

## THE CHURCH'S VIEW ON GLOBALISATION\*

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### I. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Historically speaking, a dual tendency in relation to globalisation can be observed in the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church. Firstly, there is the question of contents. The first social encyclicals confined themselves to the social problems of the industrialised countries (*Rerum Novarum*, 1891; *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931). *Mater et Magistra* (1961) then extended the realm of concern to the developing countries. This enlargement of the focus was continued in *Populorum Progressio* (1967), *Laborem Exercens* (1981), and in a special way in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), a document which used the critical expression 'structures of sin'. After the fall of Communism, *Centesimus Annus* offered a global approach for the achievement of a just economic, social and political order.

Secondly, there is the question of those to whom the encyclicals were especially addressed. The first social encyclical was intended primarily for the Hierarchy. *Quadragesimo Anno* extended the range to all Catholics and *Pacem in Terris* (1963) was addressed to 'all men of good will'. Pope John Paul II, in his social encyclicals *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Centesimus Annus*, insisted on the need for close cooperation between all Christians but also between the great religions of the world and all men of good will.

\* As Professor Sabourin has explained, Father Schasching kindly agreed to take the place of Monsignor Martin who, because of his recent appointment as Permanent Observer of the Holy See at the Geneva offices of the United Nations, was no longer able to attend. The original purpose was a brief presentation of a document previously published by the Academy and available to both Academicians and outside experts present at the session: Diarmuid Martin, 'Globalisation in the Social Teaching of the Church', *Pontificiae Academiae Scientiarum Socialium, Miscellanea* 2, Vatican City 2000. (E.M.)

What this historical development means is that there has been a growing move in Catholic Social Teaching towards a global view of social problems and at the same time an increasing call for global cooperation.

## II. THE CONTEMPORARY VIEW OF THE CHURCH ON GLOBALISATION

It is profitable to quote *Centesimus Annus*: 'Today we are facing the so-called 'globalisation of the economy', a phenomenon which is not to be dismissed, since it can create unusual opportunities of greater prosperity. There is a growing feeling, however, that this increasing internationalisation of the economy ought to be accompanied by effective international agencies which will oversee and direct the economy to the common good, something that an individual State, even if it were the most powerful on earth, would not be in a position to do. In order to achieve this result, it is necessary that there be increased coordination among the more powerful countries, and that in international agencies the interests of the whole human family be equally represented. It is also necessary that in evaluating the consequences of their decisions, these agencies always give sufficient consideration to peoples and countries which have little weight in the international market but which are burdened by the most acute and desperate needs, and are thus more dependent on support for their development. Much remains to be done in this area' (58).

It has to be noted that this passage is primarily concerned with economic globalisation but it is evident from the whole context that globalisation in Catholic Social Teaching has a more general meaning. This can be summarised in the following way:

Firstly: Catholic Social Teaching sees globalisation as an instrument by which to further the well-being of mankind, an ethical principle which has always been defended by that teaching.

Secondly: the free national market does not automatically guarantee the common good and it thus requires laws and rules. This requirement does not only apply to national markets. Globalised markets, equally, require a legal framework and legal direction.

Thirdly: in a global market this can not be done on a purely national level but requires international agreements and institutions. Catholic Social Teaching is aware that this is a very difficult task. It says explicitly that this can be achieved only if the major economic powers and leading countries agree. However, these countries are not only under political

pressure, they are also under economic pressure: for instance, the pressure of the financial markets.

Fourthly: this control of the global market should be safeguarded not only by national and international authorities but also by social forces. This corresponds to the principle of subsidiarity which affirms that the intermediate forces between the individual and the state have the primary role in ordering the free market towards the common good.

Fifthly: in all these efforts special attention should be paid to developing countries. This means that the advantages of globalisation should not be restricted to the privileged countries, for instance the United States of America, the nations of Western Europe, and Japan, but extended in a particular way to countries and continents which have not yet entered, or are not yet ready for entry into, the competition of the global market.

Sixthly: Catholic Social Teaching is convinced that globalisation requires a substantial number of economic and political measures. But it is at the same time of the view that these political and economic measures have to be based upon ethical principles and motivations. The main question which presents itself here is the sources and providers of these ethical values. It is important for Catholic Social Teaching in this context to invoke a new ecumenical spirit. This is because it is convinced that the challenges of the new globalisation can only be met by an ecumenical effort on the part of the Christian Churches, the great religions of the world, and all men of good will.

Conclusion: globalisation is a challenge not only for the economic, social and political forces of society and the world. It is also a challenge for the Social Teaching of the Church. This teaching has progressed from a rather limited point of view to a growing awareness of the new challenges of globalisation. But, as the encyclical *Centesimus Annus* observes, 'much remains to be done' (58), for instance as regards the influence of the financial markets, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, the open question of intergenerational solidarity, and the protection of nature and the environment.