

## REVIEWS

David Hollenbach, SJ, *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethics*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003. 290 pp. Pbk. \$26.95. ISBN 0-87840-139-3.

David Hollenbach's latest work, *The Global Face of Public Faith*, is a collection of his more significant articles (garnered from a variety of publications over the last fifteen years) that focuses on the role that religious communities play in civil society. In many respects, it is a prequel to his critically acclaimed *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Hollenbach organizes this collection into three major parts. The first part, "Fundamental Matters," addresses whether or not a common conception of the human good might be formed in a pluralistic society. He concludes that consensus on the common good must be reached *via* a dynamic and historically conscious process of "dialogical universalism" and "intellectual solidarity." While both of these ideas represent unique contributions to the debate about universal conceptions of the common good and pluralism, both ideas find fuller explication in *The Common Good*.

"Social Ethics under the Sign of the Cross" (chapter 4) is one of the finest essays in the entire collection. In it he tackles the thorny issue of universal ethical norms in the postmodern, pluralistic, skeptical world. He concludes that we have simultaneously "lost confidence in our ability to develop an adequate normative description of what human well-being is"; and, on the practical level, have lost hope in our ability to shape society according to some concept of human flourishing (56). In such a world, the usefulness of social ethics is questioned, since any claim about the human good is viewed suspiciously as an assertion of self-interest. In such a world, "all we can aspire to in the intellectual life are fragments of meaning," which become nothing more than "purely human constructs rather than vistas onto what is real or true" (58). In such a world, social ethics and all normative claims about what is good, right, and just are reduced to power politics. This leads to his central question: *In an increasingly pluralistic and relativistic world, can we make any normative judgments about the good in civil society?* In response he develops one of the few explicitly theological arguments in the book, namely a theology of the cross. While the cross at first seems an odd choice for a pluralistic universal ethic, Hollenbach's intent is to develop a concept of justice that moves beyond mere tolerance as benign indifference (as Rawls would have us believe), toward a theology of justice that emphasizes a God who suffers with and for humankind. Thus, while using the cross as a vehicle to explore this theological concept of justice, Hollenbach essentially argues that the universal experience of human suffering is a possible foundation for a universal concept of the human good.

The second part, "The Church in American Public Life," addresses recent debates about the role of religion in political affairs in the U.S. The first two chapters in this section (chapters 5 and 6) can be read as a single essay on practical and theoretical understandings of the

proper role of organized religion in civil and political affairs. Chapter 5 provides an overview of Protestant and Catholic approaches to political involvement, while chapter 6 takes a more theoretical turn and explores a host of legal and philosophical arguments concerning the proper role of religion in public and political life. Hollenbach concludes that the proper role of religion is to assert moral influence on civil society *via* a public moral argument; which, in turn, will have indirect influence on public policy.

In “The Context of Civil Society and Culture” (chapter 8), he develops this position by contending that religious engagement in public life should principally be in the broader social domain, rather than in the legislative or judicial arenas. In an argument that parallels deliberative democracy, he attacks the Rawlsian notion of *tolerance as avoidance* by championing solidarity as a requisite virtue of robust democracies, since it entails a willingness to engage the moral and religious vision of others in the creation of a public moral discussion about the common good.

The final part of the book, “Global Issues,” attends to the interaction of religion and politics on a global scale. In the final chapter, “Faiths, Cultures and Global Ethics” (the only previously unpublished piece), Hollenbach expands the previous debate about formulating ethical norms in a pluralistic, multi-religious context to the global level. He begins by addressing the challenges that religious and cultural pluralism pose to a global ethic. In response to these challenges he argues that the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* has functioned on a normative level as a type of global ethic, despite its lack of any theoretical foundation. He then posits the human capacities of self-transcendence and practical reason as potential theoretical foundations for claims about the necessary conditions for human dignity and human rights. He concludes by outlining some of the political implications of a global ethic, particularly when cultural practices are deemed violations of human rights. Here Hollenbach stresses the failure of Rawlsian understanding of justice and takes a realist turn by admitting, “Both persuasion and enforcement will be required if a global ethic is to have an impact on practical global politics” (253).

The strengths of this collection are the same strengths Hollenbach possesses as a theologian and writer: his ability to succinctly and clearly state the crucial questions posed by the intersection of the religious, political, and social spheres; and his ability to logically present and critically engage a variety of responses to these crucial questions. Another overall strength of this collection is the seamless transitions between ethical theory, normative questions, methodological issues and applied ethics. No stranger to metaethics, Hollenbach clearly delineates the theoretical fault lines in theological and philosophical approaches to the roles religion plays in politics and culture. He augments his analysis with a host of historical illustrations, including the rise of democracy in Eastern Europe and Africa, and the role of organized religion in the U.S. Thus, while well versed in the finer points of metaethics, Hollenbach reminds the reader that the purpose of social ethics is ultimately practical. Finally, when one looks at this collection as a whole, one finds a masterful and sustained argument for the relevance of public religion and social ethics in an increasingly pluralistic and multi-religious world. Hollenbach offers a strong critique of the liberal view that pluralism requires tolerance (i.e. a form of benign indifference) and the reduction of religious values to the private sphere, and favors a dialogical approach to finding common understandings of the human good in the hopes of formulating a global consensus on the demands of justice.

As noted above, one of Hollenbach’s greatest strengths is his ability to succinctly identify crucial questions concerning the role of religion in politics and society. This is only complemented by his ability to synthesize a variety of responses to these questions. In these shorter

articles, however, his own response is often eclipsed due to his thorough exposition of the views of others; thereby leaving his own positions not as fully developed as one would like (the exceptions being chapters 4 and 12). Those looking for an explicitly Christian position will be frustrated. Due to his commitment to the role of religion in a pluralistic setting, he often frames his analysis in non-confessional language and his use of biblical material is minimal. Finally, because this is a collection of essays that were each written to stand independently, at times it is repetitive.

*The Global Face* is an excellent addition to any theological or political science library and is particularly well suited for graduate-level courses because it presents a host of unique and insightful arguments about the role of religion in civil society (on both the national and global levels) in more accessible, article-length format. It also serves as a fantastic companion to *The Common Good* in that it contains the nascent ideas that Hollenbach further develops under the larger theological-political rubric of the common good.

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John Atherton, *Marginalisation*. London: SCM Press, 2003. vi + 210 pp. £14.99. ISBN 0-334-02919-8.

This book is a contribution to the Society and Church series for SCM Press edited by Peter Sedgwick and Alistair McFadyen. This explains the unadorned and potentially huge subject matter contained by the title of the book—*Marginalisation*; there are no strap lines informing you of the approach this book will take or the context in which it locates its arguments. Instead one simply straps oneself in for the ride and trusts that the person flying the plane knows the destination.

Fortunately, in John Atherton one has a pilot with a wealth of experience, who deftly steers a course through this daunting area by constructing an informed yet impassioned argument as to how a distinctively Christian ethics and theology should engage performatively with this most global and pressing of problematics, while at the same time providing a wealth of valuable information in terms of statistics, streams of thought and practical case studies on what marginalization is, how it works and how it can be engaged with.

The book has a threefold structure which interweaves the themes of marginalization of the poor with that of the church (at least in the context of UK mainstream religious activity). The first essay lays the context by which the problem of marginalization occurs—i.e. the processes of globalization—especially within its economic and technological forms which produces winners and losers. Transnational corporations (TNCs) benefit, as do those sectors of the world economy developing new forms of knowledge and research. However, the imbalances caused by unrestricted economic growth produce unsustainable results, including increasing poverty for three billion of the world's poorest people (many in overcrowded cities) and environmental degradation. Within the context of Western Europe, these processes of marginalization are also evident in the decline of mainstream Christian religion.

Section 2 covers at great speed key economic and human development arguments. Based primarily on the arguments of Sen and the UNHDR's [United Nations Human Development Report's] statistical frameworks, Atherton makes a passionate appeal for an expanded definition of what humans and the earth can expect from global capitalism; a move away