faces a global crisis of life related to the neoliberal deregulation of the capitalist market at all levels and driven by an unbridled lust for money and control (Faith Stance 2003). Globalization is understood to refer to the emergence of worldwide markets, the increasing internationalization of trade and of the financial, goods and services markets as well as the international interlinking of national economies. It is built on a paradigm that creates profound inequality, poverty and ecological degradation. Furthermore, the emphasis on deregulation and classical growth doctrine leads to social exclusion to the detriment of sustaining the earth and its communities.

This ideology has as a core belief that

1. competition, consumerism and the unlimited accumulation of wealth are best for the whole world.
2. the capitalist market is built on the principle of private property without any social obligation, as well as contract as the only legal basis.
3. the practice of liberalizing and deregulating the market, privatization, openness to foreign investment and imports, the unrestricted movement of capital and

lower taxes will achieve common wealth.

The Accra Confession aptly speaks to this issue in the following way: “This crisis is directly related to the development of neoliberal economic globalization, which is based on the following beliefs:

- unrestrained competition, consumerism, and the unlimited economic growth and accumulation of wealth is the best for the whole world;

- the ownership of private property has no social obligation;

- capital speculation, liberalization and deregulation of the market, privatization of public utilities and national resources, unrestricted access for foreign investments and imports, lower taxes, and the unrestricted movement of capital will achieve wealth for all;

- social obligations, protection of the poor and the weak, trade unions, and relationships between people, are subordinate to the processes of economic growth and capital accumulation” (*Reformed World*, 2005, 186-187).

One would have expected that the decolonization of Africa, of which the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa is the most recent example, would have brought significant changes to the African economic context. Africa’s colonial history “is and always will be a major factor in the socioeconomic development of Africa” (Damon 2004, 1). Tsele rightly sums up the effects of neoliberal economic globalization by stating that it “has achieved what colonization attempted but failed to realize:

the total control of economic resources and powers of developing countries...” (ESSET 2002, 117). He goes on to say that “[i]n reality, globalization as espoused under free movement of capital is about the naked drive for profits for transnational corporations” (Ibid., 117), and states that it “leaves behind it human casualties and devastated communities” (Ibid., 118).

The socioeconomic condition of Africa cannot be ascribed solely to problems from the inside, such as corruption, mismanagement, violent conflict, and the spread of deadly yet preventable diseases, exacerbating the issue of poverty. General agreement exists as to the correlation between, among others, the African economic situation and neoliberal economic globalization.

Neoliberal economic globalization primarily impacts on the economies of the African continent in the following areas:

- Trade policy with the liberalization of trade through removal of import quotas and other quantitative restrictions, reduction and dispersion of tariffs, compensatory devaluation of the national currency and removal or reduction of export taxes.

- Exchange control - liberalizing exchange control policies that results in speculative rather than productive investment.

- Fiscal policy - reducing fiscal deficits at the expense of social spending and the promotion of privatization of services as a national feature of structural adjustment programmes.

- Drawing of nation-states into the sphere of influence and domination thus relegating them to the status of serfdom in this global market space.

Africa's debt burden has increased due to compounding interest, devaluation of national currencies, and the economic instability in lending countries. Despite Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, Africa is held captive to its debt burden. The introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) in the 1980s has seen the altering of national economic planning in favour of the neoliberal agenda. This has led to the implementation of fiscal policies with limitation of budget deficits at the expense of social expenditure, cuts in employment, abolishment of food and agricultural subsidies and the privatization of state enterprises. Loans and foreign direct aid are often directly linked to the liberalization of trade and abolishment of surtax in line with the policies of the WB and its allies at the expense of national industries and labour.

In 2002 Africa's foreign debt amounted to US\$300 billion and in 1994 that of Sub-Saharan Africa was US\$21 billion. It was calculated in 1999 that 41 African countries pay an average of 18% of their revenue to service their debt (Damon 2004, 1). About 340 million people or about half the population of Africa, and in South Africa more than half the population, live on less than US\$1 per day. In Zambia 80% of the

population is poor and in Tanzania, one of the poorest countries in Africa, a third of the population live below the basic needs poverty line.

Africa has become poorer in the last four decades. One in four of the people in this region cannot afford basic shelters or the minimum food requirements for an active and productive life. Our governments spend millions of dollars annually to service debts which have not benefited us. Public goods such as water, health care and transportation are privatized, making them even less affordable. Peace and security are in decline, while preventable diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS are spreading out of control (AACC 2005).

A critical analysis of South Africa's macroeconomic policy reflects the relationship between these policies and the role, prescription and dictates of rich industrialized G-8 governments, the Bretton Woods institutions and transnational corporations. South Africa "has embarked on a very aggressive liberalization exercise that goes beyond the requirements of the World Trade Organization (WTO)" (ESSET 2002, 79). Mbekeani states that this is a major cause for concern, especially as the assumption of benefits to the South African economy is unrealistic with respect to industrial production and export base and capacity (Ibid., 81).

The African response to the crisis of globalization on the continent is embodied in the formation of the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's

Development (NEPAD). NEPAD is aimed at addressing the socioeconomic development of the continent. The biggest critique of NEPAD is based on the fact of it working within the framework of neoliberal globalization in the belief that integration into the global economy will lead to growth and development.

The Accra Confession defines “empire” as “the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests” (*Reformed World*, 2005, 187). The empire is pertinent to any analysis of the African context in general and the South African one in particular. South Africa is the biggest investor in the continent and the nature of this investment within the framework of neoliberal globalization raises the question of South Africa as a sub-imperial or an empire vassal state.

Need for vision

Two primary principles necessitate seeking a new vision of the community of life in justice and peace, namely the analysis of the crisis of life and the faith implications of this crisis of life.

A difference of opinion exists within the ecumenical movement with regard to the analysis of the crisis of life and its faith implications. Opposing viewpoints are often determined, among others, by two factors: the “credo of believers in neoliberal ideology” (WCC 2001, 20) that there are no alternatives; and the way in

which a viewpoint is influenced by a context which profits or suffers from the crisis of life. “The experience of the victims of economic injustice and ecological destruction leads to a different body of evidence than that of the beneficiaries of these practices. It has been easier for the victims than for the beneficiaries to see this; (...) it needs to be acknowledged that in certain contexts current economic policies have influenced our understanding of Christian faith to the extent that our faith may reflect the dominant values of our societies” (Buys, 2004, 6).

In this regard we stand before the challenge Luther issued in the Heidelberg Disputation concerning the contextual analysis informing any vision. In thesis 21 he says: “The theologian of glory calls the bad good and the good bad; the theologian of the cross calls things by their right names”. In the same vein dispute exists with regard to whether the nature of neoliberal ideology constitutes a crisis of faith or should merely be dealt with at an ethical level. In this respect we have the witness coming from the Reformed tradition as represented in the history of the covenanting for justice process from the 1995 Kitwe consultation to the 2004 Accra General Council. The 2003 WARC South-South Consultation on the global crisis of life stated that in this historical, ideological and theological situation, where neoliberal ideology claims absolute power over and against the sovereignty of God and gospel

claims, it is critical, for the integrity of our faith, that we take a faith stance.

Biéler's study on *Calvin's Economic and Social Thought* (2006, 459) states that theologians are challenged by the fact that the scope of contemporary economic problems determines the theological questions. He shares the conviction that Reformed believers have to rediscover anew the biblical realism encompassing the whole of existence. "For every age the discovery made by the Calvinist Reformation must be made afresh" (Ibid., 459). He believes that it is only in this way that Christians will be assisted "in the quest for a truth that will free them from the deadly antagonisms of contemporary ideologies" (Ibid., 459).

In this sense the Accra Confession states: "Speaking from our Reformed tradition and having read the signs of the times, the general council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches affirms that global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians. We believe that the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization and therefore **we confess** before God and one another" (*Reformed World*, 2005, 188).

Perspectives informing new vision

African perspectives I will be reflecting on a new vision of the community of life in justice and peace from an African context. In seeking to speak to the concept of a vision I am reminded of Guma's writing on *Ithongo*

(Guma, 1997, 12), namely of dreams as therapeutic systems in the African social reality. The nature of these dreams intersects with social, political and cultural history and integrates wholeness and social justice. He states that "the act of dreaming has a unifying quality; dreams conjure up spiritual forces and call for action among people" (Ibid., 12).

Related to *Ithongo* is the African concept of *Ubuntu*. "*Ubuntu*, (a Zulu word) serves as the spiritual foundation of African societies. It is a unifying vision or world-view enshrined in the Zulu maxim (...) 'a person is a person through other persons' (Shutte 1993, 46). At bottom, this traditional African aphorism articulates a basic respect and compassion for others. It can be interpreted as both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic. It both describes human beings as 'being-with-others' and prescribes what 'being-with-others' should be all about. As such, *Ubuntu* adds a distinctly African flavour and momentum to a decolonized assessment of the religious other. In fact, the various overlaps between such an assessment and the African way of life as described/prescribed by *Ubuntu*, make this assessment nothing but an enactment of the African *Ubuntu*" (Louw 1997, 1). Within Louw's description of the term I would argue that the *Ubuntu* concept is indispensable in any new vision of community in justice and peace with not only an African but a universal sense.

In introducing his theses on economic justice Tsele quotes Julius Nyere: "Life is the

most basic human right; if justice means anything at all it must protect life. This should be the constant underlying purpose of all social, economic and political activities of governments at all levels” (Guma 1997, 81).

Theological perspectives “In this historical ideological and theological situation where neoliberal ideology claims absolute power over and against the sovereignty of God and gospel claims, it is critical, for the integrity of our faith, that we take a faith stance” (Faith Stance 2003, 5).

The Accra Confession further states that “This is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and creation. It makes the false promise that it can save the world through the creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry” (*Reformed World*, 2005, 187).

A new vision of community in justice and peace stands before the challenge of how our theological thinking is not merely disclosive of religious truth or distortion, or the critical analysis and aetiology of actual social conditions. Rather “The norm of theology is given conversion through the power of the Holy Spirit” (Meeks 1989, 42) in which disclosure and criticism are necessary elements in expressing this conversion through transformative praxis.

Meeks believes that juxtaposing God and economy leads to the discovery of new perspectives on both. “...focusing on the

doctrine of the Trinity as a way of critically retrieving traditional views of God’s economy has led us to criticize God concepts that justify assumptions abetting domination in the economic sphere” (Ibid., 181). Meeks expounds his doctrine on the Trinity from the premise of God the Economist.

Within the Christian tradition there is a strong God-*oikos* and God-economy correlation. Within the *oikos* and *oik-paranymns*, namely economy, ecology and *oikoumene*, it affirms three fundamental understandings based on the interconnectedness of God’s work of creating, reconciling and redeeming. As such “*oikos* can be understood first as the household in which God wants to give people access to life; second, it is the household of creation in which God wants God’s creatures to live together in symbiosis; third, *oikos* is the world that God wants to make into a home by establishing God’s justice and peace among the people and nations” (Ibid., 34). This correlation has become pivotal as paradigm “for religious and moral as well as social, political and economic organization, interaction and ideology” (Ibid., 33).

The petition: “Give us today our daily bread” implies the affirmation of faith that “God is the doer of righteousness who gives bread for life in just distribution” (Ibid., 178). The nature of God’s providence stands in support of the God-*oikos*-economy correlation in that this “bread” is not a commodity that can be put in exchange relations, stored or used as means of gaining

or executing political power or domination over people (Ibid., 179). He states that “economy must be fundamentally concerned with livelihood” (Ibid., 181) and that a more humane public household is dependent on human dignity in community being a prior value to economic organization.

Duchrow presents his thinking on the economy for life based on a socio-historical methodology in the reflection on the biblical perspectives in this regard. Based on his critical historical analysis of the market economy and the neoliberal capitalist global system, he then proceeds to define what needs to be resisted and rejected in the manifestation of this ideology before expounding a new vision of an economy for life. He presents three variable dimensions, in contrast to the invariable of wealth accumulation, in support of a new vision namely:

- “The life of all present-day people, i.e. it must satisfy their basic needs;
 - the life of all fellow creatures;
 - the life of all future generations.”
- (Duchrow, 1995, 243)

In presenting an alternative economic policy for life he addresses, amongst others, the “Alternatives to the current world economic and financial (dis)order” (Ibid., 288). The sociologist Emile Durkheim introduced the concept of anomie in his book *The Division of Labour in Society*, published in 1893. The original meaning of “anomie” defined anything or anyone against or outside the “law”, or a condition where the current laws were not applied,

resulting in a state of illegitimacy or lawlessness. Durkheim used anomie to describe a condition of deregulation that was occurring in society and the way in which a rapid or comprehensive change caused a state of anomie resulting in a state where norms (expectations on behaviour) are confused, unclear or not present. He then applied the concept of anomie (normlessness) to deviant behaviour.

I would expound Durkheim’s concept of anomie to extend its application to be descriptive of what Duchrow calls economic (dis)order. Liberalization of trade and markets, deregulation, the undermining of the sovereignty of national states, and consequent normlessness in economic behaviour represent, in my view, a state of “anomie” with destructive consequences for human life and the environment.

Ecumenical thinking on vision

Any consideration of a new vision of community in justice and peace cannot ignore contemporary thinking within the ecumenical movement in this regard. What follows is a very cursory reflection on some of this thinking.

The WCC Assembly in Harare asked “How do we live our faith in the context of globalization?” Three areas were identified in the search for alternatives to economic globalization namely:

- “the transformation of the current global market economy to embrace equity and values that reflect the teaching and example of Christ;

- development of just trade;
- promotion of a just financial system free of debt bondage, corrupt practices and excessive speculative profit making” (WCC 2002, 6).

The results in response to the question posed in Harare are captured in the document *Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth*, commonly referred to as the AGAPE document (WCC 2005, 2f). This document was informed by a number of consultations under the auspices of the WCC and in consultation with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and WARC.

The document addresses economic globalization and neoliberal policies and then proceeds to speak to the three areas in which alternatives are sought.

In chapters 1 & 2 it expounds on the theology underlying the vision of an economy in the service of life. It defines the main characteristics of the economy of life as

- The gracious economy of God (*oikonomia tou Theou*) is abundance for all;
- It requires the management of the abundance of life in a just, participatory and sustainable way;
- It promotes sharing, solidarity, human dignity, and love and care for the integrity of creation;
- God’s economy is for the whole *oikoumene* - the whole earth community;
- God’s economy is marked by God’s justice and option for the poor.

It challenges the churches to become

transformative communities and presents in Chapter 5 transformative actions and living alternatives.

Within the European context I would limit myself to a very brief consideration of two responses in envisioning alternatives to the neoliberal economic globalization.

The Evangelical Church of Westphalia (ECW), in seeking to respond to the Soesterberg Letter, attempts to address the questions of its worldwide ecumenical partner churches. In view of the analysis that a globalized economy currently lacks a clear incorporation into politics it believes that the churches should “critically object to it on the basis of its confession of faith in God, the creator of justice and righteousness who turns to the poor and weak in a special way” (ECW 2004, 19). In this regard the ECW states that structural moral renewal must aim for a market economy that is exemplary of the correlation between the legitimate concerns of economic liberalism and the Christian ideas of justice and solidarity (ECW 2004, 21).

It envisions a sustainable economy

- that shows that the dignity of human beings is inalienable and that the inherent value of God’s creation goes beyond usability,
- that combines and integrates the ecological, economic and social dimensions of life,
- whose credibility depends on distributive justice based on the priority of the poor and justice between present and future generations (ECW 2004, 27).

This vision is directly related to a policy

and regulatory model that governs international, national, intermediary and individual responsibility.

On the basis of the Judeo-Christian claims of justice the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (FEPS) envisions a model of global balance in which global governance would be a prerequisite (FEPS 2003, 5). FEPS postulates that a socially and ecologically sustainable and balanced globalization needs a strong multilateral system to reach key goals such as poverty eradication, implementation of human rights, balanced and fair international trade, stable financial markets, etc. (FEPS 2005, 4f).

Reformed Churches from the South take a more radical view in attempting to envision alternatives to the neoliberal globalization: "We are convinced that the neoliberal model cannot be transformed or adjusted: it has inherent contradictions and has failed again and again to lift the countries, peoples and natural environment of the South toward life. We are united in our rejection of this model" (Faith Stance 2003, 3).

"In short, through neoliberal globalization, the economy, designed to sustain life and the wellbeing of all, has become a totalitarian faith system of wealth accumulation for the few, endangering life as a whole on our planet. This system is structural sin. Globalized neoliberalism is in complete contradiction to the central tenets of the Christian faith" (Faith Stance 2003, 5).

The Buenos Aires faith stance then goes on to present the following biblical vision of an alternative economy. "a) It is orientated to the fulfilment of basic needs and blossoming, not to maximum productivity and consumption (Is 65, 1 Tim 6). b) It has care and distribution as its primary force not accumulation (Lk 12.16-21). c) It promotes solidarity, serving living communities, and is not individualistic (Acts 4-5). d) It subjects finance to the service of the real economy, not the real economy to the rule of the financial markets (Lk 19). e) It corrects systemic indebtedness and loss of land by Jubilee measures (Lev 25). f) It binds the economy to the restraint of ecological respect instead of allowing profits to include ecological destruction (Lev 25)" (Faith Stance 2003, 7).

"The Reformers stress unanimously that it is through the encounter with God that we get to know ourselves... God is, so to say, the mirror in which we recognize our own image. ... Scripture points to a God who, as a person, is seeking communion. God, the mirror in which we recognize ourselves, is a God who is bound in love to the creation... God is on the side of all those who have become victims of power and violence and vibrates with the creation which is groaning and crying out for liberation and redemption" (*Reformed World* 1999, 111-2).

According to Luther in theses 19 and 20 of the Heidelberg Disputation, "[I]t is not the person who discerns and understands God's invisible being through his works who is rightly called a theologian. That is clear

from the example of those who sought to do that and yet were called foolish by the apostle (Rom 1.22). The invisible being of God is his power, deity, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, etc. The knowledge of all these things does not make one wise or worthy. Instead it is the person who comprehends what is set forth in his suffering and in the cross as the visible aspect of God's being that is turned toward the world. The aspect of God's being that is turned toward the world and visible his humanity, weakness and foolishness, of which 1 Cor 1.25 speaks - is set over against the invisible. For as human beings misused the knowledge of God that was based on his works, God for his part chose to be known from his suffering and so to repudiate such wisdom concerning the invisible by a wisdom based on what is visible."

Clarifying questions, values and features of vision

Any new vision of community of life in justice and peace must be preceded by settling the debate on whether the neoliberal ideology of economic globalization can be transformed or adjusted or should be replaced by alternative economic models. The need to settle this debate relates directly to opposing convictions that lead to different visions. It must in all fairness be stated that not all elements of different visions are exclusive in nature. As such one may find complementary elements, albeit in support of opposing models.

At the same time reference to transformative action should be more clearly defined in a manner that will clarify the distinction as embodied in opposing convictions.

A new vision of community of life in justice and peace also relies on the fact that the envisioning is not the sole prerogative of the community of faith. A new vision depends, *inter alia*, on the ability of the Christian community to engage in dialogue and action with people of other faith as well as with broader movements and networks in civil society, seeking to define together an integrated vision of alternative economic models and implementing a praxis commensurate with the vision. It needs further to be borne in mind that the conception and global vision of economic alternatives is an ongoing process and not merely a theoretical doctrinal formula.

The specific contribution that Christians bring to the process of visioning is related directly to its beliefs system and the values that inform its world-view. There are certain definitive characteristics that emerge within current ecumenical thinking with regard to a vision of alternative economics. These can be summarized as a set of core values informing the Christian contribution to visioning.

Based on the doctrine of creation Christians confess their belief in the triune God as creator and sustainer of life. The concept of God's economy flows from this

understanding. Certain key features of this economy have been identified in the World Council of Churches' Agape document as already quoted earlier in this paper:

- The gracious economy of God (*oikonomia tou Theou*) is abundance for all;
- It requires the management of the abundance of life in a just, participatory and sustainable way;
- It promotes sharing, solidarity, human dignity, and love and care for the integrity of creation;
- God's economy is for the whole *oikoumene* - the whole earth community;
- God's economy is marked by God's justice and option for the poor.

Another related value being contributed is that of justice. Justice resides in the "boundless generosity of God" (Dommen 2003, 66). God's boundless generosity sets the stage for the human enjoyment of all riches. As such, Christians bring to the debate their understanding of commutative justice as a principle of fairness, distributive justice as a principle of equitable distribution of resources. It also relates to restorative justice in defining the Christian imperative with regard to transformative action in conversion and involvement in social processes (which may include procedural and retributive justice) aimed at generating acceptable outcomes that involve healing (bringing of wholeness, peace).

The understanding of God, as a person, seeking communion and creating community underscores what is being said in the African culture with regard to *Ubuntu*.

Personhood finds its meaning within the context of a common humanity sharing in God-given life, dignity, interdependence and common future.

Within this framework of core values we find the concept of the preferential option for the poor. This concept is, however, grounded in the understanding that God chose to be known through God's suffering and in so doing repudiated the knowledge of the invisible based on what is visible. Christians come to know God and witness to God's act of redemption by standing where God stands, namely with the poor.

Towards a new vision

The beginning of the 21st century saw the emergence of an international civil society consciousness informed by disillusionment with the current neoliberal economic globalization. This consciousness has grown into a movement that started as antiglobalization (critique, denunciation, pressure for regulations and reforms) and developed into an alterglobalization movement. The World Social Forum (WSF) has become the symbol of this arising international civil society consciousness that seeks to create the space for all those individuals and organizations who ask and work for a different globalization. The agenda of the forum is informed by the motto: another world is possible, another globalization is possible. We have also seen the emergence of various forms of solidarity economy as a new proposal to organize the economy and society.

Among the proponents of solidarity economy we find the Workgroup on Solidarity Socio-Economy (WSSE) which is a global network of debate among grassroots actors, researchers and committed people who collectively generate and promote proposals and strategies for socioeconomic transformation. The vision of the WSSE is: an economy based upon cooperation and solidarity, so as to place human beings and social relationships back at the core of the economic activities.

Thousands of innovative socioeconomic practices i.e. fair trade, microfinance, non-monetary exchange systems, social currencies, ethical consumption and investment, etc. are already being practised around the world. These initiatives range from small local initiatives to larger national or international organizations. In recognizing the transformation potential of these initiatives the WSSE attempts to build a collective vision of an alternative economy called solidarity socio-economy.

Its understanding is that the global system of capital is configured in the following manner:

- Capital is the subject, working people are the object.
- Competition, domination and submission are the dominant forms of relationship.
- Private appropriation is the emotion and the matrix of action. Structural subordination, inequality, unemployment and exclusion are the outcomes.

- The state is a guarantor of market “freedom” and of private capital as the legitimate subject, whether through ideological manipulation or through coercion.

- Virtual, not real democracy is in place, for it is reduced to an electoral manner of conquering and perpetuating “political power”.

- The cultural matrix is that those who have are the legitimate leaders. In one expression, a culture of plain individualism.

Based on this understanding of the global system of capital it seeks to define a collective vision as the basis for a new form of organization of economic life, from local to global; organized for individual and collective self-development; sharing the satisfaction of needs and wants; co-managing of the *oikos*; ethical, reciprocal and cooperative in consumption, production, exchange, communication, education and development which fosters a new way of thinking and living.

The collective visions incorporated into solidarity-based socio-economy (WSSE 2005, 1-2) present us with a broad framework for considering a new vision. With regard to solidarity, SSE proceeds from the principle of “responsibility for the whole and not just the part to which we belong” (Ibid., 2). Solidarity socio-economy is defined as “several forms whereby urban and rural people organize themselves to create their own sources of work or to assess basic goods and services ... on the basis of mutual help, uniting the individual

and the collective, and informing their practices with the value of solidarity.

A solidarity-based socio-economy recognizes humankind, both the individual and social being, not only as creators and producers of economic wealth but also as co-owners of material wealth, co-users of natural resources and co-responsible for the conservation of nature. Solidarity economy strives towards producing and sharing enough material wealth among all in order to generate sustainable conditions for self-managed development of each and every member of society, the peoples and the planet. Solidarity economy is an economic system centred in human beings and their yearning to solve their individual, family, community and social needs in a harmonic relationship with nature and society, as parts of a planetary system in which they are developing and becoming more complex towards integral universalization and fulfilment” (Ibid., 1-2).

This collective model envisages:

- An economy that is not primarily geared towards material growth. It is aimed at wellbeing and human development for all in realization of the various qualities, attributes, and potentials of the human being. This is inclusive of social retribution for all forms of work on the basis of gender equality of rights and responsibilities. Economic and technical development, in this perspective, is only a means for the broader goal of human and social development.

- Democratic governance is based on a

universal ethic of responsibility and solidarity in which the interdependence of humanity, the biosphere and societies with each other is reflected in responsibility and social contract. Democratic governance is the authority to command the use of resources to meet the needs of society through a common vision shared by various segments of the people and in a way that promotes social cohesion.

Democratic governance, as a process, leads from domination to autonomy in solidarity. In this sense the state can regain legitimacy through responsibility, transparency and participation of civil society organizations, the recognition of the existence of public common goods and the promotion of responsible public social expenditure. As such democratic governance helps to define rules for the economy and gives a social framework to the market.

- A balanced system of global democratic governance, governed by rules and institutions for the management of public common goods and to which end global, democratic public institutions and political bodies must be created.

- It envisions a solidarity-based international finance system i.e. a World Social Development Bank and an International Solidarity Finance Fund and a solidarity-based international trade system democratically managed by a World Fair Trade Organization.

- A global society comprising a wide range of politically, economically and culturally diverse solidarity inclusive communities

- sharing values, knowledge, technology and fair trade in a wider network of solidarity and inclusive relationships.

- sustainable with sound self-management capacities ensuring independence

- enhancing a better quality of life, inclusiveness and solidarity

- enhancing their competitiveness in achievement of “value added” socioeconomic and cultural community development outcomes and in building sustainable fair trade networks to guarantee their self-reliance (Ibid., 13-14).

- A market concept representing the space of distribution of all resources through tenets of social justice rather than market forces. The market as a social relation in which the interaction between the subjects of exchange is more important than the material exchange.

- A solidarity-based management for the efficient to maximize social benefits and meet the needs of all members of society.

- Emancipated work in which the creative energy of people are directed to the restitution of the right to freedom.

- Enterprises which comply with ethical standards of solidarity economy as the basis of economic relations.

- A solidarity financial system specifically designed to enable solidarity-based enterprises. It does so on the basis that financial resources are the “fuel” that energizes the economy.

- Complementary and alternative

social currencies that increase the exchange of goods and services through, among others, a money system without interest and the contribution of resources for collective advancement.

- Solidarity production chains that incorporate production, distribution and consumption to form an equation that is systemic and self-reliant.

- A mesoeconomy in which the various sectors and social classes are integrated into a plural society in which the state is a public servant.

- People-oriented life education and sharing of knowledge free from dominant political, cultural, religious and economic bias.

- Solidarity-based consumption and fair trade in which exchanges between human beings, individuals and society, as well as with nature, are multidimensional, not just material and monetary and which are not ultimately aimed at “unlimited” growth but recognize the limits of the continuous increase of production and consumption of goods and services as informed by an “economy of enough” (Van Heijningen 2003, 5). (An “economy of enough” is undergirded by trade in the market as part of the entire process of social and human development, facilitating linkages between individuals, communities and between them and nature that strikes a balance between the right to trade, ethical consumption and the basic human needs and rights to self-subsistence.)

Conclusion

The paradigm on which economic globalization is built creates profound inequality, poverty and ecological destruction. The process of economic globalization is promoted by the neoliberal ideology of the free market economy. At the same time the neoliberal project is promoted and defended by the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power constituted as a system of domination led by powerful nations called empire.

The global impact of this model of economy is also reflected in the hardships suffered in Africa achieving what colonization attempted but failed to realize, namely the total control of economic resources and powers of developing countries.

Against the backdrop of the credo that there is no alternative, emerges a contextual, theological and ecumenical perspective informed by values and belief systems affirming that “another economy is possible, in which the dwellers of the house become

once again the ultimate goal of the building of the house and its management is shared amongst all dwellers” (WSES 2003, 1).

Defining a new vision of community of life in justice and peace however is not the sole prerogative of the Christian community. Visioning happens in a multicultural, multidimensional and interdisciplinary framework. The Christian contribution to the new vision emanates from its confession of God and how its encounter with God informs its vision on creation, life, providence, and the integrated conceptualization of economy, ecology and *oikoumene*. Justice, community and peace emerge as indispensable values that determine the scope of a Christian vision.

SSE challenges us to contribute to what it defines as a collective vision that attempts to deal in a practical manner with an alternative to economic globalization. The elements taken from a more extensive framework engage this consultation in its thinking and present it with the challenge to extend its visioning to be inclusive of endeavours by civil society.

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An ecumenical vision for a community of life in Europe

Ulrich Duchrow

The present policy of the European Union is to establish Europe as a sub-empire, writes the German theologian Ulrich Duchrow. What then could be a new ecumenical vision from the European perspective? One consistent with an understanding of human beings not as “a dis-embedded mechanistic machine for accumulating wealth and power”, but as “a living organism in relationship”, in line with the biblical teaching. The new paradigm can be implemented by withdrawing energy from “the dominating lethal system” in order to nurture life. One of the founders of Kairos Europe, Ulrich Duchrow teaches Systematic Theology in Heidelberg, Germany. He is the co-author of Property for People, not for Profit (2004).

Before looking at a new ecumenical vision in the global context from a European perspective, it is essential to analyse the status quo concerning the European Union (EU) and the European Churches with regard to the global empire.

I. The European imperial paradigm in history and today and the churches in Europe

Thesis 1: For more than 1,000 years Europe has built on the paradigm of the Roman empire. The classical period of European imperialism at the end of the 19th century was developed as a hegemonic political and military security system for the foreign investments of European capital in profitable regions of the world. After the USA

took over this model and role the present policy of the EU has been to try to establish Europe as a sub-empire, partly in competition, partly in alliance with the USA. European majority churches have historically supported this model starting, however, an ecumenical learning process in the 20th century. At present they are unwilling to face the reality of the EU in the context of global empire.

The paradigm of the Roman empire is built on the model of the Hellenistic empires since Alexander the Great (after 333 BC). Both are built on the basic model of patriarchy as part of a property-money economy, i.e. of the absolute power of the male property owner. The “house father” (Greek *despotes*, Latin *dominus*) is the

absolute owner of land, animals, slaves, women and children.¹ Originally these patriarchs formed a polis and a republic, but later developed into a pyramid system with the despotic emperor at the top. The linkage of economic, political, military, social and ideological (including religious) absolute power included the split between cities and rural areas because the owners gathered in the cities had administrators operating their properties in the countryside.

In the Middle Ages the popes in Rome, striving for an imperial structure of the church, understood themselves as agents responsible for passing on the Roman empire to the Europeans (*translatio imperii*), first to the Franks, then to the Germans - the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation,² which finally was governed by the Habsburg emperors who first globalized the empire by conquering Latin America after 1492.³ Since the 14th century capitalist dynamics complemented and reinforced this imperial development of Europe. This dynamics was again coupled with European science and technology on the basis of the Cartesian understanding of the rational man being “master and owner of nature”. Built on the absolute private property and rationality of men in the sense of Roman law and Greek philosophy, capital accumulation became the driving force of the European systems. John Locke was the first to conceptualize this paradigm (1690).⁴ He established the priority of property accumulation in the global market by rational and industrious men. The state was

defined as having the unique purpose of protecting (the unequally distributed) property.

As the nation-states prevailed over the one empire, they developed colonies all over the world in competition with each other. Eventually this led to the classical imperialist period at the end of the 19th century.⁵ When European capital ran into an overproduction crisis decreasing the profits, it started to invest in profitable regions like, for instance, South Africa (gold and diamonds) and called upon their governments to protect their foreign investments and profits. This led to growing expansion in competition which, combined with speculative capital accumulation, eventually led to the catastrophe of classical liberal capitalism in both the Great Recession (1929) and the two World Wars.

After World War II the USA took over as hegemonic power of the capitalist world system, since the 1980s under neoliberal auspices, as is well known. The think-tanks of the Bush administration openly define the USA as the heir of the Roman empire establishing the *Pax Americana*.⁶ But the European Community (EC) also began to form itself as “A Superpower in the Making” - as Johan Galtung already called it in his book with this title, published in 1973.⁷ He observed that the original EC consisted of the former six colonial European powers, now led, however, by the power of the Transnational Corporations. This

European project developed over the years until the European Union (EU) wanted to forge this concept into a *European Constitution*.

This was designed to make neoliberalism and militarization for imperial purposes the basic law of the EU, destroying the national constitutions of the period after World War II which, in the case of Germany, for example, was designed to guarantee the social obligation of private property, the social welfare state and the peace orientation by limiting the military to self-defence and prohibiting wars of aggression.⁸ Fortunately, the French and Dutch citizens rejected the European Constitution, but the policies of neoliberal economy and finance as well as the EU military build-up for worldwide intervention continue, even without a constitutional base.

Another case in point is the European Monetary Union. Not only was it not linked to a common social policy but also it missed the chance of pressing for a new international regulation of the monetary system. Now the Euro is competing with the dollar in a deregulated market system with speculative risks. Furthermore, the move of oil countries like Iraq under Saddam Hussein from the dollar to the Euro as the trading and reserve currency is one further stimulus for imperial wars. Summarizing, it can be said that the EU is part of the neoliberal capitalist US empire, partly competing with the USA within this framework.

It is in this context that we must evaluate

the refusal of the majority of *European churches* to deal with the issue of empire as could be seen at the 2004 WARC General Council in Accra and thereafter. Their only concern was the question whether the name of God should be mentioned in the European Constitution and some generalities concerning its social character. These had been put into the form of a charter of basic human rights (part II of the Constitution). What the churches overlooked was the fact that these rights were guaranteed only in the frame of the hard-core political and economic concrete regulations in part III of the Constitution. This they should have realized by taking into account the fundamental contradictions between imperial capitalism and human rights, based on the fact that capitalism historically and systematically tends to limit the rights to male property owners and people with the power to engage in contracts.⁹

What might be the reasons for the position of the European churches? My hunch is the following: Until a short while ago the Europeans could leave the dirty job of protecting Western exploitation of the world's resources to the USA, which up to recently even disguised its imperial acts by utilizing proxies. In the shadow of the superpower Europeans could do profitable business. Now the USA, under the Bush administration, is taking off the mask and acting openly and brutally itself as an imperial power. And, furthermore, the EU is beginning to form itself openly as an imperial

power. This is shaking the illusion of the West being a social and democratic market society which up to now was the basis for the positive relationship between the churches and the political and economic system and elites.

Realizing this reality would bring the churches into a basic conflict with the powers of the existing system which they fear because of the privileges they still enjoy in the old pattern of Constantinean church-state-relationships. The CEC position paper in the AGAPE process, "European churches living their faith in the context of globalization", clearly shows that they keep up the illusion that the EU in reality is still operating within the framework of the "Social Market Economy" and that the European churches should make their contribution to the AGAPE process by giving ethical advice to the powerful in "dialogues" in order to motivate them to regulate the global economy according to this "European model". There is no recognition of the fact that day by day the social welfare state is being dismantled in Europe itself - not to talk about the neoliberal policies towards the South - and that imperial militarization is advancing step by step.

This illusory consciousness is characteristic of middle-class mentality as recent research has shown.¹⁰ The middle classes are upwards oriented by definition, but they too, when put under threat, revitalize an early childhood mechanism by which the infant idealizes the powerful parent while splitting off the evil part of the

powerful other and taking it into its own inner self. Consequently, when an adult experiences threats from above, he or she takes this evil into himself or herself which either leads to depressions or to diverting the aggression against a scapegoat below. So, for example, the cause of unemployment is seen as the result of the influx of migrant foreigners who are being accused of taking jobs away. In this way the middle classes and middle-class churches can regard the economic and political elites as willing responsible actors to be addressed by ethical demands in dialogues on the assumption that they will positively change the situation - instead of seeing them as the cause of the evil and joining the struggling victims.

What, under these circumstances, could be a new ecumenical vision from the European perspective?

II. A new paradigm: living organisms

Thesis II: While the imperial capitalist model is a dis-embedded mechanistic machine for accumulating wealth and power, the new paradigm is the living organism in relationships. This paradigm corresponds to the understanding of humans not being atomistic individuals driven by the fetishism of commodities, money and capital but responsible persons in community. This is in line with the biblical understanding that human beings are created in the image of God as male and female. So the relationship between men and women as equals constitutes the core

and root of a community in mutuality. Jesus contrasts this mutual service with the hierarchical power system in the Hellenistic-Roman empires.

Before going into the details of a new strategy, we need to ask whether there is a basically new paradigm available to overcome the capitalist imperial model of Hellenistic-Roman and European origin. David Korten has convincingly drawn ancient visions and practices into today's scholarly theory-building¹¹ which could even be strengthened by indigenous wisdom and the African *Ubuntu* culture of today. Korten's central thesis is: the capitalist economy, which has been "dis-embedded" of all social and ecological relations (Karl Polanyi), is following the paradigm of Cartesian and Newtonian mechanics. According to them, the economy functions as a money-multiplying machine for property owners.

An economy, which takes into consideration relational life, must on the contrary, work in accordance with the *paradigm of living organisms in relationships*. In this paradigm it becomes clear that the single cell, which continues to grow egoistically, with no regard for the entire organism, is a cancer cell. It grows and multiplies until it has killed the host organism - and then dies itself. Here, murder is precisely suicide - exactly that which absolute imperial capitalism will do with all societies, and ultimately with the earth, if it is not stopped. In contrast to this model, the single cells of a living organism in relationships function so that, in great

variety and in interaction with their environment, they make decisions in order that the entire organism - and they themselves - have the greatest chances of survival. With this paradigm, a healthy economy is built, based on local-regional, varied, interdependent community units, which then join networks with larger units - just as in life itself.

There has to be a certain caution here so as not to fall into the trap of a naturalistic misunderstanding of this paradigm. Humans are not just organisms, but are called to be responsible subjects in community. The present system of commodities, money and capital is characterized by fetishism which enslaves the people and governs them from the back by pushing them into the competition of the market for a brutal survival struggle of atomized individuals instead of empowering responsible subjects to work for life and the common good. So the key task for an alternative vision is to liberate people towards a relational, *cooperative self-understanding of the creatively and responsibly acting subjects, in other words towards being a person-in-community*.

That this is possible is being confirmed by recent brain research. Human beings do have a physiological base for empathy in what is called "mirror neurons". These neurons enable people to spontaneously feel what others feel. When I see a person in pain, I myself feel the pain physically. Also relational psychology shows how the subject is born and strengthened by the original

interrelationship of inter-subjectivity with the parents and other persons, built on mutual recognition. Under present imperial capitalism the original potential of subjectivity breaks through in the “cry of the subject” rebelling against oppression and exploitation.¹² On this basis cooperative, transformative communities for life can be formed and organized.

According to biblical theology, since the time of the prophet Ezechiel human beings are seen as being created in the image of God, as women and men, i.e. relational (Gen 1.26-28). So it is in the overcoming of property-based patriarchy that the liberation of the subject and society finds its most basic expression. This is reflected in Jesus’ conflict with his male disciples as recorded in Mark 10.42ff.:

You know that in the world the recognized rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority. That is not the way with you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all.

On the one hand, this saying of Jesus summarizes a whole political-economic and cultural analysis. Rome and its accomplices in the upper class in Palestine’s centre and periphery represent nothing but oppression and violent exploitation. Saying this clearly is in itself liberating. It creates distance. It deprives the system of any legitimacy. It de-ideologizes it. The whole *Pax Romana* is just oppression and exploitation. There is

nothing there to tame, nothing worth transforming. So it is very important to realize that the issue of empire is not limited to an imperial political and economic system. Rather it concerns the imperial spirit and structures throughout all relationships, at all levels of society and culture, starting from the patriarchal family.¹³ Jesus rejected domination and empire at all these levels.

On the other hand, he enabled his followers to start creating alternatives by mutual service. Luise Schottroff has shown that *diakonein*, to the extent that it has to do with service, means the kind of caring which, under the patriarchal distribution of roles, is done only by slaves and women, never by free men.¹⁴ But here “serving” - far from meaning organized charitable work in a social system otherwise defined by exploitation and authority - is understood as typifying a counterculture in which exploitation and oppressive authority are put aside. In the house all are like brothers and sisters. That links up with the family solidarity of the pre-state and post-exilic egalitarian society of peasant families in Ancient Israel, but it goes beyond that. Even the patriarchal structure of the house itself is to be transformed, although this is only consistent with Israel’s egalitarian tendency. “Here equality in principle is assumed, and its vitality is in mutual service. The disciples of Jesus build a counter-model to the world’s authority structure.”¹⁵

Luise Schottroff points out that Jesus’ central idea - loving one’s neighbour - meant this kind of family solidarity as early as in

Deuteronomy and the Holiness Code. That implies that with Jesus love in the socioeconomic sense means precisely acting like brothers and sisters, through which there occurs in the house and between houses a completely equal form of cooperation in mutual service. The term “slave of all” signifies that brother-and-sisterliness, mutuality and solidarity do not stop at the borders of the patriarchal house. “For even the human one did not come to be served but to serve, and to give up a ransom for many” (Mk 10.45). These reflections also show that it is not enough to point to the house (*oikos*) as the alternative. We have to distinguish between the households of solidarity and the patriarchal Greek-Roman type of *oikos*. Economically the members of the early church, according to Acts 4.32ff, followed this model of mutual service by abolishing the absoluteness of property and instead sharing what they had so that there was no needy among them.

Politically it was Gandhi who applied this model in creating a new concept and practice of politics.¹⁶ It can be best understood by contrasting it with the Roman-European tradition. Here the key definition of “political” is *potestas*, power with the ultimate characteristic of force and violence, the “sword” being the symbol. Already the Apostle Paul interpreted it as being legitimate because God is using power for the good of the people by punishing the evildoers - of course, not justifying the absolute power of the emperor and empire,

but in the limited form of local authorities. Luther took this up in his context by interpreting political power, even using violence, as justified in the service of others as an alien form of love. He limited the Sermon on the Mount to matters pertaining to one’s own interest. However, he saw the problem of leaving room to injustice by not fighting back. Consequently, he called it a main task of the ordained minister to protest injustice publicly. Also, while rejecting “fighting for one’s right”, he challenged persons, suffering from injustice, to “confess their right”, both actions pre-shadowing nonviolent direct action against injustice. However, European history has since shown that this concept of political power, even though limited by the constitutional division of this power, has increasingly taken the form of an autonomous sphere detached from the people. This tendency has been increased by the definition of the liberal state as protector of property and contract.

Gandhi analyses sharply this interconnectedness of Western property order and the violent character of the state by saying: “Where there is possessiveness, there is violence”.¹⁷ So he rejects property beyond need together with violence in political structure and action. Defining politics as service of others with violence leads to putting the order in the centre, and to abstracting from the acting people. The protected is deprived of his or her own activity, and the “protector” is deprived of communication and in that sense also of being a responsible subject. So for Gandhi

the form of political action in the sense of struggling against injustice is *satyagraha* which is drawn from the Sanskrit *satya*/truth and *agraha*/standing steadfastly, meaning “sticking to truth”. In this way religion as loyalty to truth is necessarily connected with politics. “Politics separated from religion stinks, religion detached from politics is meaningless. Politics means any activity for the welfare of the people.”¹⁸ In his situation of fighting the British colonial power it means nonviolent resistance. But it can also mean constructive work with the people.

The key is that the people are participatory subjects and that even the politicians serving an unjust system are given the chance to give in to truth when faced by the people confronting them through nonviolent action. Thus politics is not defined as order implemented through force and violence, but as rights for people’s capacity to satisfy their basic needs and to participate in the constant political struggle for getting to the truth as much as possible.

This signifies that we can fundamentally challenge the Roman-European-Western approach to economy and politics at all levels, not only on the basis of the biblical heritage, but also building on the theory and practice of Gandhi which means we have an intercultural option for alternatives in a nutshell, both for economics and politics. A similar model is being promoted by the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. They stress that the goal is not to seize power within the existing system but rather to change

the character of power relationships already during the struggle. Therefore, they walk slowly on the way towards the alternative, constantly questioning themselves.

III. A multiple strategy for building communities of life in mutuality against empire

Thesis III: In a multiple strategy the new paradigm can be implemented. It consists of withdrawing energy from the dominating lethal system and nurturing life. This means de-legitimizing the myths of imperial neoliberalism as well as resisting and boycotting concretely its mechanisms on the one hand, and building local communities as well as alliances for political intervention aimed at transforming the macro-systems in cooperative ways on the other. The key perspective of both is to re-appropriate the resources of creation and the fruits of common labour by the people and for the needs of the people themselves. This is already happening in all parts of the world and all faith communities. In the context of this perspective Europe is challenged to rediscover the fruits of the struggles of its labour movements and develop a counter-model against the USA which is driving the European liberalist imperial tradition to the extreme.

Today the new paradigm has to transcend the false cold war alternative between monopoly-directed private capitalism and centralist state socialism. It is geared towards the *social appropriation of the earth’s resources and the fruits of the*

common work – appropriation not in the sense of absolute property rights but in the sense of the basic right of all people to have access to the resources and the fruits of common labour for the satisfaction of their life needs in dignity.¹⁹ This approach could be called a socialism from below or participatory socialism, i.e. not in the sense of a blueprint system to be introduced top down. It requires a *multiple strategy driven by the people starting from concrete struggles for life*, which Kortzen calls:²⁰ “Starve the cancer – Nurture life”.

Starving the capitalist cancer or: withdrawing energy from the system

(1) *Demythologize the neoliberal disorientation ideology* Here the majority of European churches lack prophetic clarity and courage thus contributing to the “disorientation trauma” of the victims as the relational psychologists call it. “Naming and unmasking the powers” (Wink) in the present context would mean unveiling the contradictions between the theory of the utopian types of capitalism on the one hand and reality on the other as well as exposing the cynical and fundamentalist character of the different types of nihilist capitalism.²¹ This means that the utopian types of capitalism in the tradition of Adam Smith (the invisible hand of the market transforms the egoistic actions of the competing individuals into wealth for all people) can be refuted by confronting the ideology with the reality showing that the “free” market

produces excessive wealth for the owners of capital and misery for the majority. Nihilist capitalism in its cynical form (cf. Schumpeter) and its fundamentalist form (v. Hayek) openly admits the sacrificial and destructive character of the capitalist market. So the reality is exactly as predicted by the ideology. Therefore, the only way to refute this ideology is by choosing life against death.

(2) *A clear “no” with resistance and refusal to cooperate* Even within the decisions of the Accra General Council itself there is not yet a full coherence between the basic rejection of neoliberal imperial capitalism in the confession and the action part (covenanting for justice). Most of the recommendations are reformist, not defining clearly what has to be rejected, not only by words but by practice. Here the Gandhian methods of organized nonviolent direct action should be rediscovered by the churches in alliance with social movements. They could also take initiatives themselves like, for instance, boycotting commercial banks involved in tax flight, speculation and increasing of profits at the cost of the working people as well as calling for the conscientious objection of all Christians regarding the imperial armies of the USA and the EU.

Nurturing life in two ways at different levels

(1) *Alternatives at local-regional levels transcending capitalism* Here alternatives are already growing on a worldwide scale with initiatives for a “Solidarity Socio-

Economy" (Marcos Arruda²²). They work cooperatively instead of in competition with one another, decentralized instead of centralized. The areas of action are above all: 1. Local Exchange and Trading Systems (LETS); 2. Cooperative banking; 3. Decentralized production of alternative energies (sun, wind, water, biomass); and 4. Local cooperative production, marketing and consumption.²³ Factories, self-administered by the workers, and their networks are also a part of this approach. At this level the local churches would have many possibilities of action. But the local-regional level is not enough. Alternatives are necessary at macro-levels as well.

(2) *Struggles for the social re-appropriation of stolen resources and peace at all levels in the post-capitalist and post-empire perspective.* Given the real power situation in the macro-systems the alternative economy in the service of life and communities as well as an anti-imperialist politics cannot simply be generally "introduced". The people who are affected must join together with those in solidarity and organize alliances themselves, in order to approach concrete goals and to integrate them into an overall perspective of anti-imperial, societal re-appropriation. Some examples concerning the economic dimension are: the struggle for land and live-giving agriculture, for public goods and services (such as water), for fair taxation, etc. The protagonists, to which people can relate, in order to become subjects in solidarity, are, in particular, trade unions,

social movements and churches in their diverse social forms.

In these two concrete areas (1 and 2) lies, at the same time, the great potential for healing and liberating in the direction of becoming human beings in solidarity with those who have been traumatized, frightened and addicted.²⁴ In this destructive situation, healing is only possible when those who are being healed are aware of the real possibility of an alternative praxis. Both the local-regional social economy and the alliance-building for the re-appropriation of the earth's resources and the fruits of common work are centrally based on the creation of concrete groups and movements for common work and struggle. Groups and movements (with a special emphasis on women's movements) are the primary ways of regaining a life in relationships - against the imperial capitalist ego-society which drives individuals into a war of all against each other.

As the capitalist imperial system is being enforced by direct, structural and cultural violence (cf. Johan Galtung), the strategies in the economic field must also be linked to the efforts and ecumenical processes of *overcoming violence*. We must make a new basic effort to link again the struggles and networks for justice, peace and the integrity of creation in the Gandhian political sense. Of course, this is being tried in the framework of the World Social Forum (WSF). But the ecumenical programmes in this direction were split after 1990. In Germany churches

have even used the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) to avoid participation in the AGAPE process (Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth). As the programme guidelines of the World Council of Churches 2006 Assembly call for a new interaction between the different programme priorities, we should use this momentum for a new start in the perspective of a multiple strategy to overcome neoliberal imperial capitalism at all levels.

However, in order to recapture the clarity and decidedness of the conciliar process for justice, peace and the integrity of creation in the 1980s and contextualize it for the 21st century, not only the rejection of neoliberal economy and the work for alternatives have to be continued, further developed and implemented along the lines of the Accra Confession and the AGAPE document. The Decade to Overcome Violence also has to link up again to the clear rejection of the spirit, logic and practice of mass destruction, as formulated in the 1980s, and relate it to the rejection of the spirit, logic and practice of empire as the present form of neoliberal capitalist globalization.

The empire openly threatens with mass destruction which, indeed, it is already implementing. Therefore, it has to be clearly worked out in future ecumenical processes that empire as such is irreconcilable and incompatible with the biblical faith and the being of the church in the same way as has been stated in

relation to neoliberal economy. The rejection of both must be unequivocal.

Conclusion

A new ecumenical vision for a community of life is not only possible but feasible. As a matter of fact it is already growing in all parts of the world and in all faith communities,²⁵ also in Europe.

Europe with its better social and peace traditions as fruits of the labour and peace movements is the only visible power in the world which may have the chance to counter the US type of imperial capitalism.²⁶ Therefore, on the basis of the clear analysis and acknowledgement of the present neoliberal and militaristic policies of the EU, the churches must engage in critical encounters with the European economic and political institutions, but not just “in dialogue with the powerful”.

The place of the churches in these encounters is at the side of the people, not the powers, because a new political space can only be won by the people organizing themselves in social and peace movements, trade unions and NGOs, forming alliances of cooperative nonviolent struggles (including civil disobedience). The churches in their different social forms can only live up to their biblical calling by joining these alliances - as parts of them are already doing. This will bring conflict, both inside the churches and with the powerful. But only in this way can they be the salt of the earth - as Jesus called them to be - and not the mirror of society, betraying the gospel.

Notes

- ¹ Cf. Duchrow/Hinkelammert 2004, chap.1.
- ² Cf. Duchrow 1983, chap.3.
- ³ Cf. Duchrow 1992.
- ⁴ Ibid., chap.3.
- ⁵ Cf. Hobsbawm 1987, and H. Arendt 1951.
- ⁶ Cf. www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm
- ⁷ Galtung 1973.
- ⁸ Cf. Duchrow 2005a.
- ⁹ Cf. Duchrow 2005b.
- ¹⁰ Cf. Duchrow/Bianchi/Krüger/Petracca 2006.
- ¹¹ David Korten 2000.
- ¹² Cf. Hinkelammert 2001, and Dussel 1998.
- ¹³ Cf. W. Wink 2002, p.14.
- ¹⁴ Schottroff 1994, p.299f.
- ¹⁵ Wengst 1987.
- ¹⁶ Cf. the pivotal work of Dieter Conrad 2006.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p.217.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p.65.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Zeller 2004.
- ²⁰ Using Korten's concepts, op. cit., p.262ff.
- ²¹ Cf. Duchrow/Bianchi/Krüger/Petracca 2006, p.30ff.
- ²² Marcos Arruda 2003. In Europe this model has a tradition since the 19th century. Since 70 years a whole valley, Mondragon in Euskadi/Spain, is successfully operating in this way.
- ²³ Richard Douthwaite 1996.
- ²⁴ Cf. Duchrow/Bianchi *et alii*, part III.
- ²⁵ Cf. *Colloquium 2000*, p.112ff.
- ²⁶ Cf. Susan George 2006, p.139f.

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The new Roman empire

Erme R. Camba

Out of studies on the Roman empire in the New Testament especially the Book of Revelation and of selected documents and Senate speeches on American foreign policy since 1898 and using the Philippine experience as a case study of the colonization of a people and nation, Bishop Erme R. Camba posits a thesis that the United States of America has become today's new Roman empire. He suggests five theological concepts in dealing with "empire" namely: (1) idolatry of the empire; (2) the human being as the image of God, (3) stewardship of creation (4) the kingdom of God and (5) shalom. One of the founders of the nationalist Ecumenical Bishops' Forum (in the Philippines), Bishop Camba was a former General Secretary of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and retired as Dean of the Silliman University Divinity School, Dumaguete City, Philippines.

When the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) meeting in Accra defined "empire" as "the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power [constituting] a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests" (par.11), it minced no words by mentioning the "government of the United States of America and its allies, together with international finance and trade institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization)", which use "political, economic or military alliances to protect and advance the interest of capital owners" (par.13).¹

This paper is presented from the standpoint of a nation and people that has been a victim of the "American empire".

Starting with a brief historical survey as a case study of a people suffering from the designs of today's sole superpower, the study proceeds with reflections on the Book of Revelation and the concept of the kingdom of God.

The story of a people

My country, the Philippines, which consisted of tribal peoples who had already been trading with China and Southern Asia, succumbed to Spanish colonization following the colonization of the Central and South American peoples. It remained under the Spanish Crown for 360 years until the new American empire took over. It cannot be denied that both imperial powers came for economic interests and used their international political and military might

for their territorial and economic expansion. Spain came for the rich spices of the East; America came to exploit our natural resources, dominate our economic and political life and make our country a gateway to the riches of China. In the process, Spain divided the rich agricultural country among its citizenry and created the *haciendas* that have become today's agribusiness conglomerates. America expanded its big business conglomerates, siphoning our rich natural resources, minerals and agricultural products.²

By degrees, our people rose against the onslaught of these imperial adventures. We can count some three hundred revolts and rebellions in the 360 years of Spanish rule, ending in a successful revolution, ironically only to fall into the hands of a new imperial power, the United States of America. The US fought a long war of colonial subjugation of the Filipino people which caused the loss of some one million lives from the population of 10 million at that time. The Filipino people's struggle against the American empire continues up to the present.

In fairness to the American people, it should be noted that there was no lack of opposition to this surging American tendency towards empire for early on there were anti-imperialists that championed the cause of the Filipino people. William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic presidential nominee in 1900, articulated the anti-imperialists' stance, when he declared that "imperialism had

its inspiration in the desire of the syndicates to extend their commerce by conquest".³

It is interesting to note that on the day immediately following the mock "Battle of Manila Bay", Bishop James Mills Thoburn of the Methodist Episcopal Church wrote about Admiral Dewey's "Jericho-like victory" as "the fulfilment of the hopes and prayers of years" and, therefore, urged Protestant Churches in the United States "to enter in the name of the Lord and give the people of the Philippines a pure gospel". Four weeks later, in like manner, Dr. George Pentecost reported to the US Presbyterian General Assembly saying: "God has given into our hands... the Philippine Islands... [and] by the very guns of our battleships, summoned us to go up and possess the land."⁴

Sensing that the Filipino people could not be subjugated by force of arms, the imperialists, each in their own way, brought to bear the subtle persuasive power of both culture and religion upon the Filipino people. At that time the people of the islands did not yet have a closely articulated religion - save for Islam in some areas of Mindanao and in smaller pocket areas of Luzon - and were thus easily brought into the Roman Catholic faith. With Catholicism so much of Spanish culture it filtered into the psyche and consciousness of the new converts to the faith. And since Crown and faith were close-knit entities in the dispensation practised by the

colonizers, faith and politics reinforced each other which helped to bring the Filipinos under Spanish control. At the end of the 19th century, when the work of *ilustrados* such as Rizal, Mabini, the del Pilars and others exposed the hypocrisy of the Spanish friars and provoked a critical attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church, a new generation of politically and religiously enlightened Filipinos was ready for the coming of the Protestant Gospel brought by the Americans.

Immediately after crushing the Philippine war of independence, the Americans sought to create institutions that mirrored their own - liberal democratic politics and government, universal education with a strong dose of American values, a civil society based on the principles of freedom, democracy and the free market, and imposed English as the language of government, business and the educational system. The Filipino people became “brown Americans”.

US President McKinley declared in December 1898 that the purpose of the United States in the Philippines was to “civilize and Christianize” the Filipinos “for whom Christ also died”, with force if necessary.⁵ This was President McKinley’s policy of “benevolent assimilation”, part of the “manifest destiny”. This made the US appear as the saviour and protector of the Philippines. And so the Philippines has indeed become a showcase, demonstrating that the United States of America has attained its “manifest destiny”, and in the

wider world has established the new American empire, the new Rome.

The American empire: the new Rome in the Book of Revelation?

Gordon Zerbe and Richard A. Horsley have made interesting comparisons of the New Testament Roman empire and today’s new empire. Zerbe has written mainly on the Book of Revelation and Horsley about Jesus and Empire.⁶

From republic to empire The Book of Revelation was written at the height of Roman imperial expansion and power. Zerbe notes that, starting with the conquest of the whole of Italy, Rome expanded to Asia Minor and Syria and subdued its major commercial rivals, Carthage and Corinth, gaining trade supremacy of the sea. Horsley emphasizes that Rome started as a Roman Republic taking over the whole of Italy and built an empire around the Mediterranean. In the same manner the American Republic started with the takeover of much of the North American continent from the Native Americans and other peoples. Pursuing its avowed “manifest destiny”, it seized Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, moved on to Guam, Wake Island and the Philippines in the Pacific, helped to quell the Boxer Rebellion in China, gained control of Panama and built the canal, and finally joined European powers to carve out a worldwide empire.

Religious manifestation of empire The military commanders of Rome were first called *Imperatur* (supreme

commander), then *Augustus* (the “manifest one”, starting a quasi-divine title). Later on they were called *Princeps* (the “first” in the senate, thus marking the start of the empire) and finally *Pontifex Maximus* (supreme priest completing the transition to the divine right of the emperor).

Has the “manifest destiny” its own religious ramifications? Horsley strongly believes so. He says that the early American identity started with the Puritans, a persecuted people who, like Israel, fled to establish a new covenant society. Through their victorious revolution, they established a sacred promised land and proceeded to slaughter the native inhabitants whom they derisively called the heathen savages, the dark-skinned servants of Satan. With this experience, an ideology was formed that “the United States [is] the new Israel, God’s chosen people with a historic mission, as the new Rome destined to bring civilization, law, and order to the whole world”.⁷

All roads lead to Rome But coming back to the Roman empire, we find that through military conquest Rome acquired land, booty, tribute and slaves. The latter made up about one third of Rome’s population. Rome ruled the *oikoumene* or the conquered world. As a historian puts it: “they plunder, rape, kill, and burn, and then they call it peace.” The military conquest certainly made a general sense of “peace and security” possible, providing relatively safe travel by road and sea. And so “all roads lead to Rome”. There was the *Pax Romana* - it was order decreed by terror.

In today’s empire, do we also have slaves who also travel the roads that lead to the “New Rome”? I believe the overseas contract workers are the modern version of slaves. There are six million of them from the Philippines serving the new empire and its collaborators. Like the slaves of Rome and the African slaves who were taken from their homelands at the turn of the last century, the modern overseas contract workers have the same feeling of separation, exploitation, loneliness and despair.

“All roads” (including the cyber highway) lead to the seat of the new empire that proclaimed itself the “policeman of the world” and decides the destiny of peoples. For the “policeman of the world” there is no problem even if half a million people are killed in Desert Storm and hundreds of thousands in Afghanistan and Iraq for the sake of bringing peace! The “policeman of the world” promises security by dividing the world into “those who are with us and those who are with the terrorists”. As in the old Rome, so it is in the American empire - order is imposed by an iron hand.

Economic globalization and militarization of the empire International trade brought riches to Rome. Zerbe quotes a Roman writer: “The arrivals and departures of ships never stop, so that one would express admiration not only for the harbour but even for the sea. So everything comes together here: trade, seafaring, farming, the scourings of the mines, all the crafts that exist or have existed, all that is produced or grown.” Revelation 18.11-13 lists “cargo of

gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves”.

Zerbe further explains that the international traders are not different from today’s purveyors of economic globalization. He notes that the satirical dirge on Babylon, the prostitute, in Revelation chapter 18, highlights the economic domination of Rome. Babylon’s global traders “have enriched themselves through the power of excess/luxury” (18.3) and they “have become powers of the earth” (18.23). The global traders specialize in want, not need, just like the manufacturers of today’s globalization products. In the above list of goods the Book of Revelation highlights an exploitative system that benefited an urban elite at the expense of the majority of the populace.

In 1900, Senator Albert Beveridge articulated such an imperialist position which has become true in the decades to come when he said:

We shall establish trading posts throughout the world as distributing points for American products... We shall build a navy to the measure of our greatness... Our institutions will follow our flag on the wings of our commerce. And American law, American order, American civilization and the American flag will plant themselves on shores, hitherto bloody and benighted, but, by

those agencies of God, henceforth to be beautiful and bright.⁸

The new empire can easily be what was spoken of Rome in the Book of Revelation. Consider Senator Henry Cabot Lodge’s letter to President McKinley in May, 1898:

But the time has come when (the home) market is not enough for our teeming industries, and the great demand of the day as an outlet for our products. We cannot secure that outlet from other protective countries... so our only chance is to extend our American market by acquiring more trade territory. With our protective wall around the Philippine Islands, its ten million inhabitants (sic: we were about 16 million), as the advance in civilization, would have to buy our goods, and we should have so much additional market for our home manufacturers. As a natural and logical sequence of the protective system, we should now acquire these islands and whatever other outlying territories seem desirable.⁹

Or consider again the speech of Senator Albert J. Beveridge to the US Senate, January 9, 1900:

“The Philippines are ours forever, ‘territory belonging to the United States,’ as the Constitution calls them. And just beyond the Philippines are China’s illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either... Our largest trade henceforth must be with Asia. The Pacific is our ocean ... Lines of navigation from our ports to the Orient and Australia, from the Isthmian Canal to Asia, from all Oriental ports to Australia converge at and separate from the Philippines. They

are a self-supporting, dividend-paying fleet, permanently anchored at a spot selected by the strategy of Providence, commanding the Pacific. And the Pacific is the ocean of the commerce of the future. Most future wars will be conflicts for commerce. The power that rules the Pacific, therefore, is the power that rules the world. And, with the Philippines, that power is and will forever be the American Republic... (Cf. Peter Hayes, Lyuba Zarsky and Walden Bello, *American Lake*, Australia, Penguin, 1986.) But if they did not command China, India, the Orient, the whole Pacific for purposes of offense, defense and trade, the Philippines are so valuable in themselves that we should hold them... a revelation of vegetable and mineral riches..."¹⁰

That was 1900. But consider the 1995 East Asian Strategic Report of the US Defense Department showing the furtherance of the US economic interest in Mindanao and the Southeast Asian region as well as the furtherance of the US geopolitical interest in the Asia-Pacific region today:

[This report] reaffirms our commitment to maintain a stable forward presence in the region, at the existing level of about 100,000 troops, for the foreseeable future ... for maintaining forward deployment of US Forces and access and basing rights for US and allied forces. If the American presence in Asia were removed, our ability to affect the course of events would be constrained, our market and our interests would be jeopardized.¹¹

Earlier, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge had to admit that the United States had a "record of conquest, colonization, and territorial expansion unequalled by any people in the nineteenth century".¹²

Brutality of the empire Rome's brutal conquest and the exaction of high tribute payment destroyed local economies. The acquisitions were maintained by the terror mechanism of crucifixion (10,000 in Judea alone from 63-70), imprisonments and exiles, one of the victims being the writer of the Book of Revelation. Even Roman historians describe some of their generals and emperors as "bloodthirsty".

Take the Philippine-American War that lasted from 1899 to 1913. In this longest war in US history, the Philippines lost over one million people. The Mai Lai massacre during the Vietnam war pales when compared to the massacre of the people of Samar Island in the Philippines where 600,000 Filipinos were slaughtered after the American general gave the command "to render Samar a wilderness". The order was to kill everyone who could carry guns: "the more you kill, the happier you will make me", the commander said. Whether or not the US marines were only acting on impulse to avenge the death of their compatriot, the Haditha massacre in Iraq is merely a rehearsal of the logic of empire now pursued by the USA.

Scapegoats of the empire In the time of Nero, the Christians were made the scapegoats of his crime, and many were killed. No wonder the Book of Revelation

speaks of Rome as the beast, a red dragon, with aliases of “accuser, deceiver, devil, Satan, ancient serpent”. Rome is compared to doomed Babylon, the prostitute, clothed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls (17.3-6) and depicted for (1) its lavish wealth and craving for consumption; (2) its arrogance; and (3) political oppression and economic exploitation, including its brutal military conquests and the destruction of the earth itself.¹³

Who are now the scapegoats who can be blamed for the “un-peace situation” in the world? I happened to be watching CNN when the 9/11 attack happened. I was certainly shocked watching the twin towers collapse, but I was dismayed when immediately the American authorities, without first verifying the facts, named Muslim terrorists as the perpetrators of the crime. Nero had the Christians to blame, the American empire has the “terrorists” and moreover they reserve the right to define who are the “terrorists”. Bush immediately pronounced Saddam Hussein one of the authors of 9/11 though to this day there has never been any evidence to support it. On a larger front, the Muslims are the scapegoats, concealing America’s desire for global domination.

Some theological affirmations on empire

Given the above case study and analysis of empire, I submit five theological concepts: (1) idolatry of the empire; (2) the human

being as the image of God, (3) stewardship of creation (4) the kingdom of God and (5) *shalom*.

Idolatry of the empire¹⁴ We said earlier there was a gradual transition of military titles from *Imperatur* (supreme commander) to *Augustus* (the “manifest one”, a quasi-divine title) to *Princeps* (the “first” in the senate, marking the start of the empire) and finally *Pontifex Maximus* (supreme priest completing the transition to the divine right of the emperor). The emperor arrogated upon himself the power of life and death over all peoples and territories of the known world, claiming the honour and glory of divinity, and demanded that the subjects bow before him and his images. The local kings and priests were coopted to be the implementers of the will of Rome. Any opposition faced retribution and annihilation. To the early Christians this was pure and simple idolatry.

An idol, according to Paul Tillich, is the granting of ultimate loyalty and devotion to something that is not absolute. The First Commandment says: “You shall not have any other gods before me.” The emperor has become a god. The early Christians were persecuted because they refused to attribute divinity to the emperor. Only Jesus the Messiah was given the glory and honour that belongs to God. Is the American hegemony a revival of the holy Roman empire? “Those who are not with us are terrorists and deserved to be annihilated.” In the Philippines the political leadership has become the Herodians implementing

the “imperial order” of the new Roman empire in its declaration of an “all-out war” against the “terrorists”.

**Human beings as the “image of God”:
the new Roman empire has no respect
for the “image of God”** The Christian faith affirms that human beings, male and female, are created in the image of God. The human being is a bearer of the *imago dei*. This *imago dei* is not an animal to be domesticated or vegetables to be grown and sold. The *imago dei* is not a thing to be manipulated or destroyed. The *imago dei* is to be provided with the right to life with dignity in a free and just society: life in all its fullness. The *imago dei* must be accorded with due respect and protection.

Brutality in the continuing expansion of the empire shows that the empire has no respect for the human being. In military parlance civilians, unarmed old people, women and children killed in military campaigns are “collateral damage”. In such cases human beings have no value except when they bring profit to the empire. This is why we have the massacres in the Philippines’ Samar Island, in Vietnam’s Mai Lai and Iraq’s Haditha in addition to half a million “collateral damage” caused by indiscriminate bombings during Desert Storm.

The use of religion and education to manipulate people into conforming to the culture of the empire such as creating the Filipino “Spanish Catholics” and “brown Americans” is a violation of the image of God.

In the economy of the new empire with its free market neoliberal ideology persons do not matter. The goal is profit; therefore, everything and everyone has a price.

In Hebrew/Semitic thought, the “image of God” includes the idea of the body as part of the whole person and is necessary to complete the human being. In this sense the image of God is expressed in concrete and bodily terms. As such, the human being has physical needs, for example food, shelter, clothing and intellectual development. Deprivation of these physical needs constitutes a violation of the image of God. In the empire even so-called aid has become a means of domination and deprivation.

In this connection the new empire must be prophetically confronted with the vision of Isaiah where there will be no more “infant who will live but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days” (Isa 65.20). [People] “will not build houses and another inhabit; they shall not plant vineyards and another eat” (v.22) [but] “they will build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit” (v.21).

The prophets condemn those who “sell the innocent for silver” and the “destitute for a pair of shoes” (Am 2.6-7) and those who “join house to house, who add field to field (Isa 5.8). In the Philippines, the economic conglomerates, through their local and national minions, are notoriously “adding house to house and field to field”.

The biblical goal is not the maximization of the freedom to seek individual benefits, corporate profits or national advantage in

the international market. Emil Brunner once said: “The primary purpose of economics willed by God is to minister to human needs, service to life. This implies that the economic order is a means and not an end... (I)t is the duty of each individual... and of the community as such, to see to it that the economic order is not allowed to make itself absolute, or to lose its purpose of service to humanity.¹⁵ And so the economic globalization of the empire deserves God’s judgment.”

Stewardship of God’s creation: the new empire does not care about creation The corollary to the destruction of the image of God is the destruction of creation. In the empire, global economy works in a more sophisticated way, extracting wealth from the dominated countries through the exploitation of natural and human resources. Such exploitation has no respect for the environment, God’s creation. In the face of all the concerns expressed in world conferences about preserving the environment, the new Roman empire has no qualms about its refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol.

In the Accra Statement WARC summarizes as follows: “We have heard that creation continues to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation (Rom 8.22). We are challenged by the cries of the people who suffer and by the woundedness of creation itself. We see a dramatic convergence between the suffering of the people and the damage done to the rest of creation” (par.5). The

empire and its unholy alliances are under judgment for the destruction of God’s creation.

The kingdom of God: judgment of the empire According to Mark, Jesus’ original proclamation was “The kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel!” What Jesus did was to confront the kingdom of this world with all its corruption, hypocrisy, injustice and evil with the kingdom of God. What Jesus did was to shake the foundations of the world’s socio-economic and political-military arrangements with the kingdom of God that was breaking in. The kingdom of God makes demands to do what is righteous and expose what is false and unjust. The kingdom of God demands that we love our neighbour, particularly those who are suffering and are being crushed by the evil powers of our time. And so, in every proclamation of the gospel, the idols of our time must be named and exorcised. Just as in the Book of Revelation, the beast, a red dragon whose aliases include accuser, deceiver, devil, Satan, ancient serpent, Babylon the prostitute, and all the alliances of the perpetrators of injustice are exposed and subverted; the judging power of the kingdom of God must be brought to bear, before something new can take root and arise in all human relations.¹⁶

The new Roman empire must learn that no empire in history stayed forever and therefore should heed the warning in the Book of Revelation.

Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!
(18.2)

Alas! Alas! Thou great city, thou mighty
city, Babylon!

In one hour has thy judgment come.
(18.10)

Alas! Alas! For the great city that was
clothed with fine linen,
in purple and scarlet, bedecked with
jewels, and with pearls!

In one hour all this wealth has been
laid to waste. (18.16-17)

Alas! Alas! For the great city where all
who had ships at sea
grew rich by her wealth! In one hour
she has been laid to waste. (18.19)

Concluding words: the New Jerusalem

However, it is not all dark and hopeless for humankind and God's creation, for the Book of Revelation speaks of another city. When Babylon is finally destroyed, the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God (21.2, 10) and locate itself on earth. The image is a commentary on the Lord's Prayer: "your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." Revelation says the final hope for Christians is not to leave this earth. Rather the hope that energizes Christians is God's renewing of our earthly home; the ultimate goal is to participate in and to work with God's renewal of the universe - a renewal pictured as a merging of earth and heaven where all brokenness is overcome and which leads to a consummation of God's purpose for the whole creation. The New Jerusalem is a picture of the coming of the "reign of God", in which God's people are promised a "share" or an "inheritance"

(21.7; 22.19). The New Jerusalem is an "international city" in which all nations will "walk by the light" of God's glory and of the Lamb (21.24) radiating from the throne of God, a metaphor of committing themselves to the ways of God.

In contrast to Babylon, the New Jerusalem will provide a "river of the water of life" and a "tree of life" (Rev 22.1-2). Dr. Zerbe explains: The "tree of life" which straddles the river, can produce "fruit" each month, indicating that it is a tropical city! It provides both sustenance and medicine for all the nations: its "leaves" are for the "healing of the nations". The water, the fruit, and the medicinal leaves are freely accessible to all, and from a renewable (and unlimited) resource. Thus there is clean water, food security and accessible health care, both for the city and for the whole world. The Good News is to proclaim the New Jerusalem where God dwells and where God "wipes every tear from [people's] eyes and [where] death will be no more".

Perhaps an apt concluding word for a changed world in contrast to the empire is the biblical vision of *shalom*. The 1991 Statement of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines puts it this way:

Shalom is a state of wellbeing and wholeness of life that embraces harmony with one's neighbours and social relations, with nature and creation, and with one's self. Its attainment involves a transformation of economic, social and political life so that these begin to

embody justice and righteousness, of our relations with nature, and with the whole creation so that these begin to embody care and respect for God's

purposes for them, and for ourselves so that we embody in our lives righteousness, love and human compassion.

Notes

¹ "Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth - Accra Confession," in *Accra 2004 - Proceedings of the 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches*, Geneva, WARC, 2005, p.153.

² Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: Revisited*, vol. 1, Quezon City, Philippines, 1975.

³ Daniel B. Schirmer, *Republic or Empire: American Resistance to the Philippine War*, Cambridge (USA), Schenkman Publishing Company, 1972, p.205.

⁴ T. Valentino Sito, Jr., *Several Springs, One Stream: The United Church of Christ in the Philippines*, vol. 1, UCCP, 1992, p.10.

⁵ Mariano C. Apilado, *Revolutionary Spirituality: A Study of the Protestant Role in the American Colonial Rule of the Philippines, 1898-1928*, p.29; Cf. Oscar S. Suarez, *Protestantism and Authoritarian Politics: The Politics of Repression and the Future of Ecumenical Witness in the Philippines*, Chapter 2.

⁶ Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder*, Minneapolis (USA), Fortress Press, 2003; Gordon Zerbe, "When Global Traders Ruled the World: The Choice between Babylon and New Jerusalem as Rival Economies", a Bible study presented to the UCCP National Council, October 24, 2002. Among articles on America as the new Roman empire is "Hail Bush: A New Roman Empire", *The Guardian*, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/09/19/1032054915705.html>

⁷ Horsley, p.137.

⁸ Quoted by Horsley, p.140, from Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of the Right*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1995.

⁹ Unpublished paper by CAPT. Danilo P. Vizmanos, PN (Ret), Critical Questions about US Military in Mindanao, issued January, 2002. Cf. Record, 56 US Cong., I Sess., pp.704-712.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Horsley, p.140.

¹³ G. Zerbe, op. cit.

¹⁴ Peter C. Hodgson's lectures at Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA, October 21-22, 2004 on "Christian Theology in an Age of Terror" provide an excellent theological critique of the "war on terror" perpetrated by the only remaining superpower and its "imperial arrogance" making strong emphasis on idolatry and the "radical values" of Jesus of Nazareth and zeroing in on the themes of "truth, courage, justice, love and hope". (Downloaded from Resources of Kairos: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives)

¹⁵ Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, London, Lutterworth, 1937, p.402.

¹⁶ This summary is borrowed from Dr. Levi V. Oracion in his theme exposition on "A New Millenium: Confronting New Idols in Our Times, Intensifying Our Prophetic Witness," Report of the 39th Church Workers Convocation, Silliman University Divinity School, Dumaguete City, Philippines, August 29-31, 2000, p.16. Cf. G. Zerbe, op. cit.

Theology and global empire today

Mark Lewis Taylor

Mark Taylor argues that the crises of global empire today call forth a theology that weaves together three theological themes. First, we can develop a prominent theme in the Letter from Accra, “the resurrected power of Christ”. This is to be found at work in the grace-full co-arising of counter-imperial movements around the world. Because the churches have been absent from these movements, a second theme is needed: “the resilient grace of divine Spirit”, which holds that resurrection power and divine Spirit are “resilient” i.e. persistently at work in the world in spite of the churches frequent complicity with imperial power. The third, “the way of the cross”, suggests that the movements of co-arising spirit today will take the form of an adversarial politics, of creatively dramatic nonviolent action, and of relentless organizing structures. Taylor is the Maxwell M. Upson Professor of Theology and Culture, Princeton Theological Seminary, USA. His most recent book is Religion, Politics and the Christian Right: Post-9/11 Politics and American Empire.

We address a world that is groaning for liberation, for justice, for dignity and for new unity. Without these there can be no sustainable experience of life and love on our planet. Perhaps there is no one statistic that quite discloses the forces of global empire we are up against, and also this empire’s ruthlessly distorted priorities reflected in US American policies, as this one: even a minimum budgetary Iraq war cost of US\$1.2 trillion “is 10 times the world’s annual official development assistance to all developing countries”.¹

Iraq is but one of the most prominent sites of the military and economic devastation that the global empire serves

up, steeping the majority of the world’s people in poverty, displacement and war. Indeed, many other countries and peoples can also document their ongoing devastation amid the structural dynamics of global empire that I will discuss further below.

Our theological themes

What kind of “theo-logy” - what special discourse (*logos*) about the sacred, God, faith (*theos*) - is most appropriate and effective in this time of global empire? This paper will propose that we retrieve three major aspects of Christian theological teaching. These aspects will not be those

of full doctrinal complexes. Amid today's global trauma, and along the way of the churches' urgent *processus confessionis* (which I interpret as a process marked by an urgent need to think, speak and act in a strikingly new, unified way - deliberately and critically, but as soon as possible), we have not the luxury of traditionally Western doctrinal complexities and debates. For our theological response, I suggest focus on three themes; the first, having prominence in the 2004 "Letter from Accra", the second and third being implicates of the first. The first is *hope sustained by the resurrected power of Christ*; the second is the *resilient grace of divine Spirit* (my version of traditional Reformed notions of "the sovereignty of God"), with the third being *the way of the cross*.

In this paper's opening section, I consider the first theme, hope sustained by *the resurrected power of Christ*. Then, I make an excursus into deliberation on the churches' betrayal and failure to trust in this power, making common cause instead with powers of imperialism, colonialism and neocolonial (or "neoliberal") global systems - all this, before taking up the other two theological themes. This is because the necessity of the other two theological themes rests upon a discernment of that failure and the way global empire is constituted today. This excursus, sets the stage for consideration of the other two themes, the *resilient grace of divine Spirit*, and *the way of the cross*.

Theological theme 1 – the power of the resurrected Christ

In these times when there is often near despair about the vicious and seemingly overwhelming powers of global empire, it is crucial that we not relinquish the power of hope, and articulate the kind of hope we offer. The 2004 "Letter from Accra", a prophetic witness against empire today, is also, perhaps above all, a pointing to another greater power. It is valuable, then, that one of its earliest theological lines affirms that there is hope, rooted in "the power of the resurrected Christ" to overturn "the idols and the modern gods that hold the world captive to injustice and ecological destruction".

This is Christian faith language, language that may or may not have meaning for our sisters and brothers of other faiths, for many of our friends in secular movements for justice and peace, who are also looking for hope. So we must ask: what kind of hope for the world is this "power of the resurrected Christ"? We have key stories of the resurrection of Jesus in our scriptures, and Christian theologians of many traditions have developed doctrines of Christ's resurrection. Is hope in the power of the resurrected Christ a real hope, and if so, what does it look like in the world?

There are no reliable records of anyone actually seeing Jesus' body being raised from the dead. But the powerful stories of his rising, together with the new communities that emerged around memories of the way he lived his life in his times - all this proved

so powerful that whole lives were changed, new movements birthed, by the gospel of Jesus (i.e. his discerning announcements, teachings and actions). The heart of this gospel is that there is a way of existing in the world, which combines justice and love in such a way that power is released for resisting and transforming a world of suffering and oppressed peoples and creation, even under the comprehensively threatening powers of empire.

Where is the resurrection power of Christ to be found? It is in social and historical movements. In the wake of Jesus' gospel, and the "subversive memory" of it, new movements and communities (Jesus movements, early Pauline communities) sprang up amid times of suffering under Roman rule and occupation. The *Pax Romana*, the imposed, unjust peace of Roman rule, was made to tremble. In time, as sociologist Rodney Stark argues, followers of Jesus created one of the "most successful revitalization movements in history", largely because they "prompted sustained and attractive, liberating and effective social relations and organizations".² The resurrected Christ, then, is known in "the body of Christ", which is a historical community of revitalizing power for resisting empire and enabling a resilient new flourishing of life.

Jesus movements and communities did this by forming communities of spiritual solidarity around teachings like the following: "I am my brother's [and sister's] keeper." "Do unto others as you would have them do unto

you." "It is more blessed to give than to receive."³ Christian solidarity around such teachings was tested not only by pressures exerted by Roman rulers who had their own gods and teachings, but also by Christians' courageous social presence amid the poor, even during plagues and epidemics, while emperors and their imperial doctors fled the infestations. Christians had a strange, new, revolutionary power for countering empire, and countering, too, the returning cycles of revolution and repression.⁴

I cannot in this short paper explore the many connections between the resurrection power of the Christ and the rising power of counter-imperial movements. I have explored them in other works, notably, *The Executed God: the Way of the Cross in Lockdown America*.⁵ We should not romanticize or fetishize these early Jesus movements as *always* counter-imperial. They were not perfect. But there is a real theological value to acknowledging in these early movements of history the counter-imperial power of gospel talk about Christ's resurrection. Working through the sources I list in footnote number 4 reveals the counter-imperial character of Jesus movements and communities.

The essential theological point is that if we have a hope based in the resurrection power of Christ, we should look for that hope in the rising of counter-imperial movements. This is a crucial theological underpinning for any call that we make for movements today. Christians, through knowing the power of the resurrected Christ,

are predisposed to the rising movements (uprisings, insurrections) against imperial formation. To be sure, Christ's counter-imperial power is a different power, one not only expressed in strategies of overt and direct oppositional strategies, but also marked by more covert, indirect, artful and creative nonviolent action. This counter-power usually arises in the contested borderlands and boundaries where imperial power impinges on the worlds of subjugated peoples.⁶

The theme of the power of the resurrected Christ raises a number of questions that must be answered by my second and third themes. First, though, allow me the necessary excursus on Christian betrayal of counter-imperial resurrection movements, and the rise of neoliberal and neocolonial formations today.

Excursus: the power of "Constantinian Christians" and current neoliberal developmentalism

(The power of Constantinian Christianity)

In spite of the counter-imperial power of the gospel, the followers of Jesus saw their transformative power co-opted, diluted and combined with imperial power, especially in the fourth century era of the "Christian" emperor, Constantine. Ever since, Christianity has taken on an official form that has often made ruthless, common cause with imperialism and repression. The emancipatory and counter-imperial power of the Jesus movement never was completely

eclipsed, but it was forced underground, forced to mingle and work for its ends with others dreaming a counter-imperial politics of justice and love. Underground and hybrid though it was, it often participated in some of the most transformative revolutionary agendas of decolonization. For example, the revolutionary, hybrid cultural milieu of slaves in rebellion, indentured servants, women and youth, sailors resisting impressments, and others, made up a motley crew⁷ of transnational revolutionaries who set the stage and made possible the eighteenth century revolutions in American colonies and France. (Largely white revolutionaries receive, unfairly, the credit for these revolutions.) I will return to this "underground", decolonial reality of Jesus movement power when treating the second theological theme.

While Jesus movements have never been eradicated, the imperial Christian mindset perpetrated, and continues to perpetrate, much systemic harm. In later Medieval and Reformation Europe, Christian imperial mindsets helped foster and exacerbate religious wars, revolts, cruel repression, and ever new cycles of the same. Even when Europe's religious wars were declared at an end, "Constantinian Christians" - Christians intent on expanding domination and rule of other peoples' lives and resources - used their power and beliefs to justify and help empower whole eras of globalizing domination and colonization: first Portuguese and Spanish explorers and conquerors, then Dutch, French and British

administrators, and, in the present neo-colonizing era (post-World War II to the present), US America's powerful structures and influences.

In earlier eras of Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch colonization there was an explicit Christianizing vision and intent. Even under the later French, British and US American colonizing projects, the "secular" banners of "Enlightenment", "Civilization", and now "Development", express assumptions of a Christian universalism.⁸ What is today often called the neoliberal global market ("*neoliberalismo*" in Latin America) usually structures "development"⁹ along lines that presume and rarely challenge overtly the European-based Christian universalist current - a current that with a cruel consistency delivers power to a largely white-dominant, masculinist, European-based elite. Protestant churches throughout the world that promise prosperity through participation in the global market's development projects usually only reinforce this hegemony. In contrast, routinized subordination, cultural disparagement, and underdevelopment have been and continue to be, ladled out in full, with a few exceptions, to peoples of Latin America, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and to Arab countries of Middle East (West Asia) and Central Asia.

(Six structural dynamics of today's neoliberal developmentalism)

How does the global empire's routinized subordination work today? It can be clarified first by attending to what I term "neoliberal developmentalism", the present ideology

and model for practice by global empire today. The typical pattern of neoliberal¹⁰ developmentalism, in the present era of "globalization", displays the following six structural dynamics.

Ideology There is a continuous promulgation of the ideology that the global market, as based in the initiatives of G-7/G-8 national leaders and planners, is the only alternative for the economies and politics of global community. Alternatives, or "third ways" between neoliberalism and anti-neoliberalism rarely get considered. For example, in 1979, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua sought a third way of economic structuring between capitalism and socialism. The Reagan regime in the US could only see the resistance to its own capitalist designs for Latin America. Nicaragua's proposed third way didn't even get a serious glance from Washington. Instead, Nicaragua got repression and a civil war manufactured in Washington, D.C., exploiting Sandinista weaknesses and working great devastation to that nation.

White racist and masculinist "othering" To sustain a pervasive vision and ethos of who leads in the global community and who needs to be led, of who receives privilege and entitlement and who suffers their loss, neoliberal systems rely on social and psychoanalytic constructions that problematize some humans as "other", and in diverse manners. Under various kinds of perceived duress (war, terrorist attacks, et al.), these "others" are then easily also demonized, rejected, repressed.

It seems intrinsic to nearly all cultures that an “ethnocentrism” (seeing the world through one’s own cultural lens) and even some “xenophobia” (fear of those from other cultures) are both unavoidable parts of being human. But a more vicious mode of “othering” arose with the eras of European globalization and colonization - whether Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French, British or US American. They sustained their political and military practice of mercantile and capitalist hegemony with a white racism that marked peoples of colour as subordinatable and expendable, and a hegemonic masculinity that made European women and non-European women also subordinatable and expendable. It is no accident that still today the global empire of US-dominated neoliberal developmentalism involves and reinforces a “global apartheid” of predominantly white and patriarchalized national cultures ruling over poor majorities that are primarily made up of peoples of colour and women. Women of colour are especially subject to the pressures of neoliberal economy, routinely vulnerable to dehumanizing violence and “trafficking” in exploitative labour and sexual services. In short, being white, and being a white *man* (or also any man that can benefit from patriarchal entitlement) is, in Edward Said’s words, “a very concrete manner of being-in-the-world, a way of taking hold of reality, language, and thought”.¹¹ This “taking hold” is a crucial part of global empire.

Discipline and punishment Neoliberal developmentalism shows its power in a

structural dynamic of disciplining and punishing applied to those developing nations that seek to set their own terms of development. The civil war orchestrated by the US against Nicaragua of the 1970s and 1980s is one case in point. Haiti has been punished and disciplined, by the US and France, through economic quarantining and military interventions ever since its slave rebellion at the turn of the nineteenth century. The invasion of Hussein’s Iraq in March 2003, was in part due to the fact that Hussein had demonstrated, from 1990 on, that though once a friend (and even a creation) of the US, he planned to go his own way, even entertaining plans to trade oil and gas in euros rather than dollars.¹²

Selective “integration” Neoliberal developmentalism speaks often of “integrating” poorer nations’ economies into the globalizing order, suggesting that this will bring availability of investment funds, capital and other goods for the betterment of the poorer nations. This integration, though, is quite selective. It empowers, mainly, the elite sectors within the poorer nations. Various systems of rules are often imposed upon these nations (IMF “structural adjustment plans”, privatization schemes, business agreements and debt-repayment schedules) which give opportunity to elite corruption and eviscerate social planning for poor majorities in those countries. Debt-repayment plans, set by overdeveloped countries, for example, often demand that debtor nations lower minimum wages, slash

funding for social services, privatize utilities and so on.

Accommodating rogue regimes

Neoliberal developmentalism all too often has tolerated and supported ruthless regimes in less developed countries, especially if elites in those countries are servicing the economic, political or military needs of the powerful countries. In the US dominated era of globalization, from 1946 to the present, even a partial list of countries with ruthless regimes that were supported covertly or overtly by the US is infamous: Indonesia, Greece, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, Haiti, South Korea, Turkey, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile and more. Iraq under Saddam Hussein was also once such a regime, with previous President George H.W. Bush so valuing Hussein during his war with Iran that “Bush the Elder” defended him from US Congressional plans to cut off aid to him. Now, the fiasco and inferno of Iraq’s chaos, civil war and civilian deaths by the thousands, due to unilateralist US policies of war and occupation, lay bare neoliberal development’s own “rogue regime” dimension.

Containing resistance within the imperium

Global elites in the powerful nations also have to set up measures for surveillance, disenfranchisement, and if necessary, the imprisonment and killing, of activists and members of movements within the dominant nations. Those especially subject to such modes of containment include activist individuals and groups pressing for racial, economic and

environmental justice, those working for comprehensive women’s empowerment, many seeking peace against militarist war policies, dissidents pressing for regime change within the powerful nations, or cultural freedom advocates seeking responsible sexual and family freedom from those who would colonize desire and pleasure on behalf of patriarchal family values.

In the United States, activists usually emerge from, or work in solidarity with, economically and racially disenfranchised groups. These groups, thus, are the ones most subject to systematic structures of containment. This, in part, helps account for the scale and rapidity of the rise of a US prison industrial complex (1980-2000), which featured a quadrupling of the prison population (now at 2.2 million), nearly all of whom are economically poor. Seventy-five per cent of the US imprisoned are people of colour. Nearly 50% of the total are African American. This warehousing approach to managing the economically and racially disenfranchised in an imperial nation is a constitutive and essential part of the forging of a dominant domestic coalition for US imperial adventuring and repression abroad. The *Pax Americana* abroad needs its “Gulag America” at home. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, in New York City and Washington, DC, ever greater increases in surveillance and curtailment of civil liberties and human rights *within* the United States have further strengthened the base of US

elites for their imperial adventures abroad - economic and military.

(The resultant “pyramid of global constitution”)

As a result of these six structural dynamics, we have a fluid, volatile, but nevertheless repressive, global hierarchy carrying out an imperial function vis-à-vis the rest of the world. It is summarized, best, I think, by Hardt and Negri, in their book, *Empire*, where they discuss the imperial order’s “pyramid of global constitution” with three major tiers.¹³ (See diagram)

The top tier, *the tier of global command*, is made up of three sublevels: (a) the United States as controller of overwhelming military force, (b) the coordination of interests by leaders of the powerful G-7 countries, and (c) the multilateral finance control groups (World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank).

The second tier is a *networking tier for distributing and defending global empire* and its military and economic interests. There are two sublevels here: (a) the network of transnational corporations, and (b) the national executives who have a “courtesan” role vis-à-vis the top tier of command in the global empire. These latter are usually touted as “elected leaders of their countries”, and often they are elected, but they are usually limited to the roles they play in “managing” their nations, in accord with the interests of global capital. “Bush the Lesser” is such a manager in the US. So also have been leaders of many of the poorer

nations. Leaders like Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, and Evo Morales in Bolivia, are interesting because they are among the few who seek to resist the courtesan role.

The third major tier, at the base of the pyramid, is a *tier of peoples and multitudes*. It features three sublevels: (a) international representative institutions like the United Nations and its associated agencies and groups. They seek to take the sting out of the violations imposed by the global order. They rarely challenge the structure of the system, and are often not even very effective when seeking to mitigate its damage. As we move deeper into this third tier, we come closer to the masses of humanity. Beneath the UN and like associations, are (b) nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Often these work in ways indistinguishable from the UN (often in fact being credentialed by the UN, and sometimes even serving the interests of transnational corporations), but many also have considerable independence from the UN and can be more responsive to the local, grassroots concerns of people. Then at the bottom of this tier, and of the entire pyramid, are (c) a collection of broad and amorphous individuals, groups and organizations rarely represented except by the movements and communities they organize. Often they find some representation in certain church groups, in Amnesty International and other more radical advocacy groups. They are more often “the voiceless”, the neglected, what Hardt and Negri term, “the least among us”.

“Least among us” though they may be,

they are also, for Hardt and Negri “the vital force” that underlies transformation of the pyramid of global empire. They drive most powerfully towards life, especially when at work in organized movements, because life for them is always at stake. Hence the power for resisting global empire is to be found in those at the base. Those who find themselves with access to the higher tiers can also be positive agents, but largely through their solidarity, their common and respectful working with, the agency of those at the base. And it is here, with this recognition of the vital force of the least among us, that we are thrown back to our theological themes.

Theological theme 2 – the resilient grace of divine Spirit

Regarding the theme of the power of the resurrected Christ, I have suggested that we look for that power *within* counter-imperial movements for the flourishing of resistance and advocacy for life. What are we to do, however, when so many of the churches of our time have been shaped by the colonizing heritage of Constantinian Christians (who are in power in the USA today, by the way¹⁴)? This is especially a problem if we examine major church bodies in the powerful G-7 countries. There, even progressive churches rarely challenge the structural dynamics of neoliberal developmentalism that sustain the pyramid of global constitution. Churches

Diagram – “Pyramid of Global Constitution”



of those suffering poverty and discrimination in dominant nations are often more predisposed to suspicion and resistance, as are especially the churches of the disenfranchised throughout the poorer nations of the global order. Even among those sectors, though, the theology of Christian faith is so under the legacy of dominant ideologies of missionizing colonialism that it rarely generates resistance to global empire. By a mixture of outright advocacy, habitual complicity and/or silence, the churches are often toothless in the face of global empire.

Here is where the second theological theme becomes significant. Any hope that sustains us cannot rest on the witness of the church - faithful though it sometimes can be. We need the second theological theme - *the resilient grace of divine Spirit* - which holds that the counter-imperial vitality of life, in people and nature, is resiliently present outside the church, in spite of the churches' failure to articulate grace and the gospel in a counter-imperial manner. Divine Spirit manifest in Jesus, forced underground, as it were, by Constantinian Christianities is not quashed by the churches' failure. That divine Spirit blows where it wills, and the direction of its blowing has often been towards other movements and groups showing the courage and wherewithal to wage counter-imperial struggle.

In more traditional Reformed terms, we might say that the "sovereign God" does not wait upon compromising churches to

marshal counter-imperial struggle for life. Divine Spirit has not been left without witnesses to the presence of counter-imperial resistance and flourishing of life. The presence of counter-imperial spirit in other groups, often outside the church is testimony to the resilience (the sovereignty, if you will) of God, who maintains a counter-imperial presence amid the churches' apostasy, and in spite of the empire's power. Our world, thus, we might say, is still graced by that Spirit. (I do not here use the traditional language of "God's sovereignty", since that imagery is rooted in metaphors of royalty and hierarchical leadership that all too easily are pressed into service by Christians who respect imperial authority. Thus, I write less of the "sovereignty" of divine Spirit and more of its "resilience".)

To continue in this grace, Christians are invited to work closely with movements and groups, in various realms of culture, to support counter-imperial struggle of diverse sorts, *even if this means that Christians following such divine Spirit must migrate out from the churches*. Ideally, one can hope for some co-working between the few church groups that are counter-imperial and a wide variety of para-ecclesial or extra-ecclesial groups working for emancipation from global empire. The future of that relation, though, is very uncertain. We must, in the meantime, establish ever new connections with such groups. Among such groups I would include the following: Zapatista movements in Mexico and the Americas, Women's movements in the *maquiladoras* and

sweatshops of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Gabriela women's movement in the Philippines, anti-apartheid movements in South Africa, the White Overalls movements in Italy, Justice for Janitors, Intifada movements in Palestine and peace movements in Israel, liberation theology movements in Islam, and a host of others that constitute the struggle of the "least among us" against global empire. Perhaps especially the World Social Forum needs to become one site where Christian churches play a more significant role.

To be sure, Christians' participation in all these groups will have to be critical and discriminating. Not all para-ecclesial or extra-ecclesial churches exhibit the mix of love and justice for comprehensive flourishing of all creation that is integral to the grace of divine Spirit. But it is in the midst of daring new alliances with such groups that Christians will find the joy and grace of counter-imperial struggle and flourishing.

Theological theme 3 – the way of the cross

Knowing the hope of the power of the resurrected Christ within historical movements (theme no. 1), and also within movements that follow the resilient grace of divine Spirit into alliances with para-ecclesial and extra-ecclesial organizations and movements (theme no. 2), we will be in especial need of a third theme, *the way of the cross*. I write here of "the way of the cross" and not of just "the cross" (as

traditional Christology has) in order to stress that my concern is with a process of a certain character, not just with a once-for-all transaction that took place on Jesus' cross. In most traditional Western Christologies, the cross of Jesus has been fetishized, made a kind of icon in itself, as the site of a unique saving transaction by which a supernatural God works a change, largely in individuals. The meaning of the cross, in Jesus' time and for us, thus, often becomes isolated from social, political and economic concerns.

With this fetishization of the cross, it is often even forgotten by theologians that Jesus' crucifixion was an imperial execution, one carried out by authorities against one whose teachings violated the reigning cults of religious and political respectability. He crossed the boundaries of propriety in imperial culture and was seen as an at least eccentric, probably also dangerous, subversive to the ways of empire, especially at the time of Passover when a repressed and occupied people were dreaming of liberation from Roman authorities and the religious elites who supported them.

With the first theological theme, I have already stressed that Jesus' death became an occasion for witness to the resurrected Christ as the rising of movements, even counter-imperial ones that dared to take on empire. Here, I wish to stress the whole life of Jesus which was a "*way of the cross*" to the cross, and *into* the counter-imperial rising of resistance and new flourishing. What is this "way of the cross"? What does it look like?

I suggest that there are three aspects of it, and each are processes that are part of the grace we encounter in following divine Spirit into a full cross-organizational, multireligious and coalitional working. Each aspect names a politics of counter-imperial spirit in an age of global empire.

First, the way of the cross entails a *politics of confrontational Spirit*. There is a confrontation, a difference, between the ways of life aimed at by Christians and that of global empire. The way of the cross means a continual positioning of those who know the destructive ways of empire *against* the ideologies and structures of empire. There is an adversarial relation here. Even though Jesus is much known for teaching a love of the enemy, such a teaching presupposes the existence of an enemy, of adversaries ready to destroy life and advocates for life. Jesus was as surely destroyed by the complexly-joined, adversarial forces of empire as were Martin Luther King, Jr., Arnulfo Oscar Romero, Rosa Luxemburg, Mahatma Gandhi, and countless, nameless others, who have laboured against empire, resisting what it does to nations, to communities and nearly all relationships.

In short, it is part of Christian faith, as a way of the cross, to be in an adversarial and confrontational position. I stress this because so many of the churches' teachings on "love and reconciliation" have acted as if being adversarial is un-Christian and improper. Theologians and other academics have reinforced this by tending to see strong adversarial statements against injustice as

naïve, insufficiently complex, or "binaristic", in temper. Indeed it is true that there are naïve, simplistic and binaristic modes of adversarial confrontation, but adversarial confrontation need not take those forms. In fact, as we shall see with the second aspect of the way of the cross, Christian practice is marked by a creative and complex way of relating to and challenging adversaries. But that creative way makes no sense from the vantage point of those Christianities that avoid conflict and adversarial situations. The best of scholarship on Jesus and Paul, and the movements of those gathered around them (see footnote no. 4, again) testify that an adversarial, confrontational Spirit was crucial to their way of being. It is that politics of confrontational Spirit, in fact, which most got them into trouble and often led to their suffering and death. Jesus found his place in death on the cross reserved for those who dared confront empire, and he died beside others deemed subversive criminals. Christians who lay aside the confrontational Spirit of the gospel risk betraying it.

This confrontational aspect of the way of the cross will be essential if any theological declaration in a time of global empire is going to be able to forge resistance and an adversarial challenge to global empire.

Second, the way of the cross is a *politics of creatively dramatic Spirit*. It is creatively dramatic in four senses. (a) The way of the cross was creatively dramatic because the cross was itself a place of creative drama and theatre in the Roman empire. To be

crucified was intended to be a way for Rome to make an example of someone, to issue a public warning to all others: “Act like he/she did, and you will suffer this!” It was to be made a show of. It was a spectacle of terror meant to terrorize. It was a theatric of terror.

(b) Jesus’ way, as narrated in the Gospels, often showed a marked taste for creative drama in his teachings and actions. He taught in creatively rendered parables. He used gestures. He gave gestures double meanings, as when, according to Mark’s gospel, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, parodying, mimicking and perhaps mocking the powers of imperial leaders making the same journey.

(c) Jesus’ mixture of contesting injustice, on the one hand, and his embracing nonviolent responses to systems of injustice, provoked a creative and dramatic contrast with the ways of other options. For Jesus to use and advocate a way of love, a gratuitous generosity, as a mode of dealing with adversaries, while still confronting them with so powerful a way that they had to kill him, is to exploit a contrast so dramatic that it increased the memorable quality of his witness, making him all the more dangerous in the generations of counter-imperial faithful to follow. Part of the power of the deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Oscar Romero is their similar heightening of this dramatic contrast.

(d) There is an additional element of creative drama evident in the effect of Jesus’ way of going to the cross. Though he entered into the heart of the cross’s theatre of terror,

he didn’t just suffer the spectacle, he “stole the show”. His use of nonviolent love without sacrificing confrontation and adversarial resistance, enabled that “stealing of the show”. His creative drama subverted the theatric of terror. His drama proved to be a theatric that countered and challenged imperial terror because it galvanized new lives, new sociality, new empire-challenging communal movements.

This creatively dramatic aspect of the way of the cross, in today’s context of global empire, reopens the question of how the church, as itself a movement, or in alliance with other movements, can forge dramatic nonviolent actions of love that “steal the show” from the forces of empire today. What would creative, nonviolent action look like that could steal the show amid the empire’s spectacles of control and terror?

Third and finally, the way of the cross is a *politics of organizing Spirit*. The divine Spirit along the way of Jesus’ movement that ended in his death on the cross was so related to social and political life, that we must acknowledge that it was not just about transformed individuals, but about new communities, i.e. a *basileia* (kingdom). One New Testament scholar, Warren Carter, in *Matthew and Empire*, has argued that a better translation of *basileia tou theou* (“kingdom of God”) would be “God’s empire”.¹⁵ The organizational character of Jesus’ way of the cross suggests and creates options for fresh modes of organized living, and “alternative empire”, a new kingdom. This is suggested by all the interests Jesus

manifested in relational dynamics before his death, as well as in the new communities and movements of relationship that sprung up in the wake of his death. Jesus' way of the cross, then, is an organizing way, as well as a creatively dramatic way, and a confrontational way.

This third aspect of the way of the cross means that a Christian faith, especially in this age of global empire, cannot be purely a matter of prophetic denunciation or annunciation. It is essential that it be organizing, movement-oriented, planning organizational strategies for resisting and overcoming empire in coalitions with other organizations, effecting a new "globalization from below".

Conclusion – towards a theological declaration amid global empire

If we consider together all three of the theological themes treated in this paper - the power of the resurrected Christ, the resilient grace of divine Spirit, and the way of the cross - and think them in relation to the power of global empire today, we can envision a theological declaration with a distinctive approach. The declaration, it seems to me, might foreground a Christian people with the following kind of faith and action.

1. Christians would be a people marked by *hope in an age of despair and oppression*, a hope rooted in the *power of the resurrected Christ*.

2. Because the power of the resurrected Christ is present in the world in the form of

historical movements, Christians focus their communal self-understanding as *movements for social and political change*. (These movements do not exhaust the nature of Christian community, but they are necessary and essential features of Christian life.) These movements need to be engaging concretely each of the structural dynamics of global empire's neoliberal developmentalism, mentioned in the excursus of this paper. These movements will usually arise in those borderlands where imperial powers grate against subordinated peoples, the fissures and friction generating new border languages, thinking and action.

3. Because the global empire today has a veritable chokehold on the world's peoples, Christians commit to their movements amid and *against current global empire with the utmost urgency* in all aspects of church life. This commitment cannot simply be located in some "mission" aspect, or some social policy compartment of church life or ecumenical organization. It needs to be at the heart of all church life, and pervade its gospel message as preached and taught.

4. When so many churches are in betrayal of a gospel that would challenge global empire, Christians seek to participate in and build alliances and functioning coalitions (complete with conferences and concrete dialogue) *with other para-ecclesial and extra-ecclesial movements* against global empire. Identifying what these other movements are, and then reaching out to them, becomes a crucial step. This move beyond

the church is rooted in conviction that the resilient grace of divine Spirit is also working in those movements.

5. Christians bring into world movements resisting global empire a devotion to *the way of the cross* lived out in three forms:

a. as a politics of confrontational Spirit, vibrantly and firmly standing up to and against the global empire of neoliberal developmentalism.

b. as a politics of creatively dramatic Spirit, finding fresh, imaginative ways of effecting nonviolent direct action amid global empire, dramatizing that “another world is possible”.

c. as a politics of organizing Spirit, whereby Christians build and build, organize and organize intrepidly, to build structures for change, laying groundwork for an alternative global politics and economy.

Appendix

A glossary of some key terms

Empires: “relationships of political control imposed by some political societies over the effective sovereignty of other political societies.”¹⁶

Imperialism: The building and sustaining of empires (see above). Or also, economic exploitation of other peoples buttressed by military and political domination.

Capital: Wealth owned by a person or organization, or wealth invested, lent, borrowed - in short, wealth as having a structured pattern of movement. “The essence of capital is its ability to mobilize social labour by buying labour power and setting it to work.”¹⁷

Capitalism: Standard textbook definitions define it as an economic system that allows private ownership and lets the markets make decisions on how much to produce and at what price. Less standard viewpoints say it is “a new mode of mobilizing

social labour in the transformation of nature”,¹⁸ and that it is focused on owners of wealth and production who generate surpluses to spur financial accumulation.¹⁹

Neoliberalism: A set of economic perspectives and policies, applied globally, and, increasingly within powerful nations like the United States. Why is it a “*liberalism*”? Because it advocates “economic liberalism” in the form of liberal freedom for businesses and corporations, giving them liberty from government intervention and regulation. This economic liberalism was especially strong in the US between the late 19th century and early 20th century, up until the Great Depression of the 1930s and the New Deal under Franklin Roosevelt.

Neoliberalismo, the Spanish term, according to Zapatista subcomandante Marcos, is “what the Right offers, i.e. turning the world into one big mall where they can buy Indians here, women there...”.²⁰

What is “Neo-” about neoliberalism? (a) Because it is a new variant of the older 19th/early 20th century form of economic liberalism. (b) Because its liberalism is newly constituted since 1973, the year the US went off the gold standard and let currencies float amid the fast-paced speculative finance transactions of the IT computer technology revolution. (c) Because this liberalism was able to grow into a new stronger Western form after the fall of the Soviet Union, 1990/1991.

Neoliberal capitalism: A way of structuring wealth (held, spent, invested, loaned) so that control over that wealth remains in the hands of transnational elite groups of G-7 countries who experience enrichment at the expense of a global majority’s impoverishment.

Structural Adjustment Policy: An IMF/WB policy imposed on developing nations receiving loans which policy is usually a condition for receiving the loans. This policy usually includes any or all of the following: (a) increasing fiscal discipline (debt repayment), (b) prioritizing public expenditures (deprioritizing expenditures for social services), (c) tax reform, (d) financial liberalization, (e) trade liberalization, (f) attracting foreign investment, (g) privatization, (h) deregulation, (i) strengthening of property rights.

Globalization: A global economic and political system tending to feature seven trends: (a) increasingly rapid movement of goods, services and capital, (b) subordination of democratic power to unaccountable

economic power, (c) rise of modes for planning the world’s largest economies that are less and less accountable to the public as a whole, (d) privatization of public goods and services, (e) greater commodification of life forms and experiences, (f) more strategic marketing of Western-oriented ways of life throughout the world, and (g) ascendance of “speculative” money trading over long-term basic production-oriented activity.²¹

Racism: The routinized outcome of practices that create or reproduce hierarchical social structures based on essentialized physical categories, usually skin colour and other bodily features. (More vicious and extensive than individual racial bias termed “prejudice”).

White racism: The routinized outcome of practices that create or reproduce hierarchical social structures based on the privileging and entitlement of “white”, lighter skin colour and other bodily features. This and the previous definition are adapted from sociologist of racism, Howard Winant. Winant adds: “white racism extends from the transnational to the national to the experiential and personal, from the global debt burden to racial profiling, from Negrophobia to Islamophobia.”²²

Sexism: A system constructed and maintained in which there is one gendered group of people (usually a “male” group) whose practices, and uses of laws, rules and customs limit the activities of another gendered group (usually “female”), but do not limit those same activities for the male-gendered group.²³

Notes

- ¹ U. Penn emeritus Professor of Finance, Ed Herman, citing Martin Wolf, “American Failed to Calculate Enormous Costs of War”, *Financial Times*, Jan. 11, 2006, in Ed Herman, “Notes on the Progress of the Counterrevolution, *Z Magazine*, July-August 2006 (accessed July 1, 2006).
- ² Rodney Start, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*, Princeton (USA), Princeton University Press, 1996, p.9.
- ³ Robert M. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society: Seven Studies*, San Francisco (USA), Harper & Row, 1977.
- ⁴ This distinctive kind of revolutionary potential has been summarized by a variety of scholars of early Jesus movements. In addition to Stark, see also John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years immediately after the Execution of Jesus*, San Francisco (USA), Harper & Row, 1998; Paula Fredricksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity*, New York (USA), Knopf, 1999; Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, Harrisburg (USA), Trinity Press International, 1997; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet*, New York (USA), Continuum, 1994; and Walter Wink, *Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*, Minneapolis (USA), Fortress Press, 1992.
- ⁵ Mark Lewis Taylor, *The Executed God: the Way of the Cross in Lockdown America*, Minneapolis (USA), Fortress Press, 2001. Compare, Mark Lewis Taylor, *Remembering Esperanza: A Cultural-Political Theology for North American Praxis*, Maryknoll (USA), Orbis Books, 1990, Fortress Press, 2005, especially chapters 5 and 6.
- ⁶ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, Oxford (England), Blackwell Pub., 2005, pp.10-11.
- ⁷ On this notion of the motley crew, see Mark Lewis Taylor, *Religion, Politics and the Christian Right: Post-9/11 Powers and the Christian Right*, Minneapolis (USA), Fortress Press, 2005, pp.110-23.
- ⁸ Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories, Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, Princeton (USA), Princeton University Press, 2000, 24, pp.285-7.
- ⁹ Rebecca Todd Peters, in her fine book, *In Search of the Good Life: The Ethics of Globalization*, London (England), Continuum, 2004, distinguishes a “neoliberal classical” model of globalization from a “developmentalist” one. This is an important distinction, but most of the advocates of neoliberal classical approaches also claim to be aiding the “development” of poorer countries. So, here in this paper, I speak of “neoliberal developmentalism”.
- ¹⁰ On definitions of “neoliberalism” and in relation to other terms like imperialism and racism and sexism, see the attached “Glossary of Some Key Terms”.
- ¹¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York (USA), Pantheon, 1978, p.227.
- ¹² William R. Clark, *Petrodollar Warfare: Oil, Iraq and the Future of the Dollar*, British Columbia (Canada), New Society Publishers, 2005, pp.115-23.
- ¹³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge (USA), Harvard University Press, 2000, pp.309-14.
- ¹⁴ Mark Lewis Taylor, *Religion, Politics and the Christian Right*, Minneapolis (USA), Fortress Press, 2005.
- ¹⁵ Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, Maryknoll (USA), Orbis Books, 2002, pp.301-313.

¹⁶ Michael W. Doyle, *Empires*, London and Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986, p.19.

¹⁷ Eric R. Wolfe, *Europe and the Peoples without History*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982, p.354.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.265-383.

¹⁹ Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Time*, New York, Verso, 1994.

²⁰ "Tomorrow Begins Today" (Closing Remarks at the First Intercontinental *Encuentro* for Humanity and against Neoliberalism) in Juana Ponce de León (ed.), *Our Word is Our Weapon: Selected Writings of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos*, New York, Seven Stories Press, 2001, pp.115-23.

²¹ Cf. Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World: God and Globalization*, Minneapolis (USA), Fortress Press, 2002, pp.19-29.

²² Howard Winant, *The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice*, Minneapolis (USA), University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p.126.

²³ Adapted from Sara Shute, "Sexist Language and Sexism," in *Sexist Language: A Modern Philosophical Analysis*, Mary Vetterling-Braggin (ed.), Boston (USA), Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1981, p.27.

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An ecumenical faith stance against global empire for a liberated earth community

[This is the final version of the declaration adopted by the participants in a WARC sponsored consultation on "Theological Analysis and Action on Global Empire Today", held in Manila, the Philippines, July 13-15, 2006.]

It is widely and commonly recognized that the global empire is a reality of the 21st century that must be reckoned with. There is ongoing debate - political, academic and theological - on the nature of this global reality and on how to respond to it.

Particularly, faith communities are seeking to discern the signs of the times in the context of the global reality in order to take faith stances and actions. A number of theological and interfaith discussions, as well as academic and political discussions, have taken up this problem.

The 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (2004), in both its Accra Confession and its Mission report, called for a faith stance and action with regard to the global empire. The 9th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (2006) made significant reference to the reality of the global empire in its deliberations.

In this context there is an acute need to articulate a theological stance, which will

enhance the ecumenical movement among the faith communities as well as meet the challenges of the global empire. In ecumenical circles, there is increasing interest in the deepening of theological and political discussions on the issue, along with cross-fertilizing among the regional and ecumenical discussions. This is based on the understanding that the issue of the global empire is not only a core theological issue but also a major political question.

In order to support the faith communities in their stance and action, the movement needs to catalyse and facilitate an ecumenical process of global theological reflection, discussion and debate on the global empire among concerned theologians and religious people.

For this reason and as one of the follow-up actions for living out the Accra Confession, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches organized a consultation on "Theological Analysis and Action on Global Empire Today" from 13 to 15 July 2006 in Manila,

the Philippines. Seventeen theologians from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America participated, and two invited theologians from Latin America who could not participate physically, sent a valuable paper for the consultation.

The following statement is a result of the theological analysis and reflection that took place at the consultation. It is shared with the hope that this initiative will undergird and support the ecumenical movement throughout the world, advancing discussions among global ecumenical organizations as well as regional and local ecumenical movements.

I. Signs of the times: empire on the rise

The most outstanding sign of our times is the suffering and cries of human persons and other living beings throughout the world, as their victimization proceeds in a systematic and unprecedented manner under the global US empire/market regime. At the beginning of the 21st century, all living beings in the cosmos are threatened with death and destruction. Their groaning echoes throughout the universe and is joined by the Spirit's groaning. As expressed in Romans 8.18-39, the powers and principalities of this world - with a comprehensive destructiveness in the form of the global empire - are causing creation to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation.

The brutal atrocities committed in the course of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq

have revealed the true nature of the global empire, which has taken arbitrary, unilateral military actions against the people of these countries. The global empire's obvious purpose is to expand its territorial borders in pursuit of regional hegemony and its control of oil as an economic resource, consolidating the interests of the neoliberal global market. These wars are also a new form of religious crusade, justified through religious language and theological claims.

In the Philippines, where this theological consultation is being held, we have heard numerous personal reports about the country's return to murders, abductions, disappearances and incarcerations of political dissenters, among them priests and pastors who lived out their faith and prophetic ministry. This resurgence of terror mirrors the Martial Law years and is currently compounded by the illegitimacy of the current government and its unabashed subservience to the dictates of the US empire. Those who dare to defy the empire that has enslaved and impoverished their people are being viciously suppressed. They form part of a worldwide resistance against the neoliberal ideology and imperial domination of the United States, which has officially termed the Philippines its second front in the war on terror and made it the linchpin of its geopolitical project in the Asia-Pacific region. The Philippines was the very first overseas colony of the US empire, handed over by the fading Spanish empire to the rising US Empire amidst one of the bloodiest anticolonial liberation struggles in

history. This longest-running liberation movement in Asia continues its struggle, unique in its affinity with a mass-based Christian movement that is inspired by liberation theology.

Against Cuba, the decades-old US economic embargo has been reinforced in an attempt to stop all relationships with that country, including contacts with and support for Cuba's Christian churches and the Cuban Council of Churches. Enormous economic, social, political, military and ideological pressure continues to be exerted in order to destroy the viability of a society that refuses to comply with the dictates of empire.

North Korea's economy, already weakened by the ravages of neoliberal globalization, has been pushed to the brink by the US trade embargo and economic sanctions. As a result millions suffer from hunger and malnutrition, leading to a scandalously high incidence of child mortality and a massive flood of economic refugees.

Refusing to hold bilateral talks or to normalize relations with North Korea, the US has demonized the country, naming it part of the "axis of evil" in hopes of forcing a regime change. This has only provoked North Korea to go nuclear, in turn heightening tensions and fuelling the arms race in North East Asia.

Under its "defense transformation program", the US is now turning North East Asia into a major platform for its regional and global imperial military operations. The

US-Japan alliance has been redefined to organize the Japanese self-defence forces under the effective command and control of the United States, accelerating Japan's remilitarization. In this process, the domestic political forces that wish to glorify Japan's imperial past are gaining ground, putting the country on a collision course with its Asian neighbours who have suffered Japanese colonization and aggression. The US bases in Korea are being consolidated for "strategic flexibility" to allow pre-emptive attack on North Korea and military operations anywhere in the "arc of instability".

A new militarization is also in process in the European Union (EU). European "battle groups" are being developed in order to interfere everywhere in the world to secure economic interests, particularly the access to natural resources and strategic raw materials, as well as to protect "free trade". This was concretely written into the treaty on a new European Constitution. Although the French and Dutch people defeated this neoliberal, militaristic constitution, governments are busy trying to revive it, as a legal foundation for the building of a subempire.

The US is developing new systems of weapons of mass destruction and generating high-tech and nuclear weapons. This operation along with strategies for cyber warfare and the unrestrained use of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear first strike, is seriously eroding and imperilling the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime and

disregarding the fundamental prohibition against nuclear first strikes.

The “war on terror” has led to a series of draconian laws and legally sanctioned repressive measures within the United States and in many other countries that effectively condone torture, arbitrary detention and deprivation of liberty, summary deportations, extraordinary rendition and violations of a wide range of other political and civil rights. This has effectively undermined both practice and principles of the human rights regime and the rule of law. One visible impact of empire has been the inviolability of human rights.

The very nature of the imperial project requires access to the world’s natural resources of oil, natural gas, minerals, water and forest resources. Empire is based on the appropriation of riches from the dominated countries for the benefit of the power centre. The empire is reaching out to establish unilateral control over natural resources around the world, even if this means going to war or destabilizing legitimately elected governments. Instruments such as the World Bank and other international financial mechanisms are being used to “liberalize” resource-extraction policies for the absolute benefit of the large transnational corporations serving the empire, with minimal benefits to the resource-endowed nations.

In countries, such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Indonesia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines and the Sudan, resource

extraction is undermining development. Poverty is intensified as a result of the privatization policies, which siphon profits out of these countries. Human rights are violated as people are forcibly removed from their land; working conditions are poor; environmental degradation and pollution are aggravated by a lack of control or corporate accountability, and many of these situations are giving rise to local armed conflicts.

There is a rise in religious fundamentalism within Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and other religions. The empire uses religions to justify and provide the ideology of war. This religious dimension has led to an intensification of violent conflicts fuelled by theological justifications and invoking divine purpose.

Western Christianity has been closely related to empire since the Roman days and has thus spread throughout the world. It is now being used to provide ideological legitimization for today’s empire. Globalized Christendom and the “crusades” it embarks upon today are symbiotically intertwined with global capital and the power of the global empire. In its triumphalistic pursuits, it discounts if not condemns all other religious faiths and cultures. The indigenous religions of many communities are destroyed and Islam is vilified.

The convergence of Christian religion with Western modernity has destroyed the religious and cultural life of peoples and their communities throughout the world. The powers and principalities of the global

market and empire are being baptized by these theological distortions of “Christianity”, which promote religious conflicts and bigotry globally.

The Christian religion of empire treats others as “gentiles” to be conquered, as the “evil empire” to be destroyed or as the “axis of evil” to be eradicated from the earth. The empire claims that the “goodness” of the empire must overcome these “evils”. Its false messianic spirit is imbued with the demonic.

These false claims destroy the integrity of faith(s), and radically erode the identity of Christian faith in Jesus Christ. As the spirit of empire penetrates souls, the power of global empire possesses the bodies of all living beings. Lord of its domain, it builds temples for the global market to serve Mammon.

In the name of peace and security, the global empire is exercising “omnipotent” power through its military weapons systems of mass destruction and its intensive, totalistic warfare. Already, wars such as the Crusades, the conquest of the Americas, and the colonial wars against the racial and ethnic peoples in Asia and Africa have caused massive victimization of peoples. This historical process of systematic, massive conquest and destruction of people and the earth has extended into modern times. World Wars I and II, the US atomic bombing of the Korean and Japanese peoples, the US Cold Wars against the Korean and Vietnamese people, and the Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq wars against those people and their communities have

evolved into total wars of omnicide. Current developments by the empire in global militarization threaten the total destruction of earth as a living abode. The nature of war has been radically transformed into limitless war in time and space under the geopolitics of global empire. But the omnipotent power of empire can never obtain “total security”. Its absolute power through modern military technocracy - omnicidal weapons systems and the claim of omnipotent power - constitutes a tyranny over all living beings.

The ravages of the neoliberal market economy, driven by the insatiable quest for profits, have led to massive ecological destruction, climate change, and the daily extinction of animal, plant and fish species, diminishing the earth’s life-giving biodiversity. The contamination and exhaustion of sources of potable water, the pollution of the oceans and the destruction of rain forests threaten our habitat and the life of Mother Earth.

Patriarchy and empire are inextricably interwoven. Today we see, in addition to the complex oppression of women through the ideology and practice of imperial patriarchy, the vicious use of rape and violence against women as a military tactic of domination in the wars in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, among others. Such brutal military aggression against women and girls is one of the signs of a deep and pervasive system of domination that extends to all dimensions of human life.

The gender ideology of patriarchy is pivotal in all domination hierarchies in

human society and in the communities of all living beings. These hierarchies are driven by, express and reinforce the gender ideology, as well as the racist ideology of global white power and the class ideology of transnational corporate elite. Manifested in all spheres of life, these ideologies converge and become especially visible in the global market and the geopolitics of the global empire.

II. Hope arising in the midst of empire

The people of Brazil, Venezuela, Uruguay and Bolivia, as well as Argentina and Chile, have chosen governments and opted for economic policies in resistance to the US empire. New forms of Latin American solidarity are emerging as people rise up to take control of their own resources, affirm their identity and pursue policies of economic justice, explicitly rejecting the dictates of the global neoliberal market economy and US cultural hegemony.

The people of Afghanistan and Iraq, amid rampant violence and the intense suffering of innocent citizens are resisting the occupation and imperial domination of their land. The Palestinian people continue their decades-long resistance against Israeli occupation, unmasking the link between the US imperial project of geopolitical control over the oil-rich Middle East and the Israeli expansionist project and exclusion of the Palestinians.

In Nepal the people's movement successfully dismantled the empire-backed

monarchical despot and reclaimed the right to chart their own political future. In South Korea there is growing, organized resistance by the people against the US bases and the "flexibility" doctrine, and renewed, intensified calls for the investigation of US wartime atrocities. In Okinawa, the people's sustained nonviolent struggle against US bases succeeded in 2005 in forcing the US and the Japanese Government to abandon the offshore base.

Around the globe we see a resurgent peace movement and new and growing civil society actions for peace and justice. There is an inspiring rise in peoples' resistance everywhere including within the US. The hegemony of fear has not quashed the spirit of freedom of the people, who in various parts of the world are gaining strength from each other's stories and examples.

If the rise of the global empire is the defining sign of our times, it is counterposed by people's visions of a civilization of convivial life of all living beings. These visions are rooted in people's experiences of suffering and struggle, which contain revitalized wisdom from their philosophical, cultural and religious traditions of past and present. Buddhist wisdom to overcome greed, Hindu dharma of the cosmos, Confucian wisdom of Li/Ki, Taoist wisdom of the Way (Tao), Islamic wisdom of justice, and many African, Asian, Native American and Pacific original peoples' cultural and religious wisdom provide reservoirs for the foundation of visions of a new civilization.

Such visions will be antithetical to the global empire, to Western modernity and to global Christendom. They will open ways to a civilizational and cultural “evolution” or “mutation”, in which perhaps the vision of Jesus against Pax Romana may be fused and integrated. Such movements are signs of hope, rising among the communities of people in solidarity with all living beings.

This convergence of visions of life in the midst of suffering and struggle by all living beings against the global empire, is a definite alternative to the technocratic convergence of science and technology backed by the power and greed of the global regime of empire/market.

Empire is now firmly on the ecumenical agenda as a major concern leading to discussion, reflection and in some cases action. The ecumenical engagement is deepening and widening with increased theological, prophetic and spiritual discernment. Specifically, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Council for World Mission, the World Student Christian Movement, the United Church of Canada, and the World Council of Churches have all committed themselves to address the problem of empire from various perspectives. The Lutheran World Federation and other worldwide organizations have also entered into processes of engagement with global economic injustice and hegemony.

Reflecting this widespread concern, ecumenical consultations on empire have

been held in Africa, Asia, Latin America and also in the USA.

III. Global empire: critical analysis and reflection

The use of the word “empire” in relation to US power was once controversial, more or less restricted to left-wing critiques of US hegemony. But now in the mainstream media and political discourse the concept of “empire” and “Pax Americana” are mentioned frequently and prominently.

Discourse on the global empire

Essentially, the use of the term “American empire” or “US empire” is an attempt to express the concept that the United States is no longer merely an exceptional super, hyper or hegemonic power. The shift in terminology from dominance to hegemony to “empire” is significant, above all because it highlights the classic concept of direct political control by an imperial centre. It is a question of indefinite dominance.

The US is by circumstance and design an emergent global empire, the first in the history of the world. In the last decade, the US has consolidated its Cold War era, far-flung military base system into a new global imperial system. Driven by a triumphalistic ideology, an exaggerated sense of threat and a self-serving military role, this juggernaut is tightening its grip on much of the world. Imperial domination expands by coopting and pressurizing national, regional and international government structures around the world as well as interacting with the owners and

managers of transnational corporations and mass media.

The project of global empire Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 there have been strong claims based on a new US-dominated power structure, including celebrations of a so-called “unipolar moment” and assertions that the US is “the indispensable nation”.

The report of the Project for the New American Century, entitled *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, published in September 2000, says:

“The U.S. is the world's only superpower, combining pre-eminent military power, global technological leadership and the world's largest economy... America's grand strategy should aim to preserve and extend this advantageous position as far into the future as possible.”

The military doctrines of the empire

It is officially claimed that the United States has no rival and is militarily dominant around the world. Its goal is not combating rivals but maintaining its imperial position and maintaining imperial order. Planning for imperial wars is different from planning for conventional wars. The maximum amount of force can and should be used as quickly as possible for psychological impact, to demonstrate that the empire cannot be challenged with impunity. Imperial wars end but imperial garrisons must be left in place for decades to ensure order and stability. Finally, the imperial strategy focuses on

preventing the emergence of powerful hostile challengers to the empire, by war if necessary, but by imperial assimilation if possible.

The official policy of the USA is called the “transformation of the military establishment”. When pressed on the meaning of “transformation”, Pentagon officials speak of replacing the “threat-based strategy” that long governed US military planning, with what they describe as a “capabilities-based approach”. This means that the defence department will no longer organize its forces to counter specific military threats posed by clearly identifiable enemies, but will acquire the capability to defeat any conceivable type of attack mounted by any imaginable adversary at any time - from now to the distant future. Put differently, it is a mandate for the pursuit of permanent military superiority.

The war aims of the USA have been radically changed, according to official documents. Wars are fought by the USA not just to defeat the enemy but for “regime change” and “occupation” - thus expanding the empire.

The classified Nuclear Posture Review of the US (details of which appeared in the media in March 2002, revealing the Pentagon's ambitious nuclear battle plans), redefines the role of nuclear weapons as fundamental to US defence policy. It places new emphasis on the utility of nuclear weapons in US military doctrine and strategy, and changes the very notion of deterrence. “First use” and “first strike” are

writ large on the nuclear agenda of the US. The readiness of the US to use nuclear weapons “in the event of surprising military developments” is ominous in the context of the War on Terror with its changing and expanding aims and targets.

The constant threat of war, now turned into a veritable state of permanent war, the hype about security and the promise of lasting peace are often constructed and maintained by the empire for its own survival. The defence budget of many countries is controlled or influenced, if not dictated, by the empire. The empire claims the right to intervene in any country at any time, with no particular enemy in mind. Unconditional access to space and to the use of military bases, technologies and facilities that the empire has in different countries across the world, especially in Korea, Japan and the Philippines, show the extent of its military hegemonic power. According to reliable sources of information, the Pentagon has military connections or alliances with 130 countries around the world and 800 to 1,000 (perhaps more) military bases and installations worldwide.

The ideology of the empire The most conspicuous and salient feature of the empire’s approach to international affairs is its universalistic and monopolistic claims.

The empire uses “democracy” as an umbrella term for the kind of political regime that it would like to see installed all over the world. Bringing democracy to countries that do not yet have it is claimed as the defining purpose of US foreign policy. For

the US, democracies abroad are regimes that support or follow its dictates.

According to the National Security Strategy of the USA 2002, the United States, “sustained by faith in the principle of liberty and the value of a free society”, also has “unparalleled responsibilities, obligations and opportunities” beyond its borders. It calls for possessing such overwhelming military power as to discourage any other power from challenging US hegemony or developing weapons of mass destruction. It overturns the old doctrine of deterrence and containment. Committing the US to a much-expanded understanding of security, it argues that the US must reserve the right to act pre-emptively and unilaterally against potentially threatening states or organizations. The US claims that it uses its power for good and has a selfless purpose. The Strategy also reflects the belief that global security and liberal order are based on the US - that “indispensable nation” - wielding power as the global empire.

The cultural hegemony of empire, what some call US “soft power” is a slow yet sure way of making people accept the role, function and reality of the empire as indispensable, normative and ideal. The minds of the subjects (most nations, peoples, individuals, institutions, governments) of the empire are made to believe and confess that there is no alternative (TINA) to the empire. Homogenization of cultures, traditions, values, lifestyles and the spread of triumphalistic Christianity can be identified as ways of extending the empire in all

directions in global society. The emergence of religious fundamentalism can also be seen as linked to the empire. Technology and the media also are turned to its own advantage to perpetuate the values of the global empire.

Economics of the empire The empire has two faces: global militarization and neoliberal capitalist globalization. These are interrelated, as economic domination and military rule are inextricably joined. The military forces of the empire act as the “global cop” to maintain the order and security of the global market.

The US has declared in the *National Security Strategy of the U.S.A. (NSS 2002)* that it will “use this moment of opportunity”, that is, the war on terrorism to bring democracy, development, the free market and free trade to every corner of the globe. The economic agenda that will follow the flag in the quest of what is called “a better world” is clearly spelt out. It is claimed that the concept of “free trade” arose as a moral principle even before it became a pillar of economics. It is further claimed that “the twenty-first century will be an era of great promise. Globalization - the process of accelerating economic, technological, cultural and political integration - is bringing citizens from all continents together. A growing number of nations around the world have embraced American core values of democratic governance, free market economics and respect for fundamental human rights”.

The implication is clear. There is an

integral relationship between American-style free market economics and American security in the world. Globalization and imperial security go together. Global capitalism and enforced militarily (if necessary) are integral to empire building. Having achieved a “pre-eminence not enjoyed by even the greatest empires of the past”, the US is focused on using its power globally, through both military and market intervention. America’s War on Terror or “war for freedom” is at one with the expansionary goals of the market - open invasion in some places, open markets everywhere.

Global sovereignty of the empire The “National Defense Strategy 2005” states that the most important strategic objectives of national security are to defend the US from direct attack and then to secure strategic access and retain “global freedom of action”.

There is virtual rejection of international law and multilateral institutions and mechanisms. The Defense Strategy document states, “Our strength as a nation state will continue to be challenged by those who employ a strategy of the weak using international forums (a), judicial processes and terrorism”. Here international forums (a), judicial processes and terrorism are equated. Proponents of international law are equated with terrorists.

It is officially claimed that Washington would not be reluctant to send its forces into other states that, in its opinion, do not “exercise their sovereignty responsibly” or “use the principle of sovereignty as a shield behind which they claim to be free to engage

in activities that pose enormous threats to their citizens, or the rest of the international community”.

The strategy of preventive war (pre-emption) is closely bound up with the new vitality of the “hegemonic international law nihilism” that is exhibited by the present US administration. It is rooted in the idea that only the USA will be entitled to global sovereignty in the future world order. This notion of global sovereignty means that the USA will lay down international rules (for example, through the formation of alliances or blocs), determine what constitutes a crisis (a state of emergency), distinguish between friend and foe and make the resulting decision on the use of force. Only the USA is competent to use force anywhere in the world. This is one of the pillars of the new grand strategy, which is exemplified above all else by the concept of an exclusive right to preventive military intervention all over the world. Commitments to international alliances, and in particular to the United Nations, are rejected as constituting a restriction of the freedom of the US to act. By military might the global empire wants to assert global sovereignty and maintain global freedom of action.

IV. Theology in the face of empire

We offer here, first, a distinctive theological approach to empire, and second, certain key theological affirmations and rejections that need to be lifted up in this time of global empire.

Theological approach Our theological

approach begins with the Galilean Jesus, who lived at the historic crossroads of empires and cultures. He bore witness to a gospel of life as the critique of all forms of domination at work in empire, and set into history a power for building new communities in the face of empires. The main lines of a theology of the Galilean Jesus can be set forth below in five sections: treating (a) The Witness of the Hebrew Scriptures against Empire, (b) The New Testament Witness to the Galilean Jesus, (c) The Crucifixion of Jesus, (d) The Resurrection, and (e) A New Heaven and New Earth.

a) The Witness of the Hebrew Scriptures against Empire - The prophet Isaiah stands in a long line of stubborn resistance to imperial domination, calling all nations into the “shalom” that renews all humanity and creation. This long line of resistance includes remembrance of liberation from the Egyptian empire, rejection of human kingship, prophetic critique of militarization and empire, and the Sabbath/Jubilee pronouncements rejecting economic slavery.

b) The New Testament Witness to the Galilean Jesus - The Jesus of Galilee lived out a gospel of the “reign of God” amid and against the Pax Romana, the imperial domination of his day. Against imperial domination he brought new life, healing souls and bodies wounded by empire, proclaiming and building peace on earth, anticipating the restoration of all creation. To follow Jesus means many things but it surely means nothing less than resisting

empire and creating new communities of life amidst it.

c) *The Crucifixion of Jesus* - Jesus' life and ministry under Pax Romana led to his crucifixion. Jesus' suffering bears witness to how often imperial execution (along with harassment, abusive ridicule, and torture) is imposed upon those who resist the politics and culture of empire. The empire's decision to kill Jesus reveals that the struggle against empire is a life-and-death matter, that Jesus' gospel of life is in fundamental conflict with the death-dealing ways of empire.

d) *The Resurrection* - Empire did not have the final word. Jesus' embodiment of life, love and justice under empire, and his resurrection by God overcoming the power of empire's death-dealing ways, empowered new communities of life. This "body of Christ" as a community of the Spirit is risen and present among us through the collective body of movements and communities - surviving, resisting and flourishing amid domination.

e) *A New Heaven and New Earth* - Reading the book of the Revelation of John, through the eyes of the sufferers of empire, we understand the "fall of Babylon" as judgement on all empires of history and as the promise of the New Heaven/New Earth. Empowered by the power of the resurrected Christ in history, we labour for life in interreligious solidarity:

- with struggles against empire rising from diverse faith communities worldwide,

- with movements rising to break the bonds of class, caste and other social structures of exploitation,

- with coalitions rising within the US and worldwide to end the domination of the US empire - its wars and destruction of world peace,

- with visions of indigenous peoples rising to restore respect for the earth,

- with persons rising to break down the patriarchal powers of empire in order to form a gender-just community of women and men,

- with the people rising to resist racism against communities of colour in every continent,

- with the new consciousness rising to free peoples everywhere from ensnaring consumerism,

- with the work and dreaming rising from peoples everywhere who experiment with new economies and new politics to challenge the ever-new faces and manifestations of global empire.

Theological affirmations and rejections

In the face of the present crisis created by US global empire today, we reach for new understandings of the gospel message. In the spirit of the Galilean Jesus who took on Pax Romana, we find it necessary to lift our voice against some prominent features of the current Pax Americana:

1. *Concerning absolute power* The US global empire today, with a spirit of divine pretension, lays claim to absolute power. In so doing it becomes a force that

contravenes the gospel of life revealed in the Galilean Jesus.

We reject US claims to unlimited sovereignty, as seen in its National Security Strategy, its violation of international law with impunity and its unbridled unilateralism.

2. Concerning imposed messianic agendas The US global empire, with its messianic spirit, its sense of a sacred destiny (“manifest destiny”) to save and liberate the world from evil, usurps the saving role of God in the resurrected Christ. The power of the resurrected Christ is not given through any one nation’s drive to power over others; it is given, instead, through a confluence of visions and new communities born from many peoples and nations working together toward justice, peace, democracy, dignity and the integrity of all creation.

We reject therefore the theocratic and “Christocratic” aims of many leaders in Washington, DC and throughout the US, who seek to build political dominion in the name of Christ and who support or tolerate Pax Americana’s imposition of a new Christendom globally.

3. Concerning imperial justifications of war The US global empire claims a right to kill and destroy, assuming that Pax Americana is the final arbitrator of justness and goodness. There is a godlike pretension in the empire’s posing as righteous dispenser of freedom for all other peoples. We covenant to continue the urgent task of theologically exploring the themes of war and peace, of church and state in the context of empire.

We reject the empire’s use of theological and biblical language to justify its wars and other exploitative and oppressive designs. We reject the kind of apocalyptic messianism among Christians that misuses the Book of Revelation and the book of Daniel to justify its imperial violence and destruction of “others”.

The new visions for ecumenical strategies and practices, which are offered in the next section, select key themes and dimensions of this theology to give more concrete guidance to the witness of the church amid global empire today.

V. A new ecumenical vision: the peace of Jesus

We affirm another world is possible! This enables us to search for a collective vision of a community of life in justice and peace. The peace of Jesus is not the peace of empire. A new ecumenical vision for a community of life in justice and peace is being born in our day.

New visions for peace In making our contribution to new visions of community of life in justice and peace we recognize that it is grounded in the struggles of the people who are resisting neoliberal globalization and the empire in multidimensional, multicultural, multifaith, interdependent and interdisciplinary ways.

Through peace movements around the world, various visions of a peaceful world are taking shape. The beginning of the 21st century saw the emergence of an international civil society consciousness,

informed by disillusionment with the current neoliberal economic globalization and empire, and searching for an alternative community of life in justice and peace.

Social movements are important sources for new visions. The World Social Forum (WSF) has become the symbol of this rising international civil society consciousness that seeks to create space for all individuals and organizations seeking and working for justice and peace for life. A new vision of community of life in justice and peace is already growing on a worldwide scale, with initiatives for a “social economy in solidarity”.

Cultural and religious heritage: Cultural visions include, for example, *Ubuntu* within the African culture, which reflects a definition of personhood that finds its meaning within the context of a common humanity, sharing in God-given life, dignity, interdependence and a common future. In Asia, major religions have long been reservoirs of wisdom and vision for a world of peace and justice. These are harnessing and nurturing a new cultural and religious heritage of peace.

Neoliberal economic globalization and its military promotion and protection can only be countered by the convergence of visions. A fragmented vision is inadequate to resist and replace this order with an alternative.

This vision must be inclusive of political dimensions with regard to democracy. Democracy is not the market but the people’s democracy, which is participatory - with the right of people to decide their own

future and to enjoy fundamental political, social, economic and cultural rights as well as the right to life.

Democracy is a balanced system of governance, led by rules and institutions for the management of public common goods and services, and to which end global, democratic public institutions and political bodies must be restructured or created. It is based on a universal ethic of responsibility and solidarity in which the interdependence of humanity, the biosphere and societies is reflected in responsibility and social contract. Democratic governance, as a process, leads from domination to autonomy in solidarity. In this sense the state can regain legitimacy through responsibility, transparency and participation of peoples, recognition of the existence of the public common good and promotion of responsible public social expenditure. As such, democratic governance helps to define rules for the economy and gives a social framework to the market.

Global democratic institutions cannot be limited to interstate relations but reflect international civil society participation. The converging multitudes of peoples’ movements and visions, *not* the global empire, give rise to the democracy the world needs. As people marching in the streets worldwide have chanted, “*This is what democracy looks like!*”

As a Christian faith community, our vision is informed by our reading of the Bible. Biblical witness to the peace of Jesus against empire provides a key toward reaching the

full wisdom of God and the creative inspiration of the Spirit.

Values of a peace vision This vision may be manifested in values of respect for the human being, for life in all its dimensions and for the life of nature. These are the values of mutual recognition among human beings, including the recognition of the natural origin of all, and the recognition by human beings of the rest of nature external to them. Its principle is - No one can live, if the other cannot live.

These values challenge the imperial system and on their behalf we are called to resist, to intervene and to transform that system. The common good is the process in which these values confront the empire.

These values are not justified for calculable advantages in terms of utility or of personal interest. Nevertheless, they are the basic values of humanity, without which human life is destroyed, in the most elementary sense of the word.

We are called to be nonconformist and transformative communities, because life is not possible unless we undertake transformation that addresses the roots of injustice.

We search for new community and a new world of peace against empire; therefore we live out peace and justice as a committed/faith community of peace and life:

- with critical analysis,
- with repentance and confession of our complicity,
- with theological clarification and Bible study,

- with peace pedagogy,
- with resistance, joining in the resistance of people against empire,
- with work to build peace in the world from the local to the global,
- with partnerships of solidarity.

Realizing the new visions A process of recognition, education and confession regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction (*processus confessionis*) has led to the Accra Confession (2004) rejecting global neoliberal capitalism and starting a covenanting process for justice in the economy and the earth. In this context the Confession as well as the Mission report of the Accra General Council identified the global empire of the USA as the violent system pressing through and protecting the mechanisms and structures of capital accumulation at the cost of people's lives and communities at all levels. It is necessary to continue the process of recognition, learning and confessing, addressing the interaction of empire and global capitalism.

How can congregations, churches, ecumenical groups and the ecumenical movement be engaged in this process concretely? Some examples of reflections and processes already have been launched.

Stories of ecumenical witness

Ecumenical movement in the Philippines

Since 2002 US President Bush named the Philippines as the second front of the war on terror. The ecumenical movement in the Philippines, discerning the grave signs of the times, has taken an unambiguous

position against the war on terror, understanding its nexus with globalization. The National Council of Churches (NCCP), together with the World Council of Churches and Christian Conference of Asia, convened the International Conference on Terrorism in a Globalized World in September 2002. In the Manila covenant, for the first time in the global ecumenical community, the empire was named as the logic behind these seemingly unconnected forces of destruction.

Peace for Life, a new South-South and North-South solidarity network of peace advocates, was created on the mandate of the Manila covenant. Its purpose is to be a global, faith-based movement for peace and justice engaged in building people's solidarity and in mobilizing resistance to the war on terror and destructive forces of corporate globalization. At its inaugural forum in Davao City, Philippines, in December 2004, on the theme "Christian-Muslim Solidarity in the Era of Empire", it moved ahead further to define its character within the frame of interfaith solidarity. Peace for Life organized an interfaith delegation of Christian and Muslim leaders and activists from different parts of the world to join the international group of protesters against globalization during the 12th WTO Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong, in December 2005.

The NCCP has been very active in mobilizing the ecumenical community to confront the overt state tyranny that has

been fuelled and funded by the Bush war on terror. Particularly, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the United Methodist Church in the Philippines have been outstanding in their witness and activism against injustices. The Council's mission of solidarity with the landless victims of Hacienda Luisita (small-scale mining communities being evicted by multinational mining interests - victims of environmental destruction and the empire's greed for strategic resources) has strengthened the faith and prophetic witness of church workers. With the support of Peace for Life, the NCCP initiated the WCC-convened Pastoral Ecumenical Delegation Visit to the Philippines in June 2005 to call on the international community to hear the cries of the voiceless. Together with the activist Moro-Christian People's Alliance, it also convened an international solidarity gathering in 2005.

Active participation of the Philippine ecumenical community in social concerns dates back to the dismal days of Martial Law in the 1970s. Christian leaders and activists have continued to be an integral part of the struggle for peace with justice. The resilience and continuous accompaniment of the suffering people's movement for liberation even when faced with ongoing persecution and murder (unprecedented in its brutality) is a significant source of strength and resistance.

The United Church of Canada (UCC) study: "Living Faithfully in the Midst of Empire"

The United Church of Canada (UCC) has completed a study titled "Living Faithfully in the Midst of Empire". This project builds on previous work, study and actions that have focused on deepening the understanding of neoliberal economic globalization and unlimited market capitalism as roots of poverty and ecological destruction. The study also makes linkages to the ecumenical processes of the Accra Confession (WARC) and AGAPE (WCC's programme to develop alternative visions to globalization).

The strength of the UCC's engagement in the study of empire lies in its strong engagement with partner voices and experiences through stories, theological reflection and social analysis. The study contributes to a deeper awareness of empire as a system of global domination and a threat to life and creation, and shows that the present time is critical for discernment of the Gospel. The call to confession acknowledges the church's complicity in empire and challenges the church to responsive transformation based on justice. Critical elements of this work include institutional support and commitment to seeking justice and resisting evil, availability of human and financial resources, ability to work ecumenically wherever possible, and commitment to a partnership model that takes local and

global partners' voices and participation seriously.

The challenges that lie ahead include the development of education for justice resources for use by congregations in their reflection and action on empire, continuing the process of grounding the work theologically at all levels, challenging churches to live out more fully the transformative change it has called for in the report with respect to social, economic and environmental justice and continuing to live out the church's commitments to gender and racial justice in all its responses to the challenges of empire.

In this regard, we have been encouraged to note many newly emergent examples of action in resistance against the domination of the global empire and for the building of an alternative world. To mention a few, there are the growing democratic consciousness among peoples of Latin American nations, the strong citizens' movements against US military bases in Korea and Japan, efforts to address US policies within the United States and efforts for alternatives to neoliberal globalization in Germany. Also emerging are theological movements and mission movements for justice, such as in South Africa and in ecumenical organizations, including the Council for World Mission.

VI. A call to struggle against the empire

The global empire, with its unprecedented reach, represents a massive threat to life. In the face of this pervasive

and death-dealing reality of worldwide hegemony, we are inspired and empowered by Jesus of Galilee to resist empire and to renew communities of life. This new reality has economic, political, social, cultural, religious and spiritual dimensions. It presents life and death challenges for Christians, as the empire uses religion to justify its domination and violence, and makes claims that belong to God alone.

We ask all churches whose missions and peoples have historically been involved in empire building to seriously scrutinize - in partnership with the victims of their imperial past - their structure, teaching, liturgy, funding agencies and policies as well as their political allegiances, in order to repent and reshape their life in all aspects in the spirit of the anti-imperial biblical heritage.

We call upon WARC member churches, congregations and organizations to engage in processes like these, to make connections with social movements and other faith communities in order to resist imperial and capitalist structures in their particular contexts and build up communities of peace for life.

We also ask the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Student Christian Federation and other ecumenical organizations to join in these processes, as they did following the WARC decision at the 23rd General Council in 1997 - embarking on a *processus confessionis* related to global economic injustice and ecological degradation.

Throughout the consultation, participants raised the question of how to address the linkage of US and Israel imperialism in the context of the oil-rich Middle East, where it misuses the Bible in a fundamentalist manner and most violently oppresses the Palestinian people. We ask WARC to take up this issue and develop responses in cooperation with other ecumenical organizations.

We acknowledge the disastrous consequences of the domination by empire around the world. Participants of the consultation were particularly attentive to the dramatic situations in the Philippines and in Palestine. We call on WARC to take up these concerns and develop courageous responses in cooperation with other ecumenical organizations.

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**Sally Redondo,
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Reformed Faith and the Rejection of Economic Injustice:

Essays on Practising
The Accra-Confession

by

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