Public Theology, the Common Good, and Planetary Community

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Abstract: A just, sustainable, participatory, and planetary community – that is a vision of earth's future that pulls the public theologian forward, inspires the ecologist, and provides a norm for the ethicist. Post Vatican II Roman Catholics along with their Protestant confreres can learn from David Tracy's delineation of three publics: church, academy, and culture. Accordingly, public theology is conceived in the church, reflected on critically in the academy, and addressed to the wider culture for the sake of the common good. In this explication of the tasks to be taken up by the public theologian, we will explore the necessity for envisioning a common good that is planetary in scope while attending to justice for individuals and communities at the local level.

Keywords: Common Good • Public Theology • Globalization • Glocal • Justice • Love • David Tracy • *Gaudium et Spes*

Introduction

There is no reasonable way to conceive of the common good as anything less than planetary in scope. Economic and ecological interdependence juxtaposed to rivalries and hostilities between nation-states make the present moment both opportune and perilous. How should a public theologian engage in worldview construction?

The futuristic landscape painted by the public theologian should depict Earth as a just, sustainable, participatory, and planetary community. The ethical agenda begins with designating this destination and then mapping the roads that will take us there.

For some time now, I have been recommending that our spiritual and intellectual leaders construct a public theology that is pastoral, apologetic, scientific, political,

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and prophetic.[1] Public theology should be *pastoral* by tendering considered answers to life's ultimate questions regarding meaning, death, and destiny. Public theology should be *apologetic* as well, in at least the limited sense that Christian commitments are rendered plausible, reasonable, and helpful. Public theology should engage the *sciences* in a mutually interactive way, ever cautious to keep theological concepts as consonant as possible with what science tells us about nature.[2] Public theology should be *political*, because it is the political arena where justice and the common good are publicly debated. Public theology can and should, finally, be *prophetic* because it measures today's world situation against the eschatological standard of the Kingdom of God. The prophetic public theologian announces God's promise of a new creation with a future justice that judges today's injustice.

In what follows I would like to examine the notion of the common good and then explore its planetwide implications. This will provide the coordinates for a public theology that is conceived in the church, reflected on critically in the academy, and addressed to the wider culture for the sake of the common good.

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[1] See: Ted Peters, *The Voice of Public Theology* (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2023).

[2] There is no conflict between science and faith, according to Professor Wilson Angelo G. Espiritu at Ateneo de Manila University. "To acknowledge the reliability of scientific truths does not necessarily entail the abandonment of religious faith and vice versa." Wilson Angelo Espiritu, "Science and Faith Conflict: Fact or Fiction?" *MST Review* 19, no. 1 (2017) 98-116, at 98. Espiritu reinforces what we find in *Gaudium et spes.* "If methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith." *Gaudium et spes*, §36.

Public Theology after *Gaudium et spes*

As the Second Vatican Council was winding down in 1965, it seems the Holy Spirit was just revving up our ecclesial engines with *Gaudium et spes*. This prescient document animated an already woke Church to expand the worship sanctuary to include all that is real, both sacred and secular. The health and flourishing of Planet Earth with all of its human inhabitants became a mission to be carried out by the disciples of Jesus along with non-Christians of good will. "The human family is gradually recognizing that it comprises a single world community and is making itself so."[3]

Theologians of the church could – should? – depart their pulpits to stand behind university lecterns and speak through microphones in the public square. A new era of deliberate public theology had begun.

The nest from which fledgling public theologians were departing was feathered, of course, by *Gaudium et spes*. In addition, the influence of sockdolager Karl Rahner, made a direct impact on the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez, the political theology of Johann-Baptist Metz, the fundamental theology of David Tracy, and the public theology of David Hollenbach. "The main postconciliar theologies concerned with social life—liberation, political, and public theologies—share this Rahnerian paradigm but develop it by confronting theology with the particular conditions and circumstances of society," Gonzalo Villagrán tells us.[4]

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[3] Vatican, *Gaudium et spes,* §33; https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

[4] Gonzalo Villagrán, S.J., "David Hollenbach's Public Theology as a Reading of *Gaudium et spes," Public Theology and the Global Common Good,* eds., Kevin Ahern, Meghan J. Clark, Kristin E. Heyer, and Laurie Johnston (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2016), 133-143, at 142.

By the 1980s David Tracy had stated what should have been obvious: "All theology is public discourse."[5] As reflection on faith, theology dare not limit itself to the private musings of clerics in the pulpit or seminarians in the pub. Theology by its very nature is openly shared, transparent, and available in the church, the university, and the wider society. "Theology is distinctive among the disciplines for speaking to and from three distinct publics: academy, church, and the general culture."[6] In brief, theology is public discourse on the implications of the faith which takes place where the entire world can overhear.

"Public theology," according to post-colonialist Paul Chung, "is a theological-philosophical endeavor to provide a broader frame of reference to facilitate the responsibility of the church and theological ethics for social, political, economic, and cultural issues. It investigates public issues, developing conceptual clarity and providing social-ethical guidance of religious conviction and response to them."[7] For Chung, theological initiatives are reflected on philosophically and then addressed to the wider domain of interacting social forces.

The address to the wider culture may very well take on a prophetic tone. This, according to Júlio Paulo Tavares Zabatiero in Brazil.

> Theology, when in fact it is theology and not merely doctrine, has a public dimension that cannot be denied or hidden; it cannot be restricted to sanctuaries, nor to the new 'holy of holies' of the temples and their priesthoods. The privileged place of theology today is

[5] David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 3.

[6] Ibid., 230.

[7] Paul S. Chung, *Post Colonial Public Theology: Faith, Scientific Rationality, and Prophetic Dialogue* (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2016), 1.

> the public square; the place of the struggle for justice; the place of struggle for the humanity of human beings; the place of struggle for the ecological citizenship of all beings living on planet earth; the place of struggle for the freedom to be, as a counterpoint to the pseudo-freedom to have and to consume more and more.[8]

As prophetic, today's public theologian addresses the wider public with an eschatologically inspired vision of a future planet earth embracing social justice, ecological citizenship, and genuine freedom.[9]

The Common Good in Public Theology

"We need both a renewed understanding of the common good and a revitalized social commitment to it," writes Jesuit David Hollenbach.[10] An indispensable component if not the leonine *locus* of the public theologian's constructed worldview should be the common good. The common good, according to *Gaudium et spes*, is "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate

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[8] Júlio Paulo Tavares Zabatiero, "From the Sacristy to the Public Square: The Public Character of Theology," *International Journal of Public Theology,* 6 (2002): 56-69, at 56.

[9] See: Ted Peters, "Public Theology: Its Pastoral, Apologetic, Scientific, Political, and Prophetic Tasks," *International Journal of Public Theology* 12, no.2 (2018): 153-177; https://brill.com/abstract/journals/ijpt/12/1/ijpt.12.issue-1.xml .

[10] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Chapter 8. "David Hollenbach is one of the main representatives of US Catholic public theology." Villagrán, 140.

aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family."[11]

By no means is the common good the private possession of the Christian religion.[12] It is public. It is inclusive. It is global. And it is political. In his encyclical, *Pacem in terris,* Saint Pope John XXIII reminds us that "the attainment of the common good is the sole reason for the existence of civil authorities."[13] For the Vatican II pontiff, "every civil authority must strive to promote the common good in the interest of all, without favoring any individual citizen or category of citizen."[14] His predecessor Pope Leo XIII had also insisted: "The civil power must not be subservient to the advantage of any one individual, or of some few persons; inasmuch as it was established for the common good of all."[15] For the church to serve the world's common good it must speak prophetically to the political domain.

The public theologian occasionally abandons the comfort zone of the chancel to stand on the soap box where a mixed crowd can get a good look at the church while listening to a civic message aimed at all. The public theologian risks acerbic responses from a pluralistic audience which may applaud, protest, interrupt, jeer, walk out, or fling verbal slurs.

We are all aware that soap boxes are out of date. What is today's equivalent? Social media has replaced the

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[11] *Gaudium et spes,* §26.

[12] "The common good consists of our shared values about what we owe one another as citizens who are bound together in the same society—the norms we voluntarily abide by, and the ideals we seek to achieve." Robert Reich, *The Common Good* (New York: Vintage, 2018), 181.

[13] Pope John XXII, *Pacem in terris* §54; https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

soap box. Although electronic media unites our planetary society in a single global medium of exchange, the emerging noosphere does not enjoy the virtue of unity. Rather, dissentious forces blur lines between advertising and news, between alternative facts and factual facts, between reason and propaganda, between scam and charity, between ideology and religion.[16] Whether we like it or not, this is the available public medium within which the public theologian can effectively exercise his or her or their craft. Culture and communication provide the public theologian with an opportune venue, factious though it may be.

One Planet, One Humanity, One Ecology

For the common good to be truly common, it must be sustainable and planetary in scope. In addition to including all of humanity, the common good must also include the other living creatures and natural systems that make earth a living entity. One planet. One humanity. One ecology.

But stretching the idea of the common good to planetary proportions has not always been easy. Let me trace a line of thought here.

In 1972 the Club of Rome forecasted multiple futures when asking their computer to employ a one world model. What would it take for earth to sustain its fecundity, its capacity to feed and nourish *Homo sapiens*? Multiple scenarios previewed the global interaction of nonrenewable natural resource depletion, industrial

[16] "'Post-truth' is joined by 'alternative facts' and is fueled by 'fake news'." Jennifer Baldwin, "Forward," *Navigating Post-Truth and Alternative Facts: Religion and Science as Political Theology,* ed., Jennifer Baldwin (Lanham MD: Lexington, 2018) xi-xviii, at xiii. In this context of global communications, perhaps the public theologian should don the clothes of the redoubtable person of integrity.

pollution, agricultural pollution, population growth, availability of food, and such. Even without factoring in climate change and global warming, the Club of Rome concluded that our planet cannot sustain a home for humanity if present trends continue. Clouds of disaster are fomenting on the horizon. Whether by famine or pollution, we can foresee massive diebacks of the human population. To ward off this disaster, we must solicit globe wide foresight cooperation, decision-making, and remedial action.[17]

The healing of the planet's ecosphere, added the Club of Rome, requires economic justice. The rich must help the poor. Economic justice is not merely an add on for liberal activists. It is integral to ecological balance. Taking control of earth's future requires new international economic policies which help the poorer countries develop the necessary social conditions that promote human fertility decline and pollution control.

Poverty pollutes. Pollution prevention is a luxury only the middle class can enjoy. Therefore, we cosmopolitan citizens must launch major programs to establish international food reserve programs, to expand small farm food production in the world's underdeveloped sectors and provide education to the level of literacy for

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[17] See: Donella Meadows, et al., *The Limits to Growth* (New York: Universe Books, 1972). "2022 marked the 50th anniversary of the Club of Rome's landmark report, 'The Limits to Growth'. This report – first published on 2 March 1972 – was the first to model our planet's interconnected systems and to make clear that if growth trends in population, industrialization, resource use and pollution continued unchanged, we would reach and then overshoot the carrying capacity of the Earth at some point in the next one hundred years. Some fifty years on, the call for a change in direction was more urgent than ever. The report's modelling was remarkably accurate and nuanced as the world declares the climate emergency to be real and global ecosystems to be at breaking point." Club of Rome website: https://www.clubofrome.org/ltg50/ (accessed 4/21/2024).

all adults. In short, science and technology cannot save the planet without economic justice.[18]

Christian theologians in the 1970s largely ignored the Club of Rome and other ecological prophets promoting sustainability.[19] Why? Because feminist theologians and Latin American liberation theologians objected to the planetary model. Feminists represented a specific constituency, women. And liberation theologians represented another specific constituency, the poor. So, progressive theologians of the period tailored their struggle to subversion, not cooperation.

Liberation theologians along with some political theologians believed they were in a struggle of 'we' versus 'them'. The 'them' included scientists and bureaucrats in Europe and the Americas who were white men. These white men, the liberation theologians complained, have exacted exploitative hegemony for centuries. So, liberation theologians kvetched that these white male European futurists and ecologists now want to take control of the whole planet and leave the structures of discrimination and marginalization in place. The nascent eco-theologians could not partner with other progressive colleagues at that crucial moment.

It was not until after the Chernobyl nuclear power plant meltdown on April 26, 1986, that feminist and

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[18] See: Ted Peters, *Futures—Human and Divine* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox, 1978).

[19] One clear exception is process theologian John Cobb, Jr., who with foresight championed both the liberation agenda and the common good agenda. See two prescient co-authored books. First, Charles Birch and John B. Cobb, Jr., *The Liberation of Life* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and second, Herman E. Daly and John Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989). "The human economy needs to be shaped with the health of the biosphere in view" Ibid., 202.

other liberation theologians put planetary sustainability on their agendas. The radioactive cloud wafting above Chernobyl in Ukraine rode the stratosphere like a sky horse across eastern Asia, across the Pacific Ocean, across North America, and then back across the Atlantic to Europe. Full circle. No longer could any reasonable person deny that a planetary nexus of relationships keeps every human being in community with one another. The 1979 World Future Society slogan finally took cultural traction: "Think Globally. Act Locally."

Even though Christian theologians were initially slow to embrace the planetary model, the wider culture has in the twenty-first century adopted a workable worldview for framing ecological and justice concerns, namely, the concept of the Anthropocene. In *Earth for All: A Survival Guide for Humanity,* the Club of Rome recognizes the Anthropocene, according to which "scientists acknowledge that the dominant driver of change within the Earth system is now a single species: *Homo sapiens*, us."[20] If we are honest, we can no longer think of the responsibility of the human race as anything less than global in scope. The common good is planetary.

A half century after the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, and after the Club of Rome introduced the planetary model, Christians and Muslims have boarded the public theology train. In 2015 Pope Francis proposed "an integral ecology" which is "inseparable from the notion of the common good" in §156 of his sterling document, *Laudato Si'*.[21] In 2024 a cooperative group of Muslim organizations including the Islamic Foundation

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[20] Sandrine Dixson-Declève, Owen Gaffney, Jayati Ghosh, Jorgen Randers, Johan Rockström, and Per Espen Stoknes, *Earth for All: A Survival Guide for Humanity* (Gabriola Island BC: New Society Publishers, 2022) 13-14.

[21] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (2015) http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

for Ecology and Environmental Sciences constructed a second sterling commitment to caring for Earth. "*Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth*, aims to demonstrate how Islam can be a driving force for sustainable development and environmental care."[22]

A planetary common good would make forceful sense to Roman Catholic systematic theologian Anne Clifford. "A theology of creation that earth can live with calls for commitment to solidarity with humans and earth's other-kind and to all-encompassing global common good."[23]

The Oppressive Risks of Globalization

Feminist and other liberation theologians had good reason to be cautious about the planetary vision of future oriented eco-theologians.

On the one hand, today's eco-theologians rightly recognize the need for the common good to be planetary in scope. Long time feminist eco-theologian Sallie McFague became inclusive in the way *Gaudium et spes* is similarly inclusive. "The environmental crisis we face–and which is epitomized by climate change–is a planetary agenda, involving all people, all areas of expertise, and all religions."[24]

On the other hand, globalization risks putting up "no exit" signs for the poor and putting CO_2 up to pollute

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[22] Othman Llewellyn, Fazlun Khalid, et al., *Al-Mizan: Covenant for the Earth.* The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (Birmingham, UK, 2024); chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/file:///C:/Users/Ted/OneDrive/My%20Course%20Readings/Al%20Mizan%20(English).pdf (accessed 4/28/2014).

[23] Anne Clifford, "Creation," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, eds. Francis Schussler Fiorenza and John P Galvin (Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 2nd ed., 2011), 201-253, at 249.

[24] Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 84.

everyone's atmosphere. Why? Because the superstructure of existing global organizations is built foundationally on disregard for economic justice and disregard for the planet's ecological health.[25]

The rivalry and even hostility between nation-states prevents political attempts to establish a just world peace. The political vacuum gets filled economically by the imposition of order enforced by international corporations. According to Lutheran eco-theologian Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, the economic structures we take for granted are responsible for structural violence against the poor and against the planet. Structural injustice is what a theologian would call *sin.*

Structural violence, declares Moe-Lobeda, "refers to the physical, psychological, and spiritual harm that certain groups of people experience as a result of unequal distribution of power and privilege."[26] That unequal power and privilege is held in place by the octopus arms of international corporate interests. "Neoliberal globalization, by concentrating wealth into the hands of a few enormous global corporations, also has concentrated their power for structural sin."[27] Moe-

[25] "The consequences of climate change affect the poor and the marginalised disproportionately and harshly, especially in the short term. In the long run, the future of the planet becomes endangered. This fact has been highlighted in recent years by grassroots activists and empathetic thinkers who care not solely for themselves and their pleasures but also for the lives and livelihoods of other less fortunate humans. Happily, this campaign has had some effect. An awareness has crept into people that climate change is a threat to each living being on this planet." Jacob Thomas, "Climate Change and the Poor," *Pax Lumina* 3, no.1 (2022): 6-7, at 6; chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://paxlumina.com/download/Jan-2022.pdf (accessed 4/22/2024).

[26] Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 2013), 72.

[27] Ibid., 64.

Lobeda lifts up a vision of a new world in which the sin of structural violence has been negated.

> Imagine a world in which global investment firms, mortgage markets, and other globally operating corporations do not have the freedom to pursue self-interest regardless of the cost to millions of human beings and their homes, jobs, health, food, and water supplies, and communities. The goal of curtailing unaccountable corporate power intends to bring that image into the realm of the real.[28]

Sustainability and justice. A planetary common good includes both. We might even call it *ecojustice,* "where the earth itself receives justice because the rights of all living things are granted and protected."[29]

The Cosmic Common Good, the Local, and the Glocal

We can see how public theology can be and should be global. Might it also be cosmic in scope? After all, our sun does not stand alone. While our sun provides Earth with the energy our planet needs for creative advance, the sun could not be what it is without its own contextual interaction with the Milky Way Galaxy. And the Milky Way shares a history if not a future with one trillion if not two trillion other galaxies. God's creation does not stop with Earth. Should our ethics stop with Earth?

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[28] Ibid., 271.

[29] Alan G. Padgett and Kiara A. Jorgenson, "Introduction," *Ecotheology: A Christian Conversation* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2020), 1-13, at 7. Mary Evelyn Tucker puts it this way: "Without a healthy natural ecology there is not a sustainable economy and vice versa." Mary Evelyn Tucker, "Climate Change Brings Moral Change," *For Our Common Home: Process-Relational Responses to Laudato Si',* eds., John B. Cobb, Jr., and Ignacio Castuera (Anoka MN: Process Century Press, 2015), 187-189, at 188.

Not according to astrotheologian John Hart of Boston University. Humanity on Earth should prepare now for increased interaction with life in outer space. Extraterrestrial life will come in two forms: earthlings traveling to off-Earth sites plus meeting extraterrestrial intelligences who have undergone a second genesis. Hart dazzles before the ethicist the lure of a cosmic commons.

> Cosmographically, humanity will come to be at home not only on Earth but on diverse worlds among the stars and in different dimensions. In all places, people would come to share with other intelligent beings, congenially and collaboratively, common places in cosmos communities in the integral cosmos commons.[30]

Eco-ethics will soon become cosmic ethics. In the meantime, back on Earth our immediate task is to raise the local human mind to a level where it can perceive and own global human responsibility.

But our heliotropic focus on the global need not blind us to the local. Existential questions along with human plight occur at the local level, within one or another local context. Australian theologian and editor of the *International Journal of Public Theology*, Clive Pearson, employs the illuminating term, *glocal.* This term, *glocal,* demonstrates the public theologian's responsibility to both. "The prospect of a public theology is polycentric; it is neither monocentric nor univocal."[31] It is global, local, and glocal.

A global emphasis without a local emphasis risks perpetuation of current injustices. Globalization has garnered negative connotations for "having negative

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[30] John Hart, *Third Displacement: Cosmobiology, Cosmolocality, and Cosmoecology* (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 246.

[31] Clive Pearson, "The Quest for a Global Public Theology," *International Journal of Public Theology* 1, no.2 (2007): 151-172, at 161.

impact…unjust exclusion of the poor countries from influence on powerful economic forces."[32] In our postcolonial period we dare not forget the glocal.

Karl Gasper, CSsR, a former Academic Dean of the St. Alphonsus Theological and Mission Institute in Davao City, does not forget the local.

> Thus, our ancestors lived in peaceful co-existence with Mother Nature. But Colonization cum Christianity destroyed this cultural-belief matrix which began our people's alienation from nature as their conversion to Christianity made them susceptible to accepting the mode of production of feudalism. And when the American colonizers took over, it was easy to shift to the mode of capitalism which as we know today is what *Laudato Si'* has severely critiqued. By giving up on our indigenous belief system, embracing the Western way of life (from Christianity to capitalism), it was just a matter of time before our forests would be destroyed, our lands would be converted to plantations, logging and mining would become buzz words for economic investments. And look who are suffering – all of us Filipinos, and in a special way the indigenous communities.[33]

Global, local, and glocal together make up the scope of the public theologian's vision of a just, sustainable, participatory and even planetary community.

Ferdinand D. Dagmang, who teaches at Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University, and Maryhill School of Theology, emphasizes the glocal at home in the Philippines. "Vatican II's influence is made concrete through the Basic Christian Communities whose formation has become the standard approach to Church

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[32] Hollenbach, *Common Good and Christian Ethics,* Chapter 8.

[33] Karl Gaspar, "Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa: 500 years since Christianity arrived in our islands," *MST Review* 23, no. 2 (2021): 119-133, at 133.

renewal in many parishes in the Philippines."[34] Where we find the poor and the marginalized, we find the place for the church as community. In short, the glocal includes a "theology of the people" (*teología del pueblo*).

Here, I think, the public theologian can benefit from the Roman Catholic principle of subsidiarity. The *principle of subsidiarity*, according to Manhattan College public theologian Kevin Ahern, "invites society to be structured so that decisions are made at the lowest levels when possible and the highest levels when necessary."[35] The public theologian should be attuned to both the local and the global as well as all levels of social organization in between. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that "the principle of subsidiarity … grants freedom to develop the capabilities present at every level of society, while also demanding a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power."[36]

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[34] Ferdinand D. Dagmang, "From Vatican II to PCP to BEC Too: Progressive Localization of a State of Mind to a New State of Affairs," *MST Review* 18, no. 2 (2016): 33-62, at 59-60. The Philippine glocal requires urgent attention. "Meanwhile at the ground level, the situation of our indigenous peoples continues to worsen especially in those contested territories where corporate interests protected by the State apparatus including its main agency, namely the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) and the military continue to push their agenda at the expense of both the lives of our IPs but also the integrity of creation…. So unlike countries like Australia, where the State has manifested some sense of goodwill to respond to the demands of IPs, in this country the State moves in the opposite direction!" Gaspar, op.cit., 124, 126.

[35] Kevin Ahern, "Mediating the Global Common Good," *Public Theology and the Global Common Good: The Contribution of David Hollenbach,* eds., Kevin Ahern, Meghan Clark, Kristin Heyer, and Laurie Johnston (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2016) 30-50, at 40.

[36] *Laudato Si',* §196. Fordham's Thomas Massaro has high praise for the pontiff. "Pope Francis advances global reconciliation by examining four features of the pope's advocacy for peace—a distinctive approach that combines symbolic gestures, bold actions, and insightful written and spoken words. These four include: 1) his efforts

It is reciprocal. It takes individuals in local communities to contribute to the common good. The common good, in return, blesses the individual. Herman Daly and John Cobb recognize the reciprocity. "The well-being of a community as a whole is constitutive of each person's welfare."[37]

Love, Power, and Justice for the Planetary Common Good

The destination we envision is a just, sustainable, participatory, and planetary community. How do we get there? Let's start with love.

But what about justice? We have been contending that the very concept of the common good requires a planetary and even an ecological scope. We have also acknowledged that what today counts as globalization incarcerates marginalized people in poverty and loss of access to the goods the common good offers. The public theologian's response is to pursue justice. Of course.

Nevertheless, let us now ask: is bare justice what the public theologian should demand of the world order? In the last century, theologian Paul Tillich intertwined love, power, and justice. Tillich noted that "love adds something to justice that justice cannot do by itself."[38] To address our world's plurality of cultures, multiple nation-

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at forging diplomatic solutions to conflicts; 2) his pastoral visits to many countries; 3) his publishing of many insightful documents; and 4) his use of a structural analysis to inform his judgments regarding peace.... Francis has positioned the Roman Catholic Church to develop into an even more effective agent of peace and also a more promising partner for peace than previous popes." Thomas Massaro, "Pope Francis: Renewing Roman Catholic Approaches to Peace," *MST Review* 24, no. 2 (2022): 96-130, at 99.

[37] Daly and Cobb, op. cit., 164.

[38] Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 1960), 13.

states, and rival vested interests, the Christian public theologian will need to be motivated by love. It is because we love that we pursue justice for so many in the world we may never even meet.

Our planetary community needs a self-understanding that it is in fact a community. An intentional community cannot be constructed without a blueprint drawn in love.

At present, we are estranged from one another at the level of individuals, local communities, races, nations, and political ideologies. We are even estranged from the biosphere which sustains our life. "Love is the drive towards unity of the separated .... the reunion of the estranged," adds Tillich.[39] The task of the public theologian is nothing less than one of overcoming division, competition, and estrangement with love.

"Love that seeks justice is the counterpoint of structural evil," contends Moe-Lobeda.[40] Raw justice unleavened by love yields only social flatbread. The love enriched public theologian is better off following the model of Jesus, as Helen Romero reminds us. "On the cross Jesus conquers the evil force that seeks to annihilate what is good in this world. His act of sacrifice reveals what holds both his human and divine natures together: love."[41]

How about a glocal application of Jesus' love that leads to ecojustice? Rather than working within a strict stewardship framework, Jeane C. Peracullo and Rosa Bella M. Quindoza proffer an ethic of ecological care that relies upon three local Filipino principles: "Ecological care's dimensions of *pagtutulungan* (service to one another), *pakikiisa* (solidarity), and *pananampalataya*

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[39] Ibid., 25.

[40] Moe-Lobeda, op. cit., xviii.

[41] Helen Romero, "Doing Political Theology in the Time of Violence: Unmasking Violence with René Girard and Walter Wink," *MST Review* 20, no. 1 (2018): 121-150, at 140.

(faith).[42] What we gain from this ecological care garden is a trellis within a fertile worldview on which practical proposals can climb.[43]

Such love counters sin. The public theologian employs discourse clarification to display the ways in which the structures of environmental degradation and economic injustice are products of human sin. Sin is almost universally accompanied by self-justificatory rhetoric. In our situation self-justification accompanied by scape-goating is publicly disseminated in the form of alternative truths, false facts, and disinformation. Like the prophets of ancient Israel, today's public theologian should render clarification, judgment, and truth.

This is by no means a consequentialist ethic. Rather, the public theologian embodies moral integrity imbued by love in hope that such love will be contagious and spread throughout the planetary community.

Conclusion

We began with a futuristic vision of a just, sustainable, participatory, and planetary community. Such a vision of earth's future provides the public theologian with a destination. What is now needed is an ethical GPS to map the road to get there.

To guide us? That is the vocation of the public theologian. Post-Vatican II Rahnerian David Tracy draws three publics to our attention: church, academy, and culture. Accordingly, public theology should be conceived in the church, reflected on critically in the

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[42] Jeane C. Peracullo and Rosa Bella M. Quindoza, "The Environmental Activism of a Filipino Catholic Faith Community: Re-Imagining Ecological Care for the Flourishing of All," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022) 1-15, at 13; https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010056.

[43] See: Ted Peters, "Public Theology, Discourse Clarification, and Worldview Construction," *Theology and Science* 19, no. 1 (2021) 1-4; DOI.org/10.1080/14746700.2020.1869672.

academy, and addressed to the wider culture for the sake of the common good. This article's thesis is that the common good must be thought of as planetary in scope while attending to justice for individuals and communities at the local level.

For more than half a century, scientists have prophetically proclaimed: our planet is in peril. Are the ears of our public theologians open to hearing the warning? Are the mouths of our public theologians open to speaking words of judgment and encouragement? Are the hearts of our public theologians open to loving earth's inhabitants creatively all the way into a just, sustainable, participatory, and planetary community?

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