

Antony Kalliath

Re-Visiting Liberation Theology in a Neo-Liberal World

- (II part) -

(November 2009)

SECTION 4: NEW CONSTRUCTS AND CREATIVE PRAXES

12. New Social Analysis

The Christian engagement with justice issues has always been in harmony with contextual (liberation) theologies. Liberation-contextual theologies are essentially 'local'. Today, the meaning of contextuality has undergone a radical change because of the global-neoliberalism. In our world a plurality of centres has replaced the dialectical thinking of two opposing poles: socialist and capitalist. In our multipolar world, Marxism as a description of systems of oppression and as a prescription for a new society is no more convincing. Dialectical thinking itself has become questionable. Moreover, in its ongoing crisis many questions are posed to socialism: What does 'social' mean in socialism? What is the meaning of ownership of the means of production in the present neo-liberal economic structure? Are there any economic functions left with the State in the present global market economy?

Indeed, the invasion of neoliberal capitalism through the global market and media has made the boundaries of political, cultural, social and geographical identities thin and indistinct. In the present scenario of migration, globalization, outsourcing, diversification, consumerism, virtual market of mutual funds and shares, non-dogmatism and electronic media, it is simply impossible to have a sociology of well defined classes and castes. We need a new social analysis and new constructs of a just society rooted in an authentic humanism and in social justice with the vision God's reign.

Though the globalized market has generated enormous virtual money it has not generated proportionate wealth. The social issues of poverty, oppression and exploitation remain as ever before. Maybe they have become more intricate and subtle in the sense that, unlike in the past bipolar world, the evil forces which perpetuate the unjust system today are invisible and practically invincible. The social issues are everywhere and nowhere: they cannot be located or targeted, as in the feudal system; they can be endemic and systemic; they are 'globalized' in such a way that no fibre of human life is left untouched! Sometimes one finds oneself unaware that one is the 'victim' as well as the 'promoter' of the present oppressive system. The system is the 'master' (monster), and the people who have made the system are the 'victims'. A kind of helplessness prevails in the collective consciousness of the oppressed humanity because the enemy is both 'within' and 'without' the present societal fabric. What is inferred in the present system is that there is an intricate mix of economics, politics, history, culture and religion which is steered by human hubris and acquisitiveness.

Undoubtedly, human history has never had the abundance of wealth and scientific advancement as of today, whether it is agriculture, technology, knowledge, or communication. However, the present globalized economy has compromised the cause of justice at all levels of human existence. In the thick of affluence, millions of people suffer hunger and malnutrition, and thousands of children die every day for want of food and basic medical care. The world economy does have the resources to address this inhuman situation. The end of Cold War has brought about a substantial cut (46%) in the military spending of developed nations: this is a fabulous saving.⁴³ But these spared resources are not translated into the programmes of the poor. Rather, we find in rich countries a callous apathy towards them which, as studies indicate, spend only 0.1% of the national income for international aid!

Today humanity is in search of new alternatives for a new social order, especially as a consequence of the neo-liberal capitalism's aggressive self-assertion within the vacuum created by the failure of socialism. But the present evil cannot be denounced without a clear presentation of an 'alternative good'. A revolution cannot live without an utopia. Praxis to eliminate evil cannot come about without a *telos*: the Exodus from Egypt would not have been

possible without the hope of a promised land; without it, it would only be an exodus to die in the desert!⁴⁴ Today, the crucial challenge for the Christian engagement in justice is to offer an alternative horizon and model.

First of all, the very concept of social justice has grown beyond 'economic equality' to a 'creative equity', in which each person's responsibility in the process of bringing about justice is indispensable and counted on. The economic development that will bring forth a just society is no longer an unidimensional and monofaceted operation of mere economics and commerce. It is a wholesome endeavour which cares and promotes every aspect of human existence. A human being is not a mere *zoon politikon* (socio-political animal) as Aristotle's anthropology thinks. The stoic anthropology interpreted human being as *zoon koinonikon* (a being which is in communion with the whole humanity): this vibrates better with the present need of social justice.

Economic pundits like Amartya Sen propose the thesis of "welfare-economics" which is not confined to economy but is broadly based on social, political and cultural spheres. In Sen's economic theory, freedom is simultaneously the *end* of development and *means* for it. Freedom is the fulcrum where various aspects of development intersect creatively.⁴⁵ Development is a process in which individuals and communities will have spaces and sites to actively participate according to their capabilities; they cannot be passive recipients of benefits.⁴⁶ It is in this context that the New Development Index was created. It is neither based on *per capita* income nor on consumerism, as customarily thought. Consumerism is the development index in both the communist and capitalist systems, though their praxes differ. For capitalists, consumption is development. The communist ideology thinks that the prevailing conflicts between the classes will have a logical death when there is an abundance of commodities through the maximum exploitation of the production potentials. They want to compete, or rather outstrip the American commodities production and endeavour for the development of the resources of production. Both systems failed to build up a just society.

In the context of the emerging new concepts of social justice and social analysis, as we have discussed above, the praxis of Christian justice demands "re-imagining the evil" as well as creating a new praxis to uphold the vision of Jesus' Reign of God. The Latin American genre of liberation theology has been more anti-capitalist than pro-socialist. Its principal concern was to denounce the oppressive consequences of capitalism rather than to prescribe economic alternatives. Indeed, it identified the dehumanizing consequences of capitalism as seen through the prism of the Gospel and dwelt on the 'deconstruction' of capitalist values, but without offering effective alternatives. Moreover, the political and economic changes that have taken place in Latin America since 1985 have silently taken the wind out of the sails of Liberation Theology. The transition from the authoritarian military governments to forms of democracy, the end of internecine warfare in Guatemala and El Salvador, the transition from Sandinista rule in Nicaragua and the apparent quelling of the *sendero luminoso* in Peru, the victory of conservative candidate Felipe Calderon in Mexico and the recent victory of the socialist President Evo Morales in Bolivia have redrawn the political map of Latin America and redefined social justice issues with a sense of realism taking into account of the neo-liberal market forces. The ongoing economic changes involve the deeper incursion of neoliberal capitalism into Latin America and the development of trading blocs such as MERCOSUR (Southern common market) and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). In sum, to brace up the new challenges and issues engendered by liberalism we need new constructs of a just society, new discourses on justice, new pedagogies and praxes.

13. "Fourth-World"

In this context, it is quite relevant to take note of the debate going on in the discourse of Indian communism about the construction of a socialist Utopia. A renowned neo-communist philosopher and a scientist, M.P. Parameshwaran, reconstructed the communist ideal of socialism through the postulate of "Fourth World."⁴⁷ Though he was expelled from the Communist Party for this daring initiative, his thesis has generated a good deal of debate in the political space of the Indian Communist world. His vision of "Fourth-World" is of a creative, humanist and holistic development in a sustainable society rooted in justice and peace. Dr Parameshwaran has proposed a new, comprehensive Development Index for socialist society which profoundly vibrates with the Christian humanism in a socialist construct. The "Fourth World" means:

i. *Responsible Participation* in the decision processes: development is not just abundance of material wealth but implies also opportunities for the involvement in the building up of a new society. Employment in this purview is not merely an economic need individual's but a demand of political participation as well. Hence decentralization of power is the important means to achieve a development in which a responsible and collective participation of the whole society is made possible. *Panchayat raj* (the village administrative system) is considered as the best forum in this regard. It is a political and people-participative body which is endowed with money and power to engage the developmental and social issues at the local level. It offers a people's forum through which every member's voice is heard. People are empowered: they themselves are the solution, the masters, agents and beneficiaries of the social transformations. The ideal is that the citizenry exercise their franchise through collective responsibility. No one is excluded and all are active participants in the process of building up a society of equity and justice.

ii. *The Quality of Life* is another important component in assessing development and social justice. In socialist or capitalist societies, the quality of life is customarily assessed in terms of gross national product, *per capita* income, or consumption rate. But there are many cases in which there is significantly high rate of *per capita* income, and yet poverty and destitution are the order of the day. The UNDP (United Nations Development Report) points to this

anomaly and insists to insert "Welfare-Values" in development index.⁴⁸

There can be two sets of norms to assess the quality of life according to the "Fourth World" vision: Physical (or material) Quality of Life (PQL or MQL), namely, longevity of life, sustainability, purchasing capacity, social security, health care, land reform, etc., and Spiritual Quality of Life (SQL), namely, primary education, adult literacy, literacy of women and their well-being, higher education, increased participation in cultural events and sport and games, higher economic participation in society, higher political participation. In the understanding of economic development by the "Fourth-World" vision the "Welfare-Values" are upheld according to the 'Emancipation-Index'. This means that the amount and quality of time spent for cultural life, sports and enjoyment is a decisive index of a developed society. In the former times there were seemingly only three dear concerns: food to live, self-defense, sexual life. "Welfare values" add positive human quality to the biological existence of humans.

Creating quality time and space can be achieved in two ways: i. Fast and massive production through industry, and ii. A wisdom and discretion to help one to distinguish need from greed. The first path will cause the depletion of natural resources; it ultimately leads to regress rather than progress. This brings us to the concept of development in terms of "Sustainability Index." The increasing consumerist needs lead to inordinate exploitation of the resources of nature. When the balance between human consumption and the supply from nature is lost the result will be regression. Today, it is an accepted fact that the resources of nature are not infinite and inexhaustible. It is oft predicted that if the present volume of consumption continues the very survival of humankind will be threatened. The vision and the order of the new society must incorporate the survival of the future generations. One of the key economic principles which take care of the future generation is the policy of 'recycling the natural resources'. Decreasing consuming needs and increasing recycling will promote the sustainability of society.⁴⁹

The Sustainability Index qualifies with the longevity and emancipation indexes in the assessment of development in our vision of a new society. In sum, an integrated Life-Quality index can be defined as the sum of the three indexes, namely, Longevity, Emancipation and Sustainability.

Furthermore, the "Fourth World" vision of "Quality of Life" upholds the "Spiritual Quality of Life" (SQL), which entails social quality (life), cultural quality (life) and participation quality (gender partnership).⁵⁰

To put the above discussion in perspective, the advocacy of "Fourth World" and 'Welfare Values' in the understanding of economic development and justice is deeply rooted in a cultural revolution. This revolution is not the consequence of an economic revolution. Rather it must happen before, or along with the economic revolution. Neo-Marxist thinkers like Samir Amin, would say that the idea that the cultural revolution takes place only after the economic revolution is the root cause of the failure of socialism; the import of culture was not given due importance in the process of the economic revolution. The alternative to neo-liberal capitalism and Marxian socialism should be in the direction of a new humanist civilization. The Church can draw new insights and new praxes from the proposals of the secular world. The vision of "Fourth World" vibrates profoundly with the vision of the Reign of God at the heart of the ministry of Jesus.

14. Theology of Reconstruction

The praxis of Christian justice needs creative theories and innovative tasks in our new socio-political and economic situation. There appear to be five tasks: i. *Resistance* (mobilization of the oppressed against the sources of oppression); ii. *Denunciation* (the prophetic role of identifying and condemning the source of evil); iii. *Critique* (unmasking the ideological underpinnings the oppressive powers); iv. *Advocacy* (solidarity in struggle and promotion of specific projects); v. *Reconstruction* (acknowledging the new situation, and then developing the new means of cooperation).⁵¹ These five tasks, especially the fifth, seem able to respond to the new questions which neo-liberalism has brought to us. *Reconstruction* is not a mere a prophetic 'No,' but a prophetic task of the Church that must include a thoughtful and creative 'Yes' to options for political and social renewal. It is a new 'rooted prophecy' within the ambit of the system, and it is a new constructive praxis which endeavours at the systemic level to promote a slow, steady and sure revolution trusting in the latent power of the Kingdom reality.

The experience of moving from resistance to reconstruction is complex and ambivalent. Villa-Vincencio, speaking from the South African context, says that solidarity in resistance is different from solidarity in reconstruction. In reconstruction, the tasks are more intricate. They include coming to terms with the consequences of a violent past and seeking reconciliation. They involve building a new society upon the ruins of the old. A different kind of commitment is needed that involves patience, compromise, dialogue, participation in the decision process, hope and cooperation. For example, in the context of South Africa, when the legal structure of apartheid is replaced, a Christian participation in the discourse of jurisprudence is a vital exercise of collaboration towards the reconstruction. The question is how theology can participate in the reconstruction process. Its role is to be a source of imagining a continual renewal of society.

Taking insight from J. H. Oldham, Villa-Vincencio speaks of the dynamics of "middle axioms." They are the 'provisional definitions' of the society to be reconstructed. Or rather, they are the 'evolving principles' that are operative in the process of continuous interaction with the concerns of society, and are constantly reinterpreted and reformulated by the eschatological vision of the gospel. Middle axioms function as a lure, and draw society beyond the existing values and offer a new frame and horizon to move forward. This implies that all social proposals are envisaged under the benediction of God and it is God who brings their final fulfillment.⁵²

The concept of "middle axioms" does help the church participate in the social process while not being

identified with any single political ideology or system. Thus the power of the Gospel is inserted in the social reconstruction. As Karl Barth says, God's presence is "God's revolution" that condemns the tyranny of unjust rulers.⁵³ It is God's 'permanent revolution' challenging absolutization of any political theology or ideology. This kind of theology is especially crucial in oppressive situations such as Nazi Germany, South Africa, and now in the context of the neo-liberal hegemony. It is precisely in this context that the important role of civil society has to be recognized.

Before we turn to the significance of civil society, it is good to look at the biblical images and narratives which contribute to a theology of reconstruction. The image of Kingdom of God and the narrative of Exodus have for a long time provided the Utopian constructs. But they may not always be useful if we take into consideration of the cultural sensibilities of the different regions. The Kingdom of God may not be palatable to Asian and African countries which were colonized by the Christian West. The Kingdom of God is often identified with imperial Christendom, colonization and exploitation. For the Palestines and Native Americans, the Exodus story is oppressive because their land was taken away by the Christian 'missionary invaders'.⁵⁴ So also for the contemporary Coptic Christians the Exodus is mixed up with modern Egyptian politics. Discretion is needed in choosing biblical images for constructing theologies. In the South African context, the return from Exile and rebuilding of Jerusalem would provide a useful Scriptural narrative for a theology of prophetic reconstruction and political stability rather than revolution. The Exilic and Post-Exilic theology was composite and comprehensive as it embodied and incorporated the contradictions and conflicts inherent in the social, religious and political discourses of the contemporary era. The moralism of Deuteronomy, the 'rebellion' of Job against impositions, the prophetic judgement of Jeremiah, Ezekiel's theology of renewal, the Deutero-Isaiah's theology of hope, all had a place in the Post-Exilic theology. It was an era of profound theological conversation in which the re-constructionist concepts of Nehemiah and Ezra counter-balanced the apocalyptic dreams of Zechariah and Joel. Bruegemann says that it was a period of "theological inventiveness."⁵⁵

This long era of despair and discontent, however, embodied a profound promise of something "new" of which the "Servant of Yahweh" was the invoking symbol. Gerhard von Rad infers in this metaphor a paradigmatic shift in the Old Testament theology. That is to say, the Israelites began to set their eyes on the 'future' through the poetry of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah: "Do not remember former things; behold, I am doing a new thing" (Is 43:18-19). Prior to the Exilic period prophets and poets exhorted people to look back to former times when God had done great deeds for them. The Exilic poets were more enthusiastic to enunciate new actions of God that were discontinuous with the old traditions.⁵⁶ This shift makes the theological discourse in the Post-Exilic era a theology of reconstruction and nation building.

The theological call to reconstruction and nation building is a search for the public meaning of the Gospel. The dreams of the poor should be translated into political, economic and cultural programmes to build up a new society. Otherwise the Christian religion will be little other than opium of the oppressed. The theology of reconstruction situates the Church in the 'critical-middle' between powerlessness and power. "The desire to remain a victim is evidence of disease; yet to become a conqueror after a victim is a recipe for moral suicide."⁵⁷ The vocation of the Church is to be prophetically rooted in the 'critical-middle' of the social process of justice, neither as a victim nor victor but patient mentor and an enthusiastic facilitator for the coming of reign of God.

Being in the 'prophetic middle' is being a 'prophetic-middle' in the thick of social process. To do this 'rooted-prophecy' above all, the Church has to grow into a 'vision-thing' of God's reign. Religion is not ultimately about *tells*; it is about empowering people to reach out to their dreams, though they may appear impossible. It has to collaborate with a God who calls people to move ever forward to a new, better and transformed society. If these theological ideals are not translated into political processes and economic programmes, Christianity will face a credibility crisis. To forgo this responsibility would be a grave dereliction of its civil role in society. "The Church is not to seem pedantic, to be living in a world of pure theory, remote from life, making pronouncements that do not touch the stubborn concreteness of real life."⁵⁸ The argument of the theology of reconstruction is that Church has to occupy the civic spaces of peoples' movements of resistance, human rights, justice, etc.

15. World Church vs Global Civil Society

The emergence of a global civil society is a promise and hope for the 'excluded' and 'expendable' of our neo-liberal world, about which the prophets of doom predict the 'end of history'.⁵⁹ In our complex world the future of the Church's engagement with justice has to be visualized along and linked with the numerous liberative movements happening in the civic space. The enormity and complexity of the present social issues entail a collaborative approach of all liberative movements worldwide. The Church, instead of treading a lone path, has to develop the art of engaging her mission in partnership with secular forums and movements of social justice and human promotion. The space and site the civic movements provide are real forums for the Church in her engagement with the world. There is an urgent need to develop a new ecclesiology of partnership with civil society, and thus bring forth the public meaning of the Gospel. The Global Civil Society is the matrix for the Church to be born as a World Church.

Overview of Civil Society; "Civil society could thus be defined as the medium the various organizations, groups and individuals through which a social contract is negotiated between individual citizens on the one hand and

the centres of power and authority on the other." ⁶⁰ Though the state is the supreme centre of power and dispensation, we have globally found in the last two or three decades that the state's authority is dispersed among different layers of governance. The meaning of civil society has changed. In the 18th century it denoted the gentlemanly political elite, which deliberated about key decisions. In the 19th century Marx and Hegel interpreted civil society as the arena between the state and family. The economy was also included in the concept of civil society because of the growing political role of the bourgeois class and of the bargain going on between the state and capital. In 20th century, because of the increasing role of the workers' movement, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971) saw political parties as part of the civil society. In the 21st century civil society has come to mean non-party politics.

'Civil society' has re-emerged forcefully over the past two or three decades to take on the State and the political parties which were resisting that people would take part in the decision process at the state level. Now 'civil society' means the collective bargain or voice of various groups, organizations, movements who influence the political process and national debates on economic policies, justice, human rights, etc. In the present globalization, 'civil society', which was earlier understood within the confines of the state, has become 'global'. The 'global civil society' points out that in the present century politics has become transnational. Globalization has pushed the nature and the appeal of national issues beyond the borders of nations. It is precisely against this backdrop that we have to see the crucial role which the 'global civil society' can play in the present world affairs. The Church can become really a World Church only if it situates itself in the vital space which the global civil society offers. A World Church can be fashioned and realized only in a partnership with the emergent World Civil Society, which is a world platform, unhindered by geography, polity, culture or religion, since its concern is always the common good of humanity. In one way we can interpret Jesus' Kingdom ministry as carried out on the platform of 'civil society' of people's sobs and sighs, not from the corridors of power and aisles of the temple. Taking into account of complexity of the present globalized world, the 'Global Civil Society' seems to be the most creative space and innovative site for the praxis of liberation theology in the paradigm of 'Reconstruction Theology' and in the vision of 'Fourth World'.

Enhanced Selfhood: The arrival of Global Civil Society is the most promising event in recent history when the future loomed large with dark clouds of desperation from the onslaught of neo-liberalism. It demonstrates that humans have grown in terms of human solidarity and the search of the common good on a planetary level. Activists of global civil movements search meaning and identity beyond the modernist notions of individualism and the nation state. To phrase it differently, there is a new appreciation of the individual who situates and incorporates his or her fulfillment in a broader spectrum of the global common good. The meaning of global society should not then be searched only at the macro level of movements, networks, and collective strategies of resistance but also at the micro level of the emerging images of selfhood.

Two long-standing strands of social science speak of individual identity in terms of 'deep socialization' (learning process) and 'sociological and cultural'. The former is rooted in the developmental psychology and formation of the self. The latter sees identity as an evolving event in the ongoing search process. Individuals try to forge, experiment, negotiate and reconcile their notions of self with those of society. "Given the multiple roles people perform in modern, diverse societies, this more 'soft-wired' form of identity is not only evolving, it is also precarious and precious. It refers less to identity of 'self' than to identity in relation to categories such as nation, religion place, or belonging."⁶¹

Civil Society, Matrix of possibilities and promises: Moreover, the rise of the global society must not be assessed as an 'anti-capitalist or 'anti-war movement. Rather it is paradigmatically a new 'a-modern' logic. It is the womb of new possibilities, or rather a genuine search for comprehensive alternative visions and new civil strategies for the common good in every domain and at all levels. It seeks to recapture the humanist essence of the Enlightenment. It upholds the notion of a democracy of civil presence; it softens rationality and revises unilinear conceptions of history and theories of progress and introduces multilaterality and plurality. "Only a truly a-modern as well as multicultural paradigm can capture the complexity of these dimensions, by exploring the mosaic narratives of parallel, overlapping and/or clashing global movements, and listening carefully to their respective voices and arguments." To achieve this, a new global social science has to be developed beyond the ethnocentric bias of the Western imagination. A bold recognition of the historical experience of other regions and traditions is imperative. A new paradigm shift in terms of a multicultural vision is the advocacy of Global Civil Society. Such a shift can take place through a revision of the meaning of concepts in interdisciplinary searches and networking debates.⁶²

One of the beneficial consequences of globalization is the emergence of different spaces of human 'togetherness'. The Global Civil Society has converted it to a global sphere. It is variously described as post-national, transnational, or intra-national; this sphere is somehow assumed to be a spatial extension of the domestic arena. NGOs and peoples' movements 'network' coalitions, organize events, exchange information and hold events, such as the anti-war demonstrations of 2003.

Advocacy of Civil Society: The prime promise and the radical advocacy of 'Global Civil Society' is the radical *democratization* of human life and society. Democratization of the process of liberation means that people are themselves the subjects and agents of their struggles. Democratization helps the whole liberation process to be realized through people's empowerment. It is community specific. Fundamentally this approach is in tune with the Christian theme. The Christian concept of salvation is not individualistic and private, but communitarian.

Conversion is to the community, and salvation is through the community and in the community. The Christian identity is the Kingdom identity of sharing, service, righteousness and peace. That is to say, Christian identity is 'relational', to be sought in the social and cultural process. The catholicity (*kath'holon*, throughout the world) of the Christian identity abides in the 'relational' (ubiquity) which can only be accomplished in a radical 'democratization' of its existence. The 'Global Civil Society' offers a challenging space and platform to the Church to exercise its catholicity by collaborating with its various movements of ecology, liberation, human rights, feminist theology, etc.

While speaking of democratization a distinction has to be drawn between procedures and the substance of democracy. Procedural democracy implies territory, elections, separation of powers, and rule of law. The substantive democracy is about political equality and equity; it means that citizenry can influence the decisions and policy matters. An active Civil Society is the most efficient agency of substantive democracy. It is an area where people can express freely, organize associations, and try to influence decision-makers. Civil society organizations are "the glory of democratic societies" though they are not the electoral institutions of democracy. The Civil society is a "voice, not a vote."⁶³

The last two decades, or so have witnessed the fall of Communist regimes, the decline of military governments in Asia, Latin America and Africa, and sequentially the spread of democracy. This phenomenon is critically linked to Global Civil Society. In the present globalized world it is increasingly difficult to insulate societies from the outside world. The pressures of trade, travel, indebtedness, as well as increased communication, make closed totalitarian states difficult to sustain. Indeed, international institutions and donors demand political reform alongside the market reforms which had accelerated the process of democratization. More importantly, pressure for democratization has come from civil society groups that have been able to expand the space for their activities through links with the outside world, for example the mobilization of global civil society to influence elections in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia. These occurrences suggest a recasting of national democracy. In this process, the sovereignty of a nation is not being eroded so much as transformed. It points to the need to make use of global networks to enhance democracy at the national level.⁶⁴

At the same time it should be stated that the Global Civil Society is not representative. It is not the functional alternative or an alternative mechanism of the national democracies. However it can strengthen the national democracies. For example, the post-authoritarian states (Afghanistan, Iraq or African countries) are between democracy and failure; pervasive violence, lawlessness lack of legitimacy is the order of the day in these countries. There, democracy at the national level can be strengthened through global links, even if they are imperfect.

No doubt, with its political and cultural variety and manifestations, the Global civil society is playing a central role in influencing global perceptions and perspectives. Europe and Africa seem to be making further strides in building multilateral structures. For example, the two important new organs of the African Union, the Peace and Security Council and the African Court of Human and People's Rights have come into force in 2004. Global or domestic civil societies are no parallels of political parties but they contribute to the process of substantive democracy in society. The American Civil Liberties Union in the US, or the Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo of Guatemala (supporting families of the disappeared), or the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh (providing micro-credit and organizing development projects among the poor) are some of the best examples in this regard.

Look at the nightmare scenario of Iraq. Military solutions or options are only deepening the crisis. Iraq has become a theater of the conflict between 'Global America' and 'Global Islam'. Violence spreads throughout the Islamic world, compounded by tribal and ethnic cleavages. Terror infiltrates into the domestic arena of the West. It is indeed a test case of the Global Civil Society. However a positive scenario is slowly unfolding. The US and its allies begin to recognize that democracy in Iraq, political stability in the Middle East, and security of the West can be gained only through an intensive dialogue with global and local civil society.

16. World Social Forum

Discussion on Global Civil Society will not be complete without an earnest reference to World Social Forum (WSF).⁶⁵ which is the most engaging narrative of the former. The World Social Forum (WSF) is one of the promising events of the Third Millennium. It took shape as an antithesis of the neoliberalist capitalism. The WSF is conceived as a counterforce of the World Economic Forum of the G8 nations. It is conceived as a creative deterrent to the logic of terrorism, war and imperialism. It envisions an 'Alternative World' by globalizing "humankind on the foundation of solidarity among the poor, in a logic based on human rights and peace."⁶⁶

If we journey from the first WSF held in Porto Alegre in 2001 to the last WSF on 25 January 2007 in Nairobi, it is amazing to discern the swell of imagination gathering momentum from the grass root level to affirm that "Another World Is Possible." It is a tremendous movement of masses and mass leaders who are confident to build up a new world of human solidarity and thus try to give meaning and purpose to their lives in the process. The WSF helps us to dream when alternatives to the existing oppressive structures seem never to come around ("the end of history"). Basically it is a forum or a platform for the freedom to think of and imagine different possible worlds. It is a space where a variety of views crisscross, mutate and permutate multi-laterally, when hegemonic forces are imposing uniformity and homogeneity. It nurtures "a new political culture of citizenship" and it is a "store house of alternatives." It excludes no one and fundamentally believes in the capacity of everyone, man and woman. Every one has a veritable space by "constituent citizenship" in the process of moulding economies

and the states. It is a veritable space where a wave of opinion is generated and where people can think differently, and have the possibility of differing. It is a fermenting agent for transforming its participants, who are charged with hope. It is a world of human diversity, creativity and innovations.

The WSF is forged as a bloc of collective agents firmly rooted in their common consciousness of humanity and citizenship while holding and recognizing political diversities and cultural varieties. Rather than creating alternatives, WSF brings together those who work for alternatives and empower them in their missions. What WSF does is to deepen what is already emerging from struggles against the encompassing globalization, its agents, institutions and policies. For example, in late 1999 in Seattle, the WTO negotiations were paralyzed by the work of a mega-coalition of movements and organizations with their periodical mobilizations coinciding with the G8 summits. There was also the whole process of mobilization and active participation in connection with the cycle of UN conferences beginning with the Rio "Earth Summit" in 1992 and extending throughout the last decade of 20th century. The WSF has now initiated the development of citizenship on a planetary scale. Mobilizations as those of 15 Feb. 2003, when millions took to the streets in cities all over the world to protest against the imminent imperialist invasion of Iraq and in favour of world peace, would not be possible without the common reference point of the WSF.

The participation of the most diverse social agents, with a plurality of visions and choices, gives the WSF its vitality, and becomes the basis of a new political culture. The following are the salient features of its vision and praxis: i. It upholds equality in difference, ii. We are all part of a same and common humanity, iii. We share and preserve for the common good the Earth with its resources, water, the sun, the atmosphere, iv. Bio-diversity is inseparable from human consciousness, v. We all belong to the new planetary citizenship, which is capable of building a different world.

As a forum it is a public space for strategic thinking as a way to action. "The exercise of a participative method of thinking the way to action, respecting diversity and nourishing itself on it, is the central challenge for the WSF process." Its radicality lies not only in the results but first and foremost, in the way we achieve them. The WSF is the global civil platform for such an exercise. In this sense the WSF is an embryo of a civic pedagogy of a new type to forge a planetary citizenship.⁶⁷

Notes

⁴³ See Thomas W. POGGE (ed), *Global Justice*. Oxford Blackwell Publishers, 2001, 6ff.

⁴⁴ Robert J. SCHREITER, *The New Catholicity. Theology between the Global and the Local*. New York: Orbis Books. 1997, 103

⁴⁵ See Amartya SEN, *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books, 1999; id. *Freedom of Choice: Concept and Content*. Copenhagen: World Institute for Development Economics Research of the United Nations University, 1987

⁴⁶ See Amartya SEN, *Resources, Values and Development*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984; *Commodities and Capabilities*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁴⁷ See M.P. PARAMESHWARAN was ousted from the Indian Communist Party for writing his controversial book *Nalam Lokam* [Fourth World] 3rd edition. Kottayam: D.C. Books, 2004

⁴⁸ *UNDP Human Development Report 2004*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004, 139 ff,

⁴⁹ The ongoing debates on themes like "infinite development vs discreet development," "limits of growth" (Club of Rome Report, 1962), "anthropocentric vs eco-centric development," "environmental justice movements." "Post-Capitalist Society," "Village-Urban equilibrium," "Man-Nature equilibrium," "Sustainable rate of exploitation," etc., offer perspectives towards an alternative social ordering for the future.

⁵⁰ PARAMESHWARAN, *Fourth-World*. See ch. 7.

⁵¹ See Juan José TAMAYO, *Presente y futuro de la teología de la liberación*. Madrid: San Pablo, 1994, 92-117, in Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 108 -9.

⁵² C. VILLA-VICENCIO, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 1, 9. See also, JNK MUGAMBI, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold war* Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995, 9.

⁵³ Karl BARTH, *The Epistle to the Romans*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960, 430. See also, *ibid.*, 475-502.

⁵⁴ See M PRIOR, *The Bible and Colonialism. A Moral Critique*. Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, chs.2, 4; Mark COCKER, *Rivers of Blood, Rivers of Gold. Europe's Conquest of Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Grove Press, 1998.

⁵⁵ Walter BRUEGGEMANN, "Trajectories in Old Testament Literature and the Sociology of Ancient Israel," in Norman K Gottwald (ed), *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983. 321

⁵⁶ Gerhard VON RAD. *Old Testament Theology*. New York: Harper and Row, 1965, see also Walter BRUEGGEMANN, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, 2; ; Walther ZIMMERLI. "Prophetic Proclamation and Reinterpretation," in *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament*, DA. Knight (ed). Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977, 69-100

⁵⁷ Mark ELLIS, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987, 25.

⁵⁸ Karl RAHNER, *The Shape of the Church to Come*. London: SPCK, 1974, 79

⁵⁹ F. FUKUYAMA, *The End of History and the Last Man*. London: Penguin Books, 1992

⁶⁰ See *Global Civil Society 2004/5*. Helmut ANHEIER, Marlies GLASius & Mary KALDOR eds. Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005.

⁶¹ Introduction", *Global Civil Society*, 10.

⁶² Heba Raouf EZZAT "Beyond Methodological Modernism: Towards A Multicultural Paradigm Shift in the Social Sciences" in *Global Civil Society*, 41, 43.

⁶³ Michael EDWARDS, "NGO Legitimacy Voice or Vote?" *Global Policy Forum* (Feb, 2003).

www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/credib/2003/0202rep.htm

⁶⁴ See *Global Civil Society 2004/5*, 12-14.

⁶⁵ The 1st WSF was held from January 25 to January 30, 2001 in Porto Alegre: 20,000 people attended from around the world. The 2nd WSF, also held in Porto Alegre from January 31 to February 5, 2002, had over 55,000 official delegates representing people from 123 countries, 60,000 attendees. The 3rd WSF was again held in Porto Alegre, in January 2003. About 100,000 participated in the conference. The 4th WSF was held in Mumbai, India, from 16-21 January 2004. About 100,000 people, from 132 countries, attended the forum. The 5th WSF, 2005 was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil between January 26-31. There have been 155,000 participants, from 135 countries and 6,880 lecturers. More than 200,000 people in the opening march, 2,500 activities and 2,800 volunteers that supported the organization. The 6th WSF 2006 forum was held simultaneously in different cities around the world. The 7th WSF 2007 was held in January, 25 at Nairobi.

⁶⁶ Candido GRZYBOWSKI, "Different World from the Viewpoint of Planetary Citizenship," *Concilium*, 5 (2004) 27.

⁶⁷ See *Ibid.*, 29 ff; see also *Global Civil Society*.

9. Mānav sarir ke adi anubhav, gun aur durupayog. (Pope John Paul II's radical teachings on sex, love and the meaning of life, simplified edition.) By Fr Anthony PERCY. Tr.: Fr Leo Vechoor. Pp.71. Rs. 25. ISBN 978-81-89341-24-4.

10. Katholikon ke lie dharmasiksa. Adhunik yug men visvas men jine ke lie ek path pradarsika. (A Catechism for Catholics). By Mgr. Michael TYNAN. Tr. Br. A. Xavier Tirkey, SSP. 2007. 120 pp. Rs. 28. ISBN 978-81-89341-17-0.

11. 40 Kahaniyan jo jharjhorthi hain, prerit karti hain. (40 Stories that Stir and Inspire). Compiled by Saji ANTONY. Tr.: Ms Divya Hastwala. 2008. 104 pp. Rs 38. ISBN 978-81-89341-31-2.

The last three booklets are not translations but original compositions in Hindi:

12. Samsar ki Jyoti. By ANUP DEV. 2007. 102 pp. Rs 25. ISBN 978-81-89341-20-6.

13. Murge ki vapasi. (Fifteen exhilarating short stories of moral value in Hindi.) By Shri Victor BLAKE. 2007. 134 pp. Rs. 55. ISBN 81-89341-19-7.

14. Rahi ki racanae. Ramanlya kavya mala. (A collection of charming poems.) By Prabodh Kumar RAH. 2007. 121 pp. Rs. 40. ISBN 978-81-89341-21-3.

Ref.: Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection, Vol. 72/4 April 2008, pp. 279-295