
DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION AND THE CHURCH OF THE UNITED NATIONS

By James P. Kelly, III*

Competition among the diverse values systems developed over time to create and maintain social order results in what the author terms “democratic evolution.” Since the early part of the nineteenth century, social scientists have developed different ethical systems for promoting social order at the level of the nation-state. However, recent advancements in technology and communications have made it easier to develop and disseminate ideas and to organize activities on a global basis. These developments have prompted the United Nations, international human rights treaty bodies, and non-governmental organizations to construct and promote a human rights-based “Religion of Humanity.”

This article describes this notion of democratic evolution; highlights the philosophical foundations of this Religion of Humanity; explains how the “Church of the United Nations” promotes various humanist values systems; describes its ecclesiastical features; explains the nature and drawbacks of normative imperialism; and describes the threat that these developments pose to democratic evolution at the national level.

DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION

Democratic evolution is marked by the articulation of philosophical views about the ideal social order that, over time, are embraced by political leaders, government officials, and the general public. As these philosophical ideas are debated among citizens in private and, ultimately, in the political process, they coalesce into identifiable values-systems that, because of their relation to the human person and society, have become known as “humanist.” Ultimately, courts are called upon to determine the propriety or limits of each new humanist values-system. These court battles establish a legal framework for further social evolution.

Although there are different varieties of humanism, in general, each of the humanist movements embodies “the perennial need of human beings to find significance in their lives, to integrate their personalities around some clear, consistent and compelling view of existence, and to seek definite and reliable methods in the solution of their problems.”¹ The Democratic Evolution Paradigm that follows is an attempt by the author to stimulate thought, speculation, and debate regarding the unfolding of different humanist movements throughout the modern democratic experiences of Western civilization.

The author has identified and classified the appearance of different humanist movements based on their defining value and goals; *to wit*:

Deistic Humanism. The idea that there is one God responsible for creating a human person vested with certain inalienable rights that, when properly exercised consistent with the motives written by the Creator on the human heart, further

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*James P. Kelly, III is the Director of International Affairs for The Federalist Society and, in that capacity, represents the organization on the United States National Commission for UNESCO.

the cause of social order. To stimulate citizen remembrances of the divine source of their rights, government officials promote “ceremonial” deism in the form of the placement of copies of the Ten Commandments in schools, courthouses, and other public meeting places.

Civic Humanism. The idea that social order is rooted in love of country and that the state should stimulate allegiance to the nation among citizens who, if necessary, are prepared to sacrifice themselves for their fellow citizens and country. Federal, state, and local government officials implement oaths, pledges, and school exercises that are designed to build allegiance to the State. Government officials limit or ban political speech that, in their opinion, threatens the public order.

Social Humanism. The idea that improvement in the lives of the lowest and most numerous class of citizens depends on the abilities, educational training, and work of an elite intellectual and creative class of individuals who should be supported by the State. In an effort to improve the lives of citizens in lower and middle-income classes, the government creates programs for the delivery of information and services.

Scientific Humanism. The idea that social order depends on the application of evidence-based scientific principles to the problems of human development and social life. The highest-profile battle over the implementation of the scientific humanist approach in education has arisen in connection with the teaching of evolution in public schools.

Secular Humanism. The idea that traditional theistic religious beliefs, sacraments, and practices are false and that the state should actively expunge such traditions from the public square for the betterment of mankind through rational thought and proven practices. In their attempt to achieve a “naked” public square, secular humanists seek to eliminate prayer and other religious expression from public schools and other public meeting places.

Ethical Humanism. The idea that humans require a non-theistic moral and ethical values system upon which they can rely in order to bring justice and peace to the world. Ethical humanists believe that individuals can, and should, develop a moral or ethical self without relying on a personal relationship with God or a reference to Christianity or other theistic religions.

Democratic Humanism. The idea that positive human development can only be achieved through the availability and exercise of civil and political rights which, in turn, advance the economic, social, and cultural rights of citizens in a way that secures social order and brings about prosperity. In an attempt to promote the inclusion of diverse, often minority, viewpoints in the democratic process, government officials use public funds to sponsor political discourse.

Evolutionary Humanism. The idea that a person’s pursuit of global peace is a natural outgrowth of his or her biological hardwiring and inclinations, and that humans, through rational

thought and scientific practical and moral principles, are entirely responsible for their fate. Privacy rights are foundational to evolutionary humanism.

Integral Humanism. The idea that the human person consists of both supernatural and temporal elements, and that a person's faith is an integral part of all aspects of his or her daily life. Integral humanists, including, but not limited to, Christian humanists, believe that the state should adopt policies that, at a minimum, do not discriminate against the theistic world view, and, at best, neutrally support the voluntary engagement by citizens in private and public religious activities that promote justice and peace.

Democratic evolution consists of the development of, and movement to and through, these various forms of humanism. It originates in a revolution against the imposition of authoritative values. This revolution results in the articulation of values reflecting the rights inherent in each person. Over time, immigrants introduce their values-systems to the existing social order. Government authorities use the state's educational system to indoctrinate the new citizens in the "accepted" civil religion. As the rate of urbanization increases, the government finds it necessary to become even more deeply involved in securing social order by prescribing educational, health,

marriage, childrearing, psychological, environmental, and moral practices and remedies. These prescriptions lead to discrimination that suppresses the traditional religious values, expression, and practices of the lower and middle classes. As a means of justifying such discrimination, government authorities and social scientists explain that the only acceptable remedial practices are those based in experimentation and science. An exclusive focus on scientific reason, rather than a balanced approach based in faith and reason, leads to materialism. Soon, citizens unbridled by the limits of traditional religion adopt a secularist, relativist approach to life. In the face of a decline in civic values and civility, government officials use the state educational system to introduce a non-theistic ethical religion

(i.e., character education or human rights education) to replace traditional religious values. Now skeptical about the intentions and educational practices of the government, traditionally religious citizens reject government attempts to indoctrinate their children in a "politically correct" moral and ethical code. Instead, to protect the free expression of their religious and other viewpoints, these citizens demand equal access to the public square and to the public treasury. All citizens, secular and religious, become free to develop themselves in accordance with the dictates of their consciences. The battle ground then shifts from a "statist" attempt to establish social order to a competitive "culture war" between those who desire to maximize individual autonomy and happiness through the promotion and protection of privacy rights and those who desire to maximize social solidarity by using the democratic process to peacefully persuade

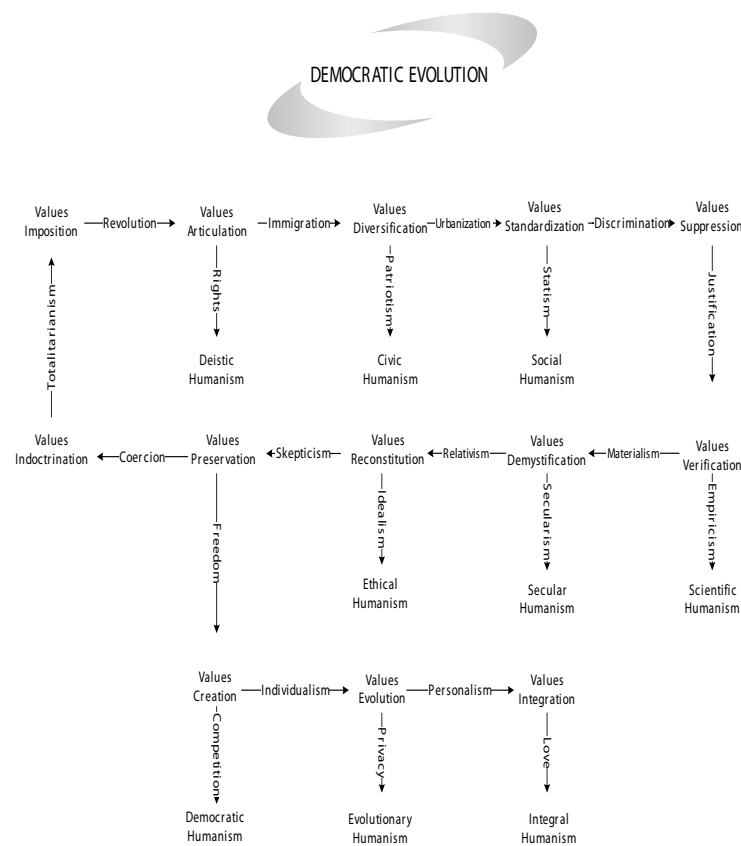
their fellow citizens to embrace a message of faith in God and love for others.

Although most people would hope otherwise, the possibility exists that citizens or nations can regress along the path of democratic evolution. There is always the temptation to adopt authoritarian policies and laws that are viewed as a necessary solution to social unrest, or to even mere social discord.

At its core, democratic evolution is a religious process touching on what one theologian referred to as one's "ultimate concern," a definition of religion subsequently

acknowledged by the United States Supreme Court.² Under such an interpretation, because democracy is a process through which citizens pursue their ultimate concerns, democracy is a religious undertaking.

In essence, democratic evolution is the outcome of each citizen, alone or together with like-minded citizens, attempting to persuade others to share his or her ultimate concern or concerns. This reality raises two important issues. First, it is critical to realize those instances where one has left the realm of persuasive speech or association and moved into the realm of coercive, anti-democratic speech or association. Second, if the government decides to limit coercive religious or political expression, one must determine whether such restrictions



are legal. For example, in Europe, any restriction on the association rights of individuals or groups must be “necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”³

The investigation as to whether a citizen or group of citizens is using coercive, rather than persuasive, means to realize his, her, or its ultimate concerns is a factual one. It involves a thorough examination of the expressed philosophies, policies, and practices of individuals and their religious or political associations.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE UN’S RELIGION OF HUMANITY

The Church of the United Nations practices a Religion of Humanity that is inspired by the Religion of Humanity of early French social scientists who sought a means to replace the moderating influence on society that was lost by the rejection of traditional Christianity. The French social scientist Count Claude Henri de Rouvroy de Saint-Simon was the first person to attempt the synthesis of religion and social science. Late in his career, Saint-Simon realized that, absent a religious instinct on the part of the masses, a purely scientific approach to restoring social order in early nineteenth-century France was doomed to failure. Convinced that historic Christianity had run its course and would be unable to adapt itself to the needs of the new society, Saint-Simon proposed his New Christianity to remind men “of the interests common to all members of society, of the common interests of the human race.”⁴

The key features of Saint-Simon’s New Christianity included:

1. New Christianity is to direct humanity toward the rapid betterment of the condition of the poorest and most numerous class of society;
2. Worship should be regarded only as a means of reminding men of philanthropic feelings and ideas; and dogma should consist only as a collection of commentaries aimed at the general application of these feelings and ideas to political developments, or encouraging the faithful to apply moral principles in their daily relationships;
3. Nations must abandon their own interests and adhere to principles of a universal morality which promotes the good of the whole human race;
4. Scientists, artists, and industrialists should be made the managing directors of the human race; and
5. Any theology that tries to teach men that there is any other way of obtaining eternal life except that of working for the improvement of the conditions of human life should be condemned.

In 1825, Saint-Simon died before fully articulating his vision for New Christianity. Nevertheless, his followers, the Saint-Simonians, spent the seven years following Saint-Simon’s death advancing his vision for a scientifically-planned society the members of which would be inspired by New Christianity.

On June 1, 1825, a group of young French technocrats formed the Saint-Simonian Society and began to publish a weekly journal, *Le Producteur*, the focus of which was to apply the scientific knowledge of competent experts to the solution of social problems. After suspension of the *Producteur* in October, 1826, the members of the Saint-Simonian Society engaged in a more precise formulation of Saint-Simonian theory which was expounded in a series of public lectures held biweekly after December 17, 1828. These lectures became known as the *Doctrine of Saint-Simon: An Exposition. First Year, 1828-29*.

The *Doctrine* critically examined the structure of contemporary European society and proposed a program for total social reorganization. The later lectures contained in the *Doctrine* tended to subordinate the earlier scientific and industrial interests to religious and political interests. As the Saint-Simonians expressed in the Tenth Session (May 6, 1829):

Without those sympathies that unite man with his fellow-men and that make him suffer their sorrows, enjoy their joys, and live their lives, it would be impossible to see in societies anything but aggregations of individuals without bonds, having no motive for their actions but the impulses of egoism.⁵

By 1829, Saint-Simon’s followers had established a hierarchically organized Saint-Simonian church for the practice of a religion of humanity.

But it was the social scientist Auguste Comte, a former assistant and silent collaborator of Saint-Simon, who developed what came to be known as the Religion of Humanity. After Saint-Simon’s death, Comte briefly contributed to the work of the Saint-Simonian movement; however, he quickly separated himself from the movement as it took on a religious nature. During 1830 to 1842, Comte produced his six volume *Cours de philosophie positive*. The *Cours* attempted to synthesize the studies of individual scientists by identifying the essence of each branch of science and arranging it into a hierarchy of complexity. The hierarchy was designed to prove that each branch of science had progressed from a theological state into a metaphysical and, then, into a positive state. Religion and sentiment were banished from Comte’s new body of positive knowledge. During this stage of his career, Comte was recognized as the ultimate fulfillment of the eighteenth-century ideal of materialism.⁶

Ultimately, however, Comte followed the pattern of other social scientists, who, when frustrated by the apathy shown by the general population toward their secular theories for the material improvement of humanity, resort to coercive religious values systems and values to inspire the social sentiments of mankind. In his *Système de politique positive* produced from 1851 through 1854, Comte proclaimed love as the motive force of mankind. He developed a special calendar for his Religion of Humanity complete with earthly saints and ritual observances in celebration of human progress. In his view, sentiments and the imagination moved mankind to action; and religious faith was the force that would bring intellectual and moral unity to humanity. In 1852, he produced his *Catéchisme positiviste* that reduced his system of positive religion into principles of faith that could be referred to by the masses.

THE CHURCH OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Similar in spirit and purpose to the attempts of Saint-Simon, the Saint-Simonians, and Comte, the Church of the United Nations seeks to secure human security for all people. According to the Commission on Human Security, which laid the foundation for the United Nations human security agenda:

Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.⁷

Human security encompasses all human rights, including civil and political rights, which protect people, and economic, social and cultural rights, which empower people. Protection strategies attempt to shield people from menace. Empowerment strategies attempt to enable people to develop their resilience to difficult conditions. According to the Commission, both strategies are required in nearly all situations of human insecurity, though their form and balance will vary tremendously.

In the Commission's opinion, although the state remains the primary source of security, it often fails to fulfill its security obligations and, at times, has even become a source of threat to its own people. In the Commission's view, human security complements state security by enhancing human rights and strengthening human development. By enhancing human rights, human security seeks to protect people against a broad range of threats to individuals and communities. By strengthening human development, human security seeks to empower them to act on their own behalf.⁸

In May 2004, the United Nations established the Human Security Unit ("HSU") within the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The overall objective of the HSU is to place human security in the mainstream of UN activities.

At its core, the Church of the United Nations and its Religion of Humanity consist of the confluence and pursuit of the following humanist ideas:

1. The *social humanist* idea that improvement in the lives of the lowest and most numerous class of citizens depends on the abilities, educational training, and work of an elite intellectual and creative class of individuals who should be supported by the state. In spreading its Religion of Humanity, the Church of the United Nations relies on a global network of official experts from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ("UNESCO"); the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the international human rights treaty bodies that it supports; the United Nations Development Programme; and the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the non-governmental organizations that have consultative status with it. This elite intellectual and creative class of individuals seeks to improve the lives of the lowest and most numerous

class of citizens through the pursuit of its human rights, development, and "social transformations" agenda.

2. The *scientific humanist* idea that social order depends on the application of evidence-based scientific principles to the problems of human development and social life. This idea is promoted by the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology ("COMEST") which UNESCO established i) to advise UNESCO on its programming concerning the ethics of scientific knowledge and technology; ii) to be an intellectual forum for the exchange of ideas and experience; iii) to detect on that basis the early signs of risk situations; iv) to perform the role of adviser to decision-makers in this respect and; v) to promote dialogue between scientific communities, decision-makers and the public at large.⁹ COMEST promotes an "ethics of science and technology" agenda that includes bioethics, environmental ethics, the ethics of nanotechnology, and the ethics of outer space.

3. The *ethical humanist* idea that humans require a non-theistic moral and ethical values system upon which they can rely in order to bring justice and peace to the world. The Church of the United Nations uses the World Programme on Human Rights Education (the "World Programme on HRE") to indoctrinate school children in its Religion of Humanity. A United Nations inter-agency coordinating committee is responsible for working with UN country teams or international agencies to support the HRE implementation strategy at the national level. In reviewing the human rights activities of national governments, UN-supported human rights treaty bodies are to emphasize the obligation of countries to implement human rights in their school systems. At the end of the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme on HRE, countries are required to provide a final national evaluation report to the UN.

4. The *evolutionary humanist* idea that a person's pursuit of global peace is a natural outgrowth of his or her biological hardwiring and inclinations and that humans, through rational thought and scientific practical and moral principles, are entirely responsible for their fate. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), a French Jesuit Catholic priest, paleontologist, biologist, and philosopher, is the person most responsible for articulating the philosophical/religious/scientific underpinnings and inevitability of the Religion of Humanity promoted by the Church of the United Nations. Writing in 1949 about his impressions on a questionnaire that was sent to influential philosophers who would be responsible for the articulating the vision for UNESCO, Chardin observed that:

Of all the structural tendencies inherent in the human mass the most fundamental (indeed, the one from which all others are derived) is undoubtedly that which has led Mankind, under the twofold influence of planetary compression and psychic interpenetration, to enter upon an irresistible process of unification and organization upon itself.¹⁰

ECCLESIASTICAL FEATURES

The Church of the United Nations rejects the natural law theory that persons are born with inalienable rights. Instead, it subscribes to the theory that its gospel, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declared a host of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights and that it is the job of the United Nations to define, promote, and secure these human rights for all persons.

The Catechism of the Church of the United Nations consists of the interpretative comments on human rights generated by international human rights treaty bodies. The holy days of obligation within the Church of the United Nations consist of the plethora of its official days, years, decades, and observances designed to promote awareness of a global society with shared concerns that dwarf national identities and concerns.¹¹ The national bishops conferences of the Church of the United Nations consist of the global network of national human rights institutions with which it is in communion.

The Church of the United Nations encourages national governments and transnational businesses to examine their consciences by conducting human rights impact assessments in relation to any proposed legislation, programs, or projects to determine and address the manner in which their actions might negatively impact human rights. For transnational businesses, penance consists of participating in the corporate social responsibility movement and sharing the benefits of commercial research and intellectual property.

In light of the growing global religious influence of the Church of the United Nations, it is ironic that, in 1963, the Roman Catholic Church foresaw and gave its blessing to such a role for the United Nations. It explained that the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be considered a step in the right direction toward establishing “a juridical and political ordering of the world community,” and expressed its wish that the United Nations be able “progressively to adapt its structure and methods of operation to the magnitude and nobility of its tasks.”¹² Likely, this was one of the developments that, in 1966, led the French-Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain to lament that the great concern and the only thing that matters for many Christians, both clergy and laity, “is the temporal vocation of the human race, with its march, embattled but victorious, to justice, peace, and happiness.”¹³ In his opinion, making these earthly goals the true supreme end for humanity ignores the presence of evil in the world. By encouraging the United Nations to assume responsibility for the earthly realization of human security, the Catholic Church may have failed to appreciate the totalitarian impulses associated with imposing a Religion of Humanity that refuses to acknowledge, or attempts to correct for, human imperfection.

NORMATIVE IMPERIALISM

In promoting its Religion of Humanity, the Church of the United Nations is engaging in normative imperialism. Normative imperialism is the imposition of civil, political, economic, and social norms by international multilateral institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and human rights

ideologues in a manner that prevents or interferes with authentic democratic evolution. In its unbridled pursuit of the amorphous and utopian concept of human security, normative imperialism rejects the importance of national sovereignty, the rule of law, democratic discourse, and political action.

Ultimately, normative imperialism has at least three significant negative effects on democratic evolution.

First, normative imperialism deprives citizens of their right to participate in the democratic process. The removal of human rights discourse from the domestic public square through international action threatens personal, political, social, and cultural development.

Second, normative imperialism forces transnational corporations to spend a significant amount of their human and financial resources defending themselves in the marketplace against a nebulous socialist dogma the scope and endpoint of which cannot be definitively measured. These unwarranted expenditures divert the attention of business leaders from reasonable consideration of their legitimate social responsibilities and from the design and implementation of business innovation and growth strategies that could benefit millions of people throughout the world.

Third, some domestic courts facilitate normative imperialism by referring to or relying upon human rights interpretations, rulings or decisions by international institutions or tribunals. In doing so, these courts ignore constitutional or statutory realities in a way that undermines respect for the judiciary by lending credence to claims of judicial activism.

IMPLICATIONS ON DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION

John Stuart Mill’s insights on utilitarianism provide a roadmap for determining the implications of the Church of the United Nations and its Religion of Humanity on democratic evolution. In Mill’s view, according to the utilitarian opinion, the ultimate end of human action (whether we are considering our own human good or that of other people) “is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich in possible enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality.”¹⁴ As is the case with the Church of the United Nations, for Mill, security is the essential element upon which an individual’s right to happiness is based. Without security, “nothing but the gratification of the instant could be of any worth to us, if we could be deprived of anything the next instant by whoever was momentarily stronger than ourselves.”¹⁵ As a result, the need for security is inextricably intertwined with the notion of justice.¹⁶

For Mill, “justice is a name for certain classes of moral rules, which concern the essentials of human well-being.”¹⁷ In his view, justice consists of the moral rules that forbid mankind to hurt one another, which include rules forbidding the wrongful interference with each other’s freedom. It is clear that Mill’s notion of justice respects the need to protect the civil and political rights of individuals. But what does justice dictate in the way of protecting economic and social rights, especially in the face of societal upheavals? As it turns out, for Mill, the function of the State naturally widens with the advance of civilization:

It must, then, be granted that new legislation is often necessitated, by the progress of society, to protect from injury either individuals or the public, not only through the rising-up of new economical and social phenomenon; but also because the more enlarged scale on which operations are carried on, involves evils and dangers which on a smaller scale it was allowable to overlook.¹⁸

In this regard, Mill and the Church of the United Nations agree that justice requires that steps be taken to protect the human security of individuals in the face of “new economical and social phenomenon.” Yet, though there is agreement regarding the end, as far as the means are concerned, Mill and the United Nations differ. In the case of globalization, unlike the top-down approach advocated and employed by the Church of the United Nations, the approach that Mill advocates for achieving human security respects the dictates of democratic evolution.

Mill rejects the argument of some that “the opinions of mankind should really be formed for them by an exceedingly small number of minds of the highest class, trained to the task by the most thorough and laborious mental preparation.”¹⁹ Instead, Mill’s idea of justice and human security contemplates the consideration and adoption of new legislation through the democratic process, where the propriety of new measures is examined in the context of local conditions and debate. This approach is the essence of democratic evolution.

For Mill, the mischief begins when, instead of calling forth the activity and power of individuals and bodies, the State substitutes its own activity for theirs; “when instead of informing, advising, and, upon occasion, denouncing, it makes them work in fetters, or bids them stand-aside and does their work instead of them.”²⁰ In his opinion:

a State which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes—will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished; and that the perfection of machinery to which it has sacrificed everything, will in the end avail it nothing, for want of the vital power which, in order that the machine might work more smoothly, it has preferred to banish.²¹

Unlike the Church of the United Nations, Mill acknowledges and accepts the fact that the removal of the sources of human suffering—the realization of human security for all—is a grievously slow process during which “a long succession of generations will perish in the breach before the conquest is completed.” Yet, each sufficiently intelligent and generous participant in this endeavor “will draw a noble enjoyment from the contest itself, which he would not for any bribe in the form of selfish indulgence consent to be without.”²²

CONCLUSION

John Stuart Mill and the Church of the United Nations share a utilitarian view of human security and the notion of justice that support its pursuit. Nevertheless, in pursuing human security, Mill would have the State invoke and draw forth the agency of individuals and their voluntary organizations consistent “not only with the wants of every country and age, and the capabilities of every people, but

with the special requirements of every kind of work to be done.”²³ He would have the State guide and assist the process by removing obstacles and by providing facilities, direction, and financial aid.²⁴ To the contrary, the Church of the United Nations is seeking to impose a Religion of Humanity that controls individual and group action, thereby stifling human development. Mill’s approach respects democratic evolution; the approach of the United Nations interrupts it at great risk to human liberty and happiness.

Endnotes

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- 23 *Supra* note 18, at 355.
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