

## Christian Complicity in Colonialism/ Globalism

The overreach of Colonialism, and now of Globalism, continues to reduce nature to a moral/ mortal wasteland. Christian Mission needs to be aware of, and wary of, the moral/ mortal devastation caused by the mindless corporate exploitation of global people and resources. This is the warning of Missiologist Stephan Bevens, SVD. Stephen Bevens writes about "New Evangelical Vision and Mission" in the *DIVINE WORD Missionary Magazine*, Summer 2002 and Winter 2002, P.O. Box 6099, Techny, IL 60082-6099. Dr Bevens, is the Louis J. Luzbetak SVD, Professor of Mission and Culture at the Catholic Theological Union, Chicago.

"On the one hand, Dr Bevens acknowledges the past errors of missionaries being in the role of serving colonialism, and on the other hand, the future risk associated with transnational corporations and globalization. He writes, "The modern missionary era was in many ways the 'religious arm' of colonialism, whether Portuguese and Spanish colonialism in the sixteenth Century, or British, French, German, Belgian or American colonialism in the nineteenth. This was not all bad — oftentimes missionaries were heroic defenders of the rights of indigenous peoples...We find ourselves today, however, in another equally ambiguous context...the phenomenon of globalization poses a threat that is in many ways much more dangerous than the old colonial order. Particularly, in the economic realm, global corporations are ruthless in their search for profits and expansion, and while many are benefiting, the poor of the world are becoming poorer and more desperate.

"The transformation that has occurred within the church over the past four decades (following the Second Vatican Council) is the changed condition that gives new insight into the evangelical mission to the world. Divine Word Missionary Bevens (who served in the Philippines from 1972 to 1981) identifies five "important shifts" that have brought about this new insight.

"*The first shift* is "**from expansion to communication**" (emphasis added). In conjunction with colonialism, the preaching of the Christian gospel is now globally widespread. Christianity has shifted its population center from the "North" to the "South"... "Brazil, for example, is now the largest Catholic country in the world, and the world's fastest growing church is the church of Africa." Further expansion, as with the followers of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, will continue to be "slow and difficult... The missionary era just now beginning is communication."

"*The second shift* is "a new motive: from the mission of the church to the mission of God." Past emphasis of mission engagement was on "obedience to Christ's command." Trinitarian theology, as it has been developed in recent decades, makes it clear that God "is the real missionary...Mission is not merely something that God does; mission is who God is...Mission" is now not so much what "church is commanded to do, [rather] it becomes [is] the church's very essence."

"*The third shift* is the "new breadth: from mission as *one* task to mission as *many* tasks." (Emphasis added.) "While...the direct proclamation of the gospel" is the "permanent priority of mission (RM 44)", it now includes persistent focus on the every day Christian life of the people and the community's efforts to make real the whole church's commitment to justice and peace on behalf of all peoples, including "commitment to ecological concerns."

*"The fourth shift.* "from missionary specialists to missionary Christians." Missionaries serve not to transplant a new culture (colonial) and / or a new nationalism but to blend the message of Jesus into the lives of people where they are. Mission witness is to personify Jesus' presence. In such witness local churches develop mission focus and become missionary churches, for "missionary activity is a matter for all Christians (RM 2). Every parish is a missionary parish."

*"The fifth shift* is the "new context: from colonialism to globalization." The missionary is to be neither the arm of past colonial overreach nor a new arm for the overreach of transnational corporations. The communication tools of modern technology, for example, may be useful to facilitate the missionary's work, but the missionary's work remains "to preach the gospel and promote the values of God's reign." The problem is the real threat of harm that globalization poses to the poor of world, and to missionaries in being identified with globalization even as they were with colonization.

"All missionaries, all Christians, like Jesus, should relate to others solicitously and not arrogantly, compassionately not pretentiously, altruistically not opportunistically, for such behavior is conducive to personal/ social justification, salvation, peace and civility. The Christian/ Human Mission is indiscriminately universal and individual, characterized in authentic relationships and service of people to each other and to life on Earth. From RELIGION & CIVILITY, pp 287, 288,

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