

Appendix A
Taking Action for Economic Justice

A Theological Assessment
(Summary Statement)

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The complete theological paper, of which this is a summary, is available for \$5.00 at the Diocese of Michigan, Office of Public Affairs, 4800 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI 48201.

Introduction

In the 1988 General Convention proposal Taking Action for Economic Justice, the Episcopal Church is urged to throw its weight behind a particular strategy for economic development. The focus in the proposal on land trusts, housing cooperatives, worker-owned businesses and community development credit unions does not represent a facile “top-down” solution to our current economic crisis, but instead demonstrates a concern to stoop below and help undergird creative grass roots initiatives arising “from below.” In adopting such a strategy, the Church faces a baptism of sorts. Like Jesus approaching John the Baptist for initiation into the prophetic movement of the rural Palestinian poor, the Church finds itself summoned to submit its resources and energies to a social movement already in progress.

There are various situations around the country where local parishes are already involving themselves in the economic initiatives recognized in the proposal. In these situations, cooperative structures and processes are enabling the community of the baptized and the community of the oppressed to participate in each other’s agenda. Here the Church is beginning to once again reclaim its historic option for the poor, and the poor are beginning to once again become the inspirers of the Church. The modern cooperative economic movement thus represents a sign of the times and a vehicle whereby the Church can translate its traditional faith into a concrete language of contemporary witness. Before highlighting the theological possibilities in such a proposal, however, we do well to briefly characterize our contemporary context and refresh our memory of our biblical heritage.

Context

“The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the foreigner without redress. And I sought for one among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that it should not be destroyed; but I found none.” (Ezek. 22:29-30)

The quintessential biblical question when the land is in trouble is a question of walls and breaches. Among those who see and hear, who will actually dare to build and what will they construct? Among those who believe and hope, who will actually be “moved” to take a stand and where will they draw their line? The God of the Bible shows up continually in history as a God of the breaches and walls who suffers “being moved” into the middle of the human war zone out of compassion and indignation, and who “builds” from the bottom up, even as the blows fall or the bullets fly. The people of God in history are those who dare do not less. And the people of God today stand before a breach that threatens to wax apocalyptic before its very eyes.

In a world that has become a single vast interdependent reality, it is now possible to witness the logic of polarization that inexorably arranges and rearranges the lives of everyone on the globe. What appears in ever clearer focus is the emergence of a two-tier world of haves and have-nots that cuts through every level of the human reality and increasingly succeeds in integrating every local political economy into its lockstep march.

North American Context

Within our own North American context, we are bedside spectators at the breach-birth of a new technological order. The “old economic world” of secure U.S. dominance was a product of numerous factors: the 1944 Bretton Woods agreement to utilize the dollar as the international medium of exchange (giving the U.S. access to markets, raw materials, and work forces around the globe); interventionist foreign policy tactics (the U.S. intervened in the internal affairs of other nations on the average of once every 14 months in the decades following World War II); utilization of the military budget as an economic stimulus (leading to the establishment of the “military industrial complex”); and reliance upon the multinational corporation as the instrument of choice for getting business done and for organizing other areas of life (e.g., the metamorphosis of cities from networks of self-sufficient neighborhood “villages” to impersonal compartmentalized bedroom communities).¹ In the context of the post-World War II economic mix, America “greened,” the American Dream became accessible to some of the working class (though not, by and large, to the black community or to millions of others locked into poverty), and the ethic of “more and more” reigned supreme.

Today however, a new reality is making itself felt. As has happened three other times in the last four centuries, economic crisis is precipitating a re-arrangement of the international division of labor.² Capital is moving to cheaper sources of labor supply. Continual plant closings, raging corporate takeover battles, incessant capital-intensive automation and robotization, ballooning deficits, and the mortgaging of the economy to foreign investors are the mere foreshadows of a more haunting specter: the massive restructuring and bifurcation of our own socio-economic context into two separate worlds, unequal and divided.³ On one side of that divide stands an increasingly internationalized professional and managerial elite, in economic control of the technology and political control of the institutions. On the other, there is emerging a self-perpetuating, permanently “lost” underclass, burgeoning numbers of homeless, and an increasingly harried, anxious and “left behind” middle class which has itself eroded demographically by 14% since 1980.

The wealthiest 10% of U.S. families now own 86% of the nation’s wealth; the bottom 55% operate with zero or negative financial assets.⁴ The breach on the national scene grows daily wider and increasingly reflects the overwhelming structural divisions that bedevil international relations.

Global Context

The global situation since World War II has grown increasingly violent. The pax Americana aftermath of the war has been anything but a pax mundi. Underlying the obvious questions of participative political structures that fuel the contemporary scenes of violent confrontation are even more fundamental questions of economic structure and viability. The 1980 Brandt Commission clearly identified Northern Hemisphere-Southern Hemisphere development conflicts as the paramount economic challenges of our time.

United Nations’ attempts to close the gap between the “developing” economies of the South and the industrialized “developed” economics of the North with its “Decade of Development” program in the 1960s only resulted in even greater disparity.⁵ The share

of trade between the First and Third Worlds shifted from 68% and 32% respectively in 1951, and 82% and 18% by 1970.⁶

Attempts by developing countries to form themselves into trading blocs either failed (OCEC) or resulted merely in the creation of yet another rich elite (OPEC). The oil crisis of the early 1970s resulted in new levels of instability in international finance markets and an ever-swelling supply of cheap dollars looking for investment. Development then took the form of “learning how to manage the debt” as Third World countries mortgaged their futures to international lending institutions.⁷

The simplest characterization of North-South relations since World War II is that of the creation of massive dependence.⁸ Typically, Third World economies have found it easier to integrate into the global economic structure by focusing on raw materials export than to opt for a pace and style of economic growth more commensurate with their own and cultural orientations.⁹ Focusing their development on the purchase of the latest technologies has resulted in a catastrophic chain reaction: cities amenable to such technology receive most of the attention; rural areas find themselves unable to compete either economically or culturally; food and other products essential to the life of the poor are deemphasized in favor of exports; land is concentrated in the hands of the wealthy; the poor are forced to flee rural areas for survival’s sake; and massive “immiseration” (i.e., misery on a massive scale) engulfs the urban areas choked with the inflow of refugees from the hinterlands.¹⁰

Reliance upon First World know-how and vision has translated into a fundamental economic deformation.¹¹ A wealthy and educated elite manipulates the technology and enjoys the finished goods and imports, while the masses find themselves concentrated in the export sectors eeking out a subsistence living and often enough the pawns of massive disruptions of precious ecosystems.¹² Internally, no infrastructural elements (demand for consumer goods, internal markets, production of the means of production, evolution of psychological and sociological structures necessary to deal with sophisticated technological environments) have matured and development stimulus has stagnated.¹³ Co-opted by rapacious short-term self-interest, the de facto result of every First World attempt to ameliorate the growing wealth and technology gap has been increased exploitation and marginalization of the Third World. The global breach broadens daily and admits of no easy solutions.

The Tradition

So much for the national and international context which informs the economic justice proposal. What perspectives emerge when we turn to the biblical tradition? We can do no more here than attempt to sketch out the identity and mission of the people of God at two highpoints of salvation history when, in the face of great social travail, that “new peoplehood” was expressed with particular clarity and genius. We are equally mindful of how easily that identity and mission can end up historically compromised when the community of God ceases moving and refuses its latest summons to the breach. A quick glance backwards can only make abundantly clear how much the “people of God” remains a free subject in history, assuming or compromising its identity, re forging or renegeing on its mission, rediscovering or refusing its destiny in each new crisis that unfolds.

Birth and Betrayal of Israel

For the Hebrew people, the Exodus event was the originating and paradigmatic experience shaping both their collective identity and their understanding of God.¹⁴ The event lodged in the memory of the people as the foundational revelation of Yahweh and served as the touchstone of all subsequent experience. Yahweh, in the Hebrew mind, was above all else the one who brought the people out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (Ex. 20:2). The annual celebration of the Passover festival kept this memory alive as an interpretive framework for each new crisis Israel faced.

In its most basic outlines, the Exodus event itself is the story of an immigrant people working as "guest labor" in the land of Egypt who are gradually forced into slavery status. The oppressive experience building royal cities and storehouses under the whip-hand of Pharaoh (Ex. 1:11) quietly erodes the inner spirit and resilience of the people (Ex. 6: 9) until they are left moaning inarticulately in their brokenness (Ex. 2:23).

The story of this people's liberation from Egyptian bondage is most remarkable for the kind of God it testifies to. Unlike all of the other divine figures of the ancient world who preside over the oppressive systems of the Pharaohs and kings, Yahweh appears on the scene as one who champions the cause of the poor.¹⁵ The slave people are taken notice of, their cries heard, and their longing for escape honored. The struggle to leave Egypt behind, both externally and internally becomes the locus of revelation for the distinctiveness of the Exodus God. This distinctiveness is clarified in both the confession at Sinai and the move into Canaan.

According to recent exegetical and archeological scholarship, the so-called Canaan conquest is actually a quite complex socio-political event involving both internal (Canaanite) revolt and external (Israelite) incursion. Throughout the 14th and 13th centuries B.C.E. various groupings of Canaanite peasants throughout Palestine apparently revolted against the oppressive feudal city-state structures along the Mediterranean coast and began to band together under the name "Israel" (a theophoric name incorporating the Canaanite god "EL")¹⁶. The arrival of the band of liberated slaves from Egypt carrying with them their story of the Exodus deliverance and their awareness of a God who takes up the cause of the oppressed, further catalyzed insurrection and galvanized the new tribal organization. Yahweh became the rallying banner under which "Israel" expanded and organized its common life and its self-understanding.

For the next 200 years Israel existed as a kind of "free Canaan," a liberated zone, complete with new name and new God, unique in its day for its decentralized political structures and egalitarian land tenure practices.¹⁷ The people were organized in a loose knit cooperative structure composed of tribes, clans and families in which decisions were taken for the whole people by ad hoc assemblies of the most respected elders. Land was distributed evenly among all of the various sub-groupings, thus eliminating "serf" or "tenant farmer" arrangements and granting access to land for the formerly landless.¹⁸

In the Sinai Torah enactments, the originality and genius of Israel's early structures emerge with full clarity. In the traditions connected to the holy mountain in the wilderness, social transactions and conflicts are anticipated and resolved with a clear view to securing the interests of those with the least legal standing or economic

wherewithal within Israel. Widows, orphans and guest laborers ("sojourners") are the subjects of special divine protection (Ex. 22:21-24).

In the legal material covering the jubilee tradition in Lev. 25, Israel manages a full confession of the economic vision arising out of its Exodus experience. The totality of the land was understood to be held in trust with Israel as fiduciary, Yahweh as ultimate owner, and each family or clan the subject of an inalienable lease, securing access to land and livelihood in perpetuity (I Kings. 21:1-24). Whatever the swings of fortune in the interim, every 50 years debts are erased, slaves released and land returned to its original holders.

Whether or not it was ever implemented, the jubilee ideal became one of the touchstones for prophetic critique of later developments in Israel, when the foundational experiences were betrayed and an option was taken for oppressive monarchical structures like those that had provoked the original revolts (Jer. 34; I Sam 8:4-18)¹⁹. The prophetic task itself could be understood as a matter of standing in the newly created breach between rich and poor and crying out, in the name of the God of Exodus, for return to the original vision. Once initiated, however, centralized decision-making processes and acquisitive land-banking practices (Mic. 2: 1-2; Is. 5: 8) quickly became entrenched, despite grave social crises (Amos 7:4-6) and trenchant prophetic critique (Jer. 6:16-26). Yet, in spite of these later compromises, the Exodus liberation experiment and its corresponding socio-economic norms were never entirely effaced from the traditions of Israel and became fertile in another moment of genius nearly a millennium later.

The Baptism and Burial of Christ

When Jesus takes up the catch phrase "Kingdom of God" as the watch word of his ministry, he is likely invoking the memory of the first 200 year period of Israel's experience when no one was king in the land except Yahweh²⁰, when the "rule of Yahweh" found socio-political expression in decentralized decision-making and socio-economic expression in equitable land tenure arrangements and cooperative village agriculture and pastoral activities.²¹ Indeed, Luke depicts the ministry of Jesus as a moment-by-moment "living" initiation of the Jubilee year release:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me...to announce a year of favor (jubilee year)." (Luke 4:18-19)

The socio-economic and religio-political strategy of Jesus only becomes clear, however, when we take stock of the context in which he was operating. First century Palestine was essentially a colonized "Third World" country. Roman administrative reorganization, Herodian expropriations of land, a double-barreled tax burden (Roman tax and Temple tax supporting the Jerusalem priestly aristocracy), and various crop failures and ecological crises (droughts, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.) had all combined to force many rural farmers into tenancy arrangements, dispossess many others, and concentrate economic assets in the hands of a few.²² Destitution and social restlessness were virtually pandemic.²³ The struggling lower and middle classes coped in various ways: diaspora emigration; Zealot "guerilla warfare"; brigandage; monastic (Essene) retreat to the wilderness; begging as a vocation; mental/spiritual breakdown (demon possession); and

prophetic resistance activity (the social movement of John the Baptist taken over by Jesus).²⁴ The majority lived only a small catastrophe's breadth away from utter ruin.

Rome ruled through the religious, intellectual and aristocratic "elites."²⁵ The legal rigorism promulgated in the countryside by the scribes and Pharisees provided the ideological justification for the privileged lifestyle of the Jerusalem priestly bureaucracy.²⁶ The masses of villagers were carefully structured into the religious system as a country "rabble" (John 7:49). They were despised as virtually illiterate in the ways of the Torah, stigmatized by some as "sinners" simply because of their destitution, but absolutely essential to the structure because of their annual tithes.²⁷

The orientation of Jesus in the context of this structure was clear-cut and decisive. In his baptism he demonstrated his option for the poor masses of the countryside who had rallied around John the Baptist as their religious leader of choice.²⁸ Under John's hand he not only opened himself providentially to the Spirit from on high; he also declared himself strategically in alignment with the marginalized down below. Henceforth, his context for doing ministry would be the struggle of the oppressed for survival and well-being. And his vital struggle for the religious poor would translate inevitably into a mortal struggle against the religious rich.²⁹

Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom set up three distinct groups in Israel in which he related on quite different bases.³⁰ The rich and powerful found themselves painfully surprised by Jesus' talk of reversal (Mk. 10:31; 12:1-12). Radical change was demanded of them (Lk. 18:18-30), curses were called down upon their heads (Lk. 6:24-25; Mt. 23:13-36), dinner parties became occasions of challenge (Lk. 7:36-50). If they allowed themselves to be moved in the direction of concrete sharing with the poor, they might even be affirmed (Lk. 10:25-37; 19:1-10).

The poor and marginalized, on the other hand, found themselves addressed as those to whom the kingdom belonged (Lk. 6:30). With them Jesus kept company (Mk. 3:20, 31-35); among them he did works of power (Mk. 1:40-45; 2:1-12); to them he looked for models of faithfulness (Mk. 5:24-34); upon them he depended for protection (Mk. 12:12; Lk. 19:46-47); and because of them he leapt for joy (Mt. 11: 25; Lk. 10:21). The "challenge" issued to them consisted primarily in "blessing" them (Mt. 19:3-15; Lk. 6:20-22), with shared meals and friendship (Lk. 15:1; 10: 38-42; Mk. 6:30-44; John 6:1-14).

The change called for amounted to "new hope"; confidence in themselves and belief in their worth to society. Would they lift up their heads and live now, in the present, the eschatological reversal of self-worth and social definition that was to come in the future (Lk. 1:46-55; 21:28).

Part and parcel of the strategy of Jesus among the oppressed was to open up new social space in which formerly muted needs could be expressed.³¹ Because of his capacity to listen "below the surface" to the painful stories of the poor and victimized (Mk. 5:25-34), it quickly became impossible for him to go anywhere without raising a ruckus (Mk. 10:46-52). His reputation preceded him: in every village on his circuit, the oppressed began to risk their cries for liberation. And throughout his ministry Jesus linked up such newly risked personal "words" with his own expression of compassionate healing (Mk. 10:51-52). Mysteriously, Kingdom "power" (including "miraculous" power) was

constituted as much by the faithful cries of the poor as by the responsive presence of Jesus himself (Lk. 19:39-40; Mt. 21:14-16).

From among either rich or poor, Jesus attempted to gather disciples (Mk. 10:17-31). This third group faced the most stringent demands of all. They were summoned to live as Jesus did—close to the bone (Mt. 6:25-33), on the run (Mk. 6:30-31; 7:24; John 7:1; Lk. 9:58), vulnerable to surveillance and public censure (Mk. 7: 1-5), often hungry (Mt. 12: 1-8), utterly dependent upon the poor themselves for sustenance (Mt. 10:5-15), ready to meet emergency needs and share cooperatively with the destitute (John 6:1-14), given over to organizing the masses and being consumed by their brokenness (Mk 6: 31-44), willing to deal with the stress of public confrontation and political realism (Mk. 8:31-38; 11:15-19), and even to begin to choke down their fears of prophetic destinies (Mk. 13:9; 14:26-31,31-38; John 15:18-27).

They were given one basic charge: to be about the prophetic task of attacking the ideological manipulation of raw human need under the guise of religion. They were to do this in the name of a God of liberation and healing and for the sake of a coming kingdom of justice and mercy (Mt. 10:5-15). In a word, they were to do what Jesus did and to anticipate ending as he ended: in both life and death, buried within the hopes and struggles of the poor. They were not only to experiment with new structures of living in the midst of the breach (Acts 2:44-45); they were to reconcile with the necessary fate of dying there (Lk. 13:33; Mk. 8:31; John 21:15-19).

The Future of the Church

In the first section we identified the biblical metaphor of the “breach” as the primary optic through which to focus our observations and briefly examined our own contemporary socio-economic crisis. In the next section we outlined two particularly cogent faith responses to social crisis as these have been preserved for us in the biblical witness. In this final section, we return to our introductory comments. Given our experience, in the light shed by our tradition, what concretely are we to do and what theologically is at stake?

The proposal Taking Action for Economic Justice issues as challenge to us to concretize our faith in action and highlights an avenue by which we may do so. In this final section, we want to focus on a theological assessment of what is at stake in both that challenge and that avenue, given our contemporary context and our biblical convictions.

The Challenge: A Question of Salvation (An “Option that is a Must”)

As a response to the working paper of the Urban Bishops’ Coalition, the proposal seeks to take seriously the bishops’ call for Christians to “commit themselves to a process of informing the conscience of society” about the paradox of a prosperity that generates poverty.”³² The language of “paradox” is simply a modern way of speaking of the biblical “breach.” Organized economic activity today is paradoxically disorganizing the social fabric; it has created and incessantly widens a breach. And such a situation demands a response of conscience.

At the heart of the proposal is a recognition that economic activity does not take place outside the realm of the human spirit and is not by any stretch of the imagination

“amoral” activity. Whether we desire it to be the case or not – or whether we are conscious of it or not – the economy is a realm of choice-making in which we both determine persons and decide destinies. At issue in our economic choices and experimentations is the ultimate allegiance of each of us as well as the proximate well-being, or even survival, of everyone else. The economy is an arena of fundamental moral and spiritual formation.

What is less explicit in the proposal but nonetheless part of its basic orientation towards reality is its ecclesiological implication. The Church is not merely being urged to do something herein, but to become something it has only managed to realize at particular moments of *kairos* in the past. It is being asked to clarify where it ultimately stands and for what it is willing to risk.

After noting that at one level the resolution amounts to a “fund drive” (page 21), the proposal goes on to assert that “it is also a call to the economically advantaged in the Church to become more engaged with the lower income community in its journey to equal opportunity within an insensitive system” (page 17). Later on it will add, “The more fully we enter into partnership with the marginalized, the more we will be enriched by their resources. The outreach to the have-nots of the world will be the criterion of salvation for the haves of this world” (Mt. 25: 31-46) (page 19).

It is here that we touch the central nerve of the entire proposal. Theologically speaking, what is at stake for the Church in the relationship to the poor is ultimately a question of the Church’s own salvation. Judging not only from Mt. 25 but from the entire biblical tradition and not least from the passionate public struggle of Jesus of Nazareth, the option for the poor is in reality a “must,” not an option.

At issue, however, is not only our willingness to reach out and help the disadvantaged but, even more critically, the development of our capacity to receive from them. Mark tells us that Jesus once interrupted an argument among the Twelve concerning who was the greatest with a kind of impromptu prophetic symbolic action in which he pulled a child into their midst, enfolded the child in his arms and said, “Whoever receives one such child into their midst, enfolded the child in his arms and said, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me” (Mk. 9: 33-37). When we remember that children in first century Palestine constituted the poorest of the poor, almost a sub-human category of person, we catch a glimpse of where and how Jesus thought authentic leadership was to be tested and measured. It was a question of reception. The challenge to the Twelve in their servant role as co-leaders of the poor masses with Jesus was to become vulnerable to them to the point of genuine interdependence. The masses were to become for the Twelve as they were for Jesus a primary sacramental reality (Mk. 25: 31-46) and a significant human community (Mk. 4: 31-35).

The proposal is mindful of the difficulty of the discipleship passage from mere condescension towards the poor to genuine partnership with them. It cautions that “churches and other supportive institutions tread a careful line as they assist but are careful not to take-over or co-opt these groups.” (page 18) The line envisioned here must without question be carefully traversed, for biblically it cuts straight through the heart of the Church and not between it and the poor. Ultimately, from a biblical perspective, “church” and “movements and organizations of the poor” are not distinct entities. In

tracing its roots back to both the liberation-birth of Israel and the prophetic community of Jesus of Nazareth, the Church as the People of God in history reveals itself as doubly constituted. When those who have embraced some measure of voluntary “spiritual” poverty (the vision of discipleship in Mt. 5:3) begin to take seriously those who have been forced into material impoverishment (the vision of discipleship in Mt. 5: 3) begin to take seriously those who have been forced into material impoverishment (the vision of discipleship in Lk. 6: 20), the conditions are ripe for “church” to happen.³³ If the people shaped by these two experiences collaborate together in a life and death struggle against the alienating grip of structural poverty, while continuing to honor the liberating value of voluntary “gospel” poverty, the kingdom explodes, healing begins to flow, the powers are challenged, accusations come down, crosses go up and resurrection breaks out. “Salvation” (from the Latin word *salvus*, “wholeness”) begins to materialize in history when the breach begins to be crossed over and occupied in the new religio-political and socio-economic reality called “church.”

[The Avenue: The Cooperative Structure and the Conversion Process](#)

At the heart, then, of the biblical vision of the People of God is the idea of a historical community living the eschatological reversal. “Church” is that human geography in which the rich own and live out their need for the poor and the poor discover and live out their gifts for the rich in the name of Jesus Christ. The fact that bifurcation rather than amalgamation characterizes the social make-up not only of society, but of the Church itself, highlights the need for conversion and pilgrimage on the part of the People of God. It is just this pilgrimage of faith and discipleship that the modern day cooperative movement can facilitate.

Cooperation, as either a process or structure, is by no means infallible. It is subject to manipulation and co-optation by the self-interested and the powerful as is any other system of getting things done. What it does provide for, however, that many other systems do not, is a structure of mutual influence and mutual vulnerability. It can allow rich and poor to come into relationship with each other without immediate colonization or instant passive-aggressive sabotage. Because it builds in a structural equality “up front,” to which both are accountable, it can become an arena of conversion for both. The rich can be opened up to the faith endowment and capacity for joy of the poor, and the poor to the expertise and know-how of the rich.

It is perhaps the metaphor of baptism that best illuminates the theological meaning of the potentialities the cooperative movement offers the Church. We could even go so far as to say the cooperative movement offers the Church. We could even go so far as to say the cooperative structure offers the community of the baptized the possibility of recapturing the meaning of their baptism. Baptism always has to do with solidarity and submission. In it, we decide with whom we will suffer and for whom we would be willing to die. It is always proximately embarrassing and ultimately regenerating. It implies a voluntary shrinking of space and potential – the taking upon oneself of a limitation – for the sake of a deeper spirituality and a broader justice.

In a sense, the poor of the land are already baptized; they are already on Calvary. The physical reality of the streets and the prisons and the psychological anxiety of insecurity bring them face-to-face with the questions of solidarity and death all the time. Quite

frequently, they already know for whom they would die and they certainly recognize with whom they are forced to suffer. Under the necessity of survival, they often experience and comprehend the meaning of community in ways that “font” or “pool” baptized Christians never begin to know. Already baptized into the suffering of Jesus, they long for even the vaguest glimmering of resurrection. The cooperative structure and process give them some small hope of coming up out of the water.

Cooperation then must never be understood as a new way for the Church to impose its agenda upon the poor. Understood under the aegis of baptism, however, it can become the sociological character of that sacrament made plain. It is a way for the Church to “go under” and come up not only “new” itself but in a new context. Authentic cooperation for the Church means stepping through a time-warp into the eschaton and through a culture-warp into the community of the awakening poor; it also means recognizing that faithfulness to that new baptismal reality will be judged by its arrival at the second baptismal moment: Calvary!!

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