

Max Stackhouse and Don Browning, eds., *God and Globalization: Theological Ethics and the Spheres of Life. Volume 2 The Spirit and the Modern Authorities* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2001), pp. x + 244, ..., ISBN 1-56338-330-6

In this second volume of *God and Globalization*, authoritative practices in the emerging global society are identified and analyzed from a theological perspective. Classical professions as law, education, and medicine, well established in the history of the West but universalized now in the process of globalization, as well as relatively new spheres of authority, playing a vital role in that process such as technology and ecology. In his Introduction Stackhouse defines ‘authorities’ as ‘those extraordinary social practices or institutions that exercise nearly sovereign control over certain decisions that become indispensable for the common life in complex civilizations.’ They seem to function as autonomous practices, ruled by inherent standards of excellence, inaccessible from the outside. Stackhouse however, resists that image. Teaching, advocating, healing, or doing science, can only be practiced well, he defends, if they are understood out of their transcending origin and foundation. A profession has to be seen as ‘an ethical engagement and a spiritual commitment that one makes in response to a personal sense of vocation and a communal certification.’ (p.18) In a spirit of technocracy, this is often denied. Hubris and Mammon will become the new gods of professions, if the theological roots of this sense of vocation are not recognized and acknowledged. ‘There are resources that can reengage these authorities and regencies and offer them guidance. These resources are theological and ethical in nature, Christian in root, public in character, and universal in implication.’ (p. 29)

Though Stackhouse presents this apologetic claim as the basic argument of this volume, it is not clear whether the other contributors do share it. In his carefully written chapter on teaching, after having sketched the impact of globalization, Richard Osmer

stresses the emerging importance of global reflexivity ('a heightened awareness of cultural others and diverse images of the global whole', p. 38). Preparing people for this new, high demanding context does not only requires a reform of public, state-supported education, but also the support of civil society. Families, businesses, media, but also churches can offer their own contribution to the globalization of education. Osmer concentrates on the Christian community. The teaching ministry of the church consists of three perennial tasks: catechesis, edification and discernment. Global reflexivity invites catechesis to encourage the development of a postconventional faith that affirms Christian beliefs and practices without absolutizing them; should lead Christians to reciprocity and universalization in their ethical outlook; and calls the church to be a community of hope, discerning the hidden possibilities of transformation anticipating Gods future.

John Witte, Jr., writing on law, argues that globalization is in need of a human rights culture. Therefore, religion and human rights need to be brought in a closer symbiosis. Witte shows how Christianity and other religions actively participated in their birth. After having been midwives, he invites them now to become also mothers of human rights. Religious bodies not only should assume the patronage of human rights, but also nurture and challenge them. A 'human rights hermeneutics' within the different traditions is needed. It consists of a critical and creative re-reading of the history of tradition, a confession of guilt that acknowledges the neglect and violation of human rights in its own past, but also a hermeneutic of suspicion vis- à-vis absolute, secular, and libertarian claims in current human rights discourse.

I consider these two contributions as the highlights of this volume, that stay close to its objective. In his chapter on medicine, Allen Verhey, offers a valuable, but more general reflection on the relationship between church (as a community moral discourse and of healing) and modern medicine. He criticizes the 'Baconian project' that regards health as the *summum bonum* rather than as a condition

for a good life, and displays an unlimited confidence in technology and in the manipulability of nature. One may have wished a more elaborated view on the concrete implications of these reflections for health care policy in the global context, for example vis-à-vis the HIV-AIDS pandemic.

Compared to law, medicine and education, technology is a new 'regency' within the globalization process. Ronald Cole Turner offers a theological analysis of the new powers, ICT and biotechnology. Their quasi-autonomous character should be rejected. Technology can be challenged and cross-examined in the public sphere. 'Where might this happen, if not in the church?', Cole Turner states. (p. 162) As for Verhey, church is the locus par excellence where authorities can be challenged. In his conclusion however, Cole Turner is modest: the church may in fact exert not more than 'a small but important influence' on the development of technology. A mission however, 'worthy of devotion'. (p.165)

A theological approach of ecology is undertaken by Jürgen Moltmann, in his contribution. Though inspiring and groundbreaking in his plea for an integration of Gaia-theory in a Trinitarian theology, it largely consists of material that goes back to the late eighties. It was not specially written for this project.

An original chapter by Peter J. Paris on moral heroes completes the volume. Though drawing on MacIntyre's virtue-theory, Paris contends, contrary to him, that virtues can both respect and transcend cultural boundaries, religious traditions, and political ideologies. Despite their differences, human beings everywhere agree on the basic attributes of a morally good person. (p.194)

Prominent laureates of the Nobel Peace Prize, such as Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela and Dwa Aung San Suu Kyi are praised world wide as moral exemplars for a new era, refuting moral relativism by their mere existence.

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