



DISCUSSANT RESPONSE

by

Michael L. Mickler
Assistant Professor of Church History
Unification Theological Seminary
Barrytown, New York, USA

to **William R. Garrett's**

**FROM COLD WAR IDEOLOGY TO GLOBAL PRAXIS:
THE UNIFICATION CRITIQUE OF MARXISM**

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COMMENT ON
FROM COLD WAR IDEOLOGY IDEOLOGY TO GLOBAL PRAXIS:
THE UNIFICATION CRITIQUE OF MARXISM

Michael L. Mickler
Unification Theological Seminary

In digesting Professor Garrett's paper, it is important to distinguish between which portion of the paper is the appetizer and which portion is the main course. Ostensibly, his paper deals with the Unification critique of Marxism. In fact, this is really an appendage to the centerpiece of the paper which is globalization theory. Dr. Garrett might as easily have selected any number of contemporary social movements and their attendant ideologies. Nonetheless, Marxism and Unificationism do function as instructive cases in point, the former being, in Dr. Garrett's estimation, "antimodern" in nature and the latter "more ambiguous" in that "selected aspects ... clearly synchronize with globalization processes while other features ... just as clearly stand at odds with the dominant scientific, liberal orientation of global culture" (2, 22).

Sympathetic to those forms of globalization theory that accommodate "material, structural, historical and cultural forces simultaneously" (6), Dr. Garrett tells us that the most "radical feature" of his conceptualization is "the reperiodization of the last eight to nine hundred years in Western social experience." Rather than finding the root of "the modern project" in the Reformation (a la Weber) or the Enlightenment (a la Troeltsch) he locates it in "the

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revolution in canon law during the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries" (9). This, he maintains, "transformed the church into a corporation founded on legal principles" (9) and prompted states to codify royal law, thereby realigning Western culture "on a solid legal base" (13). The human rights tradition later provided "a basis in law for individual perogatives and rights" which, in turn, "set the stage for the take-off of a modern capitalist economy and the rise of the democratic state" (9). Arguing that the last hundred years has witnessed "the historical fashioning of a global order" (14), Dr. Garrett divides the century into four periods--the first and last of which are continuous with globalization processes, with the middle two "interregnum periods" being discontinuous and constituting "'breaks' with the overall developmental pattern" (15). He attributes these aberrations to "ideosyncratic historical forces" (15).

Dr. Garrett deserves our appreciation on at least two counts. First, he has creatively integrated a body of literature on globalization theory as a way of contextualizing the Unification critique of Marxism. Some have perceived Unificationists as stark right-wing anti-comunists and, accordingly, have been surprised by the movement's rapproachment with certain Marxist regimes. Dr. Garrett's depiction of Unificationism's globalist orientation is helpful in this regard. Second, in terms of his particular construction, he has provided a remarkably clear distillation of what I take to be a forthcoming

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magisterial work. Indeed, had I before me a more fully nuanced version of Dr. Garrett's revisionist theorizing, it might very well be that I would have fewer reservations about it than I now do. As it stands, however, I will engage Dr. Garrett's interpretation in five areas, highlighting my concerns in terms of problems with globalization theory generally. I will also suggest several alternative points of view. The five areas are as follows:

(1) Globalization theory's sociology of knowledge perspective. Globalization thinkers seem to set a premium on social experience as a source of consciousness. This orientation is compatible with a sociology of knowledge perspective which, in essence, maintains that all knowledge, thought and culture is situation-bound, that is, tied to a given constellation of sociohistorical circumstances and that each age develops a distinctive experiential gestalt or "plausibility structure" which validates its conception of reality. This perspective, it seems to me, underlies much of Dr. Garrett's interpretation, particularly his understanding of the factors which contributed to the demise of Marxism. As he puts it, "the emergence of globalization processes had the effect of exposing the anti-modern nature of Marxist social theory and, hence, its asynchronic 'fit' with the contemporary age" (2).

My own view is different. Basically, I question whether globalization processes (if, in fact, one accepts their normative status) had all that much to do with Marxism's demise. I base this on three observations.

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First, as Dr. Garrett points out, Marxist thought, particularly its "critique of idealism," has "permanently influenced" philosophy and the social sciences and thereby remains broadly relevant in the global era. Second, despite what Dr. Garrett refers to as its "antimodern nature" and "asynchronic 'fit' with the contemporary age," Marxism is not an ancient heresy but came into being and flourished in the modern setting. It has proved immensely attractive to modernity's intelligensia. Third, had he so chosen, Dr. Garrett could have emphasized themes within Marxist praxis that more clearly resonate with "processes of the emerging global order." Marxism, for example, has always been notably internationalist. It has emphasized networking, sponsored international conferences, undertaken vast building (and modernization) projects, forged transnational trade agreements, condemned racism and poverty, promoted women's equality, and stressed "scientific" rationality. Endemic problems rather than overarching macrosocial forces have led to Marxism's demise. This leads me to my second concern.


(2) Globalization theory's determinism. Globalization theorists tend to view themselves on the cutting edge of social theorizing. To some extent, they convey of sense of having a historical mandate. Dr. Garrett, for example, sees "the emergence of the global age as a maturation--and perhaps completion--of the modernization project" (3). He further asserts that competing globalization paradigms "possess the potential for breakthroughs in theory

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construction on a scale perhaps unmatched since the age of the [sociological] Founding Fathers" (3). This sense of historical mandate and imminent breakthrough in their discipline unfortunately colors their appraisal of literal events in the "real" world. For example, whereas the idea of progress has been generally discredited within twentieth century thought, globalization thinkers seem disposed to perceive of circumstances as building steadily, and irreversibly, to a world-level integration. Within this context, movements or thought systems, like Marxism, not attentive to the flow of history are doomed to decline.

As stated in the previous section, I fail to see that the emergence of globalization processes "exposing the anti-modernist nature of Marxist social theory" had much of an effect. Rather any system which, as Dr. Garrett points out, (1) fails to "pay off" in terms of promised material rewards; and (2) is exploitative "in terms of income distribution, social equality, [and] individual freedoms," is doomed to decline in any age or sociohistorical circumstance. Marxism simply has gone the way of innumerable faulty and despotic social systems before it.

(3) Globalization theory's optimism. Globalization thinkers seem to have a view of the future and even of the present and immediate past which is remarkably upbeat. Attention tends to focus on harmonizing and integrationist trends which are in no way understood to be antithetical to human autonomy. Dr. Garrett, for example, refers to emergent globalization processes within the context of



"greater individual freedom, self-determination, a relaxation of normative guidelines, and a heightened responsiveness of institutional structures to human needs" (20). He assures us, moreover, that amidst seeming "self-indulgent hedonism ... important cultural advances were being achieved" (15) and that repression of citizenry "is simply no longer possible given the nature of modern technology" (24). Clearly, globalization theory is predisposed to see the cup half full rather than half empty.

I am not convinced that such optimism is warranted. Not only do these theories fail, so far as I can tell, to take into account darker, more pessimistic readings of the contemporary situation but they tend to convey a distinctly liberal, if not utopian bias. Dr. Garrett, in particular, seems all too ready to dismiss the depression era 1930s and "aberrant" 1950s, not to mention what he terms "the recent reactionary backlash symbolized by Reagan economic policies and Republican political ascendancy" (21) as irrelevancies subsumed under overriding "liberalizing tendencies." On the other hand, his apotheosis of the "Gay '90s" and "countercultural" 1960s has less to do with behaviors acceptable to substantial portions of the world's population than it does with the universalization of expressive American norms. It seems to me that a less selective reading would extract themes of permanent validity from both sides of the liberal/conservative chasm. This, however, leads me to my next concern.

(4) Globalization theory's reductionism. Globalization

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theorists tend to reduce their explanations of complex historical processes to a single dominant theme or interest. In so doing, they exclude manifestations not in accord with the true "causal" line of development as aberrations or irrelevancies. Dr. Garrett, for example, criticizes the Wallersteinian "World-Systems Model" for giving priority to "material factors in historical causation while cultural factors are summarily relegated to relative obscurity" (4). He, likewise, finds fault with the "World Polity Model" for being fixated on "political dynamics" and thereby offering "a less than adequate portrait of the full panoply of the forces combining to construct the global circumstance" (5). It may be, however, that Dr. Garrett is guilty of the same offense, being fixated not on material forces or political dynamics but law. He, after all, rests "the last eight to nine hundred years of Western social experience" on "the revolution in canon law during the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries" (7).

Although I am not a specialist in that period, I basically fail to see any particular decisiveness in the systematizing of canon law. It certainly wasn't the first time the Church had collected together its canons or asserted its independence from imperial domination. Dr. Garrett might as easily have gone back to Gregory the Great in the sixth century as Gregory VII (Hildebrand) in the eleventh. In fact, promulgations of canon law and assertions of independence (or supremacy) were constant refrains in the early life of the Church. This indicates to

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me that if after the thirteenth century, as Dr. Garrett suggests, "the Church enjoyed a status clearly differentiated from the state, and, hence, acquired protection from the interference of secular princes," factors other than its rock-solid foundation in canon law were determinative. I suspect that the Church was increasingly left alone because it had become less of a "player" on the international scene. This would be consistent with its diminished role in the modern world and leads me to my last concern.

(5) The role of religion in the global order.

Globalization thinkers are ambivalent on the issue of religion. Some, such as Wallerstein, buy into secularization premises. Others, like Roland Roberston argue that globalization processes have revitalized religion. Dr. Garrett seems to have been caught between these competing pulls. At one level, his brief excursus on the last eight hundred years of Western cultural history pays immense respect to the religious factor in shaping modernity. Apart from canon law, he highlights the centrality of such figures as Roger Williams and the evangelical Baptist, Isaac Backus. However, once in the twentieth century, religion vanishes from view. Instead, we hear of the formative impact of such things as the G.I. Bill and VHA loans.

This same ambivalence is apparent in Dr. Garrett's treatment of Unificationism. He is affirmative of behaviors like international conferences and highways, transnational

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economic ventures, and relief work but skeptical that these "visionary efforts" are undergirded by "a theological infrastructure comprised of premodern theological precepts" (27). On the other hand, he doubts whether "liberal, scientifically sound, rationally informed" Unificationists would "manifest the degree of commitment or endure the sorts of hardships necessary to achieve the sort of global goals for which the Unification movement currently strives" (28). Thus, he concludes, "Any well-trained sociologist of religion would predict that the current cultural trends do not bode well for the long term survival of the Unificationist movement" (30). However, Dr. Garrett waffles by asserting, "these same scientifically trained sociologists, had they been around in, say, the year 75 C.E., would have rendered a similar verdict with respect to the fledgling Christian movement" (30).

To some extent, I share Dr. Garrett's ambivalence about the role of religion in the global order. Unification thought, itself, conceives of religion as relevant only during the course of restoration. To paraphrase a common Unificationist expression, "Once the world is restored, there will be no more need for religion." Although utopian, this notion has continuities with Dr. Garrett's version of the modern/global order. He envisions it as an era in which intensified personal, ethnic, national, and global identities fully cohere, integrating persons into higher levels of organizational structure until "finally, one is able to identify with humanity itself" (6). Within this

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fully humanized social order, a "liberal, scientifically sound, rationally informed theological stance" might be serviceable. It strikes me, however, that having taken on the Marxist and Unificationist "myths," Dr. Garrett has constructed one of his own. Whether contextualized in 19th century mechanistic concepts, a "premodern theological infrastructure," or the latest globalization paradigm, these putative "myths" all address the same fundamental concern, "namely, salvation from the problem of human alienation" (25). This as much as anything else speaks to the persistence of religion in a global or any other setting.

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