

Foreword

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Meghan Clark's *Vision of Catholic Social Thought* gives us a compelling approach to key ethical issues that are arising in the context of our globalizing world. Globalization is having an increasingly powerful impact on many of the political, economic, and cultural realities shaping the lives of men and women today. Globalization has been described by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye as the increase in networks of interdependence among people at multicontinental distances.¹ This description of globalization as a network highlights the fact that it is not a single strand of interconnection such as increased trade or financial interchange. It is occurring on multiple levels of social life—the political, the cultural, the technological, and the environmental.

This thickening network of interdependence affects human well-being both for ill and for good. Ill effects such as the continuing poverty of so many in the developing world, especially sub-Saharan Africa, are often at the center of the discussions of those working for justice in church-related social action agencies and in secular activist groups as well. In these settings globalization is often seen as the expansion of Northern influence upon the less-powerful nations of the global South that keep them in poverty. In this perspective, globalization appears as itself a morally objectionable reality. It is a form of interconnection in which emerging economic, political, and cultural interconnections among peoples become forms of domination. There can be no doubt that such patterns of domination far too often mark the new interconnections emerging among the nations and peoples in the world today.

A second approach to the developments occurring in our increasingly interconnected world has been proposed by Roland Robertson. Robertson notes that this growing interconnection is giving rise to a new awareness that all people genuinely share the same time and the same space, the same history and the same world, the same earth. Used this way, the term *globalization* points to a new kind of human consciousness: an intensified awareness of the unity of the world as a whole that takes the globe itself as a framework for human

1. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, "Globalization: What's New? What's Not? (And So What?)" *Foreign Policy*, no. 118 (Spring, 2000): 104–19, at 105.

activities.² Globalization thus leads people to an increased recognition that they are part of a single community bound together in what can be called *de facto* interdependence.

This awareness of our *de facto* interdependence raises a moral challenge. It calls those who recognize they are bound together by new patterns of global trade, finance, and environmental links to recognize that they also have mutual moral responsibilities toward each other. In the words of Pope John Paul II, these factual linkages point to “the need for a solidarity which will take up interdependence and transfer it to the moral plane.”³ Thus, globalization can move from being used to express negative judgments of domination of the poor by the rich, to pointing to of new factual forms of global interconnection, to serving as a moral concept that highlights the growing need for responsibility in mutual solidarity across the boundaries that divide the planet.

The challenge, of course, is whether global solidarity based on mutuality and equality will shape the factual patterns of global interdependence that are growing in our world. If this does not happen, then increasingly the term *globalization* will point to domination of the poor by the rich and the weak by the strong. But if contemporary consciousness is further shaped by the awareness not only that all human beings inhabit the same history and the same planet but that they are members of a single human family with mutual responsibilities toward one another, then *globalization* can become a term used to describe a morally valuable development in human history.

Meghan Clark explores the resources within recent Catholic social thought that can help promote the move from a kind of global interdependence that is unjust and exploitative to one marked by greater justice and peace. She mines the long Catholic tradition and shows how its understanding of the essential linkage between the good of the human person and the common good of society points the way to a just form of globalization. This linkage of personal and common goods is at the basis of recent Catholic insistence that participation in the economic and political life of society is essential to the realization of the dignity and freedom of the person. No person is an island, so solidarity with others is a precondition for personal fulfillment.

Clark shows how this social understanding of personhood shapes a vision of development that can energize a move from unjust to just patterns of globalization. She also presents a powerful interpretation of human rights that

2. Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992), 8.

3. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 26. This encyclical, issued in 1987, is available on the Holy See’s website, at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html.

will advance this move to greater justice. The vision she draws from Catholic social thought is compassionate, demanding, and presented with intellectual care. Let us hope that this book will lead many to see the world in the way Clark's vision suggests, and to act in ways suggested by this vision as well.

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