Globalisation and Catholicity

In September 2004 the Catholic Theological Association met to consider the congruence of, the contradictions between or simply the inter-relation of 'Globalisation and Catholicity'. Congruence of: because both represent some kind of universality, moving beyond local boundaries. Contradictions between: because each can represent seriously opposed values and intentions.

Globalisation can be a confusing term because it is a multivalent concept, referring to many things and often it is unclear what it means. It is important to make distinctions as John Gray says in his provocative collection of articles from the New Statesman, *Heresies: Against Progress and Other Illusions* (Granta Books 2004),

> We need to distinguish sharply and clearly between the pressure for a worldwide free market and the process of globalization. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the two do not move in the same direction, but rather the reverse. The global free market is a political project that is not much more than a decade old; globalization dates back to at least the nineteenth century, when transatlantic telegraph cables provided, for the first time, an instant link between markets in Europe and North America. (p. 93)

Globalisation since the nineteenth century? The Catholic project has been underway since the middle of the first century of the Christian era, as I emphasise in what I call 'Paul's globalising tendency'. Richard Price also points out that 'inculturation', the adaptation of Christianity to particular cultures, was haphazard and unplanned in the early Church and that it always was and is universal in order to escape the limitations of local cultures. This is not to say that economic globalisation is at one with catholicity; on the contrary, Price thinks Christianity is at odds with economic liberalism.

Ian Linden, now retired as Director of the Catholic Institute of International Relations, initiates the discussion, as at the conference, with a clarification of what economic globalisation involves. It is a very personal account derived from long experience of representing the Church on the international scene, which concludes with recommendations of four main tasks for a response to globalisation from the Church.

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While agreeing with aspects of Linden's argument, Nicholas Boyle offers a stimulating and controversial response. He notes the primacy of the economic in globalisation and shows how it has been developing since the 1800s. He wonders whether it was the outbreak of war in the twentieth century that led to a breakdown of internationalisation between 1914 and 1945 (or 1989), or whether it was the breakdown of internationalisation that led to catastrophic wars. If the latter, we have 'a most earnest duty' to promote globalisation in the hope of avoiding further wars. Boyle has a contentious definition of politics (the state's imposed organisation of economic transactions) and a contentious view on the proliferation of human life. He argues the case for the overall benefits of free market capitalism in ameliorating poverty and, while he is not happy with the present system, he has a surprisingly benign view of multinational corporations.

He will take little comfort from the remaining articles which by and large take it that the globalisation of liberal capitalism is proving to be immensely damaging, especially to the poor of the world. Frank Turner, who spent seven years working for the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in a variety of trouble spots around the world, refers to a Brazilian bishop who prayed everyday for 'the collapse of the international economic order'. When you read, as in Catherine Cowley's paper, of the influence of the World Trade Organisation and the IMF you can quite understand the bishop's prayer. Frank Turner's pastoral response to globalisation is that our understanding of it should remain rooted in particular experiences of human life, and that economic, political and cultural developments should retain an openness to other values to promote a universal common good.

Robert Kaggwa takes us out of Britain and out of Europe to focus on Africa. He analyses three periods of the Church's mission outside Europe and in this last period looks closely at the very different experiences of South Africa and Rwanda. He then summarises the theological response of the Churches in order to identify a so-called 'new catholicity' for new circumstances in a new mission which is about reconciliation and inclusion.

Gerard Mannion, drawing particularly on the work of Lewis Mudge, tracks an ecumenical flow of discourse that might clarify our sense of catholicity, though he does not find recent Papal documents to be of much help. He considers how a renewed understanding of catholicity might enable the Church to confront the negative effects of globalisation.

Unfortunately we are not able to publish Margaret Atkins' moral and theological analysis of how local communities might relate and support each other in a world where Chinese migrants support their families in Fuijan by picking cockles (and sometimes drowning) in Morecambe Bay. However, moral analysis is found aplenty in the account of money and finance in the modern world by Catherine

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Cowley, a former merchant banker who is now leading a life of evangelical poverty. Quite simply, this article should be read by every person who owns a credit card! And apparently there are now more credit cards in Britain than people.

We conclude with a broad-ranging theological paper by David McLoughlin on ecclesiology. He realises that 'how we as the disciples of Christ encounter the world, in this case globalisation, depends . . . on how we remember who and what we are'. Christian remembering brings us to a different rhythm of life than economics. 'We remember the future', we are told. 'Those who have gone before us are ahead of us in the life of the ever-present God. Liturgy remembers the future as present. In liturgy, time and eternity are present to one another and the Christ life is renewed in the present.'

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