

GLOBAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SACRAMENTALITY

Dominador Bombongan Jr.

The article looks into the rise of new social movements in our global world as occasioned by the globalization process. It will indicate the various ways in which these present day social movements have harnessed new ways of doing social, political and cultural mobilization. The article is also a theological reflection on these social movements and how these social movements of liberation, from a Christian perspective, can be considered as sacraments of God's presence in the world.

INTRODUCTION

Neoliberalism has a way of making Third World peoples feel hopeless about their situation. Without a viable alternative, people seemingly tend to go along with liberal democracy which is the political manifestation of neo-liberalism. One, however gets the feeling that in this system the exercise of regular elections simply puts into power one dictator to replace another. Joining movements is more and more experienced as a waste of time for it does not really produce concrete results. Labor unions have lost the teeth to bargain for increase in workers' wages or benefits as they inadequately confront new problems such as outsourcing, downsizing and job security. Financial bodies such as the IMF-WB freely impose such measures as SAPs or the Poverty Reduction Programs on poor countries without meeting any clear opposition. All of these create the feeling of powerlessness among the poor. It is this sense of despondency and despair that the poor must get rid of if their voices are to be heard. Furthermore, we must heed what Frans Wijzen calls the need to move beyond the fatal impact theory.¹ This

1. See Frans Wijzen, "Beyond the Fatal Impact Theory," pp. 122-131 in Michael Amaladoss, *Globalization and its Victims as seen by its Victims* (Vidyajyoti Education & Welfare Society/ISPCCK, 1999).

simply implies that the poor are not mere passive victims in an era of globalization but they are able to actively and creatively resist the forces of globalization.² Peoples' cultural identity is the reservoir of this "symbolic capital" that people can mobilize and turn into material power.³ Change is possible then when people engage themselves in political and cultural struggles. The popular sectors have to believe that globalization in the neoliberal sense of the word can be transformed into a globalization that meets the needs of the people. And that for this to happen a globalization-from-below must take place, or to use David Korten's terminology, a people-oriented development must be the main concern.⁴ In this short article then, I hope to reflect on the ways in which present day social movements have expressed new ways of doing social, political and cultural

2. Wijzen believes that marginal groups in Europe and Asia have always resisted in various forms the homogenizing tendencies of colonialization and economic globalization by reasserting their independence or identity. Because of this, he departs from those who put stress on the victimization of those at the underside of history. This view is shared by Michael Amaladoss. For Amaladoss, Asians particularly the less fortunate (Dalits or Indian Women) have withstood the onslaught of economic globalization because of their spiritual values that speak about spiritual humanism, affirmation of life, active non-violence, community duties and responsibilities. These subaltern groups draw their strength from these cultural/spiritual values. In spite of their poverty, argues Amaladoss, the poor still have their dignity. See Michael Amaladoss, "Globalization and Counter-Culture: Liberation Movements in Asia," in pp. 132-136 in Michael Amaladoss, *Globalization and its Victims as seen by its Victims* (Vidyajyoti Education & Welfare Society/ISPCK, 1999).

3. Wijzen views culture as "the meaning system that is learned and shared by the members of a group and that is used by them to interpret experiences and to organize behaviour." It has two levels, the first is the domain of what he calls the 'inconsequential beliefs and values', hence they can be transformed if people find it propitious for them. There is a second level- the layer of the 'root paradigms'- which for him are the "unquestioned presuppositions about the nature of the world and of human beings." Here is the level where people find some of their "energies" to resist globalization. See Wijzen, "Beyond the Fatal Impact," 123; 129-139.

4. Korten writes: "There is reason to believe that such a paradigm is currently emerging from a global process of collective social intervention. The dominant logic of this paradigm is that of a balanced human ecology, its dominant resources are the inexhaustible resources of information and creative initiative,

mobilization, after which I will articulate two possible theoretical frameworks in which these new social movements can consolidate their efforts for wider influence in our global world. I will conclude with a theological reflection on the social movements and how we can consider these movements of liberation, from a Christian perspective, as sacraments of God's presence in the world.

THE NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS:⁵ A DESCRIPTION

Poverty alleviation and the care for the environment are not expected to come from the "forces" behind economic globalization. The most affected sectors must galvanize themselves to force societal transformation. The rise of new social movements from below like feminism, environmentalism and the indigenous movements or what is collectively called civil society organizations are proofs that the "poor" are taking the lead themselves.⁶

and its dominant goal is human growth defined in terms of greater realization of human potentials...it assigns to the individual the role not of subject, but of actor 'who defines the goals, controls the resources, and directs the processes affecting his or her life.' People-centered development places substantial value on local initiative and diversity. It favors self-organizing systems developed around human-scale organizational units and self-reliant communities. David Korten, "People-Centered Development: Toward a Framework," p. 300 in David Korten and Rudi Klauss, *People Centered Development: Contributions Toward Theory and Planning Framework* (Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1984).

5. For concrete examples of grassroots movements and their different activities see, Paul Ekins, *A New World Order: Grassroots Movements for Global Change* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992).

6. *The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Poverty Report of 1998* defines civil society organizations in the following way: "Civil society organizations (CSOs) of all kinds have played a central role in combating poverty. These include non-governmental organizations, people's organizations, human rights groups, trade unions, cooperatives, consumer groups, women's associations, the media, religious groups, academic and research institutions and organizations of indigenous peoples." *UNDP*, 59-60.

Towards a Definition

Philip McMichael provides us with a lengthy, though comprehensive description of the new social movements: He states:

The new social movements, such as the greens, feminism and grassroots or *basismo* politics, share criticism of the development project. Where the development project advocated state economic management, the new movements tend to reject centralism and stress community empowerment instead. Where the development project emphasized industrialism and material abundance, the new movements tend to seek post- or preindustrial values of decentralization, flexibility, and simplicity; and where the development project championed state and market institutions, the new social movements seek grassroots autonomy and the reassertion of cultural values over those of the market. In short, the new social movements are distinguished by their *expressive politics* and their challenge to the economism and instrumental politics of the “developed society” model. They have grown as the institutions of the welfare state (including labor organizations) have receded, and they have contributed to the declining legitimacy of the development project.⁷

What is highlighted in this description is the emerging conflict or difference between the developmental visions of the globalists and that of the culturalists.⁸ Globalists are for continuous growth of economic wealth while culturalists build on the values of social intimacy, care for the environment, and promotion of sustainable economic practices.

Flexibility, participation, community empowerment are some of the values that inform this new politics. Those engaged in it are not seeking to grab political power (state leadership)- a significant departure from the classical left and the armed revolutionary movement- rather they seek to change the inequalities on the societal level as these inequalities are viewed from a particular perspective or situation whether this be women’s concerns or issues of indigenous peoples. There is a broadening of the classical understanding of exploitation which is class based. Exploitation now applies not only

7. Philip McMichael, *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, London & New Delhi: Pine Forge Press, 1996), 217.

8. See *ibid.*, 9.

to workers but to women or to the environment. Furthermore, the stress that is placed on a participatory model politics undermines the idea that there is a “vanguard” class that will lead the revolutionary movement. Instead, the collaboration of persons at all levels is needed.

Zsuzsa Hegedus provides several points to differentiate the present social movements from that of the social movements of the seventies. Firstly, while the social movements of the seventies tend to be widely cultural in their orientation (also a counter-cultural approach is a cultural approach), the present movements are more ethical in their outlook. They appeal to the personal responsibility/conscience in order to affect collective change whether locally, nationally or at planetary level. Starting in the eighties, movements that are not specifically cultural in their approach emerged, for example, the peace, hunger or poverty movements. Secondly, the movements of the seventies while global in their vision and values tended to be national in their political interventions. Movements of the eighties, meanwhile, are both global/planetary/transnational in their vision and interventions. In fact, he notes that the eighties were characterized by the “planetarisation” of the practices of the social movements and moreover, that they have massively entered a previously uncharted territory for social movements- the international arena.⁹ Thirdly, while the movements of the seventies infused alternative values/culture to the dominant ones, “they were, still, ‘old’ in their discourses and in their more or less ideological, ‘leftist’ or counter-cultural character.”¹⁰ This gave them a minoritarian character. Furthermore, since the stress was basically cultural, the accent was put on their innovative (what is new about them!) character rather than on their transformative dimension. The movements as we have them now are more majoritarian and transformative in their vocation.

For Hegedus, the “new” social movements are characterized by their independence from political parties and their problem-centered program targeting a specific issue. This independence from

9. See Zsuzsa Hegedus, “Social Movements and Social Change in Self-Creative Society: New Civil Initiatives in the International Arena,” p. 263 in Martin Albrow and Elizabeth King, eds., *Globalization, Knowledge and Society* (London: Sage, 1990).

10. *Ibid.*, 267.

political parties allow these movements to address problems in an autonomous way, thus providing alternative options and creating possibilities that empower people to realize and control their collective or individual future. In a self-creative society¹¹, the function of a social movement is:

nothing else than the permanent invention of autonomous capacities to *challenge*- across time and space boundaries- the *finality* and the *procedures* of the dominant method of problem solving by *setting social limits* to the realisation of a contested single option (protest side) and by *inventing/ engendering alternative approaches* and options (counter-offensive transformative side).¹²

The issue therefore, in social movements is people's empowerment.

Indeed, civil society offers space for social and political organizations, it is only a question of using this space. New social movements are born out of resistance and the need for survival. They give rise to new ways of doing politics diverging from the dominant technocratic way. They are concerned about social solidarity in daily life. They engage in forms of resistance in the face of societal disintegration. There is a need, however to harness the potentials of these diverse movements in civil society. To do that, one has to put forward some theoretical support that will guide their praxis. We present here two attempts at providing a systematic analysis of these movements' reaction to globalization.

The Rise of Postmodern Socialisms

Three authors by the name of Roger Burbach, Orlando Núñez and Boris Kagarlitsky propose an alternative ideology to economic globalization, an ideology which takes into consideration the different

11. Hegedus claims that our present society bestows on people a genuinely new capacity to invent and realize, and therefore to choose, their future in an autonomous manner. This is what he terms the process of 'auto-creativity' in society, that is the ability to creatively invent alternatives in order to resolve problems. See *ibid.*, 274-275.

12. *Ibid.*, 275-276.

popular impulses of people's movements. They call this emerging ideology postmodern socialisms. Postmodern not in the sense of nihilism or rejection of any philosophical world-view but as a deconstruction of capitalism as the heart of modernity. Put differently, postmodern socialisms voice out "devastating critiques of Western domination and its culture of power while arguing for a new liberation of humanity."¹³ For them then, postmodernity is "strongly rooted in the call for an end to the genocidal destruction of 'pre-modern' indigenous societies, in the demand for feminist liberation, and in the cry that militarism and the tyranny of the modern state must end."¹⁴ In line with this, postmodern socialisms want to deconstruct the negative impacts of global capitalism in view of creatively reconstructing a more just society.

Postmodern socialisms as a project has nothing to do with the historically existing forms of communism. They reject it. For:

The particular variant of Marxism that became ascendant in the communist countries, Marxism-Leninism, erred fundamentally in asserting that a new order could be ushered in by taking control of the state, thus transforming the economy and society from above. This approach led to benevolent authoritarian governments at best, and harsh, violent dictators at worst.¹⁵

What they try to salvage in Marxism is its historical materialism. Two essential things can be said about historical materialism. Firstly, it holds that changes in economic structures happen as a result of the class struggles (contradictions in history) among social classes. Secondly, that it is the people who construct together their social structures. Connecting this to our present discussion, we see that the state is not the principal agent of transformation. The task is given to civil society -to grassroots people. Changes in society happen when changes in values and beliefs occur at this level. Communism and national liberation movement have eventually been alienated from the impulses of the people; therefore should be relegated to

13. Roger Burback, Orlando Núñez and Boris Kagrlitsky, *Globalization and its Discontents: The Rise of Postmodern Socialisms* (London & Chicago: Pluto Press, 1997), 49.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 3.

16. See *ibid.*, 159.

the dustbin of history.¹⁶ “This time grassroots democratic and popular social movements, rather than vanguard political formations or state-oriented communist parties, may be setting the stage for an entirely new world.”¹⁷ With the collapse of Marxism the role of the traditional proletariat as the vanguard of the revolution is gone.¹⁸ Today the new social actors are the “discontented” of the globalization process. Furthermore, postmodern socialisms are not a monolithic political prototype: they rather aim at setting up political institutions that are responsive to the unique historical and political developments of each nation, hence the emphasis on the plural form. A valuable lesson one can get from the collapse of Marxist-Leninism is that “no singular model of socialism can be applicable to all societies.”¹⁹ In this connection, postmodern socialisms have high regard for multiculturalism, and the freedoms and liberties of individuals as well as groups.

According to these authors, the globalization process has produced a large body of discontented masses who have been left out as castaways by the system. As reactions to this exclusion, postmodern economies came into existence. Most of these postmodern economies concentrate on the informal sectors: e.g., street vendors, flea markets, petty family business, small cottage enterprises, workers-run enterprises, etc. The “genius of emergent postmodern economies is that they are not the creation of the state. They are based on individual or group initiative.”²⁰ The drive is to survive the negative onslaught of globalization. These economies will grow in significance not because they can compete with the global economy, but because, for the moment, they are the only viable alternatives left to the many poor people who are excluded from the formal or transnational economies. In addition, they will

17. *Ibid.*, 4.

18. See, *ibid.*, 22. See also *ibid.*, 95-96. An example of a postmodern politics is the Zapatista Rebellion. This is an Indian uprising in 1994 in Mexico led by the Zapatista National Liberation Army. This rebellion did not intend to grab power or create a state socialism. Rather, it wanted to ignite a “broad-based movement of civil society in Chiapas and the rest of Mexico that will transform the country from the bottom up.” This is a significant point of departure from previous national liberation movements.

19. *Ibid.*, 9.

20. *Ibid.*, 157.

gain further strength because global capitalism just continues to add new faces to the already large number of people excluded from the globalization process. Besides, these economies put pressure upon the capitalistic system itself. They become anti-systemic forces that, it is believed, will bring capitalism to its crisis.

Aside from the rise of postmodern economies, there is also the intensifying increase of different cultural movements such as feminism, environmentalism, indigenous movements, etc., that fight for their particular “individual” rights. They center on identity politics. Our authors expound on this:

The social movements, broadly defined, are the major ideological protagonists of the postmodern societies. The representatives of these movements and organizations have the potential to understand and articulate what is going on among the ever-swelling numbers of castaways of global capitalism. They already challenge neoliberalism and globalization in many different ways. They fight to stop the destruction of the environment, they are anti-authoritarian and democratic in their structures and principles, they are generally opposed to the domination of multinational capital and they are based on grassroots activity. The women’s movement, the ethnic rights movements, the human rights organizations, the gay and lesbian movements, the disabled, the Indians, the environmentalist, and so on, all demand fundamental changes in the existent world so that humanity can be liberated and freed from all forms of exploitation.²¹

Important to note is that the postmodern search for *individuality* generates the proliferation of these movements. This individuality should not to be construed in the sense of individualism on which the capitalistic/economic system thrives. Rather, it is “one’s very being in relation with one’s sexuality, to a particular social or ethnic group, or even in relation to other species and environment.”²² This “new quest for individuality” has to do with a critical and deep questioning of institutions and systems that limit one’s potentiality for growth and the expression of one’s identity. The different movements are fitting examples here:

What are the gay and human rights movements, if not an attempt by each and every person to pursue his or her individual sexual

21. Ibid., 158.

22. Ibid., 51.

identity? And what is the Indian rights movement, if not an attempt by individual Indians to reclaim their particular identity in relation to the ethnic group they are a part of? The environmental movement is also rooted in an individual, personal quest for a better life, a life free from visual, commercial and environmental pollution. And the environmental movement is also an attempt to define one's relationship and identity in relation to other species.²³

We live in an era where these personal quests are unmatched to this day.

As already said, the goal of these movements is not actually to grab state power. Rather they want to infuse their alternative values—their individuality, into the very fabric of civil society. This explains why their struggle is contextualized or localized. These grassroots forces are the agents of societal transformation. They are the watchdogs against globalization. A short term political tactic of radical reformism²⁴ enables this project to materialize. A head on collision with the existing system or a bloody revolution are not part of its agenda. Collaboration, political lobbying and networking with different movements whether it be NGOs (non-governmental organizations) or GO's (governmental organization), however are its priorities. The point is to provide space for alternative new ideas and approaches to society.²⁵ Therefore, postmodern socialisms do not thrive in an environment of autarky. It needs the resources that

23. Ibid.

24. See *ibid.*, 166-67. Some of the models given for radical reformism are the Workers Party of Brazil, the African National Congress, the transformed Farabundo National Liberation Front in El Salvador, the Sandanista Front in Nicaragua, the Revolutionary Democratic Party in Mexico or the Democratic Party of the Left in Italy.

25. These authors hold that any alternative to capitalism should go beyond existing models of social democracy. For existing social democracies have been forced to give in to the demands of global capital. They claim therefore that in order to avoid the trap that social democracy fell into, the new alternative has to take in to account that: "While building a broad-based system of grassroots ownership involving workers, cooperatives, municipalities, small-scale producers and consumers, the left will have to fight for and insist upon a socially controlled and regulated mixed economy, both at the national and international levels. When in power or sharing power, the left need to use the government to set the parameters and conditions for development while redirecting the resources of the international multilateral lending agencies." *Ibid.*, 168.

the present system provides, especially in this era of integrated economies. It wants however to make the existing economic system more responsive and accountable to the majority of people.

To sum up, the rise of counter-movements against globalization are postmodern because their quests for “personal identity” makes them criticize the excesses of the globalization process. Or differently put, they lay bare the crisis of civilization that our world is undergoing and identify this crisis as the crisis of modern western society. Their personal quest is undertaken in view of reinventing the common good. Moreover, they are of socialist orientations because their very grassroots activities create the conditions for a more just society. These new movements “constitute new social subjects for revolutionary change.”²⁶

The Global Civil Society and Normative Democracy

Similar to the authors we have just discussed, Richard Falk tries to give a coherent ideological identity to the counter-movements to a globalization under neo-liberal banner. His concern is to find a theory and practice that will mobilize and consolidate these forces so that their power may not only be limited to the local level (their very specific circumstance) but may reach wider implications-transnationally or globally. Falk refers to these transnational pressure groups which are generating a new kind of transnational politics as the process of *globalization-from-below*. Globalization-from-below stands for the overall efforts of global civil society²⁷ to make the state and global forces accountable to its citizenry. Falk explains:

...To situate the argument, it is important to acknowledge that there are strong positive consequences and potentialities arising from the various aspects of globalization-from-above. At the same time, the historic role of globalization-from-below is to challenge and transform the negative features of globalization-

26. Ibid., 146.

27. Global civil society “refers to the field of action and thought occupied by individual and collective citizen initiatives of a voluntary, nonprofit character, both within states and transnationally.” Falk, *Predatory Globalization*, 138.

from-above, both by providing alternative ideological and political space to that currently occupied by market-oriented and statist outlooks and by offering resistance to the excesses and distortions that can be properly attributed to globalization in its current phase. That is, globalization-from-below is not dogmatically opposed to globalization-from-above, but addresses itself to the avoidance of adverse effects and to providing an overall counterweight to the essentially unchecked influence currently exerted by business and finance on the process of decision at the level of the state and beyond.²⁸

Put concisely, globalization-from-below challenges the neo-liberal economic global structuring of the world. The global civil society that comprises globalization-from-below contains alternative visions for a more humane and just social order. These visions are often times embodied by issue-oriented groups like feminism, human rights, the greens, etc. Falk sees the need to generate a unifying theory from which a praxis will flow which eventually will fortify the fragmentary and diverse nature of these movements. His hopes are that by doing so, global civil society will have more political potential to challenge global capital. Falk chooses the concept of democracy as its umbrella theory. It is a democracy that is however “reformulated in relation to the basic aspirations of peoples everywhere to participate in the processes that shape their lives.”²⁹ Specifically, Falk designates this democracy as a normative democracy. He spells out what he means by this:

To introduce the idea of “normative democracy” is to offer a proposal for a unifying ideology capable of mobilizing and unifying the disparate social forces that constitute global civil society and of providing the political energy that is associated with globalization-from-below.³⁰

Normative democracy emphasizes the role that agency plays in global civil society’s engagement be it local or global in scope. The word “normative” is used in order to stress the need to re-align political actions with ethical and legal criteria. He elaborates on this:

28. *Ibid.*, 139.

29. *Ibid.*, 146.

30. *Ibid.*

I prefer normative...because it highlights ethical and legal norms thereby reconnecting politics with moral purpose and values, which calls attention to the moral emptiness of neo-liberalism, consumerism, and most forms of secularism. There is also a practical reason: to weaken the political appeal of resurgent organized religion while at the same time acknowledging the relevance of moral purpose and spiritual concerns to the renewal of progressive politics.³¹

For Falk, therefore, normative democracy constitutes an “embedded consensus”, or say a synthesis of the basic points of convergence and basic orientations of the movements behind globalization-from-below. Falk enumerates eight of such ethical/legal consensus that set the stage for “coalition building and greater ideological coherence”³² among political agents of the global civil society. Falk warns us that they are only descriptive and that their “content and behavioral applications will require much amplification in the varied specific settings.”³³ Let us look at them briefly:

1. Consent of citizenry- this entails people’s proper representation by their governments through their duly chosen representatives. Choice or consent may be given through the periodic exercise of elections, referenda, rights of petition and recall or other appropriate forms depending on situations- flexibility and adaptability is needed.

2. Rule of law- this means that all government officials be accountable to the discipline of the law- that no one is above the law. Such measure is necessary firstly, to avoid abuses of power and authority and secondly, to provide a system of check and balance to the operation of the judicial, executive, legislative and administrative branches of government. Rule of law means that governments be more responsive to “the normative claims of civil initiatives” through recognition of their institutions and their declarations³⁴. The example given here is the Permanent Peoples Tribunal in Rome.

31. *Ibid.*, 146-147. Falk also launches the idea of normative potential in order to implement widely held world order values such as minimizing violence, maximizing economic well being, realizing social and political justice and upholding environmental quality. Falk maintains that the process of globalization-from-below contains this normative potential. See *ibid.*, 130.

32. See *ibid.*, 147.

33. See *ibid.*

34. See *ibid.*, 148.

3. Human Rights- this relates to the need for a comprehensive recognition of the different aspects of human rights of peoples (economic, social, cultural, civil, political, individual, and group aspects). It is crucial to devise effective ways of fairly and justly implementing human rights that take into considerations the interplay of different sources of civil authorities (global, regional, state, transnationals). In short, tolerance for difference and respect for basic community sentiments are highlighted here.

4. Participation- to devise a competent way of allowing people to effectively and meaningfully participate, directly or indirectly (representational) in societal life whether in the sphere of politics, the home or the workplace. Equal access must be given to a variety of people to express their views and to influence decision processes in society. One ought to come up with creative means of ensuring an intensified participation, other than through regular exercise of Suffrage.

5. Accountability- to provide significant spaces for people to challenge the conduct of authority by state officials; moreover, that such spaces be afforded to allow critical questioning of the orientations of the market and international institutions. What is needed is an International Criminal court that serves as a body to check abuses of authority by those in positions of power.

6. Public Goods- to devise mechanisms to rectify the imbalances produced by inequitable distribution and disparity of access to public and private goods. Such growing imbalances are reflected in deepening poverty and unequal access to basic social services (health, education, housing, etc.). Balance of support should be tilted in favor of activities like “environmental protection, regulations of economic globalization, innovative cultural activity, infrastructural development for governance at the local, regional and global levels.”³⁵ In order to finance such projects, the introduction of equitable means of generating funds can be introduced, for example, transaction tax on financial flows.³⁶

35. *Ibid.*, 149.

36. *Ibid.*: “In these regards, a gradual depoliticalization of funding, either by reliance on a use of transaction tax imposed on financial flows, global air travel, or some form of reliable and equitable means to fund public goods of local, national, regional, and global scope.”

7. Transparency - to forge trust between governments and its citizens implies openness and truthfulness on the part of the former with regards to knowledge and information, and their military operations. This applies to all levels of social interaction.³⁷ The citizenry has the constitutional right to know what their governments are doing.

8. Non-violence- that the use of non-violent means in politics and conflict resolutions be adhered to in most situations.³⁸ For governments, this means giving up on weapons of mass destruction, support for disarmament, establishment of peace and security at all levels through non-military means and lastly a “principled rejection of capital punishment”.

Basic to the success of global civil society under the ambit of normative democracy is a reinstrumentalization of the state so that it mediates “between the logic of capital and the priorities of its peoples including their short-term and long-term goals.”³⁹ The state has been instrumentalized by forces of globalization-from-above. But the state remains the basic political entity that affects the lives of peoples. Besides, it is the direct link between regional and global institutions. The task of global civil society is to “reinstrumentalize” the state once again. Falk writes:

....Only a neutralizing counter-globalism arising out of comparably transnational societal initiatives can give the state the political space it needs to strike a better balance between the well-being of its own people as a territorial community and fulfillment of its emergent role and identity as an agency for the protection of the global commons and the promotion of human (as distinct from merely national) interests. It is the social construction of this other globalism, largely through the cumulative impact of democratizing efforts, which can be identified as either “rooted utopianism” or “global realism.”⁴⁰

37. Ibid: “...in effect, establishing the right to know an aspect of constitutionalism, including a strong bias against public sector secrecy and covert operations, and criminalizing government lies of the sort recently revealed, where for years, to protect air force spy missions, the CIA lied about alleged ‘UFO sightings’; internationally, transparency is particularly important in relation to military expenditures and arms transfers.”

38. Exception to non-violence can happen in situations of self-defense and the violence oppressed people have recourse to. See *ibid*.

39. *Ibid.*, 151.

40. *Ibid.*, 51.

In short, the task for global civil society is to pressure the state to be more responsive to its people, especially to its most economically and politically deprived, and not to the commands of global capital. In that way the state becomes true to its vocation- to be a compassionate state.⁴¹

The Need for Global Alliances

Economic globalization under neo-liberal claim has already become planetary in scope. Any move to stop it must have a global scope too. The idea of postmodern socialisms and normative democracy are attempts to give theoretical power and a unifying vision to the fragmentary existence of the different movements that constitute the globalization-from-below. By galvanizing these disparate powers, the theoreticians of both attempts hope that their combined potential can bring about changes not only locally but more so on the global level. Falk's proposal is more attuned to this strategy. The call therefore is to forge what Israel Batista, in a publication of the World Council of Churches, refers to as "transborder alliances of hope," or a "universal community across diversity," or still the promotion of "international solidarity" through shared common values.⁴² Just like Falk, Batista speaks up for a "new international civil society."⁴³ Think for example of Amnesty International or Greenpeace: through their broad alliances and networking, they have become powerful driving forces on the global scene. Their activities show that it is possible to create a "new global

41. Falk has sympathy for social- democracy as practiced for example in the Scandinavian countries. See *ibid.*, 129-30.

42. See Israel Batista, "Social Movements: A Personal Testimony," pp. 5 in Israel Batista, *Social Movements, Globalization, Exclusion: Social Movements: Challenges and Perspectives* (Geneva: WCC, 1997).

43. Batista enumerates the four elements of a new international civil society: (1) The development of new values serving the needs of the people and respecting human/people's rights; (2) the search for more participatory forms of democracy and participation; (3) the strengthening of ordinary people's capacity of taking responsibilities for decisions, actions and conditions in everyday life; (4) the establishment of new international mechanisms of governance. *Ibid.*

agenda” carried by “ad hoc collective protagonists.”⁴⁴ The “aim is to encourage the creation (or strengthening) of *non-governmental actors of global scope, organized around global agendas that challenge the hegemony of liberal neo-conservatism.*”⁴⁵ The aim of this new global agenda is to put human concerns and values first, over developmental concerns. The reproduction of life, social participation and equality figure as the corner stones of this alternative paradigm. The ad hoc collective protagonists are there to rally behind it. They are to be the “conscience” of the world. In all of this we should not forget what our authors of postmodern socialisms stand for: that change happens not in the commanding heights of the states or through the presence of a vanguard class but through the different “localized” activities the discontents of the world do engage in.⁴⁶

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS/ GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY AND SACRAMENTALITY

We will culminate our discussion with a brief theological reflection/excursus on the social movements. In other words, we want to know how to understand this rising phenomenon theologically? We have indicated earlier the potential role social movements play in effecting social transformation. We have seen that they are the “watchdogs” against the distortions and abuses of the forces of globalization. Two conceptual frameworks

44. These terms belong to Ana Maria Ezcurra. See “Globalization, Neoliberalism and Civil Society: Challenges for the Latin American Social and People’s Movements”, p. 80 in Israel Batista, *Social Movements, Globalization, Exclusion: Social Movements: Challenges and Perspectives* (Geneva: WCC, 1997).

45. *Ibid.*, 84.

46. While there are great potentialities in the civil society movements, we should be attentive and wary of attempts of governments or agents of globalization to co-opt or use these movements to their own advantage. Marj Mayo and Tony Addy give concrete instances where cooptation of social movements can happen. They warn us that if such an “absorption” happens the new social movements’ power to play their distinctive role as watchdogs or promoters of democratic pressures for social change within civil society will be watered down. See Marj Mayo and Tony Addy, “Global Restructuring and the Changing Roles and Potential of Social Movements, p. 28 in Israel Batista, *Social Movements, Globalization, Exclusion: Social Movements: Challenges and Perspectives* (Geneva: WCC, 1997).

(postmodern socialisms and normative democracy) were offered to understand the role of the social movements have in our globalized world. Both views were suspicious of the grand narrative of global capitalism. According to them, many have been left out or made castaways by the globalization process. Both stressed the need to give, in the civil society, ideological and political spaces for the trampled voices and visions of those in the underside of history. The latter's local and cultural identities need to be affirmed. They need to form networks of solidarity (globalization-from-below) lest they will be gobbled up by the hurricane of globalization. Georges De Schrijver offers a perspective to view the theological relevance of global social movements/civil society reality through his notion of sacramentality of existence through a mystique of resistance and concern for building communities of resistance. Let us briefly venture into this concept.

De Schrijver relies on Leonardo Boff's notion of transparency or translucency in referring to the sacramental presence of God in the world.⁴⁷ With out going into technicalities, the gist of Boff's idea can be summed up in the following words: Our created world, though finite has the potentiality to disclose the presence of the infinite among us. Put differently, God uses "earthen" vessels to manifest Godself to humanity. Boff's view, confirms the catholic tradition of sacramentality where it acknowledges the capacity of the Church and its signs and symbols to reveal God.

De Schrijver however, moves beyond the ecclesial talk on sacramentality and expand the notion of translucency to the "broader

47. "Divine reality (the lens through which all things are looked at) is, in its startling beyondness and nearness, not so much to be conceived of as a reality *above* the world which is also immanent *in* it; but rather and primarily as a reality which transpires *through* the very world... Transparency begins to shine 'in between transcendence and immanence, as such it is formative of the whole world of symbols, signs, and sacraments. This 'in between' is also the locus of 'sacramental thinking', which is essentially a thinking through symbols." See Leonardo Boff, *Die Kirche als Sakrament im Horizont der Welterfahrung* (Paderborn: Bonifacius Verlag, 1972), 123-125 quoted in Georges De Schrijver, "Globalization and 'Postmodern' Culture Politics," in Michael Amaladoss, ed., *Globalization and its Victims: As seen by its Victims* (Delhi: Vidyayyoti Education & Welfare Society: ISPCK, 1999), 179-180.

realm of sacramentality of life.”⁴⁸ “Events and celebrations outside the strict confines of ecclesial life can also be experienced as sacramental sign.” Where there is genuine “commitment to community structures, coupled with a world-wide search for the *bonum-commune*,”⁴⁹ there the sacramental presence of God can be felt. God’s care for the world is manifested when there are:

small basic communities which commit themselves to questions of social justice in society, such as the eradication of bonded labor, unchecked child labor, and the rough treatment of lower classes and castes (races), not to mention the inferior position of women in traditional societies.⁵⁰

The perception of God’s care becoming translucent in human actions can unleash a mystique of resistance. The felt solidarity with those at the underside of history can lead us “to looking at reality with new eyes and to perceive and hallow in it signs anticipating renewal that can become a source of joy and praise- and ‘celebrative resistance.’”⁵¹

De Schrijver’s view is a repudiation of some Western postmodernists whose self-contentment prevents them from any commitment to Third World issues. This he demonstrates by his biting criticism of what he signified as the “hollow sacramentality”⁵² of the postmodern West. Hollow in two senses: One, in western postmodernists’ false enjoyment and sham fascination with global consumerism, second, their refusal to hold on to a strong goal-orientation of life and our common history. The former celebrates every manifestation of the global market as divine. The latter isolates them from grand perspectives and makes them resign to the void

48. Georges De Schrijver, “Globalization and ‘Postmodern’ Culture Politics,” in Michael Amaladoss, ed., *Globalization and its Victims: As seen by its Victims* (Delhi: Vidyayyoti Education & Welfare Society: ISPCK, 1999), 181.

49. *Ibid.*, 183.

50. *Ibid.*, 185.

51. *Ibid.*, 184.

52. For a wider exposition of this topic see Georges De Schrijver, “Experiencing the Sacramental Character of Existence: Transitions from Premodernity to Modernity, Postmodernity, and the Rediscovery of the Cosmos,” in J. Lamberts, ed. *Current Issues in Sacramental Theology: A Tribute to Cor Traets* (Leuven: Abdij Keizersberg, 1994): 12-27.

where eventually nothing is revered as holy. Both aspects, however are underpinned by western individualism. “Indeed, what creates a sham heaven of glitter and/or the experience of a dark abyss in postmodernity is the premise of (western) individualism, in whatever form it may present itself, egoism, profit-making at any price, collective elitism.”⁵³ For De Schrijver, then, the attitude of indifference demonstrated by some western postmodernists can be corrected only by a strong dosage of solidarity with the victims of our postmodern (globalized) world, for those whose voices are never heard. Only in the concern for the well-being of others can the depth of our very existence be hallowed again.

In a context of impermanence, dance of images and endless flux of (artificial) reality - in short postmodernism, genuine attempts of westerners at social transformation through solidarity with the victims can anchor them back from their withdrawal into the void (where there is disbelief in utopias for a better world and no real visible presence of God) into a more solid and hallowed ground. For, the Third World, chained into the prison of poverty, a steadfast attempt at fostering societal transformation signals a true ‘postmodernism’ of resistance where otherness confronts the idols of the grand narratives of globalization. Aware of the (European) postmodern critiques of utopias, De Schrijver, still insists that for Third World countries to effect real changes they need to hold on to their telos.⁵⁴ A telos makes suffering bearable for those in pain. It gives hope to those whose voices have been silenced to oblivion. De Schrijver quotes D. Hopkins to show the importance of teloi for those absentees of history:

If the locked out voices did not have a telos that promised that though evil might last through the night, joy comes in the morning (paraphrasing an old African-American teleological faith claim), then people without power, whether racial, gender, sexual, class, may as well go insane.⁵⁵

53. De Schrijver, “Globalization and ‘Postmodern’,” 183.

54. See *ibid.*, 186.

55. D. Hopkins, “Postmodernity, Black Theology of Liberation, and the U.S.A. Michel Foucault and James Cone,” p. 216 in David Batstone, ed., *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the Americas* (New York: Routledge, 1997) quoted in *ibid.*, 186.

If we have done justice to the essay of De Schrijver, the connection is clear with the issues we have raised concerning the phenomenon of social movements in our globalized world. We are able now to place them in an explicitly religious perspective. Wherever there are social movements, base communities and civil societies of resistance endowed with a strong vision of justice, peace, with a concern and solidarity that even extends to the cosmos- in short- endowed with the dream of a new humanity-, and living up to these ideals, there the presence of God is truly manifested in their work. Social movements then are sacraments in themselves, or at least carriers of sacramental events. Leonardo Boff expresses it beautifully in the following words:

...every great or small event that the people celebrate in their struggle towards a humane existence is a sacrament, a celebration in anticipation of God's complete salvation.⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

Our discussion had brought as to establish the relevance and uniqueness of current social movements and global civil society groups in our globalized world. We have proposed two possible ways (postmodern socialism and normative democracy) of harnessing the potentials of these diverse movements and suggested ways to theoretically improve their praxis. There is a need to politically consolidate local struggles of peoples into a truly global struggle (globalization-from-below) against neoliberal /capitalist form of globalization (globalization-from- above). We also plead for the sacramentality of the “different voices” (social movements) that toil for the betterment of the wretched of this world. When “post-modern” social movements, themselves, labor for bread to satisfy their hunger, shelter to rest their tired bodies, clothes to protect them from heat and cold –in other words, when subjugated voices demand

56. Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life: Life of the Sacraments* (Washington D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1987), 45 quoted in De Schrijver, “Globalization and ‘Postmodern’,” 180.

justice for themselves, then, they truly become sacramental vessels of the reign of God. We hold the view that any movement whether, inside the church or within a particular religion, or in the realm of civil society that works for the common good, becomes a vessel of sacramental life.

Dominador F. Bombongan, Jr.
Theology and Religious Department
De La Salle University
Manila, Philippines
Email: belgesprout@yahoo.com