

ROMAN CATHOLIC AND RUSSIAN ORTHODOX ETHICS: ON GLOBALIZATION.

by Joseph Loya, O.S.A.

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Social critic Yakov Kratov wrote in the August 31, 2000 issue of *Obschaia gazeta*, “The ‘Bases of a Social Concept’ approved by the bishops’ council of the Russian Orthodox church is as much like the social concept of the Roman Catholic church as a hollow tree is like a collective farm.” (The reference is to a popular anti-soviet joke of an old Bolshevik who was celebrating the final collectivization of nature. He beat on a hollow tree and the tree cried out, “Hollow Collective.”) The critic then goes on to recall the way the Second Vatican Council’s social doctrine was forged – through prolonged and spirited debate among the bishops in front of thousands of invited guests. This procedure was contrasted favorably against the way the “Bases” document was produced as a whole deep within the “bowels of the Moscow Patriarchate”.¹ Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, Vice Chairman of the Department of External Church Relations and Secretary of the Bishops’ working group for this, in an address to an International Science-Theology Conference painted a quite different picture of how the document was written.²

Leaving aside the issue of exactly how the “Bases” was composed, my understanding of my assigned task is to remark on the content of the Russian Orthodox social ethic (as limned by the “Bases” document) vis-B-vis the Roman Catholic social ethic, giving special attention to their treatments of the topic of globalization in particular.

I begin by providing a primer on the Roman Catholic social ethic, especially as it relates to the issue of globalization.

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<http://www.krotov.org/engl/2000/0011759.html>.

²“The Christian Basis for Economic Ethics,” E-mail Conference, October 2, 2000. http://www.sobor.ru/doctrina/1chaplin_en.asp.

Catholic social teaching is not a static body of thought but something that grows and develops through time as the Church observes the ongoing process of human experience.³ The Second Vatican Council asserted, “At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and interpreting them in light of the Gospel.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, par. 4.)

First, some notes on what the Church has been observing that are relevant to the globalization process. John XXIII, as early as 1961, through his encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, directed attention to the growing diversification and complexification of the age’s institutions and social relations, giving rise to the use of the term, the “socialization” of humanity.

Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes* (par. 5) noted that “History itself is accelerating on so rapid a course that individuals can scarcely keep pace with it...And so the human race is passing from a relatively static conception of the nature of things to a more dynamic and evolutionary conception.”

Some Notes on Interpretation:

Germain Grisez explains Catholic interpretational method as follows: “The Council’s method proceeds neither solely by deduction from general principles nor solely by induction from experienced situations but by dialectical reflection on data in the light of faith. This process uses both deductive and inductive reasoning to arrive at synthetic insights.”⁴ A small catalog of relevant faith affirmations and theological extrapolations include the following:

1. Humans are creatures made in God’s image possessing intelligence and free will, and endowed with individuality and autonomy.
2. We are social creatures by nature who need to associate with others in a variety of relationships if we are to grow as persons.
3. It is impossible for human beings to do what is best for us by our own unaided effort.
4. There is a need for individuals and relatively smaller groupings such as families and local civil communities to contribute to a wider political community to effect the broadest implementation of the common good possible, of which Jacques Maritain writes:

³Sam Gregg, *Journal of Market and Mortality*, vol. 4, no.1, spring, 2001. http://www.acton.org/publicat/m_and_m/2001_spring/gregg.html. p.2.

⁴Germain Grisez, *Living a Christian Life*, 59, no.114, quoted by Gregg, p. 5.

“[What] constitutes the common good of political society is not only the collection of public commodities and services—the roads, ports, schools, et cetera, which the organization of common life presupposes; a sound fiscal condition of the state and its military power; the body of just laws, good customs and wise institutions, which provide the nation with its structure; the heritage of its great historical remembrances, its symbols and its glories, its living traditions and cultural treasures. The common good includes all of these and something more besides—something more profound, more concrete, more human. For it includes also, and above all, the whole sum itself of these; a sum, which is quite different from a simple collection of, juxtaposed units.... It includes the sum or sociological integration of all the civic conscience, political virtues and sense of right and liberty, of all the activity, material prosperity and spiritual riches, of unconsciously operative hereditary wisdom, of moral rectitude, justice, friendship, happiness, virtue and heroism in the individual lives of its members. For these things all are, in a certain measure, communicable and so revert to each member, helping him to perfect his life and liberty of person. They all constitute the good human life of the multitude.”⁵

When interdependence is recognized, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude is solidarity. This is not a feeling of vague compassion at the misfortunes of so many people. On the contrary, it is a persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is, to the good of all and each individual because we are all responsible for all. The Church teaches solidarity, not as a set of policies or programs, but as a virtue which relates to the perfection of the individual, by inclining us to overcome sources of division within ourselves (personal sin) and within society (“structural sins”).⁶

The optimistically minded can readily espy the advantages of the socialization dynamic such as an increase in efficiency and production, the strengthening of the process of unity among peoples, and an increase in opportunities to express solidarity with the less fortunate members of the human family.⁷

⁵Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1948, 37-38, quoted by Gregg, p.7.

⁶Mary Ann Glendon, “The Catholic Church Is No Stranger to Globalization,” http://www.lifeissues.net/pastoral/papers/gle/gle_01globalization.html. p.1.

⁷ Jesus Villagrasa, professor of Philosophy at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum, in an interview reported by Zenit.org, Rome, April 23, 2001.

Writing in 1975, Cardinal-Archbishop Karol Wojtyla of Krakow warned that socialization could have negative consequences if the primacy of the human person's welfare was not kept in mind. Speaking of the Church's teaching regarding socialization, Wojtyla suggested that,

“[It] calls attention to a certain danger ... that the ‘order of things’ will take precedence over the ‘order of persons’.... In such a system, socialization may be diverted from its basic orientation towards the ‘welfare of persons’.... In other words, [the Church] perceives in contemporary social processes—those connected with the enormous advance of technological, industrial, and material factors – the danger of a fundamental alienation of human beings. People can easily become tools in the system of things, the material system created by their own intelligence, and they can become objects of different kinds of social manipulation.”⁸

Sam Gregg rightly suggests that the same warning is applicable to globalization.

As pope, Wojtyla addressed the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Social sciences thus:

“One of the Church’s concerns about globalization is that it has quickly become a cultural phenomenon. The market as an exchange mechanism has become the medium of a new culture. Many observers have noted the intrusive, even evasive, character of the logic of the market, which reduces more and more the area available for the human community for voluntary and public action at every level. The market imposes its way of thinking and acting, and stamps its scale of values upon behavior. Those who are subjected to it often see globalization as a destructive flood threatening the social norms which had protected them and the cultural points of reference which had given them direction in life.”⁹

Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard Law School writes well on the topic:

“For those of us who believe that the social teaching of the Catholic Church offers important ethical perspectives on economic globalization - and even the hope of helping to humanize and optimize the benefits of that process - the cultural effects of globalization are of great concern. Globalization seems to be spreading a thin transnational culture that is not only resistant to ethical perspectives, but inimical to respect for the dignity of all members of the human family. The values of productivity and efficiency, so prized by the market, are not so fine when they seep into the intermediate institutions of civil society or when they become normative in family relations. A transnational popular culture seems to foster a

⁸“Parenthood and the “Communio Personarum.” *Ateneum Kaplanski* 84. 1, 1975: pp. 29-30, quoted by Gregg, p.4.

⁹Zenit.org, April 27, 2001.

popular ethos charged with materialism, hedonism and hyper-individualism. And these new values, combined with increased geographic mobility, seem to be having a destructive effect on the particular cultures where virtues and habits of solidarity are rooted and transmitted. In his popular and largely affirmative book on globalization, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Thomas Friedman has written that “the more I observed the system of globalization at work, the more obvious it was that it had unleashed forest-crushing forces of development and Disney-round-the-clock homogenization which, if left unchecked, had the potential to destroy the environment and uproot cultures at a pace never before seen in human history.”¹⁰

To “observation” and “interpretation,” I add “application,” for Catholic faithful are obliged to cooperate with the impetus of God’s grace to effect a world of goodness, justice and peace. Of practical concern is the question, “Which level of government should assume primary responsibility for certain conditions conducive to human flourishing?”

One principle articulated by Catholic social teaching that assists in this addressing this concern is that of subsidiarity. The meaning of this principle is nicely stated in Pius XI's 1931 social encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*:

“ Just as it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and commit to a group what private initiative and effort can accomplish, so too it is an injustice ... for a larger and higher association to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower associations. This is a fundamental principle.... Of its very nature the true aim of all social activity should be to help members of a social body, and never to destroy or absorb them.”

Again, from Gregg,

“As applied to the question of globalization and the international order, the principle of subsidiarity would restrict the authority of any "world" government to those problems that cannot be dealt with successfully by national governments, just as it restricts the authority of national governments to those problems that cannot be dealt with successfully by local government. From this perspective, "world" government is, in principle, limited government - it is not meant to displace regional, local, or national authorities and may only legitimately exercise power where regional, local, or national governments are not competent to solve the problem at hand. This is not to suggest, of course, that theologians should limit themselves strictly to the realm of theory when thinking about these issues.”¹¹

¹⁰Mary Ann Glendon, “Globalization’ and the Church’s New Challenge,”<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Ithaca/3251/genglobal.html>. p.2.

¹¹Gregg, p 8.

In an attempt to beat the rap that the church is long on criticisms and short on cures, at an early-July meeting in Genoa, more than 60 Catholic lay groups and missionary orders offered a detailed blueprint for economic and political reform to the leaders of the G-8 group, the world's eight most developed nations. Among the proposals in the "Catholic manifesto" handed over to an official of the Italian government in Genoa for eventual presentation to the G-8 were the following:

1. Rules for international trade that allow impoverished nations to offer goods at predictable prices and without barriers;
2. An end to banking secrecy laws that conceal money laundering, especially illegal transfers of currency out of impoverished nations;
3. Adoption of the Tobin Tax (a tax of 0.25 percent on the \$2 trillion a day exchanged on global currency markets, designed to discourage speculation and to create funds for international development);
4. Cancellation of debt accumulated up to June 1999; assurance that debt payments will be required only after health, education and other basic needs are met;
5. A process of arbitration to identify "in terms of justice" the real debt levels of impoverished nations;
6. Effective norms to protect labor;
7. Stronger environmental safeguards, including adoption of the Kyoto Accords on global warming;
8. National and international laws to guarantee a plurality of voices in the media;
9. Augmented public funding for medical research, especially for producing drugs to combat diseases that afflict the poor;
10. Efforts to halt the global arms trade, including full disclosure about the flow of weapons, and a halt to public support for manufacturers and distributors.

In a point aimed at the United States, the document calls for abandonment of the Bush administration's Star Wars-style space shield, suggesting that the money be devoted to resolving the causes of conflict, above all poverty.¹²

Reaction to "Bases" Document

A report in the series "On the Verge of a New Millennium: Russia's Option" by Tatyana Yarigina (Project Head) and Irina Shalганova provides an overview of reaction to the "Bases."¹³ Among the main criticisms:

A document adopted in such a form will have no influence on the life of the Church;

A number of provisions considered in the document relate exclusively to the inner affairs of the Church;

Some judgments on the issues worked out are shallow and declarative.

The positive reactions refer mainly to the same aspects, but their evaluation is diametrically opposed:

The document contains a social initiative, which is original and quite bold towards the state;

This is not an inner compromise within the church, it is synthesis of positions;

The Concept adequately reflects the present realities, its acute problems and gives them a principled assessment.

This writer agrees with a past president of the EZA, (The European Center for Workers' Questions) when he opined:

"In short, the ROC did not make things easy for itself with this document. In making a break with its past, which was marked more by neutrality and largely standing aloof than by Christian social action and social criticism. This time has past. As a church it is showing courage in wanting to play a serving function in

¹²"Make Globalization User-Friendly is Catholic Plea." John L. Allen, Jr., *National Catholic Reporter*, July 27, 2001. <http://www.cjre.org/Docs%20Economic-%20Injustice/make%20globalization%20user-friendly.htm>

¹³[http://www.academy-go.ru/Site/English/N4\(44\).html#](http://www.academy-go.ru/Site/English/N4(44).html#). This document is dated December 19, 2000. Translated by: Olga Radayeva, Tim Avison, Irina Konstantinova. and introduced by Grigory Yavlinski.

the present difficult time in Russia: spiritually, morally, socially and economically.¹⁴

In juxtaposing Orthodox and Catholic social ethics for the purpose of comparison I would note a difference in style of pronouncement: a case of the “prescriptive” vs. the “pastoral,” respectfully. Since the 1960’s Catholic teachings seem to be delivered in a hard news/soft news manner. (For example, in the American Bishops’ Catechism, the condemnation of the intrinsic sinfulness of homosexual acts is usually quickly followed up by a gentle but firm reminder to separate sin from the sinner in judgment.) Such soft glove treatment is not much evident in the “Bases” document.

In comparing Orthodox and Catholic social ethics, teachings on the broad topics such as just war theory, ecological concerns, problems in bioethics, plus personal, family and public morality tend to reinforce one another, save of course traditional Orthodox reluctance to proscribe non-abortive contraception. This mutual reinforcement in content extends to the Section XVI of the “Bases” document entitled “Problems of Globalization and Secularization.” Points of accord between the two ethics include the following:

1. Recognition that globalization has profound economic and cultural-informational dimensions beyond the oft commented upon political and legal dimensions.
2. Concern over the cultural imperialism that a few nations who are judged “successful” by purely secular criteria might exercise over many other nations.
3. Advocacy of the establishment in the world a truly equitable and mutually enriching cultural and informational exchange marked by efforts to protect the identity of nations and other human communities.
4. Vigilance lest any world order threaten the equality and freedom of peoples enjoy in the sight of God.
5. Concern over the loss of the priority of man and labor over capital and means of production.

¹⁴Arie Hordijk, *Flash* no.007/5 June 2001. EZA European Centre for Workers Questions, p. 4.

6. Sensitivity to populations who have been caught debt dependence on financiers in a few industrial countries who cannot create dignified living conditions for themselves.

7. Recognition of the legality of the religious worldview as a basis for socially significant action (including those taken by a state) and as an essential factor which should influence the development of international law and the work of international organizations.

In light of the difficult factors that are propelling the Moscow Patriarchate and the Vatican apart, it is to be hoped that such extensive accord on the nature, dynamics and cautionary notes regarding the reality of globalization would impel the two Churches toward a closer working relationship in common service to the world.

ADDENDUM:

During the course of the CAREE conference, reference was made to the growing tension between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Vatican over the issue of the Patriarchate's protestation of the establishment during the month of February, 2002 of four Catholic Dioceses within what the Patriarchate claims as its "canonical territory". The following article was read as an exposition of the Catholic position on the issue of "canonical territory":

ARCHBISHOP KONDRUSIEWICZ REJECTS ACCUSATIONS OF CATHOLIC PROSELYTISM. - *Mir religii*, 20 December 2001.

"Catholic theology does not accept the terminology of canonical territory," declared the head of Russian Catholics, Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, during a meeting with editors of *Literaturnaia gazeta*, "Blagovest-info" reports. This is the way the hierarch answer [sic] the reporters' question with regard to accusations against Catholics of proselytism made by the Russian Orthodox church. "If a person comes to me and expresses a desire to become a Catholic, I do not ask for a passport or about nationality; I try to clarify the motives of the request," the archbishop emphasized. "If I consider them to be respectable, then in conscience I cannot refuse someone's wish to enter the bosom of the Catholic church." The bishop added that preparation for baptism or for conversion of an already baptized person to the church lasts no

less than one year in Russia, which gives an opportunity to consider the seriousness of the choice.

Regarding relations of the church and state, Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz criticized the currently effective law "On freedom of conscience and religious associations," since it does not guarantee true equality of religions. "In Russia there is an Interreligious Council, but there are no representatives of Catholics there," the archbishop noted. "We often see the president with the patriarch, but in ten years in Russia I still have not ever been in the presence of the past or current president, although a critical need for such a meeting has arisen often." The head of Russian Catholics expressed concern about attempts of some public forces to grant to the Russian Orthodox church the status of a "statehood forming" institution.¹⁵

¹⁵<http://www.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/0112c.html#17>, tr. by PDS, posted 20 December 2001.

