

RESPONSES

to

Daniel Finn:

“Faith-Based Community Organizations: A Transforming Presence of the Church in the Modern World”

Salvador June P. Lalian:

“The Couples For Christ Movement: A Model for Authentic Social Action Grounded within the Framework of Catholic Social Doctrine”

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I have long wondered how human society on earth will be organized when the Kingdom of God does come to this earth. And with time, I have come to the conclusion that the Kingdom of God will bring along with it the *communitarian* human society of the common good and democracy. This type of human society will make *citizens all and subjects none* of its members as it will ensure for all the justice of a life-time of access to food, job and social security. This is what I think the social gospel of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ holds in store for humanity: simply the re-edenization of human life on this earth.

1. To my mind, the earliest Christian prototype of this communitarian society of the common good and democracy is as described in St. Luke’s *Acts of the Apostles*, 2: 43-47, 4: 32-37, 6: 1-7. Its organizing principle was selfless-service and ceaseless-giving. But it did not last. For the cares of this world have always prevented Christians, ever since, from walking the talk of their social mandate, as followers of Christ, to provide every human being with the minimum of social space and material attention for a dignified life of independent thought and action from the womb to the tomb.
2. So, what endears me to the Catholic Social Teaching, in general, and to the *Gaudum et spes* encyclical, in particular, is the Church’s efforts therein to tell the world that the Kingdom of God is the type of human society where each member is made fully aware that he cannot exist for himself without existing for all. Thus, when the Kingdom of God emerges on this earth, the unstinting and voluntary sharing of the time, talents and treasures of the many, by the many, for the many will enable each and everyone of us to give his best for all and for self anytime.

3. However, the Catholic Social Teaching has not been bold, daring and proactive enough to use the two-thousand year history of the Church's dealings with the Holy Spirit and with human society to construct a model of this communitarian society of the common good and democracy. One is not saying that the Church should either anticipate or work ahead of God. One is only saying that the Church has, within the corpus of the Scriptures and its rich Traditions, enough of socio-organizational materials and leads that should, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, enable it to sketch the broad outlines and skeletal structures of this communitarian society of the common good and democracy.
4. Central to this exercise, I reckon, is the job of specifying the role which the State should play in society to ensure that human rights are protected and human needs are met. But, I do not, as an economist, see this to be an insurmountable problem. For since the Christian economic agenda on earth is to make active and good entrepreneurs of the Lord of each and everyone of us, then the society which excels in promoting entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial excellence in each of us must require the State to fade into the background. And this happens when the State is the lean budget-balancer whose job-of-work is to keep and enforce orderliness and fair play in the polypolistic and private-sector-led markets for currencies, savings, ideas, goods and services. This is my idea of what the communitarian market economy of the common good and democracy is like.
5. It is, in fact, this type of market economy that the two papers under review do challenge the Church to come out clear and tell us how we should go about bringing it to life. And for those of us who hail from sub-Saharan Africa where the time, talents and treasures of the many is used by the few for the few, we are eager for the Kingdom of God to come to this earth so that we may begin to have access to a dignified life of independent thought and action on this earth. This is why we in Africa do take the Catholic Social Teaching very seriously. And we are ever so anxious for the Church to show us how we should begin to reorganize our African social structures of sin and injustice after the mind of Christ.
6. Indeed, the Couples For Christ Movement, as described in Dr. Lalian's paper, has an integral evangelization model which, to my mind, is a worthy beginning in this direction. There are two segments to this CFC model. The micro-social segment of the Christian Life Programme and the Family Ministries aims at building what it calls the *Church of the Home*. And the macro-social segment of the Social Ministries is geared towards building what it calls the *Church for the poor*.
7. The micro-social segment of the CFC Movement tells us that the task of bringing the Kingdom of God down to this earth begins with renewing the "*first and fundamental structure of 'human ecology'*" which is the nuclear family of one man and one woman. For, God established the nuclear family of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as the cradle of human formation. And, because Adam and

Eve failed God through disobedience, human society has continued, ever since, to suffer from want, war, disease and debt. So, as every nuclear family of one man and one woman begins to shun Adam and Eve's socially dissipative ethic of self-interest and ceaseless-taking and begins to embrace Christ's socially integrative ethic of selfless-service and ceaseless-giving, so will human society, says the CFC Movement, be well on its way to the Kingdom state where there is the justice of *Suum cuique*.

8. Then, the CFC Movement goes on to tell us that there will be no justice of food, job and social security for all unless there is in place above society a macro-social umbrella that promotes the ethic of self-less-service and ceaseless-giving among men. This canopy of solidarity in governance straddles all class, gender, racial, ethnic, creed and other social divides to make equal partners of men in the daily market situations where decisions are made regarding what is to be produced, how and for whom in society. It is such a live-and-let-live canopy of economic and political governance, which enables every human being in a communitarian market economy to stand out and be counted in the service of men for the love of God that the CFC Movement calls *building the Church for the poor*.
9. However, the integral evangelization model of the CFC Movement as described by Dr. Lalian does not tell us how the State comes into all this to protect human rights and ensure that human needs are met. The reason for this is that the CFC Movement appears to be neither the oligocentric fish of capitalism nor the monocentric fish of *black or red* socialism. It therefore has difficulties defining the role which the State should play in the polycentric, small-scale, villagized and communitarian model of the Kingdom society it wants to build. But all hope is not lost in this regard. For Father Robert Sirico's *Acton Institute for the study of Religion and Liberty* will, with time, come up with the type of State, the structure of public finances, and, most importantly, the polypolistic structure of private-sector-led and de-centralized markets for currencies, savings, ideas, goods and services which fit the bill of the communitarian human society which the CFC Movement hopes to cover the earth with in not too distant a future.
10. Interestingly, Mr. Finn's paper on faith-based community organizations engages the issue of how the macro-social dimension of human society can be transformed to always make citizens all and subjects none of people anywhere on this earth. A citizen participates in deciding how the resources of society are used for the common good. But a subject takes dictations on how the resources of society should be used for the private good of the powerful few. And, Mr. Finn is quite uncomfortable with the fact the *Gaudium et spes* encyclical tells us that "individuals and groups will need to change sinful social structures [but] is curiously silent on just how this might occur. Such a transformation will, of course, require power, political power at least, and economic power as well. And yet the document does not address itself to issues of power nor undertake any

examination of what an appropriate exercise of power by Christians in the world would look like”.

11. In effect, we learn from Mr. Finn that the macro-social canopy of governance of any level of society, which will make citizens all and subjects none of all of us in human society, has a special power structure of grace which the Church has the duty to define, describe and help to bring to life. We know, already, that the past and present power structures of sin have made subjects many and citizens few of us in the global society, so we need to know how the coming Kingdom power structure of grace differs from the past and current power structures of sin. For, just as the monocentric power structure of sin is to the socialist market economy of the right and the left, and the oligocentric power structure of sin is to the capitalist market economy, so must the polycentric power structure of grace be to the communitarian market economy.
12. Accordingly, Mr. Finn’s paper which is set within the oligocentric power structure of sin of the capitalist market economy of USA, seeks to show how faith-based community organizations can be used to “organize people of faith within civil society to have an impact on social and economic structures”. The story he tells about the making of GRIP-Great River Inter-faith Partnership, of central Minnesota, USA, and of its success on the housing issue it pursued, is quite instructive. For we learn therefrom that faith-based community organizations “choose to invest their time and energy where they will in fact transform unjust situations. No issue is taken on that cannot be won, and although the victory is never easy or guaranteed, the goal is always calculated to be one that is feasible within the limits of the organization’s capacities”.
13. Though Mr. Finn has rightly shown in his paper that the power structure of grace in human society must be inclusionary, he has, however, only managed to address this issue of social inclusion at the margin of human society and not at the centre of it. What I mean by this is simple. Mr. Finn has not taken up the issue of the role which the State should play in his inclusionary and communitarian model of human society. And one cannot say what the power structure of any society is like unless one has found out whether the State is in the *piloting* foreground or at the *refereeing* background of market activities in society. So, just like Dr. Lalian, Mr. Finn has a lot of talking to do with Fr Robert Sirico on the nature of the State in the polypolistic and communitarian market economy of the common good and democracy.
14. I conclude by endorsing fully what Dr. Lalian and Mr. Finn have sought to do in their papers. They have both drawn attention to the need for the Catholic Social Teaching to pin-down the polycentric power coordinates of the communitarian human society of the Kingdom of God on earth. This is an issue which we in

Africa think that the Church should pay closer attention to so that debt, disease, war and want may truly become history in Africa and everywhere else on earth.

Thank you for your kind attention.

