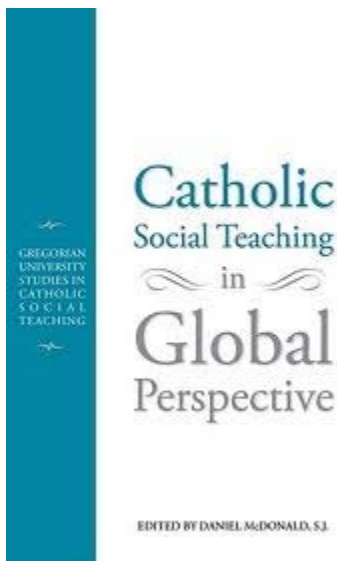


*Catholic Social Teaching in Global Perspective*, edited by Daniel McDonald, SJ, for the series "Gregorian University Studies in Catholic Social Teaching," Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010. ISBN 978-1-57075-896-6



by Fr. Anthony Estabrooks

*Catholic Social Teaching in Global Perspective* is a recent collection of academic essays by six very experienced and competent contributors, who are both thoroughly immersed in Roman Catholic social teaching and represent the engagement of this teaching from within the context of major different cultures world-wide.

We are informed in the introduction that "This volume of essays is the second in a new series on the social teaching of the Catholic Church in relation to various geographical and cultural contexts". The question posed for contributors was: "How can you reflect on your particular continent and its 'culture' in order to best apply . . . CST in your area of the world?" (p. x).

The first essay puts forth a challenge to traditional emphases on viewing social realities and culture “from above;” that is, in terms of religion and eternity, while providing a critique of social, economic and political realities and practices which violate social justice and the common good, but largely ignoring reflective, artistic, and popular elements of culture as themselves providing expressions, or means of shaping our understanding of the good already present in cultures “from below.”

Though these are academic papers, with only general reference to “grassroots” practical activities, or brief listing of examples of such in settings around the world, there are many intriguing, insightful, and seminal thoughts in these essays regarding what one might call indigenous input to the expression of Roman Catholic social teaching.

This volume is a significant resource in thinking about diversity and feedback within the global context at a time when the globalization and integration of political, social, economic, cultural and other aspects of human existence is developing rapidly through the implementation of the paradigm of the technological mastery of creation and human affairs from beyond the limitation of any concept of good and evil, or of any purpose in creation and human life.

Beside the question as to of what Catholic Social Teaching is, some considerations raised for this reviewer through these essays are the following: to what extent is the Roman Catholic Church intimately linked with the expanding global culture and trying to be its religious face? Why is the Church herself, in her own life and reality, not considered as the primary witness to the new creation and an embodiment of the eternal presence (“from above”), with its affirmation of human life, but its transformation of human reality (“from below”)? Why is there constant reference in each document to papal promulgations on the issues, but virtually no reference to the

transforming presence and power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the Church's life and witness as Christ's Body as a living expression of the new creation in a world whose forms are passing away? Similarly, why is Holy Scripture, as the core of Tradition, and the whole history of the Church's penetration of cultures and sanctifying them, not drawn upon as a guide in our current global context?

It seems to me that, in the context of these essays, with variations, these questions listed above might be posed to good purpose also within Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism.

These essays certainly are provocative and challenging regarding the Church's response to the world and participation in it. They might also be effectively used to re-consider what the Church is, and her importance as witness to the central place of, and possibility for, the renewal of all creation.

*About the author:* Father Anthony (Spencer) Estabrooks, MA, MDiv, is Director of St. Arseny Orthodox Christian Theological Institute, and the pastor of the Theotokos of the Life-Giving Spring Parish in Winnipeg, Manitoba.