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"A Classless Society?:" The Pneumatology of E. Stanley Jones in Conversation with Mortimer Arias’ Theology of the Kingdom of God

Abstract

This lecture addresses the pneumatology of E. Stanley Jones in conversation with Mortimer Arias’ theology of the kingdom of God. Jones was an advocate of what is known today in Latin America as mision integral. Integral mission seeks to restore every dimension of human life by requiring from Christians to be completely involved in the historical moment by the concrete demonstration of the power of the gospel in everyday life. Later, this understanding of mission was used in Bolivia to propagate the gospel under a brutal right-wing military regime by Bishop Mortimer Arias. Therefore, the kingdom of God as used by Jones and Arias was an encompassing eschatological reality that should be manifested in the present order by the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians.

Key Words: Pneumatology, Kingdom of God, Liberation Theology, Methodism, Latin American Methodism

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The first part of the title of this presentation evokes all kinds of questions and red alarms. "A Classless Society?" Names such as Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, and Mao Zedong come to mind. However, I wonder if Jesus Christ or the Early Church of Acts is part of that picture represented in the clause. In the 1930s, E. Stanley Jones thought it was. He earnestly believed that some aspects of Marxism were closer to the Kingdom of God than the great devour of capitalism. Thirty years after Jones somewhat positive assessment of Marxism, another Methodist missionary Bishop, Mortimer Arias, constructed a theology of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the revolutionary and volatile context of Latin America in the 1960s. My intention in this presentation is to describe and analyze how E. Stanley Jones used pneumatology in the formation of his theology of the kingdom of God and how Jones has influenced many Latin Americans, one example being Mortimer Arias. First, I will present the pneumatology of E. Stanley Jones and its contribution to theorizing the Kingdom of God in his theology in the 1930s. Second, I will describe and analyze the theology of the Kingdom of God of Mortimer Arias in the context of Latin America in the 1960s. Finally, I will make some suggestions for the contemporary church based on Jones and Arias contributions.

The Pneumatology of E. Stanley Jones: Theorizing the Kingdom of God

E. Stanley Jones is recognized today as one of the greatest North American Methodist missionaries of the twentieth century.2 His accomplishments have placed him in a league of his own. For example, Asbury Theological Seminary honored him by naming one of its schools the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism. The Foundation for Evangelism honored Jones by endowing Chairs of Evangelism in United Methodist Seminaries in the United States, Germany, Africa, and Russia under his name. Jones' granddaughter continues his legacy through the United Christian Ashrams and the E. Stanley Jones Foundation. However, as David Bundy warns us, “The myth of Jones as missionary, revolutionary statesman, charismatic speaker, best-selling author, and spiritual giant remains unexamined. Perhaps because of the superhuman image, Jones has been the subject of very little critical reflection and research.”3 One area in which Jones has not received any attention is his pneumatology. Jones pneumatology is of utmost importance because it is the cornerstone of his theology of the Kingdom of God. I will follow Bundy’s advise to read Jones in his own historical context, but more precisely, to see how the Kingdom of God was articulated in narratives in his life and how it is better to read and treasured Jones as the proto-liberation theologian of the Methodist tradition.4
The historical period under consideration is the decade of 1930 to 1940. Jones has been in India for over twenty-three years. His theological perspectives and evangelistic methods had gone through intense transformations. When Jones arrived in India in 1907, after graduating from Asbury College, his preaching and teaching were an invitation “into an individualistic and perfectionistic Kingdom of God.” His efforts in an ascetic form of evangelism in which prohibitions, discontinuity with the past, and strict orthodoxy, collapsed in front of him with the new Indian nationalism emerging at the period. Bundy states, “He had come to the hard-earned realization that an imperialistic alien Christianity rooted in disdain for India and for the Indian intelligentsia would not lead Indians to an experience of Christ.” After a year in furlough in the United States, Jones went back to India with uncertainty and great anxiety. But now, he realized that he has to take seriously Indian history, culture, and religions. He knew that he needed to change his evangelistic tactics, but did not know how to. It was through the Indian renaissance and nationalistic movements which pushed Indian theologians to think more in terms of their own cultures that Jones came to the realization that he needed to offer the experience of Christ to people instead of a Christ in Western form.

In his most acclaimed book, The Christ of the Indian Road, Jones presented the process of how Christ has been naturalized in India. By naturalization, Jones intended a definition similar to that of indigenization. Jones considered Jesus to be the highest expression of human perfection and revelation of God. He pointed out, “if God in character is like Jesus, he is a good God and trustable...We believe that God is Jesus everywhere and Jesus is God here—the human life of God.” Jones had an understanding of the supremacy and lordship of Jesus over all religious expressions and ideological aspirations. He wanted to present Christ apart from any influence of European imperialism. His efforts were directed to naturalize the name of Christ in Indian soil.

Another innovation was the theological Round Table Conferences for inter-religious dialogue with Hindus and followers of Islam. The conferences were designed to address the controversies of nationalism and colonialism. Jones gained the respect of many national leaders that were followers of Hinduism or Islam. At these meetings members of high castes were regularly present and they were very sympathetic towards the discipline, character, virtuosity, and devotion of Jesus Christ. For Jones, the encounter with adherents of other religious traditions confronted him with his own shortcomings and spiritual needs. He stated,

The valuable thing for us as Christians in the Round Table Conferences with non-Christians lay in the fact that we were compelled to rethink our problems in light of the religious
experience of non-Christians. So while these Conferences have been valuable in our approach to the non-Christian faiths, they have proved of even greater value to us in facing our own problems, spiritual and intellectual.21

Definitely, Jones has come a long way since his first arrival in India in 1907 when his “theology was neat and tied up with a blue ribbon—unchanging.”22 Now, one of his paradigms to change the structural problems of India and the world was a Hindu, Mahatma Gandhi and his theory of non-violent resistance. For Jones, Gandhi’s method was so effective that he thought it could prevent all future wars.23 Also in this period, Jones developed the Christian ashram. Ashrams in India originated in the late nineteenth century as nationalistic centers of Indian reform. Jones wanted the Christian ashram to be at the center of the nationalistic life of India to evangelize it. As Jones developed the Christian ashram based in the principles of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God ceased to be an individualistic concept and became a holistic tactic that embraced the whole human being.24 His missiological development in theorizing the kingdom of God as a historical proposal could be attributed to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

For Jones, the church of the 1930s was living a life behind closed doors. He compared it with the disciples after seeing the resurrected Jesus. They were still lacking courage to face the reality of the demands of the one they called Master. It was not until they received the promise of the Holy Spirit that they went out of the prayer house to confront the world with the message of Jesus as Christ. Living behind closed doors meant that the church was living between Easter and Pentecost. The church has embraced the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ but has not appropriated the story of Pentecost. Without incorporating the story of Pentecost, the church was living in the closed doors of fear. Jones pointed out, “The only power that could and did get them out from behind those closed doors and loose them and their message upon the world was Pentecost.”25

Jones believed that the Holy Spirit had a double function in the lives of Christian believers. First, using Acts 15:8-9 in which Peter says: “God, which knows the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith,” Jones considered the purification of the heart as one common element that united all Christians in their quest to know Jesus Christ. Second, building upon Acts 1:8, Jones believed that the Spirit gives power to witness for Christ from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.26 According to Jones, “The one (purification) is to supply my own need, the other (power) is to supply the needs of others.”27 As John Wesley, Jones believed that the Holy Spirit was not only the catalyst between God and humans, but herself the zeal of fellowship between the human and the
For example, one of the formative experiences of Jones with the Holy Spirit was in a prayer meeting with four classmates at Asbury College. He remembers in his autobiography, "I was filled—filled with the Holy Spirit. Wave after wave of the Spirit seemed to be going through me as a cleansing fire. I knew this was no passing emotion; the Holy Spirit had come to abide within me forever." The encounter with the cleansing fire of the Spirit provides the second assertion of Jones, now the believer is ready to receive the power of God for witness.

Jones evangelistic message was directed to human beings as a whole. He believed that the work of the Spirit in entire sanctification was conducive to a life of service. This term mentions the necessity of a state of grace that cleanses the heart from sin and fills it with perfect love. Jones believed that entire sanctification was the dominion of Christ in the soul. John Wesley saw entire sanctification as "pure love; love expelling sin, and governing the heart and life of a child of God." Christian perfection is therefore practical; for this reason Methodism has always emphasized social concern and action. Perfect love is a gift given for the purpose of serving others. In this sense, the concept of Christian perfection is closely related to that of social holiness by emphasizing the ethical demands of Christians who experienced the outpouring of the Spirit. Jones pointed out, "If it to be entire sanctification, it should begin at the individual man and go as far as his relationships—social, economic, racial, and interracial—extended." In this sense, the Spirit offers a new logic to engage the world and life as a Christian in it. The logic of the love of Christ pour in the soul by the power of the Spirit was the way of overcoming evil with good, hate by love; a life of inexhaustible forgiveness and love. Jones stated, "Pentecost is the Sermon on the Mount (Plane) become practicable." Here lies how he theorized the kingdom of God as a real alternative to any political, economic, and social system. Jones insisted that if Christians truly are possessed by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit would lead them to be more Christlike and to be more Christlike was to live in the fullness of the Spirit.

It was not after Jones visited Russia in 1934, that he developed the kingdom of God as an alternative social program to the needs of the world. Jones was deeply moved by the Russian experiment. He remembered the experience in his autobiography, "I had to go outside my native land to make a major discovery—the discovery of the kingdom of God. I found it, of all places, in Russia...I had always known it, but there it became vital and all-compelling. It possessed me. Russia had inwardly hit me hard." Jones saw in the Russian experiment the appearance of a new society; a society founded upon the higher principle of co-operation. He pointed out, "we are beginning to see that of all the outmoded conceptions selfish competition is the most outmoded. It simply will not fit this new world
which is striving to emerge.” Jones perceived that Marxism was a powerful challenger to Christianity. For him the only way to get ahead was not through ideological argumentations, but rather, an even better world order, a new reality rooted in the kingdom of God.

After his visit to Russia, Jones was so moved or tormented that during his trip back home while reading at night, he heard the “Inner Voice” raising the question of whether or not he should write an interpretation of the Christian message in light of the Communist challenge. He went straight to the Ashram at Sal Tal in the Himalayas where with a group of one hundred people debated for months a Christian alternative to the message of Russian Communism. The end product was Christ’s Response to Communism. Jones saw serious problems in the Russian experiment such as “lack of liberty, its compulsions, its ruthlessness, and its materialistic atheism,” but those problems were overpowered by the quest of “a classless society,” a society founded in cooperation. It is not that suddenly Jones is a Red Commie. He just wonders if capitalism fit into a cooperative system? If it could, Jones admitted that he would be very happy because he was not committed to any alternative system. However, he was very critical of the system and doubted that it will ever change. He pointed out, “Adam Smith and his Manchester school of economics promised that the laissez-faire doctrine would work out for the good of the greatest number. It has not. It cannot. It has left us with a world half overfed and the other half underfed.” He even called for a clear separation between Christianity and capitalism, something that today looks like anathema for some Christian conservatives. He pointed out, Christianity must, on no account, be considered bound up with capitalism and its destinies, for it was here long before capitalism arose, and it will be here long after it has been changed; or, if it cannot be changed, then supplanted by a juster social order.

Because Jones perceived Pentecost to be the Sermon of the (Mount) Plane made practicable, he took Jesus first appearance after being tempted in the desert by the Devil as his starting point for the social agenda of the kingdom of God on earth. Ironically, the evangelical Jones used the gospel of Luke 4:16-20 as starting point some thirty years before Roman Catholic Latin American liberation theologians used it to launch their criticisms against systems that perpetuate poverty. Jones did not spiritualize the story of the preaching of Jesus to the poor, but rather, internalized it as the only way to move forward with the message of salvation. He pointed out,

Necessities should be provided for all, before luxury is provided for any. Economically, the first concern for this new Kingdom is for the poor, not that they should be comforted by promises of future rewards to be content now, but that poverty should
be banished by providing for the poor the good things that
God has provided for all.\textsuperscript{52}

The Marxist slogan “to each according to his/her needs” was penetrating
Jones’ inner core. For him, the church should have a better solution to solve
the economic inequalities of the day by promoting programs of cooperation.
The Lord’s Year of the Jubilee would be incorporated as a new beginning on
a world scale. It would be more radical than Marxism because it would cancel
all debts and the redistribution of land and goods would be distributed to
each according to his/her need. Jones went even further, he argued, “I am
persuaded that if Christianity were really applied again, it would result in
some form of collective sharing akin to Communism.”\textsuperscript{33}

However, we have to remember that all these proposals were
accomplishable through the economy of the Spirit in restoring all things to
the one God, Jesus/Christ. This was the program of the kingdom of God.
It was a historical manifestation of the grace of Jesus/Christ in the here/
now, and not an eschatological pie in the sky. Jones argued, “It meant
nothing less than replacing this present unworkable world order, based on
greed and selfishness, with God’s order. That is radicalism, beneficent,
blessed radicalism.”\textsuperscript{34} Because of this blessed radicalism, Stephen A. Graham
has interpreted Jones as constructing a totalitarian type of theocracy.
Graham argued, “Jones’ published writings and his involvement in political
events and issues throughout his life were informed by a consistent political
philosophy, a philosophy of the totalitarian kingdom of God.”\textsuperscript{35} I am not
that enthusiastic in reading Jones as a political philosopher because he was
simply not one. I think that it is better to read him as an evangelist who was
trying to respond to the challenges of Russian communism with a program
of social restoration based in the pneumatological construction of the reign
of God. I have to found yet where Jones wanted to established a Christian
political party or a Christian theocracy in is writings. When Jones brings
attention to the totalitarian kingdom of God, he is making the illogical
assertion that love will conquer evil, meekness will triumph over war, and
the demands of Jesus as king will subvert the current system to a system
rooted in the story of Pentecost and the purifying and empowering presence
of the Spirit in the Christian community.

**Mortimer Arias’ Theology of the Kingdom of God**

Mortimer Arias was born in Durazno, Uruguay. He converted at an
eyear age. He was called to ministry and received his first appointment as
pastor in the Methodist Church of Uruguay. After a long pastorate in
Uruguay, Arias was appointed a missionary to Bolivia by the World Methodist
Council in 1962. He became the first Bishop of the Bolivian Methodist
Church and served in that post until the political situation forced him into
exile in 1980 after spending some time in jail.36 Arias studied in the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, known today as ISADET, and at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, Texas. He was the main speaker of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi, Kenya in 1975. He also was a visiting professor at the Claremont School of Theology and Iliff School of Theology in the 1980s while also serving as President of the Latin American Biblical University in San Jose, Costa Rica.

When Arias arrived in Bolivia in 1962, the situation was as in much of Latin America, a continent going through rapid social changes, revolutions, counter-revolutions, and military dictatorships. Reform in modern society have led to a prelude either of stability or revolution. In Latin America, when a government (mostly military socialist) demanded more economic equality or agrarian reforms, most often the reaction from Conservatives was to unite forces with factions of the military and endeavor a coup d'état thus giving back power to the oligarchies and military regimes. Bolivia is no different. In 1951, Victor Paz Estenssoro of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, won the democratic elections. The oligarchy was terrified. Estenssoro’s victory was equated with Communism and the election was stolen away from the NRM. President Urriolagoitia resigned and turned the government to the chief of the army, General Ovidio Quiroga. General Quiroga annulled the elections and appointed a military cabinet with General Hugo Ballavian as interim President. These events meant that two decades of reforms would be overturned, and the path to equality blocked by the oligarchy and enforced by the arm forces. Disgusted with endemic corruption, economic inequality, and injustice, new coalitions were formed and a new majority found its voice through the National Revolutionary Movement. On April 9, 1952, the NRM has retaken power from the military junta. The three central goals of the NRM were universal suffrage, nationalization of the mines, and land reform. Waltraud Morales argues that “in this most fundamental level, the NMR social revolution was a success: the nationalists, labor left wing, and the miner’s union realized the nationalization of the mines; the peasants and indigenous communities achieved the passage of land reform; and the majority of Bolivia’s dispossessed experienced meaningful citizenship and full voting rights.”39 The NRM ruled for twelve years until 1964 when a right wing military counterrevolution took place in which a ravaged militarism lasted another eighteen years. It is in this context of rapid social, political, cultural, and economic changes that Mortimer Arias ministered in Bolivia.

Arias developed a public ministry articulated in his evangelistic vision of giving “the whole gospel, for the whole person, for the whole society, for the whole world.”40 This evangelistic mission that began with his publication of “Bolivia: Manifesto to the Nation” and “Bolivian Theses on Evangelization
in Latin America Today," and culminated on his book *Announcing the Reign of God*, were crucially influenced by the theology of the kingdom of God of E. Stanley Jones. Arias recounts, "Since the time of my conversion, I have been haunted by the subject of the kingdom of God, for about that time I read E. Stanley Jones for the first time and I continued to read his works in my seminary days and in the beginning of my ministry in my native Uruguay." For example, in "Bolivia: Manifesto to the Nation," Bishop Arias advocated the liberation of all Bolivian people from the structures of oppression that dehumanized them. For Arias, the most important thing was how to give witness to Jesus Christ and how the church could be incarnated in the cultures of that nation. The document reads, "Our reason for existing is found in Jesus Christ. It has to do with a liberation to salvation, which extends to all aspects of man, his soul and his eternal destiny and also his historical, material, individual and social being. God is interested in all of life and not only in part of it. This is the message of the Bible which we proclaim and desire to incarnate." As attested in this quote, as Jones, Arias believed that the gospel penetrates all aspects of human existence. For this reason, the "Manifesto" was a harsh criticism against the revolutionary military regime, but also offered words of praises for the good things the government was doing:

As Christians and Bolivian citizens there are some aspects of our present government that concern and disturb us; the excessive placing of military personnel in the key posts of all areas of government and the always latent risk of drifting toward messianism and military fascism, the lack of participation of the people even at municipal level, the partial suppression of the Constitution and the absence of a representative legislative organism... We sincerely recognize a highly positive balance in the present revolutionary government. We support those measures as the nationalization of our natural resources, the repealing of the Law of State Security and Regulation of Unions, the withdraw of the armed forces from the mines and the restitution of workers who had been dismissed for political reasons..."

We have to understand that this holistic understanding of evangelism was conducive to the formation of a complete human being in the image of Christ. Someone who would recognize Christ as supreme Lord over all political and ideological regimes, but at the same time, would feel compel by the grace of God poured through the Spirit to seek the poorest of the poor. We have to take into consideration also that the "Manifesto" was read first by Arias and a group of Methodist Christians to the President of Bolivia and a General of the armed forces in times of political repression.
For Arias the kingdom of God was more Christological than pneumatological. He barely made the connection of Pentecost as a continuation of the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Nevertheless, Arias as Jones, presented an interpretation of evangelism using the reign of God as locus. For Arias, the kingdom of God was the central theme in the devoted life of the preacher from Nazareth. Jesus was the incarnate Word of God who came to announce the kingdom of the Father. In doing so he proclaimed a kingdom of peace and love. The kingdom comes as a gift that can be approached by everybody. It is a kingdom of love in which God is depicted as "motherly tenderness" and "long-suffering parenthood." The virtue of the kingdom of God as a gift is that it is a present reality. Arias pointed out, "the announcement of forgiveness in the reign of God is an act of total liberation." This act of total liberation is represented by the incorporation of the sinner in the affairs of the community. Therefore, as Arias argued, the kingdom of God is life. Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom was a restoration of life for those who listen and follow his teachings. The message of the kingdom as proclaimed by Jesus brought forgiveness of sins, life, restoration, and fellowship in community. This holistic framework of the announcement and establishment of the kingdom of God is the presence of God in our midst through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Arias argued that to announce the kingdom as gift involves telling the old story of Jesus and his love for humankind. It is proclaiming grace and forgiveness to a world that is immersed in selfishness and sin. The proclamation of the kingdom as gift is the assurance of God’s restoring power to humanity. For Arias, once humanity and the church have accepted the kingdom as gift a new dimension in evangelization will emerge as compassion. He stated, "there is no evangelization, no real sharing of the good news, without compassion." Compassion will be the key element in any evangelistic effort. For Arias, compassion needs to be directed to the less fortunate of society, those sinned against. In offering the kingdom of God as gift, Arias proposed a new way of considering the Lord’s Supper. For him, the Supper was an open invitation to those who needed acceptance and restitution and the most powerful evangelistic event in Christian congregations.

Arias believed that part of the problem that Christianity faces in constructing a theology of evangelization has to do with its defective understanding of eschatology. For Arias, the theme of the kingdom has a double function: announcement and denunciation. He stated that "to evangelize is to announce the coming kingdom, the kingdom of peace and justice, of love and life, the consummation of God’s purpose of love with humanity and his universe." Therefore, to announce the kingdom as hope means to fulfill the ministry of denunciation. Annunciation and denunciation are intrinsically connected
with the message of restoration of the kingdom of God. In this sense, the kingdom of hope becomes an instrument of judgment. Announcing the kingdom of God as hope will fulfill the ministry of consolation. There are millions of people living improbable lives in need of consolation. The church is called to be that agency that fulfills the special task of consoling the marginalized of society.

Arias invited his audience to enter in a new dimension of discipleship and evangelization. The process of discipleship is a total surrender to the will of God as portrayed in the preacher from Nazareth. Jesus gave himself for the cause of humanity in self-denial and sacrifice, announcing the kingdom and denouncing the anti-kingdom. His life is a challenge to those who pretend to be his disciples without following his footsteps. Kingdom evangelization is a challenge to every believer to enter into a new dimension of self-sacrifice and denial.

Conclusion

You might ask, so what? What does a missionary/evangelist of the 1930s and another from the 1960s can teach us about how to live a Christian life in a neo-capitalist society. The Cold War is over. Capitalism has become for many an omnipotent, omnipresent god. Free-markets, free-enterprise, and competition rule the atmosphere of the globe with impunity and disdain. In the late 1980s, Francis Fukuyama even welcomed the new era with open arms and baptized it as "the end of history." By placing liberal democracies as the incontestable victor over all forms of human economic and political systems, Fukuyama shut down not only any alternative solution on how to organize society, but also, all sources of criticisms against the current system. Indeed, according to Rob van Drimmelen, "economics is sometimes presented in quasi-religious terms." The classical example of a theologian legitimizing and creating a Christian dogmatic interpretation of democratic capitalism is the Roman Catholic ethicist Michael Novak. For Novak, democratic capitalism has its own theological presuppositions, values, and systemic intentions all combined in a "market economy, a polity respectful of the rights of the individual to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and a system of cultural institutions moved by ideals of liberty and justice for all." Novak sees the Trinitarian understanding of God as plural as an imperative to understand democratic capitalism: "I find attractive and resonant with dark illumination—a political economy differentiated and yet one. Each of its component systems has a certain autonomy from the others; each system is interdependent with the others. Each has its distinctive operations, methods, rules. Each tames and corrects and enhances the others." Not only Novak applies to democratic capitalism the doctrine of the Trinity, but also, the incarnation and original sin. Brazilian-Korean theologian and
economist, Jung Mo Sung argues that "if capitalism has an endogenous theology, it must share fundamental characteristics with all religions. This entails the promise of paradise; the notion of original sin, and the way, as well as the price, to pay (the necessary sacrifices) for reaching paradise."\(^5^3\) Here lies the attraction for many people who see the free-market with salvific eyes. For Novak, corporations are the new incarnational life of God in the world. Novak builds on the imagery of Isaiah 53: 2-3 which presents the Messiah as deformed, despised by all, with no beauty, rejected and scorned, to represent the modern corporation. He points out, "I would like to apply this words to the modern business corporation, a much despised incarnation of God's presence in this world."\(^5^4\) In this sense, corporations become the agents of God's grace in the world. Novak sees seven signs of grace in corporations: creativity, liberty, birth and mortality, social motive, social character, insight, and the rise of liberty and election.\(^5^5\)

The theology of the corporation is representative of the Church in the world. As the Church is call to be the first-fruits of the kingdom, the corporation is call to be the redemptive agency of God in the world.\(^5^6\) Supposedly, because of their redemptive grace, corporations "lift the poor, create a broad middle class, and undermine aristocracies of birth."\(^5^7\) What the statement does not tell us is that democratic capitalism is usurping the throne of God by implementing the promises that Christianity made for the afterlife in the present.\(^5^8\) This irrational logic of continual sacrifices means that the poor and excluded would never see the promised land of unlimited wealth. But as recent events has shown us with the Occupy Wall Street Movement, people are starting to perceived economic inequality as what truly is, an imposition by the aristocracy, an evil to be confronted. One good example could be the denunciation of the 2012 budget presented by Republican Congressman Paul Ryan by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Bishops categorically denied that the Ryan budget is following Catholic social teachings by denouncing its cuts for the most vulnerable of our society and condemning it as failing the moral criteria of the Roman Catholic Church.\(^5^9\)

I think that the teachings of Jones and Arias about the kingdom of God are pertinent and challenging to the contemporary church. Both of these evangelists expound the theme of the kingdom of God as locus theologicus. We should embrace their teachings and put the kingdom of God at the center of our ecclesiastical agenda. The kingdom of God offers an evangelistic testimony of ethical decisions in front of the church. A church filled with the power of the Spirit would be a church that is constantly announcing the kingdom of God as a gift, as hope, and as challenge. She would not sell herself to the highest bidder, but rather, would be incarnated in the contextual reality she is addressing. It would not opt for a political

regime, but would work within any system to bring the light and salt of Jesus Christ to the situation. An ecclesiology that is oriented towards the kingdom would have the values of the kingdom in her inner being. The values of the kingdom as testified by Jesus would always start by remembering that the Spirit of the Lord is in the church to proclaim the Gospel to the poor, to proclaim freedom to the prisoners, and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the Year of the Lord’s Jubilee.

Endnotes

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SANTIANO-VENDRELL: “A Classless Society?”

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28 E.S. Jones, Christ’s Alternative, 17.
29 E.S. Jones, Christ’s Alternative, 15.
30 E.S. Jones, Christ’s Alternative, 27.
31 E.S. Jones, Christ’s Alternative, 166-167.
32 E.S. Jones, Christ’s Alternative, 55.
33 E.S. Jones, Christ’s Alternative, 165.
34 E.S. Jones, A Song, 153.
39 W.Q. Morales, A Brief History, 142.
45 M. Arias, Announcing, 69.
46 M. Arias, Announcing, 78.
47 M. Arias, Announcing, 87.
48 M. Arias, Announcing, 89.


55 M. Novak, Toward a Theology, 37-43.

56 M. Novak, Toward a Theology, 54.

57 M. Novak, Toward a Theology, 51.

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