

# Grace and Agents of Justice in a Globalized World

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**Key words:** globalization, grace, justice, mission, poverty

**Abstract:** How is the church to interpret its mission in an age of globalization? This paper seeks to explore the implications of the church's distinctiveness as a grace-defined community for its socio-political mission in a globalized world. The conclusion reached is that this central Christian doctrine directs the Christian community to be an agent of God's justice in the socio-political arena through demonstrating servant-leadership to contribute in enabling the world's poorest and weakest citizens to share in the benefits brought by a globalized world."

### *INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL THEORY AND GLOBAL JUSTICE*

#### **Recognizing the need for an "ethical globalization"<sup>1</sup>**

Critics of globalization are not hard to find. One of the most outspoken and influential of these critics is Joseph Stiglitz, who was previously the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Clinton. Stiglitz argues the imperative for there to be a radical change of direction if the adverse effects of globalization are not to be repeated in the future. It is not just a question of changing institutional structures. Rather, the mindset around globalization itself must change. For the problem is not with globalization, but with how it has been managed. In his widely acclaimed work *Globalization and its Discontents*, Stiglitz declares: "If globalization continues to be conducted in the way that it has been in the past, if we continue to fail to learn from our mistakes, globalization will not only not succeed in promoting development but will continue to create poverty and instability."<sup>2</sup>

So what exactly is globalization? David Held et al helpfully describe its essential features. Fundamentally, globalization can be described as "the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life."<sup>3</sup> Yet, as reflected by Stiglitz, there is a growing recognition of the need to develop an "ethical globalization." In becoming more aware of the acute impact globalization can have on the

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<sup>1</sup> In a speech delivered by Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, entitled "*Building an Ethical Globalization*," at Yale University on 8 October 2002, she claimed that one of the most important questions facing the world today is "how do we build an ethical globalization which bridges the current divides between north and south, rich and poor, secular and religious?"

<sup>2</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 248.

<sup>3</sup> David Held, et al, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1999), 2.

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powerless of society, national governments, business corporations, academic institutions, and religious groups are recognizing that globalization is fast becoming the key agenda that must be analyzed and understood in terms of its transforming effects upon the peoples of the world. For example, James Wolfensohn, former President of the World Bank states: “We are convinced that globalization can and does contribute to development, but we cannot ignore those who are left out, nor can we fail to recognize how much better development progress could be.”<sup>4</sup> Global economic inequality has indeed increased at a rapid pace. It is estimated by the World Bank that 1.1 billion people live on less than \$1 a day - equivalent to about one-fifth of the world’s population living in extreme poverty.<sup>5</sup> Ian Shapiro and Lea Brilmayer describe this particular concern of globalization:

*Globalization has done little, if anything, to promote justice, if this is understood to require substantial redistribution from rich to poor. The world’s few wealthiest countries continue to control and consume the vast bulk of its resources while billions live below the poverty line.*<sup>6</sup>

Specifically, the challenge presented for those who shape public policy is to capture a vision of global justice in the twenty-first century. For global justice and global order are inextricably intertwined. But, significantly, as this paper will seek to demonstrate, how we approach questions of justice will differ markedly according to the extent to which our deliberations are rooted in an understanding of divine grace,<sup>7</sup> or whether they are driven by purely secular considerations.

Dominant among the concerns of our globalized world is the marginalizing of the powerless, which has led to a situation of vulnerability to exploitation by those who do have power. Jonathan Sacks captures well this predicament, and argues that the economics and politics of globalization have an inescapable moral

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<sup>4</sup> James D. Wolfensohn, “Global Links,” in *2002 World Development Indicators* (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2002), 331. Cf. Ethan B. Kapstein, “Does Globalization have an Ethical Problem?” in *Ethics and International Affairs: Extent and Limits*, ed. Jean-Marc Coicaud and Daniel Warner (New York: United Nations University Press, 2001). Ethan Kapstein declares: “Globalization can only be welfare enhancing when it promotes the life chances of all members of the international community” (262).

<sup>5</sup> James D. Wolfensohn, “*Fighting Poverty for Peace*,” which was a report presented by the former President of the World Bank on 29 December 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Shapiro and Lea Brilmayer, “Introduction,” in *Global Justice*, ed. Ian Shapiro and Lea Brilmayer (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>7</sup> In considering this theological motif, a working definition of the grace of God is as follows: *the out-flowing of the eternal triune love of God in and through his free, reconciling self-disclosure and self gift to his creatures, supremely demonstrated in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and through the presence of the Holy Spirit, bringing them into communion both with himself and with each other, such that they are given to share in his mission to the world.*

dimension. Sacks comments: “Markets serve those who pay, but what of those who cannot pay? Politics is about the balance of power, but what of those who have no power?”<sup>8</sup> Although markets are the best way we know of structuring exchanges, such as goods to be bought or sold, Sacks maintains “they are far from the best way of ordering relationships or preserving goods whose value is not identical with their price. Inevitably, societies face choices that cannot be resolved by economics alone.”<sup>9</sup>

Such a challenge has indeed raised fundamental questions vis-à-vis issues of justice and world politics. How these questions are being answered from a secular standpoint will now be considered, before turning attention to how the church as a community of grace can respond to the phenomenon of globalization.

### **The question of justice**

Throughout history, people have debated the question of justice. It is a central question of all life in society, as Serge-Christophe Kolm notes: “Facing the question of justice is in fact a condition for the very existence of a society.”<sup>10</sup> But it is a debate that has often led to intractable positions as Duncan Forrester also points out:

*Knowing what justice is and doing justice are inherently and deeply problematic. Human beings have an in-built propensity to distort ideas of justice and manipulate them so that they are compatible with our interests and desires, and, at the extreme, disguise our selfishness and exploitation as morally acceptable.*<sup>11</sup>

Debates concerning issues of justice flourished in the latter decades of the twentieth century. The *locus classicus* of these debates was John Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice*, in which his stated aim is to provide considered judgments of justice that “constitutes the most appropriate moral basis for a democratic society.”<sup>12</sup> Highly influential for international political theorists in debating principles of justice as it relates to a globalized society, Rawls presents a liberal, egalitarian, moral conception of “justice as fairness,” which he uses to justify the institutions of a constitutional democracy. Yet his principles of justice are not only applied to laws and the constitution. Applying these principles to other basic

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<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2002), 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>10</sup> Serge-Christophe Kolm, *Modern Theories of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1998), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Duncan B. Forrester, *Christian Justice and Public Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1. Cf. E. Clinton Gardner, *Justice and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1. Clinton Gardner declares: “Justice is the fundamental moral requirement of human life in community.”

<sup>12</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), viii.

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social institutions that regulate the distribution of wealth and opportunities to achieve favourable social positions is also his aim.

Beginning his theory of justice with a normative conception of persons, whom he describes as free, equal and rational, Rawls claims we have been endowed with a moral capacity for a sense of justice: “We acquire a skill in judging things to be just and unjust, and in supporting these judgments by reasons.”<sup>13</sup> What is noticeable, though, is that because he approaches issues of justice from a non-theocentric worldview, Rawls, as is characteristic of post-Enlightenment thought, fails at the outset of his considerations to provide a robust explanation of where our moral capacity originates. In contrast, as is intrinsic to the Reformation heritage, our moral capacity derives from a theology of grace, where God communicates his desire for justice in the world, mediated through the Spirit, to those whom he has made in his image and with whom he is in covenant-partnership.

Our conception of the good, Rawls states, will differ depending on our knowledge and personal situations. It has the effect that to pursue their good, free persons will make conflicting claims on scarce resources. This suggests to Rawls that the appropriate way to decide principles for a democratic society is by conjecturing what principles free persons would agree to among themselves to regulate basic social institutions.<sup>14</sup> Central to this approach is the concept of an “original position.”

In essence, the original position is a hypothetical state of equality in which the persons involved in the exercise do not yet know who they are going to be. Rawls states: “No one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like.”<sup>15</sup> They are placed behind a complete “veil of ignorance” so none can take advantage of their social circumstances, talents or individual conceptions of the good, which ensures that this agreement is fair. With this move, Samuel Freeman notes, he “carries to the limit the ideal of equality behind democratic contractualism.”<sup>16</sup> Rawls’ argument is that given complete ignorance of everyone’s position, it would be irrational to jeopardize one’s good to gain whatever marginal advantages might be promised by other alternatives. The conception of justice that would be agreed to in the

<sup>13</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 46.

<sup>14</sup> For a contrasting approach, see William A. Galston, *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues and Diversity in the Liberal State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). He challenges theorist, such as Rawls, who believe the essence of liberalism is that it should remain neutral concerning different ways of life and individual conceptions of what is good.

<sup>15</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Freeman, “Contractarianism,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), 663.

original position is neither utilitarian nor perfectionist, but is a Kantian account of justice as fairness.<sup>17</sup>

The resulting conception of justice as fairness, as articulated by Rawls, accords priority to a principle guaranteeing certain basic individual rights and liberties to all citizens equally. Once these rights have been secured, this provides his central premise for an egalitarian principle of distributive justice. He argues for two main principles of justice for such societies. The first principle echoes the libertarian view that all persons should have equal and maximal liberties. This principle affirms that positions and offices be open to all on the basis of fair equality of opportunity. Secondly, Rawls advocates the so-called difference principle, which qualifies the first principle with the requirement that inequalities be permitted only where they would be to the advantage of the “representative worst-off person.”

It is evident, therefore, that Rawls’ theory of justice benefits those who lack power as it gives primary attention to those least advantaged in society. Of importance to discussions of global justice, however, is that since Rawls’ theory assumes the framework of a closed society, his conception of the representative worst-off person is not thought of as representing the worst-off of the whole world. Peter Singer demurs at this absence in Rawls’ work:

*If he [John Rawls] accepted that to choose justly, people must also be ignorant of their citizenship, his theory would become a forceful argument for improving the prospects of the worst-off people in the world. But in the most influential work on justice written in twentieth-century America, the question never even arises.*<sup>18</sup>

Significantly, therefore, not only is Rawls’ theory of justice lacking in that it presents no absolute foundation for debating questions of justice, which is in marked contrast to the mission of the church in being in covenant-partnership with a righteous God; but it also raises the question from a straightforwardly secular standpoint as to whether it is adequate as a response to the challenges of the existing global order.

## **Human rights and international distributive justice**

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<sup>17</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 251-257. Typical of Kant’s approach is found in “Essay on Theory and Practice,” in *International Relations in Political Thought*, ed. Chris Brown, Terry Nardin, and Nicholas Rengger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). It is an essay in which Kant stresses the concept of duty: “The hope for better times to come, without which an earnest desire to do something useful for the common good would never have inspired the human heart, has always influenced the activities of right-thinking men” (429).

<sup>18</sup> Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 9.

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It is in engaging with issues of justice in the modern world that the concept of distributive justice, which was a central feature of Rawls' theory, has become the engine of growth in international political theory. Principles of distributive justice serve to generate just distributions of the earth's valued resources to seek the equitable treatment of persons and groups.<sup>19</sup> Stanley Hoffmann highlights the importance of distributive justice, which he claims "goes to the essence of politics."<sup>20</sup> At the heart of these debates are human rights and the implication of recognizing these rights in how policies are developed for different societies throughout the world.<sup>21</sup> By contrast with approaches deriving human dignity from an individualistic concept of human rights, the covenant of grace affirms humankind's worth due to being made to be in relationship with God, others, and the rest of creation.<sup>22</sup> Thus, here again, in approaching issues of justice from a non-theocentric foundation, this is inherently problematic for theologians.<sup>23</sup>

A principal figure in the discussion of human rights is Michael Ignatieff, who expresses his frustration concerning the disjuncting between academics and practice. Ignatieff's claim is that the philosophical literature has been focused on the grounds for human rights, yet this is disconnected from the real world. Rather than being concerned with the philosophical foundation, we should now interpret how to apply human rights in the world today. Sceptical of the role religion plays in defining and protecting human rights, Ignatieff states:

*People who do not believe in God must either reject that human beings are sacred or believe they are sacred on the basis of a secular use of religious metaphor that a religious person will find unconvincing. Foundational claims of this sort divide, and these divisions cannot be resolved in the way humans usually resolve their arguments, by means of discussion and compromise. Far better, I would argue, to forgo these kinds of foundational*

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<sup>19</sup> Simon Caney, "International Distributive Justice," *Political Studies*, vol. 49/5 (December 2001), 974.

<sup>20</sup> Stanley Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981), 141.

<sup>21</sup> See also Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Martha Nussbaum prefers to speak of what she describes as the "capabilities" required for living a good life.

<sup>22</sup> For a further discussion, see Howard Taylor, *Human Rights: Its Culture and Moral Confusions* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988), 351. Alasdair MacIntyre argues there are now no ways of resolving fundamental intellectual disputes among secular theorists about the nature of justice, as they all claim to be proceeding according to purely rational considerations, without appealing to fundamental axioms about the nature of things. Cf. Lesslie Newbigin, "Whose Justice?" *Ecumenical Review*, vol. 44/3 (July 1992), 310.

*arguments altogether and seek to build support for human rights on the basis of what such rights actually do for human beings.*<sup>24</sup>

While Ignatieff rightly recognizes the need for practical action to follow theological and philosophical debate, it is also evident that the two cannot legitimately be divorced from each other. Demonstrating the essential nature of a theoretical base for socio-political action, particularly in addressing issues of world poverty, Onora O'Neill in *Faces of Hunger* argues that most modern ethical theories deny that human needs make any special claims on us. It is a claim that has a direct impact on how we respond to contemporary issues in the world. O'Neill declares in surveying the issue of poverty: "Philosophical reflection is notoriously late on the intellectual scene, but it will not be redundant if it can show agents and agencies who affect poverty and hunger more urgent reasons to perceive and to treat the poor differently."<sup>25</sup>

Yet despite the noteworthy advances that have been achieved in addressing matters of social and political concern, the individualistic concept of human rights for issues pertaining to distributive justice has a critical weakness. Sparking a vigorous debate, and accentuating the intrinsic problems associated with this thought, was one of Rawls' most prominent critics, Robert Nozick. Nozick contributed to the justice debate in his statement of libertarianism in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* where he begins with the words: "Individuals have rights, and there are things no person or group may do to them without violating their rights."<sup>26</sup> At its core, he advocates a fully voluntary society, in which people cooperate only on terms that do not violate anyone's rights. Conjuring up the fear of redistribution, where some authority will come and take away part of what you own in order to devote it to some purpose it deems worthy, Nozick's thesis of the entitlement theory involves a defense of the minimal state being consistent with individual rights to life, liberty, and property.<sup>27</sup>

Taking an opposing perspective of distributive justice from Nozick is Thomas Pogge - although he concurs with Nozick's view that human rights are vital to questions of justice. Distinctive to Pogge's theory of justice is a universalistic conception of human rights, which include rights to economic

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 54.

<sup>25</sup> Onora O'Neill, *Faces of Hunger: An Essay on Poverty, Justice and Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 8. This need to oscillate between theory and practice is found in Henry Shue, *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence, and US Foreign Policy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). "Basic rights," Henry Shue contends, "are everyone's minimum reasonable demands upon the rest of humanity" (19). The three basic rights he identifies are subsistence, security, and liberty.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), ix.

<sup>27</sup> Yet in defending his thesis Nozick fails to justify the initial acquisition of individual property rights. For a further analysis, see Jonathan Wolff, "Nozick, Robert," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 7, 44-47.

resources. Pogge champions the case of the world's poor and claims that most of the current under-fulfillment of human rights today is directly connected to poverty: "That a large segment of humankind lives in extreme poverty is nothing new. What is comparatively new, however, is that another large segment is living in considerable affluence."<sup>28</sup> Because the decisive variable for realizing human rights is bound up with the existing global order, the responsibility for the realization of these rights must rest with those who impose this order.<sup>29</sup> Indeed it is such claims which have led to escalating calls for a cosmopolitan understanding of distributive justice.

### **The moral demands of cosmopolitanism**

Significantly, as we have discovered, Rawls' theory of justice is developed within the context of a bounded society. When Rawls did finally produce a work on international justice in *The Law of Peoples*, much to the frustration of many international political theorists, he argues only for selected principles of international justice. Rawls concludes his somewhat restrictive and conservative approach: "What is important to the law of peoples is the justice and stability for the right reasons of liberal and decent societies, living as members of a society of well-ordered peoples."<sup>30</sup> The law of peoples therefore does not support a cosmopolitan regime that operates on a global scale to redistribute wealth from wealthy to poorer nations in accordance with a global difference principle. Instead, he advocates only a voluntary confederation of liberal and decent peoples that recognizes a duty to assist people living in societies burdened by unfavourable conditions.<sup>31</sup>

Redistribution among peoples in different societies, Rawls argues, would be unacceptable because it would not respect peoples' political autonomy. In defending his thesis, Rawls asks us to imagine two societies, initially equally prosperous. The first society decides to industrialize and increase its real rate of savings. In contrast, the second hypothetical society prefers a more leisurely existence, resulting in it being less prosperous. It would be inappropriate, Rawls claims, to tax the first society and redistribute the proceeds to the second. If we were to take this course of action we would not be respecting each society's right

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas W. Pogge, "Human Rights and Human Responsibilities," in *Global Justice and Transnational Politics: Essays on the Moral and Political Challenges of Globalization*, ed. Pablo de Greiff and Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002), 152.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 185. See also Thomas W. Pogge, "Priorities of Global Justice," in *Global Justice*, ed. Thomas W. Pogge (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 22. Noticeably, Pogge argues not primarily for a positive duty of helping those in need, but rather a negative duty not to harm: "Because our responsibility is negative and because so much harm can be prevented at so little cost to ourselves, the reduction of severe global poverty should be our foremost moral priority."

<sup>30</sup> John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 120.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-113.



to self-determination.<sup>32</sup> Yet although there is an inherent logic in Rawls' argument that differential efforts should bring differential rewards, it fails to recognize that there is a fundamental responsibility placed upon those who have been advantaged in the global economy to assist those who are not able to maximize the opportunities presented.<sup>33</sup>

In recent years, in assessing how to respond to globalization, several scholars have challenged Rawls' original position, and the stance advocated by political theorists such as Nardin that principles of distributive justice should only apply to the state or nation-level.<sup>34</sup> This alternative has come to be known as the cosmopolitan position, which derives from the Greek compound term *Kosmopolites* meaning "citizen of the universe."<sup>35</sup> The nebulous core shared by cosmopolitans is that the proper scope of moral principles extends to include all humans wherever they live.<sup>36</sup> A just society will be a fair system of cooperation among global citizens all of whom are regarded as free and equal. For the basic idea lying behind cosmopolitanism, as Charles Jones declares, is that "each person affected by an institutional arrangement should be given equal consideration."<sup>37</sup>

Debates among international political theorists vis-à-vis global justice in a globalized world highlight the philosophical interest in cosmopolitanism, which lies in its challenge to commonly recognized attachments to fellow-citizens of a particular nation. Distinctive to contemporary cosmopolitan accounts of distributive justice is precisely that it affirms duties are owed to individuals, and not simply to states. Mark Amstutz notes that in effect, "they [cosmopolitanists] assume that international morality requires the subordination of state boundaries

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 117-118.

<sup>33</sup> See also Leif Wenar, "The Legitimacy of Peoples," in *Global Justice and Transnational Politics*, 58. Leif Wenar points out that background institutions should be in place to prevent the overall distribution of wealth and resources "from reflecting factors arbitrary from a moral point of view."

<sup>34</sup> Terry Nardin, *Law, Morality, and the Relations of States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 255-277

<sup>35</sup> See Nicholas Rengger, "Cosmopolitanism," in *Understanding Democratic Politics*, ed. Roland Axtmann (London: Sage, 2003), 321-323.

<sup>36</sup> See Caney, "International Distributive Justice," 974-997. Caney distinguishes between "radical" and "mild" cosmopolitanism. Radical cosmopolitanism claims that there are both global principles of distributive justice (the positive claim) and also that there are no nation-wide principles of distributive justice (the negative claim). Mild cosmopolitanism simply affirms the positive claim, and accepts the claim that people have special obligations of distributive justice to fellow nationals or fellow citizens.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Jones, *Global Justice: Defending Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15. Cf. Brian Barry, *The Liberal Theory of Justice: A Critical Examination of the Principal Doctrines in 'A Theory of Justice'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). Barry supports this firmly egalitarian theoretical position by drawing on Thomas Scanlon's model of contractualism, and declares that Rawls' refusal to allow for principles of international distributive justice produces results that are intuitively wrong.

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to human dignity.” This is in contrast with communitarianism, which contends that the quest for human dignity is best achieved within and through each distinct political society. Amstutz summarizes these differences of approach: “Whereas communitarianism accepts the legitimacy of the existing international order, the cosmopolitan approach denies the moral significance of the structures of the existing neo-Westphalian order.”<sup>38</sup>

Amartya Sen advocates such a position and criticizes Rawls’ exclusive focus on peoples in his interpretation of ethics and world politics. Since diverse identities are a vital feature of today’s world, a theory of global justice must take account of the full scope of our multiple identities and interconnections across borders.<sup>39</sup> Focusing on the freedoms to be enjoyed by all the world’s citizens, Sen asserts: “Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over-activity of repressive states.”<sup>40</sup> Thus Sen admits to being attracted to this “grand universalism” in which “the domain of the exercise of fairness is all people everywhere taken together...seen without distinction of nationality and other classifications.”<sup>41</sup> But in spite of its ethical interest and its comprehensive coverage, he shares Rawls’ scepticism about the application of the contractualist approach to all human beings since we currently lack the global political institutions required to implement such universal principles.<sup>42</sup> As such, what this cosmopolitan vision has introduced, are fundamental issues vis-à-vis state boundaries and global justice in international ethics.

### State boundaries and agents of justice in a globalized world

Boundaries are an integral feature of international law. This is the point Robert McCorquodale makes in declaring: “They are a cause of conflict and a reason for peace. They establish order and lead to disorder. They provide a protection and a weapon. They include and exclude. They define and divide. They are real and imagined.”<sup>43</sup> Daniel Philpott elucidates further on the far-reaching implication of state boundaries for considerations of justice and moral obligations:

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<sup>38</sup> Mark R. Amstutz, *International Ethics: Concepts, Theories, and Cases in Global Politics* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 179.

<sup>39</sup> Amartya Sen, “Justice Across Borders,” in *Global Justice and Transnational Politics*, 50.

<sup>40</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>41</sup> Sen, “Justice Across Borders,” 39.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. Cf. Amstutz, *International Ethics*, 83. Although “one of the basic ethical norms of global society is that moral obligations are not defined by territorial boundaries,” Amstutz notes, “it is much less evident how such moral obligations should be fulfilled.”

<sup>43</sup> Robert McCorquodale, “International Law, Boundaries, and Imagination,” in *Boundaries and Justice: Diverse Ethical Perspectives*, ed. David Miller and Sohail H. Hashmi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 136.

*As borders have so formidably fenced the world's populations, the state's most ardent philosophical enthusiasts, along with many citizens of many actual states, have arrived at a corresponding ethical notion – that their obligations of justice are exclusive to, or at least may heavily favour, their fellow members.*<sup>44</sup>

Philosophers have referred to this position, Philpott notes, as “partial commitments.” They are the type of commitments that borders tend to create. And yet, they are commitments that “have never rested easy with universalistic systems of ethics.”<sup>45</sup> O’Neill exemplifies this disagreement as reflected in her significant work *Bounds of Justice*, in which she endorses the concept of global distributive justice, and claims it will entail setting out a form of universalism for ethics and politics in order to be “relevant for a world in which state boundaries are increasingly porous to movements of goods, capital, ideas and people, and in which state sovereignty is increasingly circumscribed.”<sup>46</sup>

O’Neill develops the cosmopolitan position further and makes the argument that the global realities of political and economic life raise the critical question of who are the agents who will bring about justice in a globalized world, which has led to considerations as to whether institutions can be treated as moral agents. In discussing how we might work towards a global conception of justice, O’Neill declares: “We may do well not to presuppose that the sole context and guarantors of justice should be a set of mutually exclusive...territorial units, each claiming monopoly of the legitimate use of force within its territory.” Instead, “we might do better to consider a much wider range of institutions which exercise substantial power, including some that are not intrinsically territorial.”<sup>47</sup> O’Neill distinguishes between “primary agents of justice” which are those “with capacities to determine how principles of justice are to be institutionalized within a certain domain,” and “secondary agents of justice,” which are those who primarily contribute to justice, “by meeting the demands of primary agents, most

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<sup>44</sup> Daniel Philpott, “The Ethics of Boundaries: A Question of Partial Commitments,” in *Boundaries and Justice*, 335.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* See Robert McKim and Jeff McMahon, *The Morality of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) for an exploration of partial commitments in the context of nationalism and the state.

<sup>46</sup> Onora O’Neill, *Bounds of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 182. Cf. two essays in *Governance in a Globalizing World*, ed. Joseph S. Nye and John D. Donahue (Washington D.C.: Brookings, 2000): L. David Brown, et al., “Globalization, NGOs, and Multisectoral Relations,” 271- 296; and Cary Coglianese, “Globalization and the Design of International Institutions,” 297-318. See also Nicholas Rengger, “On ‘Good Global Governance,’ Institutional Design, and the Practices of Moral Agency,” in *Can Institutions Have Responsibilities?: Collective Moral Agency and International Relations*, ed. Toni Erskine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 214, in which Nicholas Rengger identifies additional challenges for the shaping of this complex global order.

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evidently by conforming to any legal requirements they establish.”<sup>48</sup> Agents of justice and their capacities or abilities to act will be multiple and diverse. It will include states and also non-state actors, such as international nongovernmental organizations that operate across borders, MNCs, and numerous transnational social, political, and epistemic movements.<sup>49</sup>

O’Neill has indeed raised interesting questions vis-à-vis the dilemma as to who will be the agents of justice in a globalized world. It is a question that challenges the church as to how it will respond to the issues of global justice in the historical and cultural context of the twenty-first century. What will become apparent, however, is that as the church is a community defined by grace, the foundation and decisive motivation for this community’s engagement with the social and political challenges of a globalized world will differ sharply from that offered by secular theories of justice. Consequently, although international political theorists have successfully identified some of the current public concerns presented in a world of transforming global dynamics, the starting point for determining a Christian response to this contemporary issue is emphatically shaped by the gospel of grace.

#### *GRACE AND SERVANT-LEADERSHIP IN THE GLOBALIZED SOCIO-POLITICAL ARENA*

#### **Servanthood in a power dominated world**

Let’s start our examination of how the Christian community may address the challenges presented in a world of global power transformations by focusing on the first of three eminent Reformational theologians, namely, Jürgen Moltmann. What in essence is the driving concern of Moltmann’s work? It is to urge the church, as a voluntary fellowship of committed disciples to become more involved in meeting the full range of society’s multidimensional needs, as it anticipates the eschatological kingdom of God in which all things will be made anew. And the church undertakes this task by recognizing that its mandate is to participate in Christ’s messianic mission here on earth. Thus although a concept of human rights does feature in Moltmann’s theology, his focus still remains one of being resolutely theocentric. As such, a primary question that Moltmann’s theology raises at this juncture is: *as christology and christopraxis are integrally related, how will the life and teachings of Christ shape Christian public involvement in an integrated world?*

In answering this question, an overriding characteristic that will be displayed by the church in the twenty-first century context of a power dominated world, is one of servanthood.<sup>50</sup> Indeed the concept of servanthood in the world is central to

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<sup>48</sup> Onora O’Neill, “Agents of Justice,” in *Global Justice*, 189.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-201.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Thomas W. Manson, *The Church’s Ministry* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948), 27. Thomas Manson states: “In the kingdom of God service is not a stepping-stone to nobility: it is nobility, the only kind of nobility that is recognized.”

the Reformational theological position. A brief historical survey will demonstrate this distinguishing trait.<sup>51</sup> In preparing the way for the Reformation in Northern Europe, an influential movement arose called the *Devotio Moderna*, meaning “the modern way of serving God.” The character who most epitomizes the faith of the *Devotio Moderna* is Thomas à Kempis. Thomas wrote several devotional works although his principal work is *The Imitation of Christ*, which has become a classic devotional for the church.<sup>52</sup> Primarily, the purpose of this book is to teach Christians to imitate Christ’s servanthood. Thomas challengingly enunciates: “True greatness can only be reckoned in terms of charity; the really great man is one who doesn’t think much of himself, and doesn’t think much of rank or precedence either.”<sup>53</sup>

In more recent history, the influence of Philip Jakob Spener and John Wesley were instrumental in motivating the church to recapture its social conscience. As a reaction against current trends, Spener wrote *Pia Desideria*, which set out proposals for the revitalization of the church of his day. Influenced by Pietism, on 2 April 1739, Wesley preached the gospel to the poor in a way that broke with conventions of his time. Wesley records in his journals: “I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation.”<sup>54</sup> In a historical survey of Wesley’s life, Bruce Hindmarsh distinguishes the concerns of this notable Christian leader from contemporary church activity:

*The evangelical sense of what it meant to proclaim and live the gospel, to announce God’s salvation to the world, embraced a broader perspective than we might have expected given the characterization today that evangelicals are concerned only with saving souls.*<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Throughout the entire history of the church there have been prominent individuals who have displayed a remarkable example of servanthood. In its earlier history, such an individual was St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis was the founder of the Franciscans, which were one of the most significant groups of monks in the Middle Ages, and who were devoted to poverty and service to the poor. For a further analysis, see Clemens Jockle, *Encyclopedia of Saints* (London: Parkgate, 1997), 165-169. Also of particular note is St. Bonaventure, who was head of the Order of Friars Minor, and who wrote *The Character of a Christian Leader* in which he similarly articulated the need for servanthood. See St. Bonaventure, *The Character of a Christian Leader*, trans. Philip O’Mara (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Books, 1978), 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> James D. Douglas and Philip W. Comfort, *Who’s Who in Christian History* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1992), 672.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Ronald Knox and Michael Oakley (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959), 22.

<sup>54</sup> John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford: From October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1735 to October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1790*, vol. 1 (London: John Mason, 1864), 174.

<sup>55</sup> D. Bruce Hindmarsh, “Let Us See Thy Great Salvation,” in *What Does it Mean to be Saved?: Broadening Evangelical Horizons of Salvation*, ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 63.

The concept of servanthood, Moltmann notes, is deeply embedded in the compassion of the triune God as supremely displayed in the crucified Christ. On the cross, Christ himself shares the suffering of the outcast and rejected of society. It is a concept of divine solidarity with the marginalized and powerless of this world that is consolidated by a vision of universal transformation grounded in the resurrection hope. Thus, if the Christian community is to recognize the lordship of Christ over his church, as Moltmann insists, then this implies it will have a multidimensional vision of liberation of the oppressed in the contemporary world. In particular, for a church that displays the servanthood of Christ in a globalized society, this will mean standing in solidarity with the approximately two billion people living in the developing world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union, who are in danger of becoming marginalized in the world economy. In essence, it is to be an agent of God's justice in a world characterized by injustice.<sup>56</sup>

Taking the concept of servanthood further than Moltmann, however, in accepting that forms of Christian leadership and power are required to address current social and political concerns, Tom Sine comments on the challenge facing the contemporary church in an age of globalization: "In a world changing as rapidly as ours, it is essential that we learn to lead with foresight."<sup>57</sup> John Stott highlights the many kinds and degrees of servant-leadership in the world, and notes that socio-political involvement is not restricted to a small minority of world statesmen, but includes members of the church. Senior executives in business and industry, judges, doctors, politicians, social workers, lecturers, students, and opinion formers in the media are all called to serve in witness to the world.<sup>58</sup> Richard Mouw draws specific attention to the need for the church to relate as servants to the world through leadership in the political sphere: "At the very least the call to servanthood requires us to be able to communicate about and within actual political processes."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Newbigin, "Whose Justice?" 311. In being "an agency of God's justice," Newbigin remarks, the church "can continually nourish a combination of realism and hope which finds expression in concrete actions which can be taken in the local community and more widely, which reflect and embody the justice of God." See also Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward an Economy of Care*, ed. and trans. Mark R. Vander Vennen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), which offers a twelve-step program for economic recovery based on an 'economy of care' for the earth and its people.

<sup>57</sup> Tom W. Sine, "Globalization, Creation of Global Culture of Consumption and the Impact on the Church and its Mission," in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, vol. 27/4 (October 2003), 355-356.

<sup>58</sup> John R.W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke: Marshall, 1984), 327.

<sup>59</sup> Richard J. Mouw, *Politics and the Biblical Drama* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 69-70.

In summary, therefore, in contrast to a purely secular approach to the question of global ethics based fundamentally on a foundationless concept of human rights, Moltmann has effectively emphasized the priority of recognizing the centrality of Jesus Christ in formulating the necessary questions that must be initially asked in developing a theological valid response to the multidimensional challenges of the contemporary world, where millions of people still live in extreme poverty. Such a holistic understanding of ecclesial mission and servanthood in the world is a key component of the Christian community's response to the indicatives of grace.

### **Faithful Christian witness in a culture of economism**

Presenting a differing perspective of ecclesial witness in the world from Moltmann, yet who nonetheless raises vital theological questions in addressing the social and political challenges presented by the phenomenon of globalization, is Stanley Hauerwas. Foremost amongst Hauerwas' theological concerns is his passionate desire to offer a church-orientated social ethics, which accentuates the need for the church to display authentic Christian witness in a world that is hostile to the gospel. It is an understanding of Christian ethics that is immediately distinguishable from secular theories of justice derived from the individualistic rationalism of post-Enlightenment thought. Thus in essence, a key question that Hauerwas' theology raises is: *what does it mean to be a faithful Christian community in a world that demonstrates values and behaviour that are, at their core, counter-cultural to the message of the gospel?*

In their examination of Western culture, Jane Collier and Rafael Esteban present a disturbing critique and argue that the West is obsessed by the "culture of economism," in which economic factors become the main source of cultural meanings and values. Such economism, Collier and Esteban point out, perpetrates inequality and injustice.<sup>60</sup> Thus it follows that due to about one-fifth of the world's current population living on less than \$1 per day, the opinions and lives of people living in the developing world are perceived to be of significantly less value than those living in the developed world.

It is in such an environment, Hauerwas argues, that the Christian community should get on with being the church, which will mean exhibiting a behavior that

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<sup>60</sup> Jane Collier and Rafael Esteban, *From Complicity to Encounter: The Church and the Culture of Economism* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), 28. For a further theological critique of the consumer culture, see Peter Selby, *Grace and Mortgage* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997); and Ulrich Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism: Drawn from Biblical History, Designed for Political Action*, trans. Elaine Griffiths, et al. (Utrecht: International Books, 1995). In his more radical denouncement of the capitalist global system, Ulrich Duchrow declares: "The accumulation of money assets is now the absolute, immutable yardstick for all economic, social, ecological and political decisions" (71).

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is increasingly counter-cultural in a world characterized by a culture of economism. As Hauerwas points out, the Christian community is to be a people in whom the kingdom of God is made visible in the world. For in being devoted to a particular God and a particular way of life that follows Jesus Christ, the church will hold to an understanding of ethics that does not simply conform to our preconceptions of right living. Rather, as Hauerwas insists, if we hold to a theocentric worldview, our moral guidance comes from Scripture, which gives direction in terms of how the world is to be changed. Indeed this concept of being a counter-cultural community, as stressed by Hauerwas, is especially pertinent for ecclesial witness in an age of globalization. Pointing out the danger of Christians failing to resist the wider social and political trends of a globalized society as the world fractures along cultural and civilizational lines, David Smith echoes these calls for the church to display faithful Christian witness in the world, and claims that Christian theology and mission are inevitably counter-cultural in a globalized world that is being shaped by materialist and economic values.<sup>61</sup>

Characteristic of the negative aspects of globalization, the abuse of power was not unknown in the first century world either. This is particularly apparent in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.<sup>62</sup> The influence of hierarchy and power in Corinth provides an explanation of the factionalism, which Paul opposed so strongly (1 Corinthians 1:10-31).<sup>63</sup> Within Corinth, society was strongly biased in favour of those who were already privileged, which is a visible trait of our globalized world. Andrew Clarke asserts: "Wealth was of supreme value, the rich were of far greater importance than the poor and esteem far more highly sought than justice alone."<sup>64</sup> Not immune from these social pressures, the Christian

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<sup>61</sup> David W. Smith, *Against the Stream: Christianity and Mission in an Age of Globalization* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 2003), 8.

<sup>62</sup> A comprehensive survey of the Greco-Roman world, and especially Corinth, is offered in: Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, ed. and trans. John H. Schütz (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982); A. Duane Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Shelton, Jo-Ann, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>63</sup> Stephen C. Barton, "Social Values and Structures," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Leicester: InterVarsity, 2000), 1129. The dichotomy between the powerful and powerless is typified where patricians developed ties of responsibility with their social inferiors. The plebs became clients to their patrons and they owed the patricians deference. For a further discussion, see James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 131.

<sup>64</sup> Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 25.



church was heavily influenced by this culture.<sup>65</sup> As a result, Paul charges the Christians for being “worldly” in their behaviour (1 Corinthians 3:3). Gordon Fee states that Paul’s concern is “to get them to stop thinking like the people of the present age.”<sup>66</sup> Greatest importance was attached in responding to those who were using their power as a tool to alienate the poor.<sup>67</sup>

Consequently, the similarities found in first century Corinth are remarkably striking to the twenty-first century world in which global power transformations have led to the marginalization of much of the world’s poor. As such, there is particular relevance in the contemporary context in Hauerwas’ call for the church to be a counter-cultural community in a world that is hostile to the ethics of the gospel. In doing so, as Hauerwas articulates, the faithful church will be authentically demonstrating the truthfulness of Christian convictions “in a society of unbelief.”

### **Global integration and the unified kingdom of God**

Yet there is a further dimension of global integration that must be considered from a distinctly Reformational theological position. And it is brought out most fully in Oliver O’Donovan’s political theology. The fundamental question arising from the works of this theologian, which is inherent to a theology of grace is: *with the world becoming increasingly integrated, how are we to conceive of globalization in relation to God’s unified kingdom reign in his world, and what are the implications of this reign for the mission of the church in this contemporary context?*

Being in covenant-partnership with God in anticipation of this eschatological kingdom, of which God’s justice for the whole world is so central, does indeed have far-reaching implications for the church in an age where the role and boundaries of nation-states are progressively changing. As O’Donovan enunciated, the kingly reign of God, which is inextricably tied to the concept of authority, causes the church to be actively engaged in the socio-political sphere as the vindication and restoration of the entire created order is foundational to the divine plan of world redemption. Where the kingdom of God is ushered in is found in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It is this divine act that both leads to the reaffirmation of creation’s order and coherence, and also provides the impetus to the church in its mission to the world. Integral to this holistic message of the gospel, the church has a crucial role to play as a political society in the unfolding of God’s all-sovereign rule.

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<sup>65</sup> John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth - in JSNT Supplement Series*, vol. 75 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 83-112.

<sup>66</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 122. Such a transformation of relations is found in Paul’s redefinition of what it means to be a servant, which was a particularly low class in Roman society. See Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 56-59.

<sup>67</sup> Andrew D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 185.

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Yet a root cause of tension with this biblical portrayal of God's kingdom and a globalized world is due to developing countries holding considerably less levels of power than the richer nations.<sup>68</sup> Sine comments on the danger existing in that those who do have power will exploit the powerless for economic gain, which is opposed to the kingdom of God: "The rapid movement of peoples into a new one world economic order is shaping their aspirations and values in ways that are often at counter-point to the aspirations and values of God's kingdom."<sup>69</sup> In being confronted with these realities in an age of globalization, Ben Knighton calls upon churches, "to become a prophetic community of hope and resistance guided by the vision of the kingdom of God. To arrive at this goal, churches need to opt for the poor and empower them."<sup>70</sup>

Expressly, when we consider Christian witness in the context of a globalized world vis-à-vis God's unified kingly reign, the answer which it invites is that national boundaries are only of contingent moral significance for a community of grace. Insofar as the autonomous nation-state stands in the way of redistribution that would be required to promote global justice, boundaries are of secondary importance. Despite arguably having a legitimate particular interest in issues of justice in one's own nation, as O'Donovan points out, a Christian vision of justice, grounded in an acknowledgment of the universal reign of God in his created world, causes the church to have a universal understanding of justice. Therefore, although cosmopolitan theories of justice have flourished in an age where traditional nation-state boundaries are becoming transformed, the doctrine of grace means geographical boundaries have never been supremely the criteria for questions of justice for ecclesial witness.

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<sup>68</sup> Carl Henry elaborates on this disparity between God's justice and the injustice found in the world: "The God of the Bible...gives the lie to modern notions that injustice is strength, that rectitude is weakness." See Carl F.H. Henry, *The God Who Shows Himself* (Waco, TX: Word, 1966), 11. A concern for the just use of power is also found in the Reformation era. Human beings "steal," wrote John Calvin, "not only when they secretly take the property of others, but also when they make money by injuring others, accumulate wealth in objectionable ways, or are more concerned with their own advantage than with justice." See John Calvin, "Commentary on Exodus 20:15/Deuteronomy 5:19," in *Calvin: Commentaries*, ed. Joseph Haroutunian (London: SCM Press, 1958), 328-329.

<sup>69</sup> Sine, "Globalization, Creation of Global Culture of Consumption," 354. For a comparison of the contemporary abuse of power with the great Babylon in the book of Revelation, see Richard J. Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically* (London: SPCK, 1989), 85-102. Richard Bauckham illustrates how the Roman Empire is opposed to God's kingdom and has a "single-minded pursuit of her own power and economic advantage." In contrast, Christians witnessed to a different kind of rule, "a kingdom founded not on exploitative power but on sacrificial service" (101).

<sup>70</sup> Ben Knighton, "Globalization: Implications of Violence, the Global Economy, and the Role of the State for Africa and Christian Mission," *Transformation*, vol. 18/4 (October 2001), 212.

In analyzing how we think about boundaries in relation to theological ethics, Richard Miller captures this vision of God's unified rule in stressing the cosmopolitan aspects of Christianity. Miller states: "Central to this priority is the belief that God is the highest good, a source of love and order in this-worldly affairs, requiring loyalty that transcends the divisions of political life."<sup>71</sup> Even though some Christians provide a clear rationale for boundaries and regional loyalties, Miller articulates that it is a rationale that stands in tension with obligations to love the neighbour irrespective of political affiliation and distance: "Borders ask us to privilege local solidarities, but Christian agape, exemplified by Jesus' teaching and example, is altruistic and cosmopolitan."<sup>72</sup> It is a conception of boundaries, which accentuates the priority of the metaphysical over the geographical vis-à-vis ethical and political questions:

*This priority has theological and ethical dimensions. Theologically, it implies a hierarchy of being and value according to which God is to receive unconditional loyalty. All lesser loyalties are subordinate to a fundamental love of God, bound as they are by finitude and dependence upon the deity as the author of good. Ethically, this priority assigns at most a provisional and qualified value to regional boundaries, a value that is corrigible when measured against the requirements of a universal neighbour-love.*<sup>73</sup>

To summarize, therefore, a theocentric vision of God's eschatological kingdom rule, as O'Donovan compellingly stressed, causes the church in being a sign of this future hope to have an unambiguously universal and holistic vision of global justice. It follows that an integral aspect of the Christian community's witness in the globalized socio-political arena is to be an agent of justice, not because it is based on any secular theory of justice, but because it is based on a holistic understanding of divine grace, which leads to living in accordance with God's design for human existence.

### **Being a community of grace in the globalized socio-political arena**

In examining how this Christian vision of global justice may be worked out practically in the context of a globalized world, a good example to look at is that offered by the "Micah Challenge." The Micah Challenge is facilitated by the World Evangelical Alliance and the Micah Network, and draws its council members from the leadership of Evangelical Alliances and Christian relief and

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<sup>71</sup> Richard B. Miller, "Christian Attitudes toward Boundaries," in *Boundaries and Justice*, 15. Cf. David Hollenbach, S.J., *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 212. David Hollenbach argues that in an interdependent world the idea of the common good must take on a more universal definition.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

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development agencies from around the globe.<sup>74</sup> The Micah Network, which brings together more than two hundred and fifty Christian organizations providing relief, development, and justice activities throughout the world, developed the *Declaration on Integral Mission* at its first International Consultation in Oxford in September 2001. The *Declaration* sets out the biblical and theological basis for the Micah Challenge:

*Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.*

In facilitating a global campaign to mobilize Christians against poverty, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Micah Network aims to deepen Christian engagement with the poor and to influence leaders of rich and poor nations to fulfill their commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and so halve absolute global poverty by 2015. All one hundred and ninety-one members states of the United Nations have promised to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, which include measurable, time-bound targets addressing poverty and hunger, education, maternal and child health, the prevalence of diseases including HIV/AIDS, gender equality, the environment, debt, trade justice and aid.<sup>75</sup> It is a holistic Christian response to some of the core social and political challenges inextricably linked with globalization, which is grounded in an appreciation of divine grace.

Commenting on the critical global challenges related to political and ideological oppression and conflict, Gary Edmonds, former Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance declares: “Evangelicals must learn how to be peacemakers in a pluralistic society and how to negotiate for justice in more monolithic societies.” This will involve, Edmonds states, learning how to train and influence the business professionals to act with justice rather than for profit margin. It will mean a form of development of communities by investing in people and not simply the infrastructure, which so often leads to the gentrification of a community. Combined with these challenges for the church in being an agent of God’s justice, Edmonds points out the need for evangelicals to learn how to advocate on behalf of the poor and the marginalized of a globalized society, at the local levels, national levels, and on regional or international levels.

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. T. Howland Sanks, S.J. “Globalization and the Church’s Social Mission,” in *Theological Studies*, vol. 60/4 (December 1999), 644-645. Since globalization has changed the context in which the church carries out its social mission, Howland Sanks notes that the church may have to foster new transnational structures to deal with matters of global justice.

<sup>75</sup> Micah Challenge website ([www.micahchallenge.org](http://www.micahchallenge.org)).

The big opportunity for evangelicals, however, Edmonds suggests, will be to be the bridge builders between Catholics, World Council of Churches, Orthodox and other faith communities:

*There will need to be multi-lateral decision making that brings together diverse faith communities for interaction with societal sectors of leadership such as business, education, government, arts and media. These cross-sector partnerships will be the only way to create a just society that 'seeks to do good to all people.' Evangelicals will be given an opportunity to play this role if they will rise up and take it. However, if evangelicals hide or stay entrenched in a narrow fundamentalist view of the faith they will miss out on the opportunity as they will not be viewed as advocates for the common good.<sup>76</sup>*

When such greater global justice is incorporated into the development of a new global order, there is significantly more scope for creating a society where the marginalized will benefit from the fruits of globalization. For global integration not only presents challenges to be overcome. Globalization has the potential to be a powerful force for poverty reduction, particularly for those living in the developing world. That is the challenge presented to the community of grace in being the agent of transformative action in the socio-political arena of the twenty-first century.

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<sup>76</sup> Gary Edmonds highlighted these specific social and political challenges presented to the evangelical church in an age of globalization in a personal correspondence.