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A note on this publication

Recently, IWJ invited theological students from different faith traditions to answer the following question: *what within your faith tradition inspires a commitment to worker justice?* This collection of papers contains submissions from students across the country in response to this question. These papers are published in conjunction with the Interfaith Theological Symposium on Economic Justice, which was held before the 15th Anniversary IWJ Conference in June, 2011.

Brueggemann Award in Economic Justice

The award recipient for the Brueggemann Award in Economic Justice is Jacob Lesniewski. The runner up for this prize is Annette Bolds. Congratulations to both on their achievement!

Special Thanks

Walter Brueggemann for his generous donation to the Interfaith Theological Symposium.

Members of the Advisory Committee: Dr. Charles Amjad-Ali, Imam Taha Hassane, Rabbi Laurie Coskey and Rev. Rebekah Jordan Gienapp.

DePaul University’s *Center for Interreligious Engagement*.

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“Can a Peace Church Evangelical Confront the Boss: Evangelical Theology, Non-Violence and the Workers Center Movement”

By Jacob Lesniewski
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Introduction

In the midst of high employment rates, debates over the labor-market effects of undocumented immigrants, and a renewed assault on organized labor's very existence, there is increasing discussion over what can be done to improve conditions of work for all workers, and especially low-wage workers. Conditions of work for all workers, but especially low-wage workers have significantly deteriorated. These conditions of work include stagnating wages, challenging scheduling practices, limited access to benefits, or limited ability to move up the occupational ladder (Berhardt, et.al 2001; Kalleberg 2009). Employers are increasingly “transferring risk” onto hourly and other low skill workers through job redesign, which has significant consequences for all areas of life for low-wage workers (Kalleberg 2009; Lambert 1999, 2008).

Workplace abuse and violations of labor law have skyrocketed to Dickensian levels not seen since the industrial sweatshops of the early 20th century. The federal government's ability to enforce basic labor law has declined substantially to the point that it is barely able to keep up with the complaints received from workers, let alone engage in pro-active investigations of workplace abuses as in earlier periods (Bobo 2009; Fine & Gordon 2010).

A group of small, underfunded, understaffed organizations called workers centers emerged in the late 1980s and through the so-called boom years of the 1990s as an attempt to combat workplace abuses and improve the conditions of work for low-wage workers. Janice Fine, in her book-length treatment of the workers centers “movement” defines them as “community-based and community-led organizations that engage in a combination of service, advocacy,

and organizing to provide support to low-wage workers” (Fine 2006). Workers centers are largely concentrated among (although not limited to) immigrant communities, are generally small, autonomous organizations that are founded by a combination of immigrant rights activists, religious leaders, and worker rights advocates, although some unions have established workers centers to assist their organizing.

The purpose of this paper is to be to reflect theologically not about the emergence of workers centers and the current state of the economy, but rather to reflect theologically about the strategies, actions and tactics of workers centers. This paper will offer the first steps towards a Christian theology of workers centers, particularly focusing on how workers centers contribute to the building of God's Kingdom of peace and justice on earth. First, this paper will briefly review Janice Fine's description of what workers centers do in order to allow the reader to get a sense of the work of workers centers and the scope and breadth of the workers centers movement. Second, this paper will use the particular workplace justice campaign strategy of Arise-Chicago workers center to think theologically about the work of workers centers in the world.

Fine makes ten basic claims about what workers centers do, based on extensive interviews and some observational studies of individual workers centers. First, she claims that workers centers at their core are hybrid organizations in that they combine elements of different kinds of organizations. Second, workers centers are service providers, either through direct service provided by the organization itself or through referrals. Third, workers centers engage in advocacy, which Fine defines as: “conduct(ing) research and releas(ing) exposes about conditions in low-wage industries, lobby(ing) for new labor and immigration laws and changes in existing ones, work(ing) with government agencies to improve monitoring and grievance processes and bring(ing) suits against employers.” (Fine 2006)

Fourth, workers centers engage in what Fine calls organizing. For Fine, this organizing is building strong membership organizations and engaging in leadership development for the purpose of direct economic action at workplaces and public policy reform (p. 12). Part of the hybrid nature of workers centers is their fifth characteristic. Fine claims that they are largely place-based rather than worksite based. Due to this place-centeredness, workers centers

members and the organizations themselves often have strong ethnic and racial identification.

Fine also finds workers centers distinct in their commitment to leadership development and internal democracy within the organization. Many workers centers claim a commitment to "Frierian" (Fine's terms) forms of organizing, in their focus on using tools of popular education to build democratic organizations with strong worker leadership. Her ninth claim is that workers centers "think globally," that their leadership especially expresses solidarity with other social movements locally and internationally. Oftentimes, workers centers maintain transnational ties with organizations in the home countries of many of their members. Tenth, workers centers often have broad social change agendas that move beyond work related problems to community and immigration needs. Workers centers by necessity and design are heavily involved in coalition building and finally, have small and involved memberships.

Fine claims that workers centers "arise because of an absence of pre-existing institutions to integrate low-wage immigrants into American civil society and provide them with pathways to economic stability through service, self-help and self organization" (p. 33). Much like the settlement houses of the earlier immigrant wave periods of the late 19th early 20th century, workers centers fill the social service, advocacy, community building, and organizing void left by a weakened labor movement and a dearth of other pro-immigrant organizations. Political parties are weak and no longer rely on or are equipped to take advantage of the mobilization of new immigrants. In Fine's view, even the immigrant organizations that exist, such as hometown associations, rarely engage in local politics or advocacy (p. 36).

At the heart of the workers center model of organizing is the notion that the relationship between employer and employee, boss and worker is inherently a conflictual one. Workers' stories of workplace law violations and abuses, while thoroughly investigated and confirmed, are generally taken at face value. Workers center staff accompany and advocate for low-wage workers with the firm belief that what drives workplace abuses are power imbalances between workers and bosses.

Many workers centers, especially those affiliated with Interfaith Worker Justice's network of workers centers also mobilize religious communities as part of a workplace justice campaign. Religious leaders, whether Protestant pastors, Catholic priests, Jewish rabbis or Muslim Imams are usually motivated

to support the workers center members by their commitment to the social justice traditions of their respective faiths. Outreach to religious communities is a key aspect of workers centers' strategies to improve the conditions of work for low-wage workers, but in many respects it is the least developed. Workers centers know that people of faith should be deeply offended by the injustices suffered by low-wage workers and know that the moral force of a religious leader is often important in winning a workplace justice campaign. What is less developed is a "theology of the workers center movement," an understanding of what role individual workers centers and the workers center movement as a whole plays in building God's kingdom of peace and justice and how people of faith can understand the conflict and power struggles at the heart of daily work of a workers center.

As previously stated, the purpose of this paper is to take a first few tentative steps towards a Christian theology of the workers center movement. More specifically, this paper attempts to frame some initial steps towards an evangelical understanding of the workers center movement. While this may seem like a less important task to those of us who work in, study, or support the workers center movement than, say reforming the Department of Labor's wage and hour division, it is a deeply urgent and personal task for those immersed in daily confrontations with abusive employers and supporting low-wage workers.

I am an organizer with Arise-Chicago Workers Center and a doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration. I have spent the bulk of my thirty-three years absorbing the evangelical mantra that the very words of God are contained in the Biblical text and that I must base my life on the mandates and strictures of those recorded words. I also have had the great fortune of spending significant time learning from and working alongside Mennonites, whose commitment to the character of God as revealed in the Bible means a commitment to lives of peace, non-violence and non-resistance.

I am left with the challenge of reconciling evangelical concepts of social justice with a long tradition of Christian nonresistance and the confrontational power oriented ideology of the workers center movement. The fundamental question is how can one who believes that the Incarnate God of the Universe was speaking truth and direction to my life in the 21st Century when Jesus said "do not resist an evil-

doer”¹ confront bosses who are doing evil by abusing their workers?

This paper argues that a proper, evangelical view of Christ’s reconciling work as revealed throughout the Gospels, and most specifically in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians provides the key to understanding the role of workers centers in building God’s Kingdom of justice and peace. This paper builds this argument by relying on the evangelical dictates to stick as close to the Biblical text as possible and the mandate of liberation theology to develop theology based on praxis, the lived lives of those who work and struggle for justice. In other words, this paper will rely on direct discussion of Biblical texts and reflection on my work as an organizer at Arise-Chicago workers’ center.

The heart of this argument is what I would argue is a Biblical understanding of the process of reconciliation. Reconciliation, as traditionally viewed or practiced by people of faith, often has connotations of an unbiased third party mediator assisting parties in negotiating solutions to their problems (Favretto, 2009), and is often the traditional view of peace church Christians, such as Mennonites or Quakers (although not exclusively, see Hart, 2001). In this model, people of faith, by virtue of their ability to see the Image of God in all, are able to mediate and transform conflict into a reconciling moment that allows for the recognition of mutual interest and sustainable changes in relationships. This is decidedly not the vision of the workers center movement

Workers centers operate with clear definitions of good and evil. Their grounding assumption is that employers, whether because of greed, racism, or inattentiveness to labor laws, engage in abuses of their workers largely because they can. In the ideology of the workers center movement, employers face little to no constraints on their ability to maximize their profits through exploitation of low-wage workers because the power of low-wage workers, whether expressed through attentive government agencies or strong organizations of low-wage workers (such as unions) is minimal. Workers centers organizers confront employers with the reality of the abuses they are committing and demand an end to those abuses and/or some form of recompense.

When workers center organizers engage clergy in confrontations with employers, they do so after spending significant time orienting them to the workers center perspective. The role of a clergy member in a delegation to an employer or at a direct action is not the role those clergy often assume that it will be: that of an unbiased mediator between two sides. Rather, the clergy member provides something completely different, a task that requires taking sides and confrontation. Clergy members, workers center organizers and the others who accompany workers when they confront their abusive employers provide witnesses and a mirror. They confront employers with the reality of their abuses and hold up a mirror to the boss, showing him or her what their actions really mean, what dignity they have stripped from their workers and the laws they are breaking. So what does this have to do with reconciliation?

In 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 the Apostle Paul tells Christians that:

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

The key question here is what exactly is the ministry of reconciliation that Christians have been given by God to perform as “ambassadors for Christ.” It seems to me most important question concerning this ministry of reconciliation is how an individual accepts the reconciling work of Christ in their lives. Evangelicals have long pointed to the need for some sort of transformative experience in the life of any individual who would join in the reconciling work of Christ. Famous for their insistence on being “born-again,” Evangelicals teach that an individual must become cognizant of their need for deliverance from the evil that resides within in them and the evil they practice on a daily basis. In other words, Evangelicals would argue that Christ’s reconciling work can not begin in an individual until that person recognizes that the sins they commit or harbor in their hearts and minds are at the center of what prevents them from experiencing the reconciling work of Christ in their lives and communities. When discussing the basic tenets of their understanding of Christian faith, Evangelicals will often travel down the “Roman road,” which walks an

¹ Matthew 5:39b. Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

aspirant from Romans 3:23 (all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God) to Romans 6:23 (the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus), back to Romans 5:8 and onward.

Advocates for workers rights and those involved in the workers center movement would likely tend to look askance at this understanding of faith, given the ways it has been used to individualize faith and avoid political and social responsibility in the name of personal salvation. Evangelicals have tended to focus on personal moral choices in the arena of sexual relations, consumptive behaviors, and religious rituals such as church attendance, prayer and Bible study while leaving behind discussion of economic and political relations.² This ignores a significant portion of the Biblical text that points to how oppression of workers is a massive obstacle to God's reconciling work in the lives of individuals and communities. In Isaiah 58, for example, the people of Israel cry out to God wondering why God has not noticed the fasts, sacrifices, and religious ceremonies they have so diligently performed. In verse 3a, God responds saying, "Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day and oppress all your workers." The New Living Translation is even more evocative, saying:

"We have fasted before you!" they say. "Why aren't you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don't even notice it!" "I will tell you why!" I respond. "It's because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers."

The passage then goes on to describe what concrete changes the people of Israel needed to make in order to experience the reconciling work of God in their lives, mainly an ending of injustice and respect for the Sabbath day of rest from work. One does not have to see the parallels with "one day rest in seven laws" to know that part of the importance of the Sabbath is the economic aspect of allowing workers to rest from their labors and worship God.

And this is not an isolated passage. Time and time again, in the prophetic texts of the Old Testament or in the words of the New Testament, it becomes clearer and clearer that a major barrier to reconciliation with the God of the universe is the sin of oppression of workers. For example, James 5:1-5: "Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence

against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts on a day of slaughter."

Or Isaiah 10:1-3

"Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive statutes, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be your spoil, and that you may make the orphans your prey! What will you do on the day of punishment, in the calamity that will come from far away? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth?"

Or Amos 5:21-24

"I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain-offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals, I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

No matter how sincere the religiosity of those who oppress workers, no matter how much they dot their ritual I's and cross their religious T's, God's wrath remains upon them. Their sin of oppression is a major barrier to the reconciling work of God in their lives. Without turning away from their sins of oppression, injustice, and abuse of workers, employers who steal wages, discriminate, or mistreat their workers will never experience the reconciling work of God in their lives. Individuals need to walk down the Roman road not only for violations of the Ten Commandments or "heart attitudes towards wealth" but also for the spiritual distance from God caused by concrete acts of oppression that rob workers of their wages and their dignity as image-bearers of the Creator God. Despite the fact that Evangelicals tend to spiritualize the justice passages of the Old and New Testaments to emphasize one's attitude toward wealth and work, these passages make clear that God stands on the side of the abused worker.

The tactics employed in a workplace justice campaign by a workers center like Arise-Chicago would seem to fit this model of reconciliation well. Workers contact Arise-Chicago by phone or by dropping in to the center on Chicago's north side. Workers are listened to and then invited to a worker

² Although not exclusively, the work of thinkers in the "emergent church" movement have moved away from this understanding.

rights workshop, in which individual workers join with others who have called or walked into the center with a workplace justice issue to learn about their rights, to learn how Arise-Chicago works, and perhaps most importantly to realize that their individual situation is not just a personal problem, but is part of a larger social problem. Workers are made to feel that they are not alone in their struggle, that they are victimized by a system that is stacked against just and equitable workplaces, and that direct action, solidarity, and commitment are the key aspects of a successful workplace justice campaign.

Workers then schedule a meeting with an organizer at Arise-Chicago, in which the particulars of the workplace justice violations they've experienced are discussed and documented. If appropriate, the organizer calls the employer in the presence of the worker to attempt to set up a meeting to discuss the problem. If the employer is not responsive, then a follow-up letter is sent demanding a meeting within seven days to discuss the situation. If the employer remains unresponsive, then Arise-Chicago schedules a delegation, usually of workers, members of Arise-Chicago, clergy, Arise-Chicago staff and allies to confront the boss with the reality of their wrongdoing.

This progression from friendly attempts to meet to confrontation at the place of business or even an employer's home when deemed appropriate generates more discomfort for abusive bosses and is a more empowering experience for workers than it would seem at first blush. While there are certainly many employers who would rather pay thousands of dollars in legal fees than pay a worker the \$300, \$400 or \$500 in stolen wages they owe, a surprising number of employers are thrown off by being forced to face the human consequences of their actions. I have been sworn at, called all sorts of terrible names, accused of lying and other sundry moral and ethical crimes on the phone with an employer, only to have a relatively calm and productive discussion with the same employer in the physical presence of the worker and the worker's allies. The moral power of presence and accompaniment is a surprisingly effective tactic that can move even the most recalcitrant of abusive employers.

The potential for reconciliation the moment an employer, however begrudgingly, agrees that they have sinned against their worker and will take steps to redress their violations is at least four-fold. There is the reconciliation with the worker, which rarely (never in my experience) rises to the level of the emotionally satisfying resolution assumed in traditional models of

reconciliation. There is the reconciliation with God that has been discussed to this point, reconciliation with the families and communities that depend on the wages earned by workers and stolen by employers, and to the state which demands certain standards in the workplace. This reconciliation rarely happens in the traditional sense, but mainly consists of an employer admitting, whether through his or her actions or (less often) words, that he or she has "sinned before God and man." In others words, workers centers offer the opportunity for employers to walk the Roman road from their current position willfully ignoring the laws of God, the mandates of the state, the norms of the community, and the humanity of their workers to a place where they will begin to be reconciled to all.

I would argue that this set of tactics is as powerful as it is for the same reason that Saul's experience on the Damascus Road turned him from Saul the murderer of Christians to Paul the Apostle in Acts 9. At that moment, Saul was confronted with the reality of his actions, his moral depravity and the consequences of his violence against the first Christian communities. Being forced to recognize the wrongness of the violence and abuse he was perpetrating laid bare the contradictions and emptiness of the ideological framework that he had developed to justify his actions. Stripped of the veneer of respectability that his ideological justifications provided him, Saul became acutely aware of the evil inside him, the evil he was perpetrating, and his need for reconciliation. It is much the same with abusive bosses. While less dramatic (sometimes) than a voice speaking out of a blinding light, the moment of public confrontation between a boss and his workers forces the boss to make a decision: will he admit wrongdoing and seek to redress his actions, or further consign himself to those who would infuriate God by abusing workers.

The import of this action is revealed by the lengths many employers will go to avoid accepting any responsibility for their abuse of workers. Employers will attempt to shift blame by throwing doubt on the documentation status of their workers, by claiming that it they were "extorted" (in the word of at least three employers I've encountered) rather than admit wrong doing, or employ all sorts of stalling, subterfuge or even go to the extreme of filing for bankruptcy to avoid accepting the offer of reconciliation that comes from admission of guilt and sin. This admission, while opening up the possibility of reconciliation, also is a deeply humbling admission that weakens the power of the employer in the face of an empowered worker. As

one employer so memorably stated: "I don't need you telling me how to run my business. I know the laws, I know right from wrong, I don't need you to try to intimidate me and tell me what's right and what's legal."

What workers centers offer employers, then, is the opportunity to turn from their abuse of workers and begin to allow the reconciling work of God to act in their lives. Workers centers force employers to confront the consequences of their actions and transform workers from cogs in a machine or ticks on a balance sheet into a member of a community that will support them in all aspects of a workplace justice campaign. Workers centers shift the balance of power in the workplace towards workers by making employers confront their own misdeeds.

There are at least two possible objections to this understanding of the role of a workers center. First, there is the reality that few, if any employers will go beyond the mere "performance" of reconciliation. Most of the time, workers have left the job and are mainly interested in recovering stolen wages and never returning to work with or even interact with their former employer. In those cases, we can say that the possibility of reconciliation has been extended to employers. Whether they take it or not, whether they go for full reconciliation (which might include some sort of apology, reinstatement or change in the practices that led to the violations of employment law in the first place) is a question of power. Workers centers struggle to generate the kind of power in a workplace justice campaign that can sustainably change the conditions of work for low-wage workers in a particular workplace or better said, move bosses to fully reconcile their business practices to the strictures of the Biblical texts. The promise of full reconciliation will likely remain far off for the time being.

A more serious objection may be found in the nonresistance tradition of Mennonites and other peace churches. The main stumbling block for those who would participate in confrontation with a boss as part of their kingdom building mission is found in Matthew 5:38-41.

"You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, **Do not resist an evildoer.** But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile." (emphasis mine).

Does this non-resistance mean that Jesus says that we are not to resist the actions of an evildoer, that

we are to be compliant and to abandon all desire for justice? Should we allow an abusive boss to walk all over workers in the name of patience and long-suffering? Does "turn the other cheek" mean that one is to become a doormat in the name of spiritual growth, to be trampled without protest in order to earn crowns in heaven? This is clearly at odds with a complete reading of the Biblical text, but is not an uncommon interpretation.

In the hands of those who do not or cannot understand the reality and consequences of workplace abuses, these dictates are transformed into mandates to actively participate in one's own oppression. Among some peace church thinkers, this nonresistance is taken to mean that nonviolent direct action (such as the delegations and protests performed by workers centers) are inappropriate because they are coercive. In this model, only passive resistance is appropriate. The Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia describes this as an "initiatory lack in traditional Mennonite civil disobedience (<http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/C51ME.html>). To be fair, passive resistance is not without its critics within peace churches like the Mennonites. The Mennonite Central Committee has recently revisited its civil disobedience policy and includes active nonviolent resistance as part of its litany of peace building activities (www.mcc.org), but there remains significant commitment to traditional passive resistance within Mennonite communities.

Theologian Walter Wink is most responsible for showing how these verses offer a "third way" between the "fight" of violent resistance and the flight of non-resistance (Wink, 2004;2011). In Wink's estimation, Jesus here is condemning violent resistance to evildoers, largely based on Wink's interpretation of the Greek "*antistenai*:"

In short, antistenai means more in Matt. 5:39a than simply to "stand against" or "resist." It means to resist violently, to revolt or rebel, to engage in an insurrection. Jesus is not encouraging submission to evil; that would run counter to everything he did and said. He is, rather, warning against responding to evil in kind by letting the oppressor set the terms of our opposition. Perhaps most importantly, he cautions us against being made over into the very evil we oppose by adopting its methods and spirit. He is saying, in effect, do not mirror evil; do not become the very thing you hate. The best translation is the Scholars Version: "Don't react violently against the one who is evil (Wink, 2011).

Wink goes on to deconstruct the three examples Jesus uses to exemplify his conception of non-violent resistance. Interestingly, in each case the actions Jesus recommends to His hearers force the offending party to face the consequences of their oppressive actions. Those who are physically abusing the poor are forced to see that they are humans, creditors are forced to see how their actions ruin real humans lives and destroy communities, and Roman soldiers are forced to see the injustice of their occupation of Palestine. Wink sees this as empowering the oppressed to regain the initiative and forcing those who are sinning to face the reality of their wrongdoing.

It should be clear then, that this nonviolent resistance, a resistance that allows for the reconciliation and redemption of those who oppress workers is the kingdom building work of workers centers like Arise-Chicago. Workers become not only agents of their own liberation, but become agents of God's reconciling work in the world. Workers become empowered not only to resolve their own workplace justice campaigns, but are moved into a position where a boss depends on the worker for their reconciliation with God, with community, and with the state. This is not a watery reconciliation that ends in handshakes and smiles. It is the hard, exhausting work of resistance to those who treat their workers as nothing more than ticks on a balance sheet. It is about extending the possibility of reconciliation time and time again, confident in the rightness and ultimate success of that mission, no matter what the temporary setbacks. It is about workers centers taking up the crosses of Christ, bearing one another's burdens, and pressing on to the goal of justice that we have in Christ Jesus.

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“The Beloved Community: A Paradigm for Immigrant Worker Justice Ministry”

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Introduction:

The issue of immigrant worker justice and the acrimony visibly present in much of the debate concerning it is deeply rooted in the “us”- “them” dichotomy characteristic of the sin of alienation. Fostered by the perspectives of nationalism and rights, America has modeled and nurtured this sin in its collective psyche throughout the country’s history. Those of a religious persuasion who are strongly loyal to a nationalistic perspective emphasize a God “who is especially interested in the success of the American experiment, one who makes no particular demands upon it other than that it continue to succeed and spread that success to the corners of the globe.”³ Persons who do not possess a particular religiosity yet still uphold the nationalistic point of view support the same narrative, but will not necessarily invoke a role for God. Although it is often not publicly acknowledged, the nationalistic perspective has also been fueled by a strong desire to maintain a Western European cultural hegemony that has been the norm within the United States since the initial arrival of the colonists.

Using inauthentic exegesis of Hebrew Scriptural texts, the nation’s “founding fathers” became convinced that God had led them to enter a new Promised Land where they were to establish a “new Israel”. This belief in their own divine election, along with a misplaced identification of the Americas with ancient Biblical Canaan enabled these colonists to find justification for expelling sovereign indigenous people from their land.⁴ Further, convinced that their religion

³ Mark G. Toulouse, *God In Public: Four Ways American Christianity and Public Life Relate*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 56 (Toulouse, 2006)

⁴ Roy H. May, Jr. “Promised Land and Land Theft”, *Joshua and the Promised Land*, General Board of Global Ministries United Methodist Church, www.gbglm-umc.org/umw/.../may7180.stm, accessed April 14, 2011

and culture were superior, they saw it as their God-given appointment to rule over the native people. Once these misappropriations of sacred text along with cultural arrogance became enshrined within public policy through the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, the colonizers found justification to enter into war with Mexico as well as to expand their enterprise in Cuba, Central America and the Caribbean.

By the end of the 1890’s, the belief in Western European superiority gained further strength with the advance of the worldwide Eugenics movement. First promoted by British anthropologist Francis Galton and his protégé Karl Pearson, this movement developed the concept of race as a biological construct, and assigned racial “superiority” to persons of Western European ancestry. Not surprisingly, it supported the enslavement of Africans, brutal behavior towards Mexicans and others who lived in the southern hemisphere of the Americas, and discriminatory immigration policies aimed at persons from Eastern and Southern Europe, Asia, India, and the Arab nations.⁵ Thus, racial ideology became the mechanism for rationalizing unequal social groups and unjust treatment that afforded privilege, power, status and wealth to some at the expense of others. Additionally, specific racial and ethnic exclusion laws that allowed for preferential treatment of Western European immigrants were built into United States public policies from 1882 to 1952. Although there was a more open attitude towards immigrants after 1952, it did not last long. When America began to experience an influx of Cuban, Haitian and Central American refugees during the 1980’s, new nationalism rhetoric began to be espoused, and it continues to be heard in much of the immigrant discourse today.

This is not to suggest that all who approach the issue of immigrant worker justice from a nationalistic perspective are supportive of racist ideology. However, since there is a strong element of racism within much of the discussion, it becomes problematic as we seek to move forward. Further, it allows the debate to stay focused on worker justice issues within the narrow framework of the United States, rather than enabling us to more effectively see, understand and respond to global issues that negatively impact all workers.

Framing the worker justice discussion from the ethical perspective of rights also limits forward

⁵ American Anthropological Association, “Race: Are We So Different?”, 2007, www.understandingrace.org/history/science/eugenics_physical. , Accessed April 15, 2011 (Association, 2007)

progress. The rights paradigm emphasizes responding to the needs and concerns of individuals or particular societal groups, but does not acknowledge the mutual interdependence of the human family. It also fails to adequately address the moral responsibility of persons who have benefitted from systemic injustice. Perhaps its most fatal flaw as it pertains to the worker justice movement, however, is that the claims of identity politics based on race, gender, national status and occupational specialization that flow from the rights perspective perpetuate suspicion, competition and perpetual division among workers. Ultimately, the ones who benefit from this division are the CEOs of American corporations. In the absence of a strong, united labor movement to hold it accountable, corporate America has been able to consistently mobilize resources and pressure state and federal governments to pass laws which favor corporate profits over the just treatment of workers. Their sphere of influence has also extended into the global arena, as they have successfully provided leadership to the establishment of free trade zones in developing countries. Not only have these zones enabled transnational corporations to outsource production at the expense of jobs for the American worker, but they have also contributed to the global exploitation of labor.

Although this exploitation of workers exists in every pocket of the world where transnational corporations have established factories and offices, one of the most egregious offenses is found in the Americas. With the passage of the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) in 1994, the entire country of Mexico essentially became a free trade zone for U.S. corporations. The Mexican agricultural industry has been hardest hit by this agreement. Unable to compete with the subsidies and technology of U.S. agribusinesses, Mexican farmers are no longer able to earn enough money to support their families. "Instead of supporting a thriving food system that keeps people on the land and communities eating healthy, local food, NAFTA has empowered global food corporations, increased market concentration and consolidated market power within and across sectors."⁶ This has resulted in unprecedented profits for transnational agribusinesses, and an economically forced migration of hundreds of thousands of Mexican farmers in search of work to the United States. The

impact of NAFTA on Mexican workers has also been felt in nonagricultural industries. The majority of these workers have experienced a steady wage decline and in the last decade those who have been making minimum wage have seen their purchasing power decrease nearly 50%.⁷ Currently, approximately 30 million Mexicans nationwide survive on less than the equivalent of three dollars per day, and over 10 million have a daily income of less than a dollar per day. When viewed from the perspective of percentages of the total population, this translates to 37.7 percent of Mexico's citizens living in poverty, and 23.6 percent in extreme poverty.⁸ For these persons, as well as many from Asian, Eastern European, African and Caribbean countries who are economically victimized by the policies of transnational corporations, migration to the United States and other industrial nations is a choice of survival.

Since both American born and immigrant workers are negatively impacted by a global capitalism inordinately focused on profit making at the expense of human need, it is imperative that the worker justice movement begins to embrace a perspective that seeks to minimize the divisive discourse which contributes to the maintenance of the status quo. This perspective must not only have a strong ethical foundation of justice, but also flow from a vision that models bridge-building between workers, affirms the dignity and worth of all humanity, and transcends the discordant strains of nationalism.

The Necessity of Embracing A Care with Justice Ethic:

Although feminist and womanist theologians along with some others who adhere to liberation theology perspectives have consistently argued that the ethic of care with justice should constitute a moral minimum for both private and public ethical decisions, their insights and contributions are largely pushed to the periphery of public discourse. This is due, in no small part, to the prevalence of the notion of rugged individualism that is foundational to capitalistic economies. A nation built on an economy that thrives

⁷ Carlos Salas, "The Impact Of NAFTA On Wages And Incomes In Mexico", *NAFTA AT SEVEN Its impact on workers in all three nations*, Economic Policy Institute Briefing Paper, Washington, DC, 2004, www.eptnet.org, Accessed April 19, 2011 (Salas, Carlos, 2004)

⁸ David Bacon, *Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration And Criminalizes Immigrants*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 24 (Bacon, 2008)

⁶ R. Dennis Olson, "Lessons From NAFTA: Food and Agriculture", Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, 2008, www.iatp.org, Accessed April 16, 2011 (Olson, 2008)

on individual competitiveness and consumption does not easily make room for an ethic of care, and gives lip service at best to justice. Secondly, embracing this ethical perspective is not in the best interests of those who support the spread of global capitalism. Doing so would require them to take responsibility to alleviate the disproportionate representation of women and people of color among the poor, the unemployed and underemployed, and to work to change a socio-political and economic system that thrives by keeping people divided by race, sex, class nationality, immigration status and religion. Thus, a moral appeal to care directed to persons and institutions that profit from maintaining current economic, political and social policies is likely to be an exercise in futility. However, since both American born and immigrant workers bear the burdens resulting from the prevailing policies, they have much to gain by embracing a common vision and engaging in action that demonstrates mutual care and commitment to the eradication of unjust public and corporate policies that harm all workers.

An overview of the sordid current state of affairs is illustrative of the urgent need for this action: For the past 35 years the incomes of the richest 10% of Americans have risen at unprecedented levels, so that they now control 2/3 of American's net worth. Of this group, the top one hundredth of one percent average \$27 million per household. The average income for the other 90% of Americans, on the other hand, is \$31, 244.⁹ Additionally, documentation of the 2010 CEO pay of the Standard and Poor 500 index companies reveals a median total compensation package of \$11.4 million - an increase of 23% just since 2009. What is even more astounding in light of America's current high unemployment rate is that the \$3.4 billion combined total CEO pay of just 299 of these companies is enough to support 102,325 workers at the median income level.¹⁰ Clearly, this unethical state of affairs in a country that was founded on democratic principles of justice for all cannot be allowed to continue. There must be a concerted effort by labor, faith based and community organizations to hold federal politicians accountable for their actions. They need to be reminded that although they themselves have a median net worth that is eight times

that of the average American family they are still primarily responsible to the voters who placed them in office.¹¹

Many of those who hold elected office also need to be held accountable for either their silence or outright support of an unprecedented attack on public sector employees that has been occurring in America. Disparagingly referring to hard working teachers, social workers, police officers, fire fighters, sanitation workers and federal employees as "faceless bureaucrats", those who support an anti-union, pro-business and pro-rich agenda blame public workers for crippling federal and state budgets. However, a recent article by *Business Insider* reveals that there is no corollary between the presence of collective bargaining rights and budget deficits. Author Robert Reich discovered that some states which do not permit employee bargaining rights – such as Nevada, North Carolina and Arizona- have current deficits of over 30 percent of spending. On the other hand, there are states which do grant bargaining rights- such as Massachusetts, New Mexico and Montana- yet they have small deficits of less than 10 percent.¹² The sad reality is that it is far easier to go after public workers than it is demand change in capital gains and tax laws that keep the contributions of corporations and upper income taxpayers to public budgets disproportionately low.

It is crucial for all persons committed to worker justice to understand that throughout this nation's history the strongest supporters of the anti-labor movement have also been responsible for maintaining a system that keeps American born workers competing with employees of overseas transnational corporations and immigrants. An historical study of collaboration between the United States government and American business interests by Aviva Chomsky, professor of history at Salem State College in Massachusetts shows that beginning with "Operation Bootstrap" in Puerto Rico in the early 1940's, the federal government has consistently offered incentives to United States businesses to move labor intensive portions of their corporations outside of the country. "Since it was getting harder and harder to deprive workers of rights inside the United States because of popular mobilizations, unions and laws protecting workers and

⁹ Kevin Drum, "Plutocracy Now", *Mother Jones*, April 2011,22

¹⁰ AFL-CIO, "2011 Executive Paywatch", April 2011, www.aflcio.org/corporatewatch/paywatch/ Accessed April 20, 2011

¹¹ Drum, 27

¹² Reich, Robert, "Someone Has To Stop This Shameful Attack on Public Employees", *Business Insider*, January 6, 2011, www.businessinsider.com. Accessed April 22, 2011 (Reich, 2011)

their right to organize, companies found it more and more attractive to move jobs across the border to where U.S. laws did not apply".¹³ Furthermore, when hiring workers in those industries that cannot be outsourced and do not have strong collective bargaining units, businesses have consistently preferred to employ undocumented immigrants who will work for long hours with low pay.

The often- heard argument that immigrants only take jobs that Americans don't want is a specious claim at best. It does not consider the historic role that collective bargaining units have played in transforming unsafe, dirty and low wage jobs such as those once held by immigrants in the steel mills into solid middle class jobs. It is precisely where there is an absence of unions that industries are able to keep jobs so unattractive that immigrant workers, particularly the undocumented, are willing to accept. This practice then forces many American born workers to either accept the same low wages and adverse working conditions as immigrants or to be locked out of those jobs. Further, "in industries that are heavily unionized and that provide middle-class wages and benefits, competition from non-union employers who hire undocumented immigrants puts downward pressure on the wages and working conditions of middle-class workers whose employers are put at a disadvantage by complying with the law."¹⁴ It is clearly an unjust, exploitative phenomenon that enhances business profitability while substantially hurting all persons striving to earn a middle class living in America.

Although some may offer the solution of imposing sanctions against employers of undocumented workers along with deporting the immigrants who work for them, this position cannot be supported by the theologies of faith communities. Rather, religious traditions advocate for compassionate care with justice for all persons. There are also specific scriptures within the sacred texts of all major religious faiths that proclaim a mandate to welcome the sojourners among us without regard to legal status. Therefore, those within faith communities seeking to advocate for worker justice must allow their position on immigrant workers to be grounded in the solid theology of their

faith traditions, which overwhelmingly support a care with justice ethical model.¹⁵

A Paradigm for Going Forward:

As communities of care whose theological positions include a strong commitment to justice, faith communities are uniquely positioned to provide leadership that forges the flames of inclusive worker justice in the 21st century. Dr. Martin Luther King's vision of the Beloved Community provides a powerful paradigm for this work. Giving deeper meaning to the concept that was first articulated by the 19th century American religious philosopher Josiah Royce, Dr. King declared:

"Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives"

"We must struggle against an evil system, not against persons who may be caught up in the system"¹⁶

Although he concurred with Royce on the need for individuals to be radically transformed in their inner being so they could live together in beloved community, Dr. King also proclaimed a need for the radical transformation of institutions and systems. Affirming that the American dream must be rooted in the principle of equality and justice for all, Dr. King also understood that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere".¹⁷ Calling racism, poverty and war triple evils that exist in a vicious cycle, Dr. King challenged the individualistic and nationalistic tendencies of his day and our own by reminding us that we all inhabit one "world house". Therefore, according to King, although we may have unique ideas, cultures, religions and interests, we cannot live in peace if we fail to recognize and affirm our interrelatedness. Not only must we affirm our interdependency with one another, but it is also essential that we "learn to live together as brothers

¹⁵ For a fuller discussion of these mandates, the reader is encouraged to consult: "For You Were Once A Stranger: Immigration in the U.S. Through the Lens of Faith", (Chicago: Interfaith Worker Justice , 2007), www.iwj.org. Accessed April 3, 2011

¹⁶ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Facing The Challenge of a New Age", First Annual Institute on Non-Violence and Social Change, Montgomery, Alabama, December 1956. www.mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu. Accessed April 1, 2011

¹⁷ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King , Jr. , "Letter from Birmingham City Jail", *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.* (New York: Harper Collins, 1986), 290

¹³ Aviva Chomsky, *"They Take Our Jobs!" and 20 Other Myths About Immigration*", (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 6

¹⁴ Drum Major Institute for Public Policy, "Principles for an Immigration Policy", (Policy, 2011) 14, www.drummajorinstitute.org. Accessed April 25, 2011

(sisters) or together we will be forced to perish as fools.”¹⁸ For Dr. King, this was clearly a call to work for racial and economic justice in both the national and global arenas.

Although it is perhaps not as well known as his civil rights advocacy, King had a life-long concern for the poor and strongly affirmed the dignity and rights of all workers. As early as 1958, he spoke out against the so called “right- to- work” laws that still prevail in many states, arguing that they don’t provide any rights to workers, but only to employers. By 1965 Dr. King also realized that worker justice cannot be realized without a guaranteed annual wage. In an address before the Illinois AFL-CIO in October of that year, he called for an adequate minimum wage without exclusions for all who work and a guaranteed job for all willing to work. Further, he advocated for this guaranteed annual income to be tied to the median income level of American society, not to its lowest. Three years later, in 1968, he placed justice for poor and working class people at the very center of his agenda. Challenging people to be “maladjusted” to “the tragic inequalities of an economic system which takes necessities for the masses to give luxuries to the classes”¹⁹, he planned a Poor People’s Campaign designed to galvanize America into action. Although his tragic assassination occurred a month before the march was to take place in Washington, D.C., Dr. King’s widow, Coretta, along with religious and civil rights leaders took up the mantle of leadership. This culminated in thousands of American workers of all backgrounds gathering on May 12, 1968 for an historic worker justice march, followed by six weeks of encampment in Resurrection City along the National Mall.

Although there are many issues beyond the scope of this paper that negatively impacted the nation’s willingness to seriously grapple with the campaign’s demands for a radical redistribution of economic power and resources, it could be argued that one of the greatest reasons has been the failure of the interfaith community to remain tenacious in the cause of justice for the poor and other marginalized persons in society. It is not an exaggeration to say that, with rare exceptions, since the late sixties we have been taking a 43 year collective nap! Rather than remaining

awake and involved with public policy issues as Dr. King admonished us to do, we have focused inward on our own particular faith communities and have kept the prophetic word in the face of injustice to a whisper at best. Dr. King warned us that “we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be co-workers with God.”²⁰ Yet, for the most part we have relegated this warning to the pages of history books.

It is time for us to wake up and retake the mantle of leadership! As we witness the continued outsourcing of jobs, persistent unemployment and underemployment, the attempts to dismantle collective bargaining, the racist undertones present in nationalist arguments against immigrants, and the exploitation of immigrant workers faith communities must provide a prophetic moral voice to the public discourse. We must do so within the particularities of our faith traditions as well as joined together in an interfaith movement.

As an interfaith movement, we must provide an alternative vision to the profit driven paradigm that enables the greed of the few to take precedence of the socio-economic needs of the rest of us. We must reclaim and proclaim Dr. King’s vision of a Beloved Community as one that can help us to break down the walls of suspicion and hostility that currently exist between American born and immigrant workers as well as between races, ethnicities, religions and nations. But we must also do more. As communities of faith, we must model the radical inclusiveness of the Beloved Community in our work together. We must be very intentional about making sure that the movement we build reflects racial, ethnic, religious and gender diversity in leadership, that persons of all faith traditions feel welcomed, and that we take special care to include immigrant workers in every aspect of the movement. It is also vitally important to show solidarity with immigrants, particularly when they become targeted by workplace raids, hate crimes and other forms of violence.

Coalition building with non faith based activists is also essential for the success of a 21st century labor justice movement. We must rekindle the historic ties between religion and labor that have weakened over the past forty years and work together in ways that proclaim and demonstrate a commitment to

¹⁸ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?”, *A Testament of Hope*, 620

¹⁹ Martin Luther King Jr, *All Labor Has Dignity*, ed. Michael K Honey, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 5

²⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr. “Remaining Awake Through A Great Revolution”, *A Testament of Hope*, 270

advocacy and care with justice for all workers, those born in America as well as immigrants. This coalition must also include people who are poor, unemployed persons looking for work, immigrant and civil rights activists, students and young adult workers, and small business owners who are being negatively impacted by the current practices of transnational corporations. All must be encouraged to see the need for a unity of vision and purpose, and to embrace the paradigm of the Beloved Community as a model for our work together.

Further, in the spirit of Dr. King, we must be careful to focus our work on bringing forth positive social change by fighting against an evil, unjust system and not resort to attacking the persons who are in the forefront of its perpetuation. Although they may not be appropriate for every labor justice issue that needs to be addressed, the Six Steps of Nonviolent Social Change developed by the King Center can provide a workable framework for this aspect of the movement. They include: 1) information gathering and research focused on getting the facts straight on issues before making any movement to address them; 2) education of adversaries and the public about the facts; 3) personal commitment to nonviolent attitudes and action; 4) negotiation with adversaries in a spirit of goodwill to correct injustice; 5) nonviolent direct action such as marches, boycotts, mass demonstrations, picketing, sit-ins, and the use of social media to help persuade or compel adversaries to work toward dispute-resolution and 6) reconciliation of adversaries in a win-win outcome, with the goal of establishing a sense of community.²¹

Conclusion:

Forging the flame of worker justice in the 21st century requires more than relighting the flames that have sparked the movement in the past. The divisive, often hostile tone manifested in public discourse pertaining to federal and state budget issues along with continued efforts by transnational corporations to increase profits at the expense of all workers, requires a counter-narrative designed to bring presently disparate groups together to work for the common good. We can no longer allow divisive politics to cloud our vision, so that we become complicit in blaming immigrants or workers across the globe for the decline of the American middle class. As people of faith, it is imperative that we operate from what

David Korten, co founder of the Postive Futures Network refers to as a “spiritual consciousness”. This consciousness “supports an examined morality grounded in the universal principles of justice, love, and compassion common to the teachings of the most revered religious prophets. It approaches conflict, contradiction and paradox not as problems to overcome, but as opportunities for deeper learning.”²²

Choosing to intentionally ground ourselves in this spiritual consciousness can enable us to not only talk about the Beloved Community as a powerful paradigm for worker justice, but also to lead the movement by example. It can empower us to go forward together responding to the call to work for justice in a spirit of care and compassion while still acknowledging and working through differences rooted in the particularities of our diverse religious, social, economic and cultural experiences.

If we are going to bring forth a new day for workers, we must be willing to embrace what Dr. King referred to as the “third way”- the nonviolent way of the Beloved Community- that “combines toughmindedness and tenderheartedness and avoids the complacency and do-nothingness of the softminded and the violence and bitterness of the hardhearted.”²³ For all of us, immigrant and non-immigrants need each other’s support, insights, gifts, talents and resources as we go forward to ignite the flames of justice.

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²² David C. Korten, *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2006), 47

²³ Martin Luther King, “The Strength To Love”, *A Testament of Hope*, 495

²¹ The King Center, “The Beloved Community: Six Steps of Nonviolent Social Change”, www.thekingcenter.org, Accessed April 27, 2011 (Center)

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“The Wealth of the Wicked: Noblesse Oblige in Buddhist Scriptures and the 2011 U.S. Federal Budget”

By Joshua Eaton

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“Such, they may cry, deserve the sovereign state,
Whom those that envy dare not imitate!” Homer,
Illiad (Book XII)

Since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2007, both the public and private sectors have implemented massive spending cuts. Businesses, private universities, and nonprofits have eliminated hundreds of thousands of jobs through layoffs and attrition, relying instead on temporary employees, contract workers, and unpaid interns. Meanwhile, federal, state, and local governments continue to eliminate positions while using their budget shortfalls as an excuse to attack both labor rights and the social safety net. Even as the private sector began to tentatively recover in April of this year—adding 268,000 jobs—the public sector lost 24,000 jobs and the unemployment rate (U3) actually rose from 8.8 to 9 percent;²⁴ on 29 April, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg unveiled a fiscal year 2012 budget proposal that would eliminated 6,100

²⁴ Motoko Rich, “Payrolls Show Strong Growth But Jobless Rate Rises,” *New York Times*, 6 May 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/07/business/economy/07jobs.html> (accessed 9 May 2011). The U3 measures the number of people who are both without work and have looked for work within the past for weeks, as per the International Labor Organization's definition of *unemployment*; it does not measure the underemployed or those who are unemployed but have given up looking for work (discouraged workers).

teaching jobs through layoffs and attrition as part of \$400 million in additional budget cuts.²⁵

In March 2009, public anger erupted when the American International Group (AIG) paid \$165 million in bonuses to executives in its financial services division at a time when it was also receiving \$170 billion in taxpayer money under the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) and when the U.S. government owned 80 percent of the company.²⁶ Despite this brief moment of populist outrage, however, the new spirit of fiscal austerity in American business and government has not extended to executive compensation.²⁷ Indeed, the median compensation for a corporate CEO went from \$8.4 million in 2007 to \$9 million in 2010²⁸—a

²⁵ David W. Chen and Javier C. Hernandez, “Bloomberg to Lay Off Thousands of Teachers,” *New York Times*, 5 May 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/06/nyregion/bloomberg-budget-will-seek-400-million-more-in-cuts.html> (accessed 9 May 2011).

²⁶ Helene Cooper, “Obama Orders Treasury Chief to Try to Block A.I.G. Bonuses,” *New York Times*, 16 March 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/17/us/politics/17obama.html?fta=y> (accessed 8 May 2011).

²⁷ The presidents of Cornell, Amherst, Stanford, and Brown Universities did all take at least one voluntary salary cut between 2007 and 2009; however, President Drew Faust of Harvard University—the oldest and most prestigious university in the United States—refused to take a cut in her nearly \$800,000 annual compensation even while the university laid off 275 ordinary staff and many other contract and temporary workers. See Janet Frankston Lorin, “Cornell President Rides Bus, Barnard Dumps Limo in Budget Cuts,” *Bloomberg*, 23 July 2009, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=ar u9U5wcHKgM> (accessed 8 May 2011); Athena Y. Jiang and June Q. Wu, “Admins Stay Mum on Salaries: Fiscal Year 2008 Salary Hikes Modest Compared to Previous Years,” *Harvard Crimson*, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2009/5/18/admins-stay-mum-on-salaries-harvards> (accessed 8 May 2011).

²⁸ Ralph Beck, “AP IMPACT: CEO Pay Exceeds Pre-recession Level,” Associated Press, 6 May 2011, http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_16026/contentdetail.htm?contentgid=MUR60SWX (accessed 8 May 2011).

two percent increase above inflation²⁹—while even the fiscally conservative Rep. John Boehner (R-OH) accepted a \$30,100 raise when he became Speaker of the House in 2010 amidst widespread voter frustration over excessive government spending.³⁰ Clearly, the culture of austerity has not trickled up.

Despite America's historically Judeo-Christian culture and the waning influence of organized religion in developed nations, there is a strong case to be made for the necessity of a Buddhist theological response to this economic and political crisis. According to the Pew Center for Religion and Public Life's 2008 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, Buddhism is the third largest organized religion in the United States, behind Christianity and Judaism and ahead of Islam and Hinduism.³¹ Among organized religions in the United States, Buddhism is second only

²⁹ The total increase in compensation was 7.1 percent, while inflation was 5.2 percent. For the total increase in compensation, see the following equation:

$$((9 / 8.4) = [x / 100]) = (900 / 8.4x) = ([x = 107.142857] - 100) = 7.142857 \%$$

For the increase after inflation and the rate of inflation between 2007 and 2011, see U.S. Inflation Calculator, <http://www.usinflationcalculator.com> (accessed 8 May 2011).

³⁰ Jordy Yager, "Boehner Under Fire: First Cut Should Be Lawmakers' Salaries," *The Hill*, <http://thehill.com/homenews/house/127879-boehner-pressed-to-cut-pay-of-lawmakers> (accessed 8 May 2011).

³¹ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Affiliation; Diverse and Dynamic* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008), <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf> (accessed 9 May 2011), 12. The American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) estimates the number of Muslims in the United States to be higher than the number of Buddhists by 0.2 percentage points, which would make Buddhism the fourth largest religion in the United States behind Christianity, Judaism, and Islam; I have chosen to use the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey's numbers here because of its much larger sample size and because of the Pew Forum's imminent reputation in the field. For the ARIS estimates, see Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, *American Religious Identification Survey [ARIS 2008]: Summary Report* (Hartford, Connecticut: Trinity College, 2009), http://b27.cc.trincoll.edu/weblogs/AmericanReligionSurvey-ARIS/reports/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf (accessed 9 May 2011), 5.

to Pentecostal Christianity in its rate of growth, and Protestant Christianity—of which Pentecostalism is a subgroup—is actually shrinking.³²

Buddhists account for only 0.7% of the adult population,³³ but this number is deceptively small. As Thomas A. Tweed says of Buddhism in America,

At least tens of thousands—and probably hundreds of thousands—of Americans have neither inherited the tradition from their parents nor bought it fully in the marketplace of U.S. religion. They shop—purchasing a bit of this and consuming a bit of that, but never buying it all.³⁴

Tweed calls these people *sympathizers* or *night-stand Buddhists*. Donald Swearer has called them *fellow-travelers* because they sympathize with Buddhism without ever self-identifying as Buddhist or becoming "party members," so to speak. The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey counts only self-identified Buddhists, but it is fair to assume that Buddhism also has a significant number of unidentified sympathizers in the United States. Indeed, way back in 1997, Helen Tworok—editor of the popular American magazine *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*—estimated that fully half of the magazine's 60,000 readers did not self-identify as Buddhist, and Diana Eck—Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University—said that the number of Americans who did not self-identify as Buddhist but had adopted some

³² *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 26.

³³ *Ibid.*, 12. The ARIS estimates the number of Buddhists in the United States at 0.5%, or 0.2 percentage points lower than the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey; again, I have chosen to use the latter here. For the ARIS estimate, see Kosmin and Keysar, *American Religious Identification Survey*, 5.

³⁴ Thomas A. Tweed, "Night-stand Buddhists and Other Creatures: Sympathizers, Adherents, and the Study of Religion," in *American Buddhism: Methods and Findings in Recent Scholarship*, ed. Duncan Ryūken Williams and Christopher S. Queen (Richmond, England: Curzon, 1999), 83.

form of Buddhist practice was "probably in the many hundreds of thousands."³⁵ The number of Buddhist sympathizers can only have grown since then. Whatever else might be said, it is clear that Buddhism has a cultural currency in the United States that far exceeds its relatively modest number of adherents.

This paper, then, is just such a theological response to the current economic and political crisis. More specifically, it is an argument—grounded in both classical Buddhist texts and contemporary budget realities—for public- and private-sector leaders to think of themselves as the first part of their organizations that ought to face economic sacrifice. It is, put bluntly, a Buddhist call for *noblesse oblige*. At the same time, it will also take a critical look at the philosophy and practices behind contemporary movements for economic justice and worker's rights.

In part one, I will introduce Buddhism and discuss excerpts from two Buddhist scriptures that advocate *noblesse oblige*: 1) the Ten Royal Virtues from the *Mahāhasa jāta*, and 2) the *Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra*. Each is addressed to a king and discusses how he can use his—and his people's—wealth virtuously. In part two, I will look at what practical effect it would have on the federal budget reductions for Fiscal Year 2011 if elected officials actually took these texts' advice seriously. Finally, I will conclude by briefly looking at some possibilities for future action, research, and reflection.

Part One: Noblesse Oblige in Classical Buddhist Texts

Buddhism: A Brief Overview

According to tradition, the man we call the Buddha was born Siddhārtha Gautama some 2,500 years ago to King Śuddhodāna and Queen Mahāmāyā of the Śākya Kingdom, in what is now southern

Nepal.³⁶ At his birth, court astrologers predicted that Siddhārtha would grow up to become either a great king or a great sage. Wanting his son to become a great king like himself, Śuddhodāna confined young Siddhārtha to the palace, where the prince was constantly surrounded by luxuriant pleasures.

The young prince was not permitted to see anything that might remind him of the transience of life—not even a wilted flower; but, one day, as he ventured out of the palace to visit a pleasure garden, his royal carriage crossed paths with a man disfigured with disease and in obvious pain. Siddhārtha returned to the palace shocked and despondent. On two successive trips outside of the palace Siddhārtha saw a man bent with age and a dead corpse, neither of which he had ever seen before. By this point, he was unconsolable.

On his fourth trip outside of the palace where his father kept him sheltered, Siddhārtha saw a wandering monk who had given up home and family to seek an answer to the question of suffering. That night he kissed his wife and young child goodbye and snuck out of the palace. Once safely out of his father's kingdom, Siddhārtha shaved his head and traded his fine clothes and royal ornaments for the patched robe of a wandering ascetic.

For the next six years, Siddhārtha devoted himself to practicing austerities with various teachers. He went without sleep or shelter, matted his hair, and—so the story goes—survived off of a single grain of rice per day. Despite all of these efforts, however, Siddhārtha realized that he was just as far from finding an end to suffering as when he was living decadently in the palace. Just then, a young cow herder named Sujātā happened by. Seeing Siddhārtha meditating and obviously weak, she offered him a bowl of sweetened rice porridge, which is traditionally given to infants in Southeast Asia as their first solid food. Renewed,

³⁵ Ira Rifkin, "The Accidental Buddhist," *Raleigh News and Observer*, 7 February 1997: 1E, 4E.

³⁶ For a discussion of the contested dates for the Buddha's birth, see *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2004), s.v. "Buddha, life of the."

Siddhārtha sat down beneath a fig tree and determined not to move until he had conquered old age, sickness, and death once and for all. Early that morning, Siddhārtha found what he was looking for. He realized *nirvāna*—a state said to be completely, perfectly free from suffering. He was now called the Buddha, the Awakened One.

Over the next 45 years or so, Siddhārtha traveled throughout northern India and southern Nepal, teaching others how to put an end to suffering and establishing the monastic community, or *sangha*. He died around the age of 80, surrounded by his disciples.³⁷ In the thousand years that followed, his teachings would spread across southeast, east, and central Asia.

Today, the Buddha's teachings are preserved in three main canons. Theravāda Buddhism—practiced primarily in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, and Laos—uses a canon that was initially written down in Pāli. East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism—practiced primarily in China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam—uses a canon that was translated from various Indian languages into Chinese. Finally, a very unique form of Mahāyāna Buddhism called Vajrāyāna—practiced primarily in northern India, Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, and Bhutan—uses a canon that was translated from various Indian languages and Chinese into Tibetan. (There is also a school of Vajrāyāna in Japan, but it has largely existed apart from the central Asian schools.) While there is some overlap between the Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan canons, each contains many texts that are completely absent from the others. In fact, none of these canons even have a definitive version. Finally, each of these three languages—Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan—also serves as a lingua franca of Buddhist scholarship for its respective region, even

³⁷ For a traditional—and beautifully poetic—telling of the Buddha's life, see Aśvaghōṣa, *Buddhacarita or Acts of the Buddha*, trans. E. H. Johnston (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007); Aśvaghōṣa, *Life of the Buddha [Buddhacarita]*, trans. Patrick Olivelle, Clay Sanskrit Library (New York: New York University Press and JJC Foundation, 2008).

when that region contains many very different local and national languages.

The Ten Royal Virtues and the *Jātakas*³⁸

The *Jātakas* are a set of 550³⁹ stories of the Buddha's previous lives as a buddha-to-be (*bodhisattva*), often in the form of an animal. These 550 stories are divided into twenty-two books called, collectively, the *Jātaka pāli*. The *Jātaka pāli* is part of the *Khuddaka nikāya* (*Minor Collection*), one of several *nikāyas* (collections) that make up the *Sutta piaka* (*Basket of Scriptures*). Together, the *Sutta piaka*, *Vinaya piaka* (*Basket of Rules*), and the *Abhidhamma piaka* (*Basket of Abhidhamma*) form the *Tipiaka* (*Three Baskets*), the traditional name for Theravāda Buddhism's Pāli canon.⁴⁰ In short, the *Jātakas* show the Buddha's 550-life trajectory towards *nirvāna*. They remain intensely popular throughout the Buddhist world, especially in the Theravāda countries of Southeast Asia; as animal morality tales, they serve much the same social function in Asia that Aesop's Fables have played in the West. (Indeed, several tales from the *Jātakas* and from Aesop's Fables share the same basic plot.)

The Ten Royal Virtues (*dasa rāja dhammā*) are mentioned by name in at least eighteen of the 550 *jātakas*, but they are only enumerated twice: in the *Nandiyamiga jātaka* (*Deer Nandiya Birth*, no. 385) and in the *Mahāhasa jātaka* (*Great Goose Birth*, no. 534). In both instances, the Buddha-to-be is an animal king extolling the Ten Royal Virtues to a human king.

³⁸ Parts of this section are excerpted from Joshua A. Eaton, "He Ruled in Righteousness: Normative Political Ethics in the *Jātaka* and the *Precious Garland of Advice for the King*," *Culture* 4 (2009): 24-25.

³⁹ Other sources list only 547 *jātakas*.

⁴⁰ Introduction to *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, ed. and trans. E.B. Cowell et al., Vol. 1 (Delhi: Cosmo, 1978), vii; Burma Piṭṭaka Association, *Guide to the Tipitaka: An Introduction to the Buddhist Canon* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1993), 111.

Here are the Ten Royal Virtues as they are listed in the *Mahāhasa jātaka*, in both Pāli and English:

Dāna sīla pariccāga ajjava maddava
tapa,
Akkodha avihisañca khantiñca
avirodhana.⁴¹

Almsgiving, justice, penitence, meek spirit,
temper mild,

Peace, mercy, patience, charity, with morals
undefiled.⁴²

A more straight-forward English translation—with Pāli
equivalents—is:

1. generosity (*dāna*)
2. morality (*sīla*)
3. liberality (*pariccāga*)
4. non-anger (*akkodha*)
5. non-violence (*avihisa*)
6. patience (*khanti*)
7. uprightness (*ajjava*)
8. gentleness (*maddava*)
9. self-restraint (*tapa*)
10. non-contentiousness (*avirodhana*)⁴³

These ten virtues remain both politically and spiritually
influential throughout the Theravāda Buddhist world,
and they are often used in Theravāda countries to

praise or criticize political rulers.⁴⁴ For our purposes,
the most striking inclusions are generosity, liberality,
and self-restraint. The latter refers specifically to
restraint from vain luxuries and pleasures; the
combination of all three suggests that a virtuous leader
supports herself modestly while giving lavishly to
others, not vice-versa.

The inclusion of private virtues—especially
morality, non-anger, patience, uprightness, and
gentleness—in this list is also instructive. When we
speak of *economic* or *social* justice, it implies that
there are two distinct sets of virtues, one private and
the other social. Furthermore, which set one
emphasizes often determines one's political affiliation;
"[I]berals worry about the people they don't know;
conservatives worry about the people they do know,"
as the cliché goes.⁴⁵ The Ten Royal Virtues challenge
this piecemeal view of justice and ethics through their
portrayal of virtue as an integrated whole. Individual
and social ethics are not just equally important, they
are indivisible.

If the Ten Royal Virtues challenge the *social* in
social justice, then they challenge the *justice*, as well.
While the *Mahāhasa jātaka* emphasizes a life of
modesty and generosity, it does not recommend self-
mortification. Rather, the Ten Royal Virtues are meant
to promote flourishing—for the leader who enacts
them, for that leader's organization, and for the entire
local environment. In fact, when the Buddha-to-be
asks the king in the *Mahāhasa jātaka* whether he
practices the these virtues, the king replies,

⁴¹ John T. Bullitt, ed., "J V_utf8," Access to Insight, 21
February 2011,
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sltip/J_V_utf8.html#pts.378
(accessed 12 May 2011), line 4000. This is the modern Sri
Lankan edition.

⁴² "Mahāhaṃsa jātaka (No. 534)," in Cowell et al., *The
Jātaka*, Vol. 5, 200. See also "Nandiyamiga jātaka (No. 385)," in
Cowell et al., *The Jātaka*, Vol. 3, 174.

⁴³ *Pāli Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary*, ed. T.W. Rhys
Davids and William Stede (Oxford: Pāli Text Society, 1998), s.v.
"Rāja-dhamma." My translations.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Paul M. Handley, *The King Never
Smiles: A Biography of Thailand's Bhumibol Adulyadej* (New Haven,
Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006), 18-19; Walpola Rahula,
What the Buddha Taught, Revised Edition (New York: Grove,
1989), 84-86; Malinda Seneviratne, "Pariccaga: The Third Element
of the Dasa Raja Dharma," *Daily Mirror*, 18 September 2010,
<http://116.12.93.8/opinion1/21792.html> (accessed 12 May
2011).

⁴⁵ Juliet Lapidus, "Hate Thy Neighbor: The Politics of Parks
and Recreation," *Slate*, 25 April 2011,
<http://www.slate.com/id/2291843> (accessed 19 May 2011).

lcceṭe kusale dhamme hite pasasāmi
attani,
Tato me jāyate piti
somanasasaññācanappaka.⁴⁶

These graces firmly planted in my soul
are clear to see,
Whence springs rich harvest of great
joy and happiness for me.⁴⁷

The Ten Royal Virtues are much different from our modern Western concepts of *rights* and *justice*. As their name implies, they are much closer to classical Western ideas of *virtue* or *the good*. Leaders should not practice them because it is right or just, but because doing so will bring them the best possible life.

The *Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra*⁴⁸

The *Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra* (*Discourse Requested by Sūrata*) was originally written in Sanskrit, but only survives in Chinese and Tibetan translations. The Tibetan translation was made by the Indian translators Jinamitra and Surendrabodhi and the Tibetan editor-translator Ye Shes sDe in the late eighth or early ninth century of the common era; it is number 27 in a collection of 49 *sūtras* called the *Mahāratnakūa sūtra* (*Great Heap of Jewel-like Discourse*).⁴⁹ The Chinese canon contains three

⁴⁶ Bullitt, "J_V_uff8," line 4001.

⁴⁷ "Mahāharṇa jāṭaka (No. 534)," in Cowell et al., *The Jātaka*, Vol. 5, 200.

⁴⁸ Parts of this section are excerpted from Joshua A. Eaton, "The Poorest of the Poor: Wealth, Greed, and Buddhist Ministry," Zen Peacemakers' Bearing Witness Blog, 24 September 2010, <http://zenpeacemakers.org/bwblog/?p=1210> (accessed 12 May 2011); Joshua A. Eaton, "The Poorest of the Poor: Wealth, Greed, and Buddhist Ministry," JoshuaEaton.net, 24 September 2010, <http://www.joshuaeaton.net/archives/570> (accessed 12 May 2011).

⁴⁹ *Discourse Requested by Sūrata* (*Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra*, *des pas zhus pa'i mdo*), TOH 71, Degé Kangyur (dkon brtsegs, Ca), folios 181.a-193.a.

copies of the *Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra*: the first is number 27 in the *Mahāratnakūa sūtra* and was translated by the Indian translator Bodhiruci in the late fifth or early sixth century of the common era;⁵⁰ one—and possibly both—of the other two was translated by Zhi Shi Lun in 373 C. E.⁵¹ My discussion here is based on the Chinese translation of the *Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra* from the *Mahāratnakūa sūtra*, as translated into English by the Buddhist Association of the United States; however, I have also consulted the Tibetan translation.

In the *sūtra*, the *bodhisattva* Sūrata is begging for alms in the city of Śrāvastī when he discovers a golden bell made at the beginning of the eon, a bell worth more than all the world. Being a *bodhisattva*, he decides to give it to the poorest person in Śrāvastī; however, instead of choosing the city's oldest citizen—who lives in abject poverty—Sūrata picks the fabulously wealthy King Prasenajit. Everyone is, of course, baffled, not least of all because Sūrata approaches the king while he and his retinue are counting the royal treasury. Once in the presence of the king, Sūrata explains his bizarre behavior in no uncertain terms:

If one has a treasury of billions
And yet, due to greed, is still
unsatisfied,
He is like a great ocean,
Which never has enough
Of the myriad streams it swallows.
Such a fool is the poorest of the poor.

⁵⁰ Lancaster, Lewis R. and Sung-bae Park, comp., *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1979), 12, 18-19. For this Chinese translation, see *Discourse Requested by Sūrata* (*Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra*, *xū lài jīng*), T 310 (27), Taishō Tripiṭaka (Vol. 11), page numbers unknown.

⁵¹ Lancaster and Park, *Korean Buddhist Canon*, 129-130. For this Chinese translation, see *Discourse Requested by Sūrata* (*Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra*, *xū lài jīng*), T 328 and T 329, Taishō Tripiṭaka (Vol. 12), page numbers not known.

If such a fool allows his greed
To grow, spread, and perpetuate,
He will always be needy
In his present and future lives.

Sūrata then proceeds to upbraid the king for his stewardship of Śrāvastī:

Such a senseless manifestation
Who is monstrously greedy
And amasses riches insatiably
Is called the poorest of all.

Your Majesty, you levy harsh taxes
And punish the innocent for no reason.
Infatuated with your sovereignty,
You never heed
The future effects of your karmas.

While you enjoy power in this world,
You do not protect your subjects,
And have no pity
For the poor and suffering.

You indulge in women's company
Without any fear of falling
To the miserable planes of existence.
You are not even conscious
Of your outrageous wickedness—
Are you not poor?

If one practices mindfulness diligently
And delights in self-control,
He is called rich and noble,
And his wealth and goodness will bring him
Eternal peace and joy. . . .⁵²

Eventually, Sūrata convinces King Prasenajit to visit the Buddha, whose teachings make him repent. The king then divides his wealth into three parts. He gives one third to the Buddha and his monastic community (*śaḡha*), he gives another third to Śrāvastī's needy

citizens, and he reserves a final third for state use. Prasenajit then gives Sūrata two priceless garments that Sūrata blesses and has the king distribute to 500 of the city's needy citizens. Because of Sūrata's blessing, the garments heal the physically and mentally ill among them. When they ask how they can ever repay Sūrata, a voice from the sky encourages them to generate the aspiration to lead all beings to *nirvāna* (*bodhicitta*) in return for Sūrata's kindness.⁵³

Sūrata's conversation with King Prasenajit is an exemplary case of a political critique in a Buddhist text. Like the Ten Royal Virtues, this text extolls the virtues of a leader who lives modestly while giving lavishly to others—a leader who is content, mindful, self-controlled, and who pities the poor and suffering; like the Ten Royal Virtues, it sees individual and political virtue as indivisible by placing King Prasenajit's promiscuity and his unjust economic policies on par with each other. Like the Ten Royal Virtues, it also challenges our punitive ideas of justice by pointing out that a leader who follows Sūrata's advice will have "[e]ternal peace and joy."⁵⁴

What is unique about this passage, however, is how it both opposes and re-appropriates conventional notions of wealth, nobility, and poverty, turning them on their heads. Śrāvastī's destitute senior citizens are not poor; its incredibly wealthy yet deeply unsatisfied king is. "[A] treasury of billions" and "power in this world" do not make one rich and noble;⁵⁵ diligent mindfulness and self-control do. Sūrata is not just trying to criticize the rich and powerful, but to redefine the terms *wealth* and *power* toward virtuous ends.⁵⁶

We have seen that both the Ten Royal Virtues in the *Mahāhasa jātaka* and Sūrata's upbraiding of King Prasenajit in the *Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra* envision leaders living modest lives that are lavish only in their service and generosity toward others. Both challenge conventional ideas of *social* justice by viewing social

⁵³ Ibid., 243-255.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 250.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 249.

⁵⁶ This sort of re-appropriation and re-definition is part of a long tradition in Buddhist literature. See, for example, dGe 'dun chos phel, trans., *Dhammapada* [*chos kyi tshigs su bcad pa*], trans. from the Tibetan by Dharma Publishing Staff (Berkeley, California: Dharma, 1985), 193 (v. 26:11, 14); Āryaśūra, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives* [*Jātakamālā*], trans. Justin Meiland, Vol. 2, Clay Sanskrit Library, ed. Sheldon Pollock (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 360-363 (vv. 31:53 - 55, 58).

⁵² "Bodhisattva Surata's Discourse [Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra]," in *A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtras: Selections from the Mahāratnakūta Sūtra*, trans. Buddhist Association of the United States and ed. Zhenji Zhang, Institute for Advanced Study of World Religions Series (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1983), 248-250.

and individual virtues as indivisible, and both challenge conventional ideas of social justice by insisting that modesty, self-control, and generosity are just as important for the happiness of a leader as they are for the happiness of those she leads. What would happen if modern-day leaders in business, government, higher education, and the nonprofit sector took these ancient Indian ideals of leadership to heart?

Part Two: Noblesse Oblige and the 2011 U.S. Federal Budget

The Democrat-controlled 111th U.S. Congress failed to pass an appropriations bill for fiscal year 2011 (October 2010 to September 2011), leaving this task for the 112th Congress; however, in the 2010 midterm elections, the Democrats lost 63 seats in the House of Representatives and six seats in the Senate, ending their House majority and their caucus' Senate supermajority.⁵⁷ Moreover, many of these freshman Republican lawmakers were Tea Party candidates who campaigned on fiscal austerity and deficit reform. On 19 February 2011, the House passed an appropriations bill that would have reduced discretionary spending by \$61 billion; that proposal was rejected by Senate Democrats and both sides dug in.⁵⁸

As a result of all this, the U.S. government was funded by a series of six continuing resolutions from 1 October 2010 through 8 April 2011,⁵⁹ when the House and Senate agreed to reduce discretionary spending by \$38.5 billion, narrowly averting a government shutdown.⁶⁰ The final fiscal year 2011

appropriations bill, which the Congressional Budget Office estimated will save only \$352 million through the end of the fiscal year and reduce budget deficits by only \$122 billion over the next ten years,⁶¹ passed Congress on 15 April 2011 after a seventh continuing resolution that funded the federal government in the interim.⁶²

Meanwhile, elected officials' own compensation went entirely untouched. In 2011, the Executive Branch will pay \$1,429,500 to current elected officials and former presidents:⁶³ \$400,000 to President Barack Obama;⁶⁴ \$230,700 to Vice President Joseph Biden;⁶⁵ and \$199,700 a piece to the four living former presidents.⁶⁶ The Legislative Branch will pay \$94,280,500 to current elected

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/09/us/politics/09fiscal.html> (accessed 19 May 2011).

⁶¹ Associated Press, "CBO: Recent Spending Bill Cuts Deficits by \$122B Over 10 Years; Much Less Than Predicted," *Washington Post*, 16 May 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/cbo-recent-spending-bill-cuts-deficits-by-122b-over-10-years-much-less-than-predicted/2011/05/16/AF91v94G_story.html (accessed 20 May 2011).

⁶² Library of Congress, "Status of Appropriations Legislation."

⁶³ **\$400,000.** per year salary for the President + **\$230,700.** per year salary for the Vice-President + **(\$199,700.** per year pension for former president **x 4** former presidents) = **\$400,000.** per year salary for the President + **\$230,700.** per year salary for the Vice-President + **\$798,800.** per year total pension for former presidents = **\$1,429,500.** per year total salary for all elected members of the executive branch and total pension for all former presidents. For the sources of these amounts, see n41-43, below.

⁶⁴ Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Officials: Process for Adjusting Pay and Current Salaries*, by Barbara L. Schwemle, Congressional Research Service RL33245, 9 February 2011, http://www.senate.gov/CRSReports/crs-publish.cfm?pid=%270E%2C*P%3CS%3F%23%40%20%20%0A (accessed 9 April 2011), 7 (table 1).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 6 (table 1).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; Emily Yoffe, "A Presidential Salary FAQ," The Explainer, *Slate* (3 January 2001), <http://www.slate.com/id/1006798> (accessed 9 April 2011).

⁵⁷ "Election Results 2010: House," *New York Times*, <http://elections.nytimes.com/2010/results/house> (accessed 19 May 2011); "Election Results 2010: Senate," *New York Times*, <http://elections.nytimes.com/2010/results/senate> (accessed 19 May 2011).

⁵⁸ Carl Hulse, "Republicans Want Cuts In Interim Spending Bill," *New York Times*, 23 February 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/24/us/politics/24spend.html> (accessed 19 May 2011).

⁵⁹ Library of Congress, "Status of Appropriations Legislation for Fiscal Year 2011," THOMAS, <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/approp/app11.html> (accessed 19 May 2011).

⁶⁰ Carl Hulse, "Budget Deal to Cut \$38 Billion Averts Shutdown," *New York Times*, 8 April 2011,

officials;⁶⁷ \$223,500 to Speaker of the House John Boehner;⁶⁸ \$193,400 a piece to the four House and Senate majority and minority leaders and to President Pro Tempore of the Senate Daniel Inouye;⁶⁹ and \$174,000 a piece to the 432 non-leadership House members, the six non-voting House delegates, and the 97 non-leadership Senate members.⁷⁰ Overall, the federal government will pay elected officials and former presidents \$95,710,000 in 2011 alone, not including benefits or compensations outside of base salary;⁷¹ however, in 2009 the median household income in the United States was only \$49,777 per year.⁷²

⁶⁷ **\$223,500.** per year salary for the Speaker of the House + **(\$193,400.** per year salary for congressional leadership x 5 congressional leaders) + **(\$174,000.** per year salary for non-leadership senators, representatives, delegates, and the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico x **535** non-leadership senators, representatives, delegates, and the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico) = **\$223,500.** per year salary for the Speaker of the House + **\$967,000.** per year total salary for congressional leadership + **\$93,090,000.** per year total salary for non-leadership senators, representatives, delegates, and the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico = **\$94,280,500.** per year total salary for all elected members of the legislative branch. For the sources of these amounts, see n45-47, below.

⁶⁸ Library of Congress, *Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Officials*, 6 (table 1).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ **\$1,429,500.** per year total salary for the elected members of the executive branch + **\$94,280,500.** per year total salary for the elected members of the legislative branch = **\$95,710,000** per year total salary for the elected members of the executive and legislative branches. For the sources of these amounts, see n41-43 and n45-47, above.

⁷² U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2009*, by Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica C. Smith, Current Population Reports: Consumer Income, Bureau of the Census P60-238, September 2010, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2010pubs/p60-238.pdf> (accessed 9 April 2011), 7. The American Community Survey (ACS) found that median household income in 2009 was \$50,221 per year—\$444 per year higher than the Current Population Report's median household income; I have chosen to use the Current Population Reporter's number because of its larger sample size. For the ACS' statistic, see U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Household Income for States: 2008 and 2009 American Community Survey*, by Amanda Noss, Bureau of the Census ACSBR/09-2, September 2010,

This is all despite the fact that federal elected officials are, on average, more wealthy than the majority of Americans. In 2009, median net worth in the United States was about \$96,000.⁷³ President Barack Obama was worth about \$4,960,505.⁷⁴ Vice President Biden was actually below average, with about \$89,512 in net worth, but the former presidents more than made up for him.⁷⁵ President James Carter was the least wealthy, with only about \$7 million in net worth;⁷⁶ President William Clinton was the wealthiest, with about \$38 million in net worth.⁷⁷ At the other end of the National Mall, the median net worth for a senator was almost \$2,380,000, while the median net worth for a representative was about \$765,010.⁷⁸

It is obvious, then, that federal elected officials are both much more highly

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2010pubs/acsbr09-2.pdf> (accessed 9 April 2011), 4.

⁷³ Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, *Surveying the Aftermath of the Storm: Changes in Family Finances from 2007 to 2009*, by Jesse Bricker et al., Finance and Economics Discussion Series, March 2011, <http://www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/feds/2011/201117/201117p.pdf> (accessed 9 April 2011), 7.

⁷⁴ Center for Responsive Politics, "Barack Obama (D), 2009," Personal Financial Disclosure, <http://www.opensecrets.org/pfds/CIDsummary.php?CID=N00009638&year=2009> (9 April 2011).

⁷⁵ Center for Responsive Politics, "Joseph R. Biden (D), 2009," Personal Finance Disclosure, *OpenSecrets* (n.d.), <http://www.opensecrets.org/pfds/CIDsummary.php?CID=N00001669&year=2009> (accessed 9 April 2011).

⁷⁶ Douglas A. McIntyre, Michael B. Sauter, and Ashley C. Allen, "The Net Worth of the U. S. Presidents: From Washington to Obama," *Business*, *The Atlantic* (20 May 2010), <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2010/05/the-net-worth-of-the-us-presidents-washington-to-obama/57020/1> (accessed 9 April 2011), s.v. "39th :: James Earl Carter (1977-1981)."

⁷⁷ Ibid, s.v. "42nd :: William Jefferson Clinton (1993-2001)."

⁷⁸ Center for Responsive Politics, "Congressional Members' Personal Wealth Expands Despite Sour National Economy," *OpenSecrets Blog* (17 November 2010), <http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2010/11/congressional-members-personal-weal.html> (accessed 9 April 2011).

compensated and much wealthier than the average American. What would have happened if they had taken the Ten Royal Virtues and the *Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra* to heart by starting the debate over the fiscal year 2011 budget by reducing their own salaries? Let us imagine for a moment that elected officials had chosen to reduce their own salaries—leaving all of their other compensation untouched—to an across-the-board rate of \$100,000 per year, or just over twice the national average. That would have reduced federal payroll spending by \$41,010,000.⁷⁹ In other words, any of the following programs focusing on the poor and working-class could have been funded at 2010 levels:

- Department of Health and Human Services
 - Youthbuild - reduced by \$23 million
 - Green Jobs Innovation Fund - reduced by \$40 million
 - Rural Health Programs - reduced by \$35 million
 - Administration on Aging - reduced by \$16 million
 - Adult Education - reduced by \$31 million
 - Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants - reduced by \$20 million
 - AmeriCorps - reduced by \$23 million
 - Learn and Serve America - reduced by \$40 million

- Department of Housing and Urban Development
 - Personnel Compensation and Benefits -

⁷⁹ **\$95,710,000** per year total salary for the elected members of the executive and legislative branches in 2011 - **(547** elected officials in the legislative and executive branches (including former presidents) **x \$100,000** per year proposed salary) = **\$41,010,000** per year federal payroll savings on elected officials. For how I arrived at \$95,710,000 per year total salary for the elected members of the executive and legislative branches in 2011, see n48, above.

reduced by \$17 million

- Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Vouchers - reduced by \$25 million
- Lead Hazard Reduction - reduced by \$20 million

- District of Columbia (D.C.)
 - Permanent Supportive Housing - reduced by \$7 million
 - Water and Sewer Authority - reduced by \$9 million
 - Reconnecting Disconnected Youth - reduced by \$4 million⁸⁰

What is more, for a relatively modest decrease in salary elected officials could have fully funded both AmeriCorps and HUD's personnel compensation and benefits; funded lead hazard reduction, the Administration on Aging, and Reconnecting Disconnected Youth; funded both Youthbuild and the Administration on Aging; or funded the three programs from the District of Columbia that I highlight above with \$20 million to spare.

If federal elected officials had done something truly radical and reduced their own salaries to an across-the-board rate of only \$50,000—or just above the national average—that would have reduced federal payroll spending by \$68,360,000.⁸¹ With

⁸⁰ U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *4.12.11 Program Cuts List - Final FY 2011 CR - Updated*, 112th Cong., 1st sess., 12 April 2011., 12 April 2011, <http://appropriations.house.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=CommitteeDocuments.Home> (accessed 23 May 2011), unpaginated. These numbers do not include the 0.2% across-the-board reduction in all non-defense accounts.

⁸¹ **\$95,710,000** per year total salary for the elected members of the executive and legislative branches in 2011 - **(547** elected officials in the legislative and executive branches (including former presidents) **x \$50,000** per year proposed salary) = **\$68,360,000** per year federal payroll savings on elected officials. For how I arrived at \$95,710,000 per year total salary for the elected members of the executive and legislative branches in 2011, see n48, above.

those savings, they could have fully funded AmeriCorps, Youthbuild, and the Administration on Aging with money leftover; funded all of the HUD programs that I highlight above with almost enough leftover for D.C.'s supportive housing; etc. They might also have spared the following additional programs for the poor and working-class:

- Department of Agriculture
 - Farm Service Agency Farm Assistance - reduced by \$44 million
 - Renewable Energy Program - reduced by \$34 million

- Department of Health and Human Services
 - Occupational Health and Safety Administration - reduced by \$49 million
 - Community Block Grant Programs - reduced by \$43 million
 - Mentoring Children of Prisoners - reduced by \$49 million
 - Byrd Honors Scholarships - reduced by \$42 million

- Department of Transportation
 - Railroad Safety Technology - reduced by \$50 million

- Department of Housing and Urban Development
 - Native American Housing Block Grants - reduced by \$50 million
 - Energy Innovation Fund - reduced by \$50 million⁸²

Of course, both of these lists ignore literally hundreds of other worthy federal programs—in defense, health research and disease control, science, the

⁸² House Committee on Appropriations, *4.12.11 Program Cuts List - Final FY 2011 CR - Updated*, unpaginated.

environment, infrastructure, etc.—that might have been spared budget cuts had federal officials valued those programs more than they value themselves.

This is a relatively simple and a necessarily incomplete example of the practical benefits that the ethical advice in the Ten Royal Virtues and the *Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra* can have. As I have already said, it ignores compensation outside of base salary, which is quite significant. It also leaves out an in-depth analysis of federal appropriations, which is beyond the scope of this paper and my own capabilities. Still, it is a striking illustration of how those at the bottom of an organization—or even an entire society—can benefit when those at the top make relatively modest sacrifices.

Conclusion

"Racism," argues Judith Katz, "is a white problem in that its development and perpetuation rest with white people."⁸³ Throughout this paper, I have tried to make the same argument for class: that its origins, the reasons for its perpetuation, and its ultimate solutions lie not with the poor and working-class, but with the well-off and powerful. We are, indeed, living in a time of vast wealth inequalities. It is a time when our political, corporate, and even nonprofit leaders live lives that are completely disconnected from the pain of the vast majority of their compatriots. As such, many of our leaders cannot even begin to have compassion—to literally suffer (*-passion*) with (*com-*)—those they lead.

The recent transgressions of former International Monetary Fund managing director Dominique Strauss-Kahn,⁸⁴ Galleon Group hedge

⁸³ Judith H. Katz, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-racism Training*, Second Edition (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 11.

⁸⁴ Al Baker and Steven Erlanger, "I.M.F. Chief, Apprehended at Airport, Is Accused of Sexual Attack," *New York Times*, 14 May 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/nyregion/imf-head-is-arrested-and-accused-of-sexual-attack.html?_r=1 (accessed 23 May 2011).

fund founder Raj Rajaratnam,⁸⁵ and others testify, however, that the well-off and powerful are often also deeply unhappy. As Graeme Wood wrote in the *Atlantic*, summing up the results of one survey of the very wealthy by Boston College's Center on Wealth and Philanthropy,

The respondents turn out to be a generally dissatisfied lot, whose money has contributed to deep anxieties involving love, work, and family. Indeed, they are frequently dissatisfied even with their sizable fortunes. Most of them still do not consider themselves financially secure; for that, they say, they would require on average one-quarter more wealth than they currently possess. (Remember: this is a population with assets in the tens of millions of dollars and above.)⁸⁶

Unmoored by the ultimate emptiness of the power and wealth they worked so hard for, these people often seek solace in hedonistic pleasures or in the endless pursuit of prestige and power.

Both the Ten Royal Virtues from the *Mahāhasa jātaka* and the *bodhisattva* Sūrata's sermon to King Prasenajit in the *Sūrataparipṛcchā sūtra* argue for a very different vision of leadership—one in which leaders live for those whom they lead rather than for themselves. For these texts, power, honor, wealth, and nobility come from leading a life that is modest,

ethical, and generous. Moreover, these are not guidelines that leaders must follow if they wish to be good, or just, or ethical; they are guidelines that leaders must follow in order to be happy. Neither are they separate from a leader's personal life and relationships. Rather, like the West's own tradition of virtue ethics, they are an integrated roadmap for human flourishing.

This vision of leadership is especially compelling because of its consequences for economic justice work. Solving problems like wealth inequality and worker exploitation requires us to convince the rich and powerful to give up some of that wealth and power, but this is hopeless so long as guilt, judgment, and derision are all that we have to offer. We must begin speaking to the ways in which greed, dishonesty, and selfishness actually harm the rich while offering a compelling alternative. We must convince them that taking a voluntary pay cut, or paying their workers a living wage, or turning temporary and contract position into full-time staff positions is not just in others' best interests, but in their own. We must convince them not only that nobility obliges, but that this obligation is noble in itself, and ennobling.

⁸⁵ Peter Lattman and Azam Ahmed, "Galleon's Rajaratnam Found Guilty," *New York Times*, 11 May 2011, <http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2011/05/11/rajaratnam-found-guilty/?ref=rajrajaratnam> (accessed 23 May 2011).

⁸⁶ Graeme Wood, "Secret Fears of the Super-rich," *Atlantic*, April 2011, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/04/secret-fears-of-the-super-rich/8419/1> (accessed 24 May 2011).

Appendix I: Buddhist Quotes on Labor

Work as a Source of Suffering

11

○ free, indeed! ○ gloriously free!

I am free from three crooked things:

The quern, the mortar, and my
hunchbacked husband.

Yes, but I'm also free from rebirth and
from death,

And all that held me back is hurled
away.

—Muttā, *Therīgāthā* v. I:11 (*Khuddaka nikāya*
9)⁸⁷

23

○ woman well set free! How free am I,

How thoroughly free from kitchen drudgery—

Me, stained and squalled among my kitchen
pots,

My brutal husband ranked as even less

Than the sunshades he sits and weaves all day.

—Sumagala's Mother, *Therīgāthā* v. I:23 (*Khuddaka*
nikāya 9)⁸⁸

⁸⁷ C. A. F. Rhys Davids and K. R. Norman, trans., *Poems of Early Buddhist Nuns (Therīgāthā)* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1997), 11. My adaptation. For the original Pāli, see John T. Bullitt, ed, "Thi_utf8," Access to Insight, 21 February 2011, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/slt/Thi_utf8.html#v.11 (accessed 15 March 2011). This is the modern Sri Lankan edition.

⁸⁸ Rhys Davids and Norman, *Poems of Early Buddhist Nuns*, 19. My adaptation. For the original Pāli, see Bullitt, "Thi_utf8," http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/slt/Thi_utf8.html#v.23 (accessed 15 March 2011). This is the modern Sri Lankan edition.

In the land of Kaliputra, Kaparipa, "the Smith," worked hard at the profession of his caste. Then one day, a yogin came where he was working. "What are you doing?" the yogin asked. "I am simply doing the work of my caste," Kaparipa responded. "Do you enjoy your work?" asked the yogin. "Do I look happy?" asked the smith. "The fire, sparks, and heat all torment me. I must suffer just to make a living."

—Abhayadattaśrī, *Caturaśīti siddha pravṛtti*
no. 45⁸⁹

Medhina, "the Man of the Field," was a low-caste man of Saliputra. One day, while laboring in the fields, he just stopped and stood there. A yogin came along and asked him, "What are you doing, just standing there?" "I have stopped doing field work, he replied. "Wouldn't you like to get away from this pain and suffering?" asked the yogin. "The Dharma can accomplish that."

Abhayadattaśrī, *Caturaśīti siddha pravṛtti* no.
50⁹⁰

Kumaripa, "the Potter," lived in the country of Jomanaśrī, where he made his living by making pots. Because he had time for nothing but work, he

⁸⁹ Abhayadatta, *Buddha's Lions: The Lives of the Eighty-four Siddhas [Caturaśīti siddha pravṛtti]*, trans. James R. Robinson, Tibetan Translation Series (Berkeley, California: Dharma, 1979), 158-159. For the Tibetan translation of the full text, see Abhayadattaśrī, *Lives of the Eighty-four Siddhas (Caturaśīti siddha pravṛtti, grub thob brgyad cu rtsa bzhi'i lo rgyus)*, OTA 5091, Peking Tangyur (rgyud 'grel, Lu), folios 1.a - 68.a.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 170-171

became quite despondent. A yogin then came and begged alms from him. The potter brought food to him, saying, "O guru, I work strenuously at my task but no great benefit comes from it. I am disheartened because the work is never completely finished. I am disheartened because there seems to be no end to it."

Thereupon the yogin answered, "O benefactor, do you not understand? The living beings of the world have pleasure only with suffering. A few do not have any pleasure at all. From beginningless time, even without working, the pain alone has no end. You have reason to be depressed."

—Abhayadattaśrī, *Caturaśīti siddha pravṛtti*
no. 63⁹¹

In the city of Maṇḍharā, Kantali, "the Tailor," lived a life devoid of both wealth and enjoyment. To support himself, he could only sew clothes and beg. One day, while sewing, he stuck himself with the point of a needle. Blood spurted forth, and the hurt was so great that he could not endure it. Therefore, he returned home.

—Abhayadattaśrī, *Caturaśīti siddha pravṛtti*
no. 69⁹²

**

Outside kings and petty princes,

Inside taxes and the cost of living,

In between, lowlanders coming to collect debts—

Thinking of these my mind is naturally sad.

I beseech and pray that I may wander the mountains alone.

Outside, endless streams of visitors.

Inside, preparing and serving food and drink,

In between, bent over in the kitchen—

Thinking of these my mind is naturally sad.

May I quickly be alone and meet with meditation.

Outside, many people dying,

Inside, my own death uncertain,

In between, much suffering from disease and illness—

Thinking of these my mind is sad, so sad.

I pray for solitude and spiritual practice.

Outside, much worldly work,

Inside, no time to practice the holy Dharma,

In between, food and wealth torment the mind—

Thinking of these, my mind is naturally sad.

⁹¹ Ibid., 203-204.

⁹² Ibid., 216-217.

May I quickly go to Sikkim.

—O rGyan Chos Skyi, *Mkha' 'gro ma*
*o rgyan chos skyi nram thar*⁹³

Master, the precious source of all refuge,

Patron deity Avalokiteśvara,

This beggar praises you from the center of her
heart.

I, this beggar, beseech you to bless me.

Compassionate one, gaze upon me, Chokyi.

Giving provisions to those departing,

Preparing food and beer for those arriving,

Dividing up food for the many staying here,

These I have put behind me, and I am happy.

This happiness is the kindness of the master.

To repay this kindness I meditate and recite
mantras.

Large crowds of crooked and deceitful people,

Defending compassion and kindness, yet
faithless,

Remembering desires large and small,

These I give up, and I am happy.

This happiness is the kindness of my religious
brothers and sisters.

To answer that kindness I repay them with a
pure mind.

Rising at dawn and boiling vegetables,

Reluctantly beginning work after calm
meditation,

Kitchen boys preparing water and wood,

When I think of [leaving] these, Chokyi is
happy.

This happiness is the kindness of Orgyan
Chodrol.

To answer her kindness I pray that she
becomes like me.

—O rGyan Chos Kyi, *Mkha' 'gro ma o rgyan*
*chos skyi nram thar*⁹⁴

Where tea is grown, in China, the
number of small creatures that are
killed while it is planted, while the
leaves are being picked, and so on,
would be impossible to count. The tea
is then carried as far as Dartsedo by
porters. Each porter carries a load of
twelve sic-brick packs, taking the
weight on a band around his forehead
which wears away the skin. But even

⁹³ O rgyan chos kyi, "Part II: The Life of Orgyan Chokyi [mkha' 'gro ma o rgyan chos skyi nram thar]," in Kurtis R. Schaeffer, *Himalayan Hermitess: The Life of a Tibetan Buddhist Nun* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 157-158. For the original Tibetan of the full text, see O rgyan chos skyid, *Life of the Dākinī Orgyan Chokyi (mkha' 'gro ma o rgyan chos skyi nram thar)*, 86 folios, Nepalese-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) E2825/7 (identical with E2933/4). NGMPP L122/5 (identical with L667/3) has 57 folios. See also *Brief Life of the Dākinī Orgyan Chokyi (mkha' 'gro ma o rgyan chos skyi nrams thar bsdus pa)*, 51 folios (incomplete), NGMPP L401/3.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 170-171.

when his skill shows through, all white,
he carries on. . . . So when we think
about the production and trade of such
products, we can understand that even
a single sup of tea cannot but
contribute to rebirth in the lower
realms.

—Dpal sPrul Rin Po Che, *Kun bzang bla ma'i zal lung*⁹⁵

My Lama Lhaje Sonam Rinchen, look upon me
with compassion!
Having gained this Precious Human Body
through my past merit,
Lama, always remember me!
Transforming all activity on the path into
Nirvana, free from anxiety,
Lama, cherish me!
Possessing all I need, free of work and wages,
Lama, safeguard me!
Living in comfortable lodgings, though free of
labour in the fields,
Lama, remain with me!
Always regarding my lodging as my home, free
of attachment to it,
Lama, protect me!
Identifying the Lama as my own mind, free
from dependence upon others,
Lama, remain clear to me!
Letting reality hang loosely, free from mundane
pursuits,
Lama, be aware of me!
Unswayed by any argument, free from every
persuasion,

Lama, stay with me!
Beyond simulated objects of meditation, free
from distraction,
Lama, remain present!
Behaving naturally and spontaneously, free
from hypocrisy and self-deceit,
Lama, guide me!
Having achieved the goal at the start, free of
all hope and fear,
Lama guard me!
Comprehending the meaning of *samaya*, free
of the pitfalls of rigid discipline,
Lama, hold me in your eye!
Having the seeds of my desire' fulfillment
planted, free from decision making,
Lama, bless me!
Teaching young girls who always listen, free
from contention with their mothers,
Lama, live within me!
Parting from my girl friends before they fade,
free from regret and mourning,
Lama, gaze upon me!
Always my own steward and treasurer, free
from dependence upon servants,
Lama, be with me!
Preferring to remain lowly, free of the pride of
Lamas dominated by the Eight Mundane
Preoccupations,
Lama, save me!
Happy to do whatever arises, happy to leave
whatever passes by,
Lama, look upon me with compassion!

—dGe 'Dun Rin Chen, *Brug pa kun legs kyi rnam thar
rgya mtsho'i snying po*⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Patrul Rinpoche, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* [*kun bzang bla ma'i zal lung*], trans. Padmakara Translation Group, Revised Edition (Boston: Shambhala, 1998), 79-80. For the original Tibetan of the full text, see Dpal sprul o rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po, *Words of My Perfect Teacher: Guidance on the Heart Essence Preliminaries* (snying tig gi sngon 'gro'i khrid yig kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung), in *o rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po'i gsung 'bum*, Vol. 5 (Gangtok, Sikkim: Sonam Topgay Kazi, 1970-1971), 1-564 .

⁹⁶ Dge bshes brag phug dge 'dun rin chen, *The Divine Madman: The Sublime Life and Songs of Drukpa Kunley*, trans. Keith Dowman and Sonam Paljor (London: Rider and Co., 1982), 105-106. For the original Tibetan of the full text, see Dge bshes brag phug dge 'dun rin chen, *Meaningful to Behold: The Heart of the Oceanic Life of Drukpa Kunley* ('brug pa kun legs kyi rnam thar rgya mtsho'i snying po mthong ba don ldan) (Kalimpong, India: Dge 'dun rin chen, 1971).

How to Treat Employees

Let your majesty give food and seed to anyone in your realm who devotes themselves to keeping cattle and to farming. Let your majesty give capital to anyone in your realm who devotes themselves to trade. Let your majesty give wages and food to anyone in your realm who devotes themselves to government service. Then those men—each following their own business—will no longer harass the realm, the king's revenue will go up, the country will be quiet and at peace, and the populace will dwell with open doors, happy and pleased with one another, dancing their children in their arms.

—Royal Chaplain, *Kūadanta sutta* (*Dīgha nikāya* 5)⁹⁷

In five ways should an employer respect workers and servants . . . : 1) by allocating work according to their aptitude, 2) by providing them with wages and food, 3) by looking after them when they are sick, 4) by sharing special treats with them, and 5) by giving them reasonable time off work. So respected, workers and servants reciprocate with compassion in five ways: 1) by being willing to start early and finish late when necessary, 2) by

taking only what their employer gives them, 3) by doing their work well, and 4) by promoting their employer's good reputation.

—Buddha, *Sigālovāda sutta* (*Dīgha nikāya* 31)⁹⁸

To have much wealth and ample gold and food, but to enjoy one's luxuries alone—this is a cause of one's downfall.

—Buddha, *Parabhava sutta* (*Sutta nipata* 1.6)⁹⁹

When a person of integrity acquires lavish wealth, he provides for his own pleasure and satisfaction; for the pleasure and satisfaction of his parents; for the pleasure and satisfaction of his wife and children; for the pleasure and satisfaction of his slaves, servants, and assistants; and for the pleasure and satisfaction of his friends. He gives support to priests and contemplatives that results in happiness and leads to heaven. When his wealth is put to proper use, the government doesn't make off with it, thieves don't make off with it, fire doesn't burn it, water doesn't sweep it away, and hateful heirs don't make off with it. So his wealth goes to good use and is not

⁹⁸ Narada Thera, translator, "Sigalovada Sutta: The Discourse to Sigala (DN 31)," Access to Insight, 8 June 2010, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.nara.html> (accessed 27 March 2011). My adaptation. For the original Pāli of the full text, see John T. Bullitt, ed., "DN III_utf8," Access to Insight, 21 February 2011, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sntp/DN_III_utf8.html#pts.180 (accessed 15 May 2011). This is the modern Sri Lankan edition.

⁹⁹ John T. Bullitt, ed., "Sn_utf8," Access to Insight, 21 February 2011, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sntp/Sn_utf8.html#v.91 (accessed 15 May 2011).

⁹⁷ T. W. Rhys Davids, trans., "Kūṭadanta Sutta," in *Dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. 1, Sacred Books of the Buddhists 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1899), 176. My adaptation. For the original Pāli of the full text, see John T. Bullitt, ed., "DN_I_utf8," Access to Insight, 21 February 2011, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sntp/DN_I_utf8.html#pts.127 (accessed 15 May 2011). This is the modern Sri Lankan edition.

wasted.

—Buddha, *Aputtaka sutta* (*Sutta nipata* 3.19)100

People who make religious images and print spiritual books should do so out of a pure motivations. As professionals they should make a reasonable living from their time and efforts, but their attitude should be to bring benefit to people and not merely to make a large profit. From our side we should take care that the artifacts we acquire are purchased from sincere people.

— Thirteenth Dalai Lama Thubten Gyatso, Sermon at the 1922 Great Prayer Festival¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Thanissaro Bhikkhu, translator, "Aputtaka Sutta: Heirless (1) (SN 3.19)," Access to Insight, 16 June 2010, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn03/sn03.019.than.html> (accessed 27 March 2011). My adaptation. For the original Pāli of the full text, see John T. Bullitt, ed., "SN 1_utf8," Access to Insight, 21 February 2011, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/snp/SN_1_utf8.html#pts.089 (accessed 15 May 2011).

¹⁰¹ Thub bstan rgya mtsho, Dalai Lama XIII, "Semon One: The Water Dog Year—1922," in *Path of the Bodhisattva Warrior: The Life and Teachings of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama*, comp. and trans. Glenn H. Mullin (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion, 1988), 144. For the original Tibetan of the full text, see Thub bstan rgya mtsho, *A Compilation of Sermons on the Occasion of Group Refuge Ceremonies, Etc. (tshogs mgon du phebs skabs sogs kyi gsung bshad ljags bsgrigs)*, in *thub bstan rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1981-1982), 11-325.

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“Catholic Social Justice Teaching and Catholic School Teacher’s Unions: Failing to Practice What You Preach”

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Introduction

The social justice teaching of the Catholic Church, especially as it concerns labor and the rights of workers and unions, is considered the most extensive among all of the Christian churches. Starting with *Rerum Novarum* (*On the Condition of Labor*) written by Pope Leo XIII (1891) and leading up to *Caritas in Veritate* (*Charity in Truth*) written by our current Pope Benedict XVI (2009) the social teachings of the Church continue to address issues of labor, the rights of workers, and unions to exist without fear of reprisals. Even today, with unions under attack in the states of Wisconsin, Ohio, and other states the Catholic bishops in those states have quoted from the previous mentioned documents to uphold the rights of workers and unions.

On February 16, 2011, Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI, President of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, issued a statement to members of the state Legislature’s Joint Committee on Finance outlining Catholic Church teaching on the rights of workers (*The Compass* 2/16/11). In it he quotes the papal encyclicals written by Pope Benedict XVI (2009) and Pope Leo XIII (1891).

He wrote, “As Pope Benedict wrote in his 2009 encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*:

Governments, for reasons of economic reality, often limit the freedom or the negotiating capacity of labor unions. Hence traditional networks of solidarity have more and more obstacles to overcome. The repeated calls issued within the Church’s social doctrine beginning with Rerum Novarum (80), for the promotion of workers’ associations that can defend their rights must therefore be honored today even more than in the past, as a prompt and far-sighted response to the

urgent need for new forms of cooperation at the international level, as well as the local level.” (#25)

The Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire, Chairman of the United States Bishops Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, added his support in a letter written to Archbishop ListECKI (2/23/2011). He quotes Blessed Pope John Paul II (1981) in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (*On Human Work*). Pope John Paul II called labor associations “an indispensable element of social life, especially in modern industrialized societies,” but also reminded unions “to secure the just rights of workers within the framework of the common good of the whole of society.” (#20)

He highlights a statement made by Archbishop ListECKI that includes an additional quote from Pope John Paul II (1981):

It does not follow from this that every claim made by workers or their representatives is valid. Every union, like every other economic actor, is called to work for the common good, to make sacrifices when required, and to adjust to new economic realities. However, it is equally a mistake to marginalize or dismiss unions as impediments to economic growth. As Pope John Paul II wrote in 1981, ‘a union remains a constructive factor of social order and solidarity, and it is impossible to ignore it.’” (#20)

On February 26, 2011, eleven communities of women religious in Wisconsin issued a statement in support of the rights of workers. In it they express concern about Republican Governor Scott Walker’s plan to strip the workers of basic human rights, including the right to collective bargaining. They quote from the United States Bishops pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All* (1986). “No one may deny the rights to organize without attacking human dignity itself. Therefore, we firmly oppose organized efforts, such as those regrettably seen in this country, to break existing unions or prevent workers from organizing.”

In response to Republican Governor John R. Kasich’s successful attempt to strip public-employee unions of collective bargaining rights the Ohio Catholic Conference of Bishops issued a statement in support of the right to collective bargaining. “The Catholic bishops of Ohio encourage leaders in government to pursue changes that promote the common good without the elimination of collective bargaining (Hershey 2011).”

From the above examples, it would appear to be very clear that the long history of Catholic social justice teaching on the rights of workers and unions continues to be reclaimed and reapplied to our

present situation with unions under attack. The Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church calls for the following of Church teaching on labor and the need to pay a just wage in Canon 1286: "Administrators of goods: 1) are to observe meticulously the civil laws pertaining to labor and social policy according to Church principles in the employment of workers; 2) are to pay employees a just and decent wage so that they may provide appropriately for their needs and those of their family."

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) upholds social justice teaching regarding Article 7, "The Seventh Commandment" in the subsection "Economic Activity and Social Justice" in paragraphs 2426-2436. Included in this section are paragraphs that call for a just wage (2434), recourse to strike (2435), failure to pay social security contributions and harm brought about by unemployment on the individual and his/her family (2436).

While this paper will highlight the gift that Catholic social justice teaching brings to worker justice the second part of the paper will reveal a failure to uphold this social justice teaching as it applies to Catholic school teachers' unions—a failure of the Catholic hierarchy to practice what the Church preaches. For example, in the state of Wisconsin, there are no Catholic elementary or high schools that are unionized. In the state of Ohio, three out of the six dioceses do not have Catholic elementary or high schools that are unionized. In 1973, 25 out of 145 responding dioceses reported the existence of unions (James 2004; Russo and Gregory 1999). The decline of secular union membership is cause for greater concern, within the Church and Society, given today's current economic climate. Sadly, there have been Catholic school teachers' unions that have been decertified or simply shut down under the new policies of dioceses undergoing organizational restructuring. One of these unions was the Boston Archdiocesan Teachers Association (BATA) in the Archdiocese of Boston representing 8 Catholic high schools (Massey 2004) and another was the Scranton Diocese Association of Catholic Teachers (SDACT), which was decertified in 2006. Another Catholic school teachers' union, the Lay Faculty Association LIUNA Local 255 representing ten Catholic high schools, is currently fighting for its right to exist, with future court cases pending, in one of the largest and wealthiest Archdioceses in the country, the Archdiocese of New York.

Before examining the specifics of these three unions it will be helpful to understand the history of

Catholic school teachers' unions and the historic court cases that allowed them to exist as a union against the wishes of local and national bishops.

The paper will conclude with some signs for a hopeful future.

Rerum Novarum: The Magna Carta of Catholic Social Justice Teaching

Nearly fifty years prior to Pope Leo XIII's papal encyclical, written in 1891, some people believed that the Christian Churches in Britain should not be involved in political matters. This was challenged by the Christian Chartists movement (1838-1848) that took the position that Christianity could not be divorced from political matters. A couple of examples at the time reveal the shift from a passive Christianity to a radical Christianity that would influence the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII.

Rev. William Hill wrote in the Northern Star "We are commanded...to love our neighbors as ourselves...this command is universal in its application, whether as friend, Christian or citizen. A man may be devout as a Christian...but if as a citizen he claims rights for himself he refuses to confer upon others, he fails to fulfill the precept of Christ.

Rev. Joseph Barker saw Britain's churches as pointless. "I have no faith in church organizations. I believe it my duty to be a man; to live and move in the world at large; to battle evil wherever I see it, and to aim at the annihilation of all corrupt institutions and at the establishment of all good, and generous, and useful institutions in their places (Faulkner 1916).

In #3, Pope Leo describes the "misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class" due to the vacuum left after the "ancient workingmen's guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other protective organization took their place." As if describing the current economic situation he describes how "by degrees it has come to pass that working men have been surrendered, "isolated, and helpless, to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition." He addresses "rapacious usury...more than once condemned by the Church...still practiced by covetous and grasping men." "To this must be added that the hiring of labor and the conduct of trade are concentrated in the hands of comparatively few; so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself."

An example of the greed of unchecked competition, at the time of this paper, is the profit made by the five major oil companies for the first three

months of the year: 34.2 billion dollars; up 42% from last year, or 379 million dollars a day (ABC News, 4/29/11). While the oil companies make so much profit gas prices continue to soar impacting the budget of the poor and middle class.

#4 rejects the ideologies of socialists and upholds the right to private property. Tensions would continue to exist between unions with socialist and communist ideologies and those set up as separate Catholic unions in Europe. Communist concerns and influences would follow unions in the United States.

#20 addresses the millions of jobs today that pay minimum wage, poverty level wages without benefits and that constitute wage theft whether it be Wal-Mart, McDonalds, sweatshops or the salaries of Catholic school teachers which are far below the prevailing wage of their public and some Catholic school counterparts. The underlined statement below was used by the teachers of the LFA in the Archdiocese of New York during their prolonged fight for a just contract.

In statistics that have surely gotten worse, Msgr. Higgins, noted Labor Priest, in *Organized Labor and the Church*, quoted from an article written by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, "A Low Wage Explosion: The Grim Truth About the Job 'Miracle:'" between 1979 and 1985, 44% of the net new jobs created paid poverty-level wages. "Since the early 1970's average wage and salary incomes adjusted for inflation had declined for nearly all groups within the population and in most industries (1993, 71)." In light of the declining number of union members today, an even more prophetic statement is taken from the article: "in the absence of a new wave of labor organizing in services and of government policies to expand high-value added production, wage standards for a substantial fraction of American working people will likely continue to erode (Ibid., 72)." Higgins addresses the labor problem, "In the mid-1960's, nearly a third of American workers were organized into unions. By 1992 that figure had shrunk to approximately seventeen percent—the lowest in any of the industrialized countries. (Union representation in the private sector stands at around twelve percent) (Ibid., 71)." Some estimate the private sector union membership today at 7%.

Wealthy owners and all masters of labor should be mindful of this - that to exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain, and to gather one's profit out of the need of another, is condemned by all laws, human and divine. To defraud any one of wages that are his due is a great crime

which cries to the avenging anger of Heaven. "Behold, the hire of the laborers... which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth; and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."(6) Lastly, the rich must religiously refrain from cutting down the workmen's earnings, whether by force, by fraud, or by usurious dealing; and with all the greater reason because the laboring man is, as a rule, weak and unprotected, and because his slender means should in proportion to their scantiness be accounted sacred. Were these precepts carefully obeyed and followed out, would they not be sufficient of themselves to keep under all strife and all its causes?

The following percentage of workers experience wage theft today: 60% of nursing home workers; 89% of nonmonitored garment factory workers in Los Angel of onion producers, and 62% of garlic producers; 78% of restaurant workers in New Orleans; almost half of day laborers involved in construction work; and 100% of poultry plants steal workers' wages (Bobo 2009, 7).

#32 encourages the government's role in passing laws to benefits the working classes. "And the more that is done for the benefit of the working classes by the general laws of the country, the less need will there be to seek for special means to relieve them."

#37 and 50 repeat the important role and necessity of assistance provided by the state to protect and care for the worker that is being reversed today by the state in taking away protections from the worker like collective bargaining rights.

The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. And it is for this reason that wage-earners, since they mostly belong in the mass of the needy, should be specially cared for and protected by the government.

The State should watch over these societies of citizens banded together in accordance with their rights, but it should not thrust itself into their peculiar concerns and their organization, for things move and live by the spirit inspiring them, and may be killed by the rough grasp of a hand from without.

#42 The role of women has changed dramatically in the workplace since the time of the encyclical. Sexism, sexual harassment, and discrimination continue to victimize women in the workplace. In 1963, women earned 59% of the

wages earned by men and by 2005 the wage gap had narrowed to 81% with older women experiencing the largest disparity of wages (Ibid., 49).

Women, again, are not suited for certain occupations; a woman is by nature fitted for home-work, and it is that which is best adapted at once to preserve her modesty and to promote the good bringing up of children and the well-being of the family.

Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth) (1963) written by Pope John XXIII would repeat the idea that women find work "consistent with their needs and responsibilities as wives and mother (#19)." But, later in the document, adds a new development recognizing women becoming more aware and active in the realms of politics and work.

The part that women are now playing in political life is everywhere evident. This is a development that is perhaps of swifter growth among Christian nations, but it is also happening extensively, if more slowly, among nations that are heirs to different traditions and imbued with a different culture. Women are gaining an increasing awareness of their natural dignity. Far from being content with a purely passive role or allowing themselves to be regarded as a kind of instrument, they are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons (#61).

#49 authorizes the rights of unions to exist:

The most important of all (workplace associations and organizations) are workmen's unions, for these virtually include all the rest. History attests what excellent results were brought about by the artificers' guilds of olden times. Such unions should be suited to the requirements of this our age - an age of wider education, of different habits, and of far more numerous requirements in daily life. It is gratifying to know that there are actually in existence not a few associations of this nature, consisting either of workmen alone, or of workmen and employers together, but it were greatly to be desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient

#50 gives one of the best passages on solidarity. It is restated in a different way in a later document by the U.S. bishops "*Economic Justice for All,*" (1986): "The dignity of the human person, realized in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured" (Heine and Brooke 2010, 80).

We read in the pages of holy Writ: "It is better that two should be together than one; for they have the advantage of their society. If one fall he shall be supported by the other. Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)."(34) And further: "A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city (Proverbs 18:19)."(35) It is this natural impulse which binds men together in civil society; and it is likewise this which leads them to join together in associations which are, it is true, lesser and not independent societies, but, nevertheless, real societies.

#58 describes the purposes of societies and associations to "try to arrange for a continuous supply of work at all times and seasons; as well as to create a fund out of which the members may be effectually helped in their needs, not only in the cases of accident, but also in sickness, old age, and distress." This paragraph addresses the importance of benefits like health insurance, medical benefits and retirement pensions currently being taken away from the rights of workers. This teaching is further affirmed by Pope John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth) (1963)*. Any denial of these rights harms persons and wounds the human community (Ibid., 88). "Thus any government which refused to recognize human rights or acted in violation of them, would not only fail in its duty; its decrees would be wholly lacking in binding force (61).

From the above passages it should be clear why *Rerum Novarum* is considered the Magna Carta of Catholic social justice teaching and why it still supports the common good of the worker, unions, and society.

Laborem Exercens (On Human Work) and the Role of Unions and Political Parties

Blessed Pope John Paul II addressed caution against unions having too close a relationship with political parties. Recent budget decisions and bills being passed in many states stripping away the collective bargaining rights of unions, affecting benefits, pensions, and issues impacting the wages a worker earns have made it a necessity for unions to be directly involved in the political process. The words of Pope John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens (On Human Work) (1981)* would have to be reexamined in today's political world especially when political action lobby organizations like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) work tirelessly with corporations and politicians to pass anti-union legislation that harms the rights of workers.

The role of unions is not to “play politics” in the sense that the expression is commonly understood today. Unions do not have the character of political parties struggling for power; they should not be subjected to the decision of political parties or have too close links with them. In fact, in such a situation they easily lose contact with their specific role, which is to secure the just rights of workers within the framework of the common good of the whole of society; instead they become an instrument used for other purposes (20).

Centesimus Annus (The Hundreth Year) and a Just Wage

One hundred years after *Rerum Novarum*, and ten years after the above mentioned encyclical, Blessed Pope John Paul II emphasized the need for a just wage and the role of unions in negotiating these wages and work conditions.

Furthermore, society and the State must ensure wage levels adequate for the maintenance of the worker and his family, including a certain amount for savings. This requires a continuous effort to improve workers’ training and capability so that their work will be more skilled and productive, as well as careful controls and adequate legislative measures to block shameful forms of exploitation, especially to the disadvantage of the most vulnerable workers, of immigrants and of those on the margins of society. The role of trade unions in negotiating minimum salaries and working conditions is decisive in this area (15).

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, United States Catholic Bishops

“A New ‘Social Contract’ for Today’s ‘New Things’”, USCCB Labor Day Statement

Our Cherished Right, Our Solemn Duty, Catholic Bishops of New York State

The following social justice documents and statements continue the tradition of *Rerum Novarum*. In *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship (2007)* the U.S. bishops state:

“Catholic social teaching supports the rights of workers to choose whether to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively, and to exercise these rights without reprisal...Workers, owners, employers, and unions should work together to create decent jobs, build a more just economy, and advance the common good (76).

What isn’t mentioned by the U.S. bishops is what happens when workers “choose” to organize or join a union.

“91% of employers require employees to attend a one-on-one meeting with their supervisors where they are

told why unions are bad and why they should vote against the union. 51% of employers illegally coerce union opposition through bribes and favors. 30% of employers illegally fire pro-union employees. 49% of employers illegally threaten to eliminate all workers’ jobs if they join a union (Bobo 2009, 86).”

Sadly, some of these anti-union tactics have taken place in Catholic hospitals and Catholic schools as examples of Catholic institutions and administrations failing to uphold Catholic social justice teaching.

For this year’s Labor Day Statement, Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, New York, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development made a reference to Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which means “Of New Things” by making it a part of this year’s statement, “A New Social Contract for Today’s ‘New Things (2010).” In his statement Bishop Murphy mentioned many of the difficulties facing workers today including: the 29 West Virginia coal miners who died when the earth collapsed around them; the 11 oil riggers who died in the Gulf of Mexico oil derrick explosion; the 15 million unemployed and the 11 million who can only find part-time work; and, the influence of globalization on the world’s economy. He concludes the document calling for: the protection of the life and dignity of each worker, and how workers need to have a real voice and effective protections in economic life. He speaks of the need for: “private action and public policies that strengthen families and reduce poverty; new jobs with just wages and benefits so that all workers can express their dignity through the dignity of work and are able to fulfill God’s call to us all to be co-creators; and, a new social contract, which begins by honoring work and workers, ...that ultimately focuses on the common good of the entire family.”

The Catholic Bishops of New York State issued their statement on the upcoming elections “*Our Cherished Right, Our Solemn Duty (2010).*” Among the important questions for Political Candidates are questions regarding: The Right to Life; Parental Rights in Education; Protecting Marriage; Immigration Reform; Access to Health Care; and, protecting the poor by the support of the Farm workers Fair Labor Practices Act that would grant farm workers certain rights available to all other New York workers, such as the right to overtime pay, collective bargaining and a day of rest. For Catholic school teachers’ union it is puzzling how the Catholic Bishops of New York could advocate on behalf of farm workers while engaging in

union busting tactics with its own Catholic school teachers.

There are other examples of Catholic social justice teaching that uphold the rights of the worker and unions that can be read and mentioned here, but it is now time to focus on Catholic school teachers' unions and how they came to be born out of the Catholic social justice teaching tradition with resistance. Recommended websites to access the social justice documents and papal encyclicals would be the Catholic Labor Network at CatholicLabor.org, and the Compendium of the Social on the Vatican website:

www.vatican.va/.../rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_c ompendio-dott-soc_en.html -

The implementation of Catholic social justice teaching regarding the right to organize began to take place in Catholic schools in the late 1950's and early 1960's due to the popularity found in public schools (James 2004; Russo and Gregory 1999). It was only with the help of court decisions that Catholic school teachers' unions were able to exist

Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971)

While not directly related to issues of collective bargaining this case is "frequently cited in most of the state and federal court decisions involving collective bargaining in Catholic schools (James 2004)." This case involved additional state payments of salaries to teachers of secular subjects in non-public schools in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania. Religion teachers teaching religion courses were not entitled to the state reimbursements. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the cumulative effect of the laws was to foster excessive entanglement between government and religion, and was ruled unconstitutional (Ibid., 2004).

The court established three tests for a law to survive the Establishment Clause prohibition of the Constitution: "First the statute must have a secular legislative purpose; second, its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; finally the statute must not foster an excessive government entanglement with religion (Lemon v. Kurtzman, 1971, p. 635; Ibid., 2004)."

Catholic Bishop v. National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) (1977)

This case involved two Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago, and five diocesan Catholic high schools in the FortWayne/South Bend diocese who sought to be certified as collective bargaining units by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) with unions in Illinois and Indiana representing lay teachers employed in Catholic schools. The NLRB

certified the unions but the employers contended that the NLRB should decline jurisdiction based on its own rules and based on First Amendment prohibitions against government entanglement established in the Lemon v. Kurtzman case. This case can be used as the first example of the Catholic hierarchy and administrations of these seven Catholic schools failing to uphold the Catholic social justice teachings of the Church that support the rights of workers to unionize.

The issue of jurisdiction was rejected since the NLRB accepted jurisdiction over schools where instruction was not limited to religious subjects in earlier court cases. But, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Catholic Bishops of Chicago by ruling the NLRB had no authority over religious schools (Ibid.) The significance of this "decision ended federal involvement in the involvement in the oversight of labor relations within Catholic schools by the NLRB (Ibid.)." The outcome of this case could be seen as a victory for the Catholic hierarchy but a loss of credibility regarding the failure to uphold Catholic social justice teaching regarding the rights of workers to organize into unions without fear of reprisals.

Catholic High School Association (CHSA) v. Culvert (1985)

This case pertains to the union that is currently fighting for its right to exist in the Archdiocese of New York and to which this author belongs: The Lay Faculty Association (LFA). In 1968, the State of New York enacted legislation in 1937 similar to the Wagner Act/NLRB (1935) and amended the legislation in 1968 to include charitable, educational, and religious organizations. Shortly after this, the LFA petitioned the State Board for certification to represent 11 archdiocesan high school teachers as the exclusive bargaining agent. The petition was certified and from 1969 until 1980 the LFA and CHSA representing the Archdiocesan schools engaged in collective bargaining agreements governing the "secular terms and conditions of lay teachers' employment" (Catholic Highs School Association v. Culvert 1985, 1163; Ibid.).

A rider to the agreement included the following statement: "certain areas of Canon Law, ecclesiastical decrees and religious obligations that cannot be subject of negotiations" and included this example giving reason for discharge "if a teacher were to teach that there was no God, the discharge would not be subject to the grievance procedures (Ibid., 1163; Ibid.).

In 1980, the LFA filed unfair labor practices when the CHSA suspended 226 teachers who

protested the schools' unilateral decision to implement a policy which would require teachers to cover the classes of absent teachers (a policy that continues to this day, saving the schools thousands of dollars from having to pay substitute teachers).

The LFA also alleged that the CHSA sent letters to teachers urging them to pressure individual teachers urging them to pressure the LFA into accepting the CHSA offer and added other unilateral decisions. (This tactic would continue up to the present with the LFA having filed 22 Unfair Labor Practice charges (ULP's) waiting to be heard in the New York State Employment Relations Board court (SERB against the Archdiocese of New York and CHSA).

While the District Court followed the decision of Catholic Bishop v. NLRB regarding the issues of entanglement, the United States Second Circuit Court of Appeals reversed and remanded the District Court ruling. The Second Circuit Court of Appeals ruled "It is a fundamental tenet of the regulation of collective bargaining that government brings private parties to the bargaining table and then leave them alone" and furthermore, the court rejected the "likelihood of entanglement" in favor of one where the Church must show "the coercive effect of the enactment as it operates" in the practice of religion (Catholic High School Association v. Culvert 1985, 1168; *Ibid.*). As a result of this decision the LFA and other Catholic school teachers' unions in the state of New York would have access to State Labor Boards. The problem is that not every state has State Labor boards, nor does every state recognize non-public schools under the Labor boards or legislation. This absence of protection from the state leaves Catholic school teachers especially vulnerable to union busting and other bullying tactics.

Future court cases in Minnesota, New York and New Jersey would result in court decisions giving Catholic lay teachers' unions the right to collective bargaining "regarding secular conditions of the contract such as salary, benefits, and quite possibly a narrow definition of work conditions that do not encroach upon the religious freedom of the school (James 2004)."

Given the strong and unequivocal social justice teaching of the Catholic Church, regarding the rights of workers and unions to organize without fear of reprisals, the question has to be asked why the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, in the United States, fails to uphold these teachings and fails to practice what they preach as it applies to the children of the Church as represented by Catholic school teachers

and the unions that represent them? Perhaps the easiest answer is simply to say that if the Church can get away with doing it, without being told otherwise by the courts, it will. Another reason for this contradiction and scandal within the Church is the hierarchy following the 11th Commandment "Thou Shall Not Get Caught."

The following examples will further reveal the scandal within the Church regarding Catholic school teachers and the unions that represent them. This scandal is of a magnitude that far surpasses the child sex abuse scandal in the Church because of the failure to call it a scandal. A scandal that goes unidentified as a scandal is allowed to continue and thrive.

The Boston Archdiocesan Teachers Association (BATA) in the Archdiocese of Boston

In 2004, the Archdiocese of Boston announced that eight regional Catholic high schools would become new, independent entities that would be run by independent boards of trustees. At the expiration of the teachers' August 31, 2004 contract each of the eight boards decided not to negotiate, thus ending a collective bargaining process that had lasted 38 years. In June, 2004, BATA filed a lawsuit claiming that the boards of trustees served as an "alter ego" of Archdiocesan Central High Schools Inc, which is the branch of the archdiocese that handled the negotiations with the teachers for the past 38 years. The loss of the rights of the previous contract left the teachers without any standards for working conditions such as class load and preparation time, sick and personal leave days, salary scale, health insurance and job security. All of these were rights of workers previously mentioned in Catholic social justice teaching beginning with *Rerum Novarum* and continuing up to the present day as shown in this paper and the documents themselves.

One of the main reasons the Archdiocese was able to get away with this reversal of Catholic social justice teaching was because it did not correspond with state law. A bill was introduced by a group of Massachusetts state legislators that would give employees at nonprofit institutions, including Catholic school teachers, the right to unionize (Massey 2004). The status of this bill is not known at this time. It did not matter that Catholic social justice teaching since 1891 already recognized this right. When Catholic social justice teaching is not upheld and the Catholic hierarchy does not practice what the Church teaches it is up to the courts to decide the fate of the Catholic school teachers and unions. Unfortunately, the previous court decisions giving Catholic school

teachers the right to organize as a union, free of reprisals, did not apply to the Catholic school teachers and union in Boston.

Scranton Diocese Association of Catholic Teachers (SDACT) in Diocese of Scranton

On January 24, 2008, the diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania, announced it would no longer recognize SDACT as a collective bargaining unit. The decision to restructure the schools led to the bargaining relationship coming to an end in 2006. Between 1978-2007, the union negotiated contracts with diocesan schools. Teachers in 9 of the 10 high schools and all large elementary schools in the diocese were represented (Hall 2/3/2008). Michael Milz, the union President, was terminated from his position after more than 30 years of service in the diocese. The diocese justified his termination by stating he did not have enough seniority at his school Holy Redemer in Wilkes-Barre despite his work in the diocese for 34 years (Hall 6/11/08).

In a similar political move as the legislators in Boston, Pennsylvania state legislators introduced Bill 26 that would amend the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Act which would allow lay teachers and other lay employees of religiously-affiliated schools to organize and bargain collectively with their employers. It did not matter that Catholic social justice teaching already called for the teachers to have this right.

As if rubbing salt in the wounds of the teachers, the diocese refused to pay the teachers almost 1 million dollars in arbitration awards for accumulated sick leave and severance pay. The union was forced to take the diocese to court to make them pay. After six years of legal actions, delay and frustration, the diocese will start to pay the teachers nearly 1 million dollars that was owed to them. The uproar over the labor injustice would lead to the eventual resignation of Bishop Joseph Martino that was accepted in August, 2009. His successor Bishop Joseph C. Bambera has not restored the union. The Vatican upheld the decision made by the Diocese of Scranton (Fraga 2011). While the diocese of Scranton may consider this a victory that endorses the union busting actions made by this decision, it only serves as a greater example of a loss of credibility and failure to uphold Catholic social justice teaching.

Lay Faculty Association LIUNA Local 25 in Archdiocese of New York

Following the script or precedence to reverse Catholic social justice teaching, the Archdiocese of New York announced January, 2009, that the ten Catholic high schools of the LFA would become

independent entities and cease to be run by the Catholic High School Association (CHSA). By September, 2009, all of the rights the teachers had over the last 40 years were unilaterally stripped away. Terms and Conditions were unilaterally imposed upon the teachers without any negotiation with the LFA. At the end of the 2009 school year, LFA President, John Fedor, was terminated from his Hall of Fame teaching career at John S. Burke Catholic High School after 41 years. Similar to the termination of Michael Milz in Scranton, the reason given was due to enrollment. Among the 22 ULP's filed in the New York State Employment Relations Board is one contesting the firing of John Fedor. John was one year away from retirement and he and his wife have had to dip into retirement savings to make up for his lost paycheck. There is no more egregious union busting action that can be taken then when a Union President is fired. The fear of reprisals is felt by the rest of the union members and it is no surprise that John S. Burke Catholic is in a state of suspension. The fear of reprisals does not affect only the teachers. In today's union busting climate, so-called labor priests have remained silent and unable to stand with the teachers of the LFA because of fears regarding reprisals taken against their schools by the Archdiocese. While the 11 communities of religious sisters supported worker's rights in Wisconsin, a group of religious sisters failed to support the teachers of the LFA because of the fear of reprisals due to the Vatican investigation of women's religious communities. Real or imagined, reprisals impose a psychological violence upon the victims of the reprisals and violate the sanctity of their conscience.

As result of the teachers not having a contract affective September, 2009, all union dues deductions were stopped. This seems to be another tactic in today's union busting environment to weaken the financial strength of unions. It is part of the legislation proposed in some "Right to Work" states. In addition to the failure to deduct union dues, teachers with a voluntary pension plan with the parent union have been unable to have pension deductions which will also need to be made retroactively. A supplemental pension plan was also frozen, which will negatively impact the financial support teachers will receive in their retirement, which also violates the right to have a pension or be cared for in one's senior years. The administrations and new Board of Directors chose to retain the same Archdiocesan Attorney that represented the schools as the CHSA. Only after two of the Principals were sued did they change attorneys.

As a result of the change two of the ten schools have negotiated successful contracts.

Similar to the unsuccessful Boston situation, the key case among all of the ULP's, is the case set to determine whether the 10 independent schools are alter egos of the Archdiocese. The LFA is charging they are alter ego schools and not independent of the Archdiocese. Court dates have been set for the summer.

Signs of Hope for Catholic Social Justice Teaching

The future of Catholic schools and Catholic school teachers' unions can look bleak in light of this paper. Catholic social justice teaching should be enough but it does not appear to apply to Catholic school teachers. The following are signs of hope for the future.

The contract negotiated by Maria Regina High School, one of the schools of the LFA, shows that through good faith negotiating a contract can be possible. If the terms and conditions of the collective bargaining agreement were offered to the other 9 schools they would be accepted immediately. Unfortunately, another tactic is being used to encourage decertification and union busting and that is the delay of justice and the failure to accept binding arbitration. An interesting observation is that there are no Archdiocesan priests involved in the Maria Regina administration. Not only is there concern about the education of the hierarchy, regarding Catholic social justice teaching, especially if the future leaders of the Church are being educated in Rome, at the Pontifical North American College, but it also raises questions about the social justice education of seminarians as the future priests in the Archdiocese of New York.

The document *"Respecting the Just Rights of Workers: Guidance and Options for Catholic Health Care and Unions."* Catholic Health Care institutions like Catholic schools can be another Catholic institution that has historically experienced terrible examples of union busting. The significance of this document is the collaborative effort that went into the writing of the document. Representative included: Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, at the time Chairman of the Domestic Policy Committee of the USCCB; Sr. Carol Keehan DC, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Catholic Health Association of the U.S.; John Sweeney, then President of the AFL-CIO; and, Dennis Rivera, the then Chair of SEIU Healthcare. It also received pro bono assistance from the Feerick Center for Social Justice at Fordham University School of Law to convene, mediate and participate in the process of learning, discussion and reflection.

While recognizing past conflicts and controversies the document affirms the commitment to creating a more positive and productive work environment that promotes dignity, mutual respect and harmony (Part II, Article E 2009).

A similar document and process needs to be entitled "Respecting the Just Rights of Workers: Guidance and Options for Catholic School Teachers and Unions," or, "A Charter for the Protection of Catholic School Teachers and Unions," similar to the charter addressing the sexual abuse scandal in the Church. Perhaps John Sweeney, a graduate of Cardinal Hayes High School, one of the schools of the LFA, could facilitate this process. John advocated on behalf of the teachers of Cardinal Hayes and the LFA when the school honored him and entered him into the school's Hall of Fame.

Another sign of hope involves the various labor organizations like Interfaith Worker Justice (www.iwj.org), the Catholic Labor Project (www.catholiclabor.org) and Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice. The LFA was extremely grateful for a letter of support written by Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice, under the leadership of Joe Fahey as Chairman. The organization can be accessed via the following website: www.catholicsscholarsforworkerjustice.org. It is recommended to read their article "Union busting is a mortal sin." Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice is one of the few labor organizations to publicly stand with the Catholic high school teachers of the LFA. More support and strong condemnation of the union busting tactics of the Archdiocese of New York and other dioceses in the Catholic Church of the United States, and other denominations, by these other labor organizations can serve as a great means of solidarity. The interreligious social justice teachings of various religions and Christian denominations offer further hope for solidarity. The Living Wage Campaign in New York City is an example of this interreligious support for a living wage for projects receiving state subsidies.

Finally, the "Employee Free Choice Act," or better named "Employee Fair Contract Act" needs to be resurrected or similar legislation proposed (Fahey 2010). The importance of this act would have increased the financial penalties and fines against employers that violate the rights of workers. As long as remedies amount to a slap on the wrist, or a posting of an Unfair Labor Practice charge, the Church and the most unscrupulous of employers will continue

to fail to uphold Catholic social justice teaching and thus fail to practice what the Church preaches.

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"For the Love of Justice"

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I. INTRODUCTION

Desmond Tutu sums up my own feelings towards the church in general and the United Methodist Church (U.M.C.) in particular - That the modern church seems to work very hard to be neutral on issues of social justice and workers rights. The church seems to have forgotten or has all but ignored the fact that participation in the kingdom of God is directly connected to our participation in works of justice.

As an African American who attends a predominantly white church (Germantown U. M.C.) and works in predominantly African American and Hispanic American communities, I find myself comparing these distinctly different social cultures almost daily. I have for some time wanted to better understand how America, a nation which proclaims its allegiance to God in songs (God Bless America), speeches and even our pledge of allegiance (one nation under God) can justify its actions to coincide with its proclamations.

For this study, three ethnic groups are examined: African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans. Their economic and cultural conditions are considerably different from mainstream America. How have the church and the Christian community responded to their social and cultural disadvantages over the years? I wanted to look at the Church's treatment of these groups to see if it stood up to the teachings, commandments and directives contained within the Bible.

I wanted to look historically at the economic conditions of African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans to see if they have fared as well as their European immigrant brothers and sisters, and if not, why?

Globalizing theology in the era of world Christianity (Course #DM10004 at Memphis Theological Seminary) puts these major issues before our D.Min. class...globalization, religiously based violence and peacemaking, and the large scale movement of people due to globalization, poverty and violence.

"What are three lessons?" that can be drawn from this class, that can be brought "home" to one's own congregation or ministry setting? Why are these

three "lessons" most significantly theological? How should these three "lessons" be brought home?

The following three major topics are examined to find the answers: Race/Ethnicity, Christ vs. Culture, and the Church: Its Fears, Failures and Social Justice.

II. RACE/ETHNICITY – Still Matter

A. "Racism Continues in State Education System"

(Reprint of) Guest Column by James Luvene, Special section in the Advocate (A United Methodist Church Newsletter)

"While many white leaders in Mississippi enjoy telling people outside the state how different things are in the "New South", the problem for most blacks in Mississippi is that conditions have changed little for them even though Mississippi has experienced strong economic growth.

While I cannot say that Mississippi is the most racist state in the Union (I am not familiar with racial problems in other states), I can speak of racism in Mississippi, and in particular, racism in their education system. Mississippi today has a very segregated public school system. The K-12 system is funded in a way that treats black children as third class citizens, while at the same time putting the blame for the poor conditions, inferior facilities, low pay and poor performance on the black community which has little or no economic power and even less political power to influence the funding and policies that directly influence the conditions and effectiveness of public schools.

The higher education system made up of eight public universities (historically five white and three black institutions) stands today as a clear and undeniable monument to what long term and a well planned system of segregation can do to institutions as well as to a race of people.

The sad irony about Mississippi is that after over 400 years of slavery, Jim Crowism, segregation and economic dis-empowerment, its white leaders (with the blessings of some in the church) have declared all people (black and white) as equal; therefore, since all are equal, blacks in Mississippi have only themselves to blame for their poor health care, poor educational institutions, high poverty rate and lack of economic power. Blacks represent 39 percent to 42 percent of Mississippi's population.

I believe that we are all equal in God's eyes. However, after having been locked into second-class status for over 400 years, African Americans were freed from slavery, but far from being accepted as equals, were forced to compete with white people who still harbored racial prejudice, still practice Jim Crow tactics, segregation and class privileges. (I understand that not

all whites are treated equally and not all whites are racist.) This 400-year head start, coupled with an appropriate memory loss of all the ills inflicted on people of color, allow Mississippi's white leaders to go around the country, and indeed the world, declaring "All is well in Mississippi, let the races begin."

Not so fast!"

(Luvene, an Oxford native, is a member of the State College Board.)

B. Racism and the Church

"I have tried to make it clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong or even more, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends." Martin Luther King, Jr.

[Saturday, May 24, 2008] -- While at Mt. Zion Church of Christ, Lon Oliver, Director of the Appalachian Regional Authority stated, "Mt. Zion members voted to be neutral and not take sides during the Civil War, opting instead to fly the yellow flag of neutrality and use their church building as a hospital for both Confederate and Union soldiers injured during the war. As I watched the look on my (all white) classmates' faces, I could see what I could only describe as a sense of pride that this Congregation had done such a worthy action as to take no side in the war but offer medical help to the injured on both sides of the conflict.

I wondered to myself, if the roles of the war had been reversed and the issue of slavery had been forced on white people as slaves and those fighting had been Native Americans and African Americans, with one group wanting to keep whites as slaves and the other wanting to abolish slavery, if my classmates would have felt the same pride in Mt. Zion Church for staying neutral.

To remain neutral in a fight over slavery / evil by a church of any denomination is an insult to God and a rejection of God's call for justice.

Mt. Zion was not alone among churches in America, with the majority of churches of all denominations failing the test of courage by either trying to stay neutral over slavery or by supporting slavery (especially in the South) and remaining free of oppression and isolating themselves.

Thus, Dr. Martin Luther King's prophetic voice speaks back to the church during the Civil Rights Movement when he says, "But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong or even more to use moral means to preserve immoral ends." This is still just as relevant today.

Human rights and civil rights are bound up with each other. Dr. King's commitment to economic

justice and worker's rights are becoming more widely appreciated today as we continue to confront all of the unresolved challenges facing our nation today. Joblessness is still pervasive; and wages remain too low to lift millions of people out of poverty. Globalizing corporations and conservative politicians have relentlessly chipped away at workers rights and workplace safety. Forty seven million Americans are medically, second-class citizens "unequal landscapes (rooted in racism) of wealth and opportunity in housing and schools still make the words "American Apartheid" a dirty but accurate epithet. (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

While White / European Americans share in the economic injustice of poverty, however, there is no denying that people of color (African Americans, Native Americans and Hispanic Americans) bear disproportionate shares of America's economic injustice, which raises the question "What does race/ethnicity have to do with it?"

Race/ethnicity seems to play a major role in the dynamics of globalization and for the practices of the Church both locally and nationally. To say that 11:00 a.m. on Sunday is the most segregated hour in America is not, I believe, by chance (even though many whites will deny this). European Americans are comfortable with diversity, as long as that diversity does not pose a threat to the white power structure. I have observed how black and white church leaders play a game of segregation rooted in the belief that integration threatens their power structure. This practice by the Church and church leaders gives validation to corporations when they use and exploit people of color for monetary gains because these corporations only have to look at the church for an example of the exploitation of people by color.

In the United Methodist Church where I am a member, I watch this racism game played out through the appointment process – where white pastors get appointed to predominantly white well financed churches and black pastors get appointed to predominantly black and poorly financed black churches. Yet we call ourselves "United" Methodists as if to indicate we are one (happy) Church where all are equal.

In the dynamics of globalization, race has always been prominent in how to oppress for the profits of capitalism. One does not have to look very far to see that dark skinned people such as Native Americans, African Americans, and Latino Americans have historically carried the burden for globalization through lower paying labor-intensive jobs, less promotions, less workers rights and higher than average unemployment statistics.

Yes! Race/Ethnicity does matter and it should matter to the Church. The Church should stand firm against all forms of racism. When the Church refuses to see the reflection of racism in its own eye, it is difficult to confront racism in the eyes of globalizing corporations and nations.

Some recommendations:

- Preach / teach about issues of racism in America, your community and the world (and encourage others too).
- Confront racism (in all its forms) – Yes! It takes courage and, yes, it can be painful.
- Work for integration inside as well as outside of the Church that embraces the integrity and net worth of all human beings.
- Question institutions and policies that cause any group of people to be marginalized according to race.
- Support organizations that work for equality/justice.

III. CHRIST VS. CULTURE – Choose ye today whom you will serve.

"I look forward confidently to the day when all who work for a living will be one, with no thought to their separateness as Negroes, Jews, Italians or any other distinctions. This will be the day when we bring into full realization the American dream – a dream yet unfulfilled, a dream of equality of opportunity; a dream of a land where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to a few; a dream of a land where men will not argue that the color of a man's skin determines the content of his character; a dream of nations where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone, but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of the human personality. That is the dream." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. AFL-CIO Convention, December 1961.

A. Christ's Directive

A basic principle of both Jewish and Christian faith is that religion must be lived out in relationships. Faith is not merely a matter of individual piety. In John 3:18, we are charged, "...Love is not in word of speech, but in truth and action." The book of John is clear that faith without actions is empty. In the Hebrew tradition, God demands of those who have received the mercy of God's justice, liberation and abundance, that they ensure the same treatment is given to people with whom they would live in peace. Amos 5:24 admonishes God's people to "Let justice roll down like water."

It is not always possible to point to specific Scripture passages in describing the moral implications of our economic choices. Yet the clear expectation of God in Scripture is for fair treatment of others in our employment:

"You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages...because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt." Deuteronomy 24: 14 – 15

James 5:4 states, "The wages of the worker held back in fraud cry out!"

The God of scripture demands fair treatment of workers.

Malachi 3:3 warns: "I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against you...those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the Lord of Host."

Jeremiah 22: 13-17 says, "Indicts those who build luxurious homes for themselves without treating fairly the laborers who build it: woe to [the one] who builds [a] a house by unrighteousness, and upper rooms by injustice: who makes neighbors work for nothing, and does not give them their wages."

For people of faith, "jobs vs. the environment or economic growth vs. the environment (BP Oil Company, Shell Oil, etc.)," poses a false dichotomy. Since God owns creation, humanity is charged with good stewardship and challenged to develop holistic ways of building community. Wealth obtained by suppressing and violating workers rights or by destroying the land is not wealth but ill-gotten gain.

B. Culture

"No slave can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." Luke 16:13 NSRV

Bishop Ken Carder in his book titled, *Sermons on United Methodist Beliefs*, tells a story of a successful businessman sharing his keys to success. This businessman who was a United Methodist quoted John Wesley as one of his keys to success. Quoting Wesley he said, "One should earn all you can and save all you can." Bishop Carder in describing this individual said the man was only two thirds Wesleyan, in that John Wesley in speaking on the subject of wealth/money had actually said, "One should earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can."

Like the man in the above story “capitalism” has so influenced the Church that the Church instead of critiquing capitalism is mimicking it. If the Church, especially the churches in our western culture, cannot hold on to their own doctrine when facing off with capitalism, how can the church stand against the evil forces of unchecked greed inherent in the consumer-driven excesses of capitalism?

When I hear and see the attitudes of some in the ministry on issues of social justice, globalization, economic disparity, etc., I walk away shaken and sad. Comments such as, “People are poor because they do not know how to manage money;” or “People go back to jail after being released because they want three meals a day,” show how many in the clergy have been shaped by the culture instead of Christ. If we as clergy and believers are going to be powerful voices for Christ we must be willing to live counter-cultural lives rooted in the teachings of Christ. A few examples:

1. Live simply – reject excessive consumerism, hoarding and greed.
2. Preach/teach simple living.
3. Reject “prosperity ministry” even though it is popular.
4. Become involved in social justice and encourage your church to do so.
5. Develop a daily prayer life, Bible study and time alone with God. It will be impossible to do these examples effectively without this.
6. Be part of a support group / community of believers.

If we as clergy and Christians have not been truly transformed by Jesus, how can we possibly expect to help the poor, oppressed, sick and disabled to live transformed lives through Christ?

IV. THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH: Fears/Failures/Social Justice

The U.M.C. has a long history of concern for social justice, and their Social Principles are written with prayerful and thoughtful effort on the part of the general conference to address social issues in the contemporary world from a sound Biblical and theological foundation. These principles are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit.

We claim all economic systems to be under the judgment of God, no less than other facets of the created order. Therefore, we recognize the responsibility of governments to develop and implement sound fiscal and monetary policies which provide for the economic life of individuals and corporate entities, and which encourages full employment and adequate incomes with a minimum of inflation. We believe private and public economic

enterprises are responsible for the social cost of doing business, such as employment and environmental pollution, and that they should be held accountable for these costs. We support measures that would reduce the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. We further support efforts to revise tax structures and to eliminate governmental support programs which benefit the wealthy at the expense of others.

Every person has the right to a job at a living wage. Where the private sector cannot or does not provide jobs for all who seek and need them, it is the responsibility of government to provide for the creation of such jobs. We support social measures which ensure the physical and mental safety of workers that provide for the equitable division of products and services, and that encourages an increasing freedom in the way individuals may use their leisure time. We believe that persons come before profits. We support the rights of workers to refuse to work in situations which endanger their health and/or life without jeopardy to their jobs. We support policies that would reverse the increasing concentration of business and industry into monopolies.

In January 2010, our D.Min. class traveled to Washington, D.C. for a week-long immersion trip to The Church of the Savior. We visited many of the outreach and mission programs that were started or sponsored by the Church of the Savior. I was awestruck by the depth and compassion of the church’s work. There seemed to be one common thread that ran through every program, “That every person should be treated and engaged in such a way that caused that person to look and feel the way God created Him or Her to be.” I left Washington, D.C. feeling as if I had glimpsed at what the kingdom of heaven must be like. I also realized how my church and many of the churches in my community do a poor (many times terrible!) job of reaching out to or engaging the poor.

The highlight for me was meeting Dr. David Hilfiker, M.D. and listening to him talk about his work with the poor and marginalized in the D.C. area. While meeting with Dr. Hilfiker, a member of my class addressed this question to Dr. Hilfiker, “Are you an atheist or agnostic, because from reading your book I could not tell if you believe in God as Christians do?” Dr. Hilfiker replied, “I have and continue to read the Bible regularly and as a person with a scientific background, I struggle to understand some of the miracles of the Bible, however, I have no problem understanding that most people who profess to be Christians in America do not seem to follow the teachings in the Bible when it comes to the poor or social justice.” Because of this sensible answer, I could

feel myself warming with joy on the inside and I thanked God for Dr. Hilfiker and the Church of the Savior.

The principles taught in this class (DM10004 - Globalization Theology in the Era of World Christianity) spoke to my heart in so many ways. It increased my concern about the consumer culture and excess materialism of America as well as the church's failed response to the culture of excess. David Brooks of the New York Times highlighted this concern in his article, "Redefining the Gospel of Wealth," (reprinted in *The Commercial Appeal*, September 8, 2010). (Please see Appendix A.)

While listening to the dialogue between Dr. Gathje and ministers/students after our class visited the FedEx hub was for me spiritually chilling at the least and outright scary at the most. There seemed to be this justification and rejection of any questions about FedEx practices as long as these individuals received a good salary when they worked for FedEx. Listening to this discussion left me wondering if Fred Smith had become a godlike figure to these ministers and FedEx like the ideal social Utopia with no problems or concerns. I am not implying by my question that FedEx is not a good place to work, but listening to these ministers knowingly or unknowingly rebut or refute every labor concern or justice concern outright was very disheartening to me.

To hear one minister say, "Anybody who does not like working at FedEx must have a problem," then brag about how he had applied for a \$65,000 year job at FedEx only reinforced my concern about how our culture of capitalism has invaded the church. The final conclusion that I took away from this discussion was that if it is profitable, then it *must be* good. I can only hope this does not bring back the institution of slavery because the last I checked, it was very profitable for a few.

From the growth of mega churches rooted in their prosperity ministry to the global corporation using the teachings of the Bible to validate / justify their actions, the results have been the failure of the Church in America to uphold the teachings of the Bible on money, poverty, and laws / policies dealing with the poor. Some examples:

- Check cashing / pay day lenders who charge excessive fees and high interest rates on loans.
- NAFTA / CAFTA policies which extort workers and water down workers' rights.

- Policies/tax laws which greatly favor rich individuals and profit-driven corporations.
- Weak enforcement and watered-down environmental laws which protect the interests of powerful industrialists such as the oil industry

If the dialogue between Dr. Gathje and the ministers is any indication, then the typical status quo remains deceptively simple; if it makes a profit, then the end justifies the means. This is capitalism taken to extreme measures and the greed involved will ultimately be responsible for working towards its own destruction.

The Church (modern church), I believe has failed and failed miserably when it comes to issues of excessive living by individuals and greed / unethical practices by globalizing corporations. The response from some clergy and churches infuse neutrality beyond its limits with an attitude that says, "I got mine, hope you find yours."

I believe there is an underlying issue in the Church that is not talked about, but that I began to see clearly, thanks to my "For the Love of Justice" survey. In this (questionnaire) survey I have been interviewing clergy and laity about their understanding of the Biblical teachings on justice and their opinions. The results have not surprised me, but their answers did further impassion me to work for changes. This report so far (half-way through the interviews) indicates that most of the clergy believe the Bible's Old and New Testaments' teaching on justice still applies, *but they do not preach and actively pursue justice issues* because of three main reasons:

- 1) Fear of job security
- 2) Fear of being rejected and/or ostracized by other clergy
- 3) Fear of pressure from people and organizations outside the Church.

This forces me to conclude that the Church has been forced or modeled by the culture into accepting the cultural beliefs on money/capitalism which translates ultimately to a lack of justice. *The Church has overly embraced the work of charity and its underlying mission to try to appease God for their failure to stand up and fight for social justice causes.*

So the Church's focus remains on: soup kitchens, clothes closets, adopt-a-school programs at home and every kind of missionary program we can think of abroad to cover our fear and failure to do justice work as taught and required in the Bible.

I don't want to imply that charity work is not Biblical, far from it. I believe the Bible teaches that we should do charity. However, I find it difficult to

embrace charity when it comes from the same people and corporations that force people and countries into poverty by their actions. On one hand society's actions destroy by forcing millions into poverty and on the other hand, we profess to care by giving a token (something that is no longer wanted or food that isn't needed) and calling it "charity" and then we expect these ethnic groups to be grateful and appreciative. This is not following the most basic of all Christian principles – Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

As a group let us begin to make amends by showing how loving we can be. If we truly follow God's shining word, our blessings will naturally follow.

V. CONCLUSION

"He has showed you, O Man what is good. And what does the Lord required of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." – Micah 6:8

As people of faith, we face a world with many real, not imagined holes in the socio-economic net of America. Many in the government and the Church want to believe that the fault is with the people. They want to believe that if you work harder, give more to the Church and believe, then your problems will be solved. However, it's plain to see what the systematic works of corporate globalization and its capitalistic greed has produced:

- Holes in the safety net so big that the net hardly exists.
- Holes in the economy so big that you can drive through all the way to Mexico and China; and many companies are doing just that.
- Holes in the environment laws which allow the environment to be damaged for profits.
- Holes in human/workers rights where one group does all the work and takes all the physical risks and another gets all or a majority of the profits.

If the Church is to regain its place as the spiritual leader that society looks to for guidance on decisions, whether moral, public or private, then the Church must, I believe, reject the current cultural mindset rooted in excess, prosperity-type ministries and racism. If the church is to continue to be a vital and growing element of American life, then the Church must begin to make amends for its lack of actions towards justice issues.

Plan of Action

The late Billy Graham preached with power and love. He brought God's message to the masses of the day. He was especially prophetic when he preached that, "Believers should work for justice." To

work for justice means to care so strongly about others until it becomes an intrinsic core belief of your Christianity. Yes, we should work for justice and we should work equally hard, if not harder, against injustice.

If America invested more in programs which lifted people out of poverty, increased their quality and level of education and instilled respect for family values (such as a living wage so people do not have to work two or three minimum wage jobs in order to support their families), the rates of violence, crime and illicit drug use would drop significantly in America.

The following are suggested initiatives which would help towards providing the Church with an increased awareness:

1. Teach Sunday School classes at Germantown United Methodist Church and Idlewild Presbyterian Church on: Racism, Christ vs. Culture, and Justice – Biblical teachings on social justice.
2. Conduct a pilot program between Germantown U.M.C. and Idlewild Presbyterian Churches and Workers Interfaith Network. Six people, three from each church could meet weekly (or at a specified time interval) at the Workers Center of the Workers Interfaith Network to work with Latinos, African Americans and other low income workers.
3. Conduct a 40 to 50 people survey (see questionnaire on the following page) and present the findings to the General Conference of the United Methodist Church for inclusion into the Book of Disciplines of the United Methodist Church.

This presentation to the Conference will help open up much-needed dialogue and hopefully give us insight into how to involve clergy and laity in works of social justice.

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Appendix A:

By David Brooks of the New York Times

Maybe the first decade of the 21st century will come to be known as the great age of headroom. During those years, new houses had great rooms with 20-foot ceilings and entire new art forms had to be invented to fill the acres of overhead wall space.

When future archaeologists dig up the remains of that epoch, they will likely conclude that sometime around 1996 the U.S. was afflicted by a plague of claustrophobia and drove itself bankrupt in search of relief.

But that economy went poof, and social norms have since changed. The oversized now looks slightly ridiculous. Values have changed as well.

Today, savings rates are climbing and smart advertisers emphasize small town restraint and respectability. The Tea Party movement is militantly bourgeois; using Abbie Hoffman means to get back to Norman Rockwell ends.

In the coming years, of slow growth, people are bound to establish new norms and seek noneconomic ways to find meaning. One of the interesting figures in this recalibration is David Platt.

Platt earned two master's degrees and a doctorate from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. At age 26, he was hired to lead a 4,300-person suburban church in Birmingham, Ala., and became known as the youngest megachurch leader in America.

Platt grew uneasy with the role he had fallen into and wrote about in a recent book called "Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream." It encapsulates many of the themes that have been floating around 20-something evangelical circles the past several years.

Platt's first target is the megachurch itself. Americans have built themselves multimillion-dollar worship palaces, he argues. These have become like corporations, competing for market share by offering social centers, child care programs, first-class entertainment and comfortable, consumer Christianity.

Jesus, Platt notes, made it hard on his followers. He created a minichurch, not a mega one. Today, however, building budgets dwarf charitable budgets, and Jesus is portrayed as a genial suburban dude.

"When we gather in our church building to sing and lift up our hands in worship, we may not actually be worshipping the Jesus in the Bible," he says. "Instead, we may be worshipping ourselves."

Next, Platt takes aim at the American dream. When Europeans first settled this continent, they saw the natural abundance and came to two conclusions: that God's plan for humanity could be realized here, and that they could get really rich while helping Him do it. This perception evolved into the notion that we have two interdependent callings: to build in this world and prepare for the next.

The tension between good and plenty, God and mammon, became the central tension in American life, propelling ferocious energies and explaining why the United States is at once so religious and so materialist. Americans are moral materialists; spiritualists working on matter.

Platt is in the tradition of those who don't believe these two spheres can be reconciled. The material world is too soul-destroying. The American dream radically differs from the call of Jesus and the essence of the Gospel," he argues. The American dream emphasizes self-development and personal growth. Our own abilities are our greatest assets.

But the Gospel rejects the focus on self: "God actually delights in exalting our inability." The American dream emphasizes upward mobility, but "success in the kingdom of God involves moving down, not up."

Platt calls on readers to cap their lifestyle. Live as if you made \$50,000 a year, he suggests and give everything else away. Take a year to surrender yourself. Move to some poverty-stricken part of the world. Evangelize.

Platt's arguments are old, but they emerge at a post-excess movement, when attitudes toward material life are up for grabs. His book has struck a chord. His renunciation tome is selling like hot cakes. Reviews are warm. Leaders at places like the Southern Baptist Convention are calling on citizens to surrender the American dream.

I doubt we're about to see a surge of iPod shakers. Americans will not renounce the moral materialism at the core of the national identity. But the country is clearly redefining what sort of lifestyle is socially and morally acceptable and what is not. People like Platt are central to that process.

The United States once had a Gospel of Wealth: a code of restraint shaped by everybody from Jonathan Edwards to Benjamin Franklin to Andrew Carnegie. The code was designed to help the nation cope with its own affluence. It eroded, and over the next few years, it will be redefine."

“The Catholic Commitment to Worker Justice Faith and Action”

By Nannette M. Onest

MA student at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, IL

Introduction

Promulgated on May 15, 1891, *Rerum novarum*, the great encyclical on capital and labor written by Pope Leo XIII, is often cited as the seminal document detailing the Catholic position on labor and the dignity of the human being. This, of course, is correct in the sense that it was a comprehensive and formal response to the Industrial Revolution which ushered forth a significant change and altering of the way in which human beings engaged in labor. Over the course of the ensuing 120 years, much has been said about the Catholic Church’s commitment to worker justice in the form of Encyclicals such as *Octogesima Adveniens*, *Laborem Exercens* and *Mater et Magistra*, the principles of Catholic Social Teaching that, among other topics, speak to the life and dignity of the human person, rights and responsibilities and the dignity of work and the rights of workers, the writings of theologians such as John Courtney Murray and Charles Curran, to name a few as well as the good and purposeful works of individuals such as Dorothy Day and Fr. Joseph Buckley.

The work of humanity and the holiness of our engagement in labor is a topic that, in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, is addressed, literally, from “in the beginning.”¹⁰² Work as a good and natural human activity is introduced in the Book of Genesis, echoed and developed in theme throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and further reinforced for all people of good faith in the Gospel narratives of Jesus Christ.

Today, we have been asked to address the question “What within your faith tradition inspires a commitment to worker justice?” It seems, however, that in answering this first

question, we must also stand ready to respond to a second challenging question which asks “how ought one act upon that commitment to worker justice in a way that honors our faith tradition? For Christians, these questions can only be answered in light of the Word of God that inspires us, daily, to try to emulate the actions of our Lord, Jesus Christ and honor the

tradition of our faith.” In response to both questions and, through reference to scripture, papal writings, the application of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and an appeal to the signs of the times, this paper will detail the foundations of the Church’s position on worker justice as it includes traditional labor and trades, science and technology and the emerging need for reconciliation with “the other” as a critical element to the realization of worker justice and the preservation of the working middle class of this nation.

Work as a Divine Command

Created in the image and likeness of God, human beings have been entrusted with the proper subjugation of all the resources available in the natural world. The implied responsibility includes right use as well as right distribution. In the context of a blessing, God gave humanity the power to subdue and to dominate many aspects of creation as well as the free will to wield that power for good or for evil. How each human being acts on the power given to them by the Creator depends upon their interpretation of subjugation and domination. For many, the power of co-creatorship is understood in light of the self. By their misuse, resources are hoarded or destroyed simply for personal gain. Those who understand their power in the light of faith, recognize that, as we are told in *Laborem Exercens*,

*Man dominates the earth by the very fact of domesticating animals, rearing them and obtaining from them the food and clothing he needs, and by the fact of being able to extract various natural resources from the earth and the seas. But man “subdues the earth” much more when he begins to cultivate it and then to transform its products adapting them to his own use.*¹⁰³

This section will explore the underpinnings of worker justice that are revealed in scripture; how the relationship between human beings and work is divinely ordered, how it becomes humanly disordered and how, in light of the Gospel, we must respond to the disorder.

Order out of Chaos

Created in the image and likeness of God, human beings are, from the beginning, the proper subject of work. Contrary to what we may be conditioned to believe, work is not a curse but rather a blessed and creative act that, in reflecting the image and likeness that we share with God and one another, affords great dignity to every human being. In its

¹⁰² Reference to Genesis 1:1. New American Bible.

¹⁰³ Ioannes Paulus PP. II. *Laborem exercens*. II.5.

proper context, work is a pre-lapsian characteristic that was, like all other things, disordered by humanity's own misuse of free will. In *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII states "As regards bodily labor, even had man never fallen from the state of innocence, he would not have remained wholly idle; but that which would then have been his free choice and his delight became afterwards compulsory, and the painful expiation for his disobedience."¹⁰⁴

God's intent for humanity's occupation was, in a sense, a co-creator or caretaker of the material world. In the Genesis 2 narrative, God brings man to the garden of Eden "to cultivate and care for it." (Gn. 2:15 NAB). The narrative describes how God creates each animal and bird bringing them to the man to be named; an act which is symbolic of mastery over all other living things. To name something is to have a certain ownership or dominion over the subject. Through both physical and intellectual power, human beings were entrusted with taking the resources of creation, which were good, and perfecting or refining them into the service of all humankind not in a way that was destructive but rather, with the same affection and concern as the God who first loved humanity and all creation into being. However, the risk of creation was that the free will given in love to human beings would ultimately cause them to choose the desires of the self rather than the will of God and, as we well know, hindered the human capacity for right reason therefore ushering sin and evil into the world. God's ways were no longer clear and the actions and decisions that flowed from the self as center were as damaging as they were alluring.

As the first human beings were banished from the Garden of Eden, God said, "Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life...By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, Until you return to the ground from which you were taken; For you are dirt and to dirt you shall return." (Gn. 3:17-19, NAB)

Traditionally, interpreted as a curse, this passage should be understood as God's forewarning of the ways in which human brokenness, that originates from our freedom will, from that point forward in the course of history, negatively affect the activity that is proper to all human beings. In his encyclical, *Laborem exercens*, John Paul II asserts; "it is also a perennial truth that he eats this bread by 'the sweat of his face,' that is to say, not only by personal effort and toil but also in the midst of many

tensions, conflicts and crises, which, in relationship with the reality of work, disturb the life of individual societies and also of all humanity."¹⁰⁵

The toil and sweat will not only stem from the work itself but also from the change in our approach to work and our focus as to the importance of work. Human brokenness shifts the importance of work from the subjective to the objective; from the worker to the product. In other words, work was soon valued not because of the fact that it is performed by a beloved son or daughter of God but, rather, for the object that is ultimately produced. In God's economy, work is good because it is performed by a human, however, the economy of this world measures the human being by the output of work. Thus, we begin to see a valuing or devaluing of the individual based upon the type of labor in which he or she is engaged as well as a desire to keep the best or the most product of our labor for ourselves, whether or not we exceed the needs of our own selves or households. An example of this can be discerned in the story of Cain and Abel. What we specifically know about the brothers is that Cain is a farmer and Abel is a shepherd. What we can discern is that Cain might tend toward desire for material gain than his sibling as suggested by the fact that God looked more favorably on Abel and his offerings than those of Cain. The devaluing does not come from God, but rather from Cain himself who, by demonstrating an unwillingness to give the best fruits of his labor to God, in fact, demonstrates an attitude that places more importance on the value of his product than on his own dignity as the one who has produced good fruit. Contrary to the image that might be projected, those who are driven by greed and materialism devalue themselves before all other things. However, that same devaluing rapidly spreads and culminates in the unjust and undignified treatment of entire cultures. Indeed, beginning with the event of The Fall, the story of the Bible becomes the story of humanity's quest and struggle for a just society.

As touched on earlier, when the human being, as subject, ceases to be the focus of work then the act of work becomes a struggle and a burden. This is most clearly demonstrated in the story of the Israelites captivity in Egypt. The land of Egypt becomes the iconic example of a culture that has been led astray by the materialism and consumerism that ensues when work is valued objectively. Pharaoh becomes the personification of world and industry leaders who bear

¹⁰⁴104 Leo XIII. *Rerum novarum*. 17. (5).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. I.1.

responsibility for inequity and injustice by placing the self ahead of the common good and, thus, reducing the human being to the level of a “merchandise”¹⁰⁶ or an “impersonal ‘force’ needed for production.”¹⁰⁷ The narrative speaks of the outrage of those who recognize the disorder of his reign and the God who hears the cry of his people. In fact, throughout the Old Testament, the cycle of oppression, outrage, crying out to God and freedom from bondage is repeated frequently and fervently. It is the experience of all human beings for all time.

The anecdote to oppression and injustice is always to be found in the righteous response from within the affected community. Like Moses and all the prophets, the righteous must not only accept their responsibility to be the mouthpiece of God’s justice among the voiceless but also to recognize the faces of the voiceless wherever they may be.

In the Gospel narratives, Jesus Christ demonstrates the way in which we are each called to carry out that responsibility in radical commitment to the command for love of God and neighbor.

Lift high the Cross

In his Encyclical letter *Laborem exercens*, Pope John Paul II makes reference to the “workbench” from which all our labor proceeds. In his incarnate self, the God-Man demonstrates the sanctity of all human work through his own humble service at the workbench of physical labor as well as the workbench of intellectual labor. Recognizing from the first section that all work is good because it is accomplished through the actions of humanity, this section will demonstrate the goodness of all work as it has been blessed by the efforts of God in the flesh.

As the son of a carpenter, trained to continue the trade of his father, Joseph, Yeshua obediently followed the command to subdue the earth. With his own highly skilled human hands, our God refined and elevated the natural resources available to him in that time and place, turning raw material into objects that serve the needs of his community. From a simple ladder to an intricately carved alter, our Lord and Savior, once again, blessed the work of human hands as he, himself engaged in the day-to-day task of refining and, ironically, elevating the very resource that would one day elevate him. All men and women who spend their working hours refining the raw materials of our planet, subduing the elements of creation for the benefit of all humankind do so in solidarity with the

Nazarene, Jesus the Christ, son of a Carpenter, who, in the spirit of co-creatorship, makes all things new.

There is, however, another workbench from which Jesus is engaged in labor during his earthly existence. A workbench that is reflective of the continual changes to the ways in which human beings engaged in work. Advancements in science and technology have opened up areas of opportunity for work that, although not as physically demanding as those positions traditional to industrial or agricultural sectors, experiences toil in varied ways. As detailed in *Laborem exercens*,

[toil] “is likewise familiar to those at an intellectual workbench; to scientists; to those who bear the burden of grave responsibility for decisions that will have a vast impact on society. It is familiar to doctors and nurses, who spend days and nights at their patients’ bedside. It is familiar to women, who sometimes without proper recognition on the part of society and even of their own families, bear the daily burden and responsibility for their homes and the upbringing of their children. *It is familiar to all workers* ¹⁰⁸ and, since work is a universal calling, it is familiar to everyone.

As Rabboni, Jesus’ ministerial work also flows forth from the intellectual workbench. A teacher in the Synagogue, he bears the burden of proper interpretation and dissemination of the words of the Torah. As with all those who find themselves called to work in fields that require a dedication to that which is academic, there is a responsibility to ensure that the product and quality of one’s intellectual activity is directed toward the common good at all times. A teacher, scientist, doctor or nurse who has not been diligent in mastering the skills necessary for the proper administration of their vocation has missed the mark, not only in their responsibility to the greater community but also in the quest to fully achieve that wholeness of being for which God intended. Again, work is good in that it is accomplished by humans for the betterment of themselves and of all creation. Those who recognize the obligation to fully utilize the gifts and talents provided to them, carry out their tasks as an offering that is surely pleasing to God.

And Who is my Neighbor?

There is yet, one more lesson that we learn from the scriptures and an auspicious one at that. However, some background information may be in

¹⁰⁶ RN 1.7 (8)

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Author’s emphasis.

order before addressing the central topic of this section.

It is an interesting fact to note that one can peruse the Gospels and frequently know more about a character's occupation than any other personal detail. It is a subtle reminder that human beings are, in many ways, defined by work. Not the nature of the work or the product of the work but, rather, as has already been explored, by the goodness of work as a human activity. Contrary to this belief, we have seen throughout the course of history that people ultimately get classified by the types of work in which they are engaged. For instance, highly civilized cultures felt that hard physical labor was the inheritance of slaves and prisoners while crafts, trades and specialized occupations were reserved for middle and upper class citizenry. This is the result of humanity's inability to recognize the true importance and purpose of work. Again, it is the reverence of the product of labor over the subject of labor for just as the law was made for man and not man for the law, so too, is work made for man and not man for work. In his ministry, Jesus, demonstrates for us not just the law of love but the gospel of work. In the last two sections we have seen how Jesus sanctified both the physical and the intellectual workbench and now we will see how he also gives dignity to those whose labor is outside of what we see as conventional, unacceptable or, even, detestable. How, as Christians and people of good faith do we project our commitment to worker justice on "the other?"

Perhaps we should begin by defining exactly who falls into the category of "the other." In the time of Christ it might have been a tax collector, symbolic of those who, for whatever reason, have chosen to earn their money in the service of the oppressor and at the expense of their neighbor, it may have been the prostitute, who, devoid of social standing and all other options, must choose between this occupation or annihilation or the foreigner, whose customs, traditions, features and language were unfamiliar and, therefore, mistrusted or feared. Jesus sat at table with all of them, not to cajole or manipulate but, rather, to teach, heal and bring them into community. He made the first move to empower the powerless.

So who are the powerless today? The people who sit on the margins, those with no voice, the oppressed and the exploited. As Jesus tells us, "the poor will always be with us" but it is up to us to recognize the faces of the poor when we see them. Reference to "the poor," in Christian terms, has a very broad interpretation, some of which may challenge you, at best; enrage you, at worst.

Laborem exercens states;

And the "poor" appear under various forms; they appear in various places and at various times; in many cases they appear as a result of the violation of the dignity of human work;¹⁰⁹ either because the opportunities for human work are limited as a result of the scourge of unemployment, or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family.¹¹⁰

I would propose that we interpret this paragraph in light of two variables. First, it might be timely to account for the recent situations involving several Midwestern states and the competing sentiments that have been revealed as a result. Secondly, and in response to the first variable, it is necessary to evaluate the evolving responsibility on unions today to remain a relevant "mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice" and a "constructive factor of social order and solidarity."¹¹¹

Today, we are faced with the difficult challenge of repairing a house that has been divided against itself and I am going to propose that the way to heal this division is by replacing traditional middle class models. Expanding the definition of working men and women to be more inclusive and reflective of the reality that exists in today's society may be our only hope in the face of the plutocracy that now controls the fate of American working families.

The middle class seems to have become polarized; divided into union or non-union workers and while both groups are bearing the burden of the ever increasing disparity of wealth in this country, they, as groups, have been pitted against one another by those who would harm them both.

On one hand, middle class union members are being scapegoated and used in a most odious manner. However, on the other hand, the non-union segment of the middle class has been, in many ways, rendered invisible. These are the employees of corporations and businesses who were forced to accept significant salary cuts in order to retain positions, cumbersome health care costs, elimination of pensions, unrealistic demands for increased

¹⁰⁹ Author's emphasis.

¹¹⁰ *Ioannes Paulus PP. II. Laborum exercens.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 20.

productivity as well as additional taxes and fees at every level of government. With no representation to provide a collective voice and no equivalent to the present outrage displayed by legislators, this section of the middle class has been disenfranchised.

It is easy to illicit non-union sentiments from this group because, in many ways, they have become representative of “the other;” the group that exists on the margins with no collective voice.

Some may argue that this segment of the middle class population now finds itself devoid of a collective voice of its own volition. However, it might also be argued that decades of conditioning and misrepresentation are also significant contributors. In his book *Go to the Worker: America’s Labor Apostles*, Kimball Baker recounts Fr. Joseph Buckley’s insight into the failure on the part of the United Financial Employees Union (UFE) to organize workers that were comprised of “clerks, tellers and other white-collar employees.”¹¹² According to Baker, “Buckley was struck by the fact that when he identified workers capable of recruiting for the union and tried to approach them, they would come up for promotion into management.”¹¹³ Of course, the institutions were playing on the employee’s fears of losing a promotion. Unfortunately, what was very clear was that all of these individuals were promoted to management positions in title only for according to Buckley, “they were really workers in need of union representation.” Earlier detail of the loss of wages, benefits and personal time suffered by non-union members of the middle class indicates that the need for a collective voice exists now more than ever however, the conditioning talked about earlier combined with the rampant individualism of many of the non-union sectors creates an impasse that perpetuates the ever widening divisions of the middle class benefitting no one but those who continue to exploit the workers who not only do not have a voice but seemingly do not recognize the need nor the scope of the attack on the middle class. The results are the same that can be expected from all groups that are marginalized including resentment, hostility and an overall lack of concern.

A Call to Action

This is the point where we are forced to take a hard look at how we are inclined to respond to

the second question which, again, asks us “how ought one act upon that commitment to worker justice in a way that honors our faith tradition?”

We have a clear understanding of the goodness of work and the dignity of the worker in our faith tradition. We are also aware of the fact that God’s original purpose for work has often been corrupted as a result of humanity’s brokenness. It is for this very reason that the Catholic Church, in its principles of Catholic Social Teaching stands firm in its position that the Church “fully supports the right of worker to form unions or other associations to secure their rights to fair wages and working conditions...No one many deny the right to organize without attacking human dignity itself.”¹¹⁴ The Church takes this stand to combat those who would fail to “pay sufficient attention to the rights of the workers, on the grounds that human work is solely an instrument of production, and that capital is the basis, efficient factor and purpose of production.”¹¹⁵ In fact, it was this very practice that was the catalyst for the organization of labor unions in the first place.

Today may be the time to begin to re-evaluate the role of unions in preserving the middle class of our nation. Is the role fresh and relevant? Does it respond to the needs of all working class men and women or is it still working out of an Industrial Revolutionary model? Keep in mind that for as often as the way we work changes so, too, will change the ways in which workers will experience unjust practices in the workplace. Organized labor has a voice and perhaps the time has come to use that voice like, Moses and the prophets, to speak for those who could not or, like Jesus, to invite the stranger to the table of reconciliation and healing. Some will argue that unions have done plenty for their non-union counterparts in the form of controlled workday hours and working condition requirements. Successes indeed, but, as the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus tells us, do not pitch your tent on that mountain when there are others to climb.

If unions are to remain a relevant force in economic life they must continue to find ways to broaden the fulfillment of that role to ensure that all working men and women may experience the goodness of work and the dignity of the human

¹¹² Kimball Baker. *Go to the Worker; America’s Labor Apostles*. (Milwaukee, WI; Marquette University Press, 2010) 112.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ *Economic Justice for All* (1986) USCCB.

¹¹⁵ *Laborem exercens* II.8 (9).

being as intended by God and upheld in our faith tradition.

Conclusion

The faith tradition of the Catholic Church tells us that, by nature of our baptismal call, we are all a royal and priestly people created in the image and likeness of God and called to cooperate with him as co-creators and caretakers of the world. Blessed and sanctified by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, we know that the Church's commitment to worker justice harkens back to "in the beginning" and we recognize in that commitment our own responsibility in answering the ever-changing and ever relevant call to action that will ensure the dignity and rights of all workers for all time.

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