THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE PHENOMENON OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract
Among the phenomena observable in the world of today is that known as globalization. The impact of this phenomenon on the entire human society has been very strong, showing both positive and negative effects. This article is aimed at finding out whether the Catholic Church of today, in accordance with the urging of the Vatican Council II that She should always read the signs of the times (cf. GS, 4) in order to know how to minister more fruitfully to the people of different times, is aware of this phenomenon. Examination of some recent Church documents shows that the Church is really aware of the phenomenon and of the fact that it has both positive and negative factors. Among its positive factors are the promotion of unity among different nations and increased economic efficiency. And among its negative factors are excessive attention to economic issues and discrimination against the poor nations especially in economic affairs. The next section of the article considers the recommendations made by the Church to make the phenomenon more fruitful. Among other things, She calls on the rich nations to have a special consideration for the poor nations in their dealings and for adoption of solidarity of action of the rich and the poor in the issue. She also recommends creation of international monitoring agencies in the affair. The article concludes by extolling the recommendations of the Church and seeing in them the way globalization could be made more fruitful to the people of all nations.

Introduction
Among the phenomena very prominently observable in our human society today is that known as globalization. The impact of this phenomenon on the entire human society has been very strong, showing both positive and negative effects. For this reason, it has generated intense debates, heated polemics, public demonstrations and street protests across the globe. It is thus widely discussed and different views have been expressed on it especially from the point of view of its importance to the world of today. This brief article is mainly concerned with showing the view of the Catholic Church on its importance; its positive and negative aspects and how it could be made more profitable to the entire human race. Before showing this view, however, some explanations of the term and a brief review of the history of the phenomenon as well as its basic characteristics are made.
The Meaning of the Term

The term “globalization” literally means the act of making worldwide in scope or application, the act of extending, enlarging, or spreading on a global scale.¹ Technically, however, globalization has a more specific meaning. From the voluminous literature available on the topic today, one can discern two general classes of meaning, one narrow, and the other broad. The narrow meaning confines it to the economic, financial and technological changes now sweeping the global economy. The other broader meaning stresses the importance of locating the dramatic economic changes in a wider context, and embraces cultural, ideological, political and other changes, along with the economic ones.

A good example of the narrow meaning is offered in the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) Human Development Report of 1997. The Report describes globalization as "the widening and deepening of international flows of trade, finance and information in a single, integrated global market." On the other hand, a good example of the broader meaning is found in the writing of Pope John Paul II who succinctly describes it as a “many-faceted reality” in which the various parts of the world are increasingly drawn into a tighter configuration through the increasing volume and rapidity of the flows of money, goods, people, information, technology, and images, to form just one global village.² This description of the Pope appears comprehensive, and is, therefore, the one adopted in this writing. In its light, one can easily understand globalization as a process with a basic characteristic of making the world become more and more a single place, so that interactions become quicker and easier, and what happens in a local neighbourhood becomes easily influenced by factors operating at an indefinite distance away from the neighbourhood itself.

Historical Development of Globalization

In the historical development of globalization, one could identify a remote cause and an immediate cause.

1. The Remote Cause

Although globalization is a new phenomenon, it is not completely new. A good number of authors have pointed out that it is neither an entirely new phenomenon nor the creation of entirely new forces. Wilfred, for instance, has pointed out that the present-day globalization is but a continuation of a long tradition

of over five hundred years, the tradition of imperialism. He shows it to be only the latest phase and expression of this uninterrupted history of domination and subjugation of peoples, nations and cultures through the conquistadors and colonisers. Similarly, in his article written from an African perspective, Odozor shows that globalization dates to pre-colonial times, to those times when groups started to interact with each other either for slaving, warring or trading.

Other important factors of the remote cause of globalization have also been shown to include the global unfolding of an Islamic civilization in the 7th and 8th centuries and the subsequent Pan-Arabic colonization that followed the founding of Islam. It is further pointed out that like its Islamic counterpart, the Christian missionary movement that began soon after the death of Christ and continues till today has been a major force for globalization.

With special reference to economic globalization, the first great expansion of European capitalism is said to have taken place in the 16th century, following the first circumnavigation of the earth in 1519 to 1521. There was then a big expansion in world trade and investment in the late nineteenth century, but this was brought to a halt by the First World War and the bout of anti-free trade protectionism that led to the Great Depression in 1930 generally seen as an interruption to the process of globalization commenced in the late 19th century. Furthermore, a sense of a united world was particularly generated by the establishment of the International Date Line and World Time Zones together with the near global adoption of the Gregorian Calendar between 1875 and 1925. During this period, international standards were also agreed for telegraphy and signalling.

2. The Immediate Cause

Hitherto, there has not been an agreement among scholars on the immediate factors responsible for globalization. While some people see the immediate cause in the increasing hegemony of trans-national corporations, others attribute it to new developments in the mass media and mass communication, including faster and easier means of commuting from one part of the globe to another. Pope John Paul II shares this latter view, pointing out that globalization “is a process made inevitable by increasing communication between the different parts of the world, leading in practice to overcoming distances, with evident effects in widely different fields.”

5Ibid., 7-8.
6John Paul II, Ecclesia in America, 20, 55.
Similarly, Schrijver holds that postmodern mobility is the motor behind the speed-up of the process of globalization.

For many, however, globalization is caused by a combination of factors. Accordingly, the US Catholic Bishops remark on its cause: “During the last decade, the rapid globalization of markets, communication, and transportation has dramatically drawn the world together.” Harvey has also pointed out that the shift away from modern fordism (highly centralized production systems) to postmodern flexible systems of accumulation, has immensely contributed to the promotion of globalization. He indicates the flexible character of the postmodern era to be clearly visible in the recent multinational conglomeration of enterprises in which a sports car, for example, is financed in Japan, drawn up in Italy and constructed in Indiana (USA), in Mexico, and in France, and containing the most recent electronic components developed in New Jersey and constructed in Japan.

Postmodern is related to postmodernism, which is a complicated term that only emerged as an area of academic study since the mid-1980s. It has been suggested that the easiest way to understand it is through modernism, from which it seems to have emerged. Modernism, in this context of usage, has two modes of definition, both of which are relevant to understanding postmodernism. The first comes from the aesthetic movement broadly labelled “modernism,” and which is the movement in visual arts, music, literature, and drama that rejected the old Victorian standards of how art should be made, consumed, and what it should mean. From a literary perspective, the main characteristics of modernism include an emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity in writing (and in visual arts as well), and a movement away from the apparent objectivity provided by omniscient third-person narrators, fixed narrative points of view, and clear-cut moral positions. While postmodernism resembles modernism in many ways, in general, the postmodern view is said to be cool, ironic, and tends to concentrate on surfaces rather than depths, to blur the distinctions between high and low culture, and as a whole to challenge a wide variety of traditional cultural values.

Another way of looking at the relation between modernism and postmodernism is that attributed to Frederic Jameson, according to whom modernism and postmodernism are cultural formations that accompany particular stages of capitalism. He outlines three primary phases of capitalism which dictate particular cultural practices. The first phase is characterised by market capitalism, which occurred in the eighteenth through the late nineteenth centuries in Western Europe, England, and the United States, and is associated with particular technological developments, namely, the steam-driven motor, and with a particular kind of aesthetics, namely, realism. The second phase occurred from the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century, and is characterised by monopoly capitalism and also associated with electric and internal combustion motors, and with modernism. The third, the phase, in which we are now, is characterised by multinational or consumer capitalism (with the emphasis placed on marketing, selling, and consuming commodities, not on producing them), associated with nuclear and electronic technologies, and correlated with postmodernism. Cf. Mary Klages, “Postmodernism;” available from http://www.colorado.edu/English/ENGL2012Klages/pomo.html; Internet. Accessed 01.12.2004; Columbia Encyclopedia, 2001 ed., s.v. “Postmodernism” and “Modernism.”

Goerges de Schrijver, “Contextual Theology: Developments in Third World Theologies of Liberation” (Class Notes for Licentiate Course, Faculty of Theology, Ku Leuven, 1999-2000), 58.


Schrijver, “Contextual Theology,” 58.
It has been particularly remarked that the end of the Second World War brought another phase of expansion of capitalism with the development of multinational companies interested in producing and selling in the domestic markets of nations around the world. The emancipation of colonies within this period is also shown to have contributed to this by creating a new world order. Air travel and the development of international communications further enhanced the progress of international business.

But certain events since 1970 have been especially known to have accelerated the recent phase of globalization and indeed marked its evolution. Among them is the establishment of the European Monetary System, an arrangement by which most nations of the European Union (EU) linked their currencies to prevent large fluctuations relative to one another. Another event consists in the liberalization of the world money markets and the economies of the West during a period that has come to be known as "the great decade of the markets," namely, the 1980s marked by the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and Ronald Regan in 1980 and the collapse of the Berlin Wall and fall of communism in 1989-1990. The next event consists in profound changes in technology with regard to the money and commodity markets. It is especially remarkable that the great money markets of the world are today linked up by computers so that people in one part of the world can easily know about and react instantly to the moods of the market in other parts of the world.

Characteristics of Globalization

Globalization has been shown to have some peculiar characteristics, among which are the following:

11This was organized in 1979 and led in 1999 to the adoption of a single currency, the Euro, which replaced the former local European currencies in 2002.

12Cf. Odozor, “Globalization and Mission,” 6-10. See also John Paul II, "From the Justice of Each Comes Peace for All," Message for the XXXI World Day for Peace, 1 January 1998, 3. Liberalization is the act of reducing government-imposed constraints on the behaviour of actors in the economy. The two ways that this is achieved are by privatization and deregulation.

In privatization several aspects exist, with the main theme being the exposure of the public sector production process to free market forces. The most commonly understood meaning is the sale of state-owned enterprises, but it can also refer to the contracting out of a service.

Deregulation means easing the rules under which a firm or an industry operates, allowing expansion within the sector or diversification into other sectors, as well as opening the sector to other entrants. "Fewer restrictions on price" is another recurring theme. In short, it is the process by which governments remove selected regulations on business in order to (in theory) encourage the efficient operation of markets. The theory is that fewer regulations will lead to a raised level of competitiveness, therefore higher productivity, more efficiency and lower prices overall. Cf. Martin Khor “Rethinking Liberation and Reshaping the WTO,” a Paper Presentation at the World Economic Forum, Davos, 28 Jan. 2000; available from http://www.aptn.org/ibis/pegb02.html; Internet; Accessed 29.11.2004; “Deregulation,” from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deregulation; Internet. Accessed 29.11.2004.
1. **Trans-Nationalization of Economic Productions:** One of the most striking characteristics of globalization is trans-nationalization of economic products. Affirming this, Wilfred remarks that “the mill of globalization is operated by the wind of trans-national capitalism” that "blows where it wills," and operates above and across all national borders.\(^{13}\) He points out that consequent on this characteristic, it has become difficult today to assign any industrial product to only one country. He notes, for example, on Honda automobiles, which are generally understood to be Japanese products, that some of its models are designed in Japan and assembled in the United States with American labour and with parts manufactured in Europe, the U.S. and Japan. Consequently, one would not be right to call a Honda car produced in this manner a Japanese car. It is rather a global car coming from a Japanese company that has become a global company through a multinational conglomeration of enterprises.\(^{14}\)

2. **Promotion by Electronic Media:** Another important characteristic of globalization is its promotion by the fast expanding electronic media. The use of this is generally considered very essential for the global market to get across countries and nations, and to create a network of communication and exciting advertisement for selling the various commodities. Furthermore, the media itself is regarded as a huge business enterprise involved in an industry of a peculiar culture invading every nook and cranny of the globe, namely, the culture of consumerism, materialism, subjectivism and excessive stress of individual freedom.\(^{15}\)

3. **Use of Technocratic Process:** By technocratic process is meant the practice of governmental, social, and industrial management by technical experts. It has been remarked that a basic characteristic of globalization is its involvement of a technocratic process that revolves around finance, and in which market and technology work in collaboration.\(^{16}\)

4. **Commodification of Cultures:** A further observation on globalization is that in its general sweep, it makes any culture it meets a part of its own system, which in

\(^{13}\)Capitalism is an economic system based on private ownership of the means of production, in which personal profit can be acquired through investment of capital and employment of labour. Capitalism is grounded in the concept of free enterprise, which argues that government intervention in the economy should be restricted and that a free market, based on supply and demand, will ultimately maximize consumer welfare.

\(^{14}\)Wilfred, “Globalization and Cultures,” 42-44. For a similar point, see Schrijver, “Contextual Theology,” 58.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., 4.

\(^{16}\)Ibid.
effect means that it commodifies the cultures of different people, pulling them out of their origin and context. It has been remarked that it is aided in this process by the imperial history of domination, from which through memory, it retrieves what it needs now for control. It essentially utilizes the different cultures as instruments for sale of commodities, or as exotic pieces for entertainment. By so doing, it reinforces its own peculiar tradition and identity.\footnote{Cf. Ibid., 45-46.}

5. **Demand of Conformism**: Another feature of globalization is that it tries to convert everything into its image and likeness, and anything that does not mirror it and its concerns are stoutly resisted. In other words, conformism to the system is its supreme norm, and no voice of dissent is tolerated. In short, it is said that globalization has ingrained in it dogmatic and ideological characteristics, and that the most insidious aspect of it is that it presents itself as the only way, apparently, claiming that outside its pale there is no ‘salvation’ for the world, but only ‘hell-fire’ of destruction, or the ‘limbo’ of primitivism.\footnote{Ibid., 46.}

6. **Opposition to Plurality**: Related to the above-mentioned characteristic of demand of conformism is that of opposition to plurality. There is hardly any room for plurality in the system of globalization. For this reason it has been shown to differ from modernization (i.e., the act of bringing up to the present standards), which does not necessarily imply absence of pluralism but rather involves a little more openness in this regard. In modernization, it is possible for the different peoples and cultures to appropriate in their own culture (i.e., in their specific ways) the benefits and advantages offered by the modern world. Hence, it is possible to have a plurality of being modern. With regard to globalization, however, it has been remarked that in its universal sweep, it tends to leave little room for any such thing. This is because, at the heart of it, contrary to all appearances, a process of centralization is at work. In earlier forms of imperialism, these centres of control could be geo-politically located. But in globalization, there has taken place, a development in terms of deterritorialization, so that this highly centralized system is operative everywhere without being bound to national or geographical confines.\footnote{Ibid., 46-47.}

7. **Continuation of the Principle of Imperialism**: By the principle of imperialism is meant the policy of extending the rule or influence by one government, nation, or society over another. It is the act or fact of dominating another nation’s economic, political, and even military structure without actually taking over
governmental control. It has already been pointed out above that this was a principle prevalent during the era of colonialism. But it has been observed that there is a continuation of this principle in globalization, though in a new guise. It has been remarked that though operating in a manner different from the ways of the old colonialists, globalization tries also to control different nations and peoples to do things they would not have otherwise done.  

8. **Driven by the Motives of Power and Profit:** It is also characteristic of globalization that despite the idyllic connotations of its designation, it is very much driven by the power-and-profit motive. Hence, it has been observed that the professed ideals of its culture of openness without limits and global participation are provoking feelings of doubts and rejection against the system.

9. **Promotion of Liberalization, Deregulation, and Privatization:** The terms, liberalization, deregulation and privatization, are very familiar in the context of economic discussions today. It has already been shown in one of the footnotes here (no. 12) that all imply removal, or great reduction, of control by individual governments. The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines have pointed out that these are also “instruments of the phenomenon of globalization.”

**The Teaching of the Catholic Church on Globalization**

Following the foregoing points and others on the nature, history, and characteristics of globalization, it is not a surprise to see the Catholic Church officially expressing some views on it. In short, in her social teachings in recent years, the Catholic Church has given much attention to the issue of globalization, expressing her views very clearly on it. In general, the Church observes both positive and negative factors in the manner in which the movement has hitherto operated, and indicates some ways it could be made more profitable to mankind.

**Positive Observations**

Among the positive observations made by the Church on globalization are the following:

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20Ibid., 47.
a. **Promise of Unity**: Unity among people of different nations and at various levels has always been highly cherished and encouraged by the Catholic Church. Accordingly, she praises and encourages the promise of unity observable in globalization. This is clearly shown by Pope John Paul II with his remark that “globalization, for all its risks, also offers exceptional and promising opportunities, precisely with a view to enabling humanity to become a single family.”

The Synod of Bishops has also more concretely pointed out that in more recent years, the phenomenon is causing acceleration in the unification and integration of member-countries into the European Union to the point of establishing a single currency. The Bishops happily observe that participation in this process has allowed many peoples in Europe, perhaps for the first time, to experience in concrete terms on the national level, the effects of an increase of institutions particularly European, thus replacing a simply rhetorical and distant vision of Europe as a continent.

b. **Economic and Socio-Political Values**: One of the foremost values identified by the Church in globalization is economic value. Affirming this, Pope John Paul II remarks that “there is an economic globalization which brings some positive consequences, such as efficiency and increased production and which, with the development of economic links between the different countries, can help to bring greater unity among peoples and make possible a better service to the human family.”

The Synod of Bishops also points out its socio-economic value, especially in Europe. Like the Pope, the Synod observes that the phenomenon is leading to increased efficiency and growth in production, and that, likewise, it has the possibility of strengthening the process of inter-dependence and unity among peoples, offering a real service to the entire human family. The Bishops particularly observe that, in the construction of Europe, monetary union had taken on an importance and significance that could serve as a major opportunity. They remark that besides requiring individual states to re-think the meaning of national sovereignty and areas of jurisdiction, it could - if approached with a global view of solidarity - give major stability to Europe and its economic development. Furthermore, they express the view that it could be an

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important tool in helping the continent to increase exchanges of various kinds and in assisting a qualitative advance in living together on the continent.  

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines also affirms the belief that globalization could widen "international flows of trade, finance and information in a single integrated market." Accordingly, they express approval of its principle "to liberalise national and global markets."  

C. Cultural Value: It is further indicated by the Synod of Bishops that globalization has also a positive value from the point of view of culture. They make it known that globalization could offer the possibility of mutual enrichment of different cultures through inter-communication.

Negative Observations

As already mentioned above, while acknowledging the positive values of globalization, the Church authorities have also considered with great concern the negative factors that follow in its wake. And among them are the following:

a. Excessive Attention to the Needs of the Economically Powerful: As Pope John Paul II shows the positive aspects of globalization in his various writings and speeches, he also points out some of the negative aspects. He shows one of them to be that it “is ruled merely by the laws of the market applied to suit the powerful.”

The Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines also remarks that while globalization has such advantages as widening free flows of exchange and negotiations, the free forces of the market system do not automatically result in equality of distribution or quality of growth. The Bishops make it clearly known that while inequality may not be inherent in globalization, in the manner of its operation today, poor and developing countries and poor people too often find their interests neglected. They show, as an example, that “since investment flows are usually tied up with transfers of technology, this means huge regions of the world being left out of the technological advance.” They point out too that while ordinary people marvel at one truly dramatic dimension of globalization, namely, the information revolution, it

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26 Synod of Bishops, II Special Assembly for Europe, Instrumentum Laboris, 10.
29 John Paul II, Ecclesia in America, 20. See also The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, Pastoral Exhortation on the Philippine Economy, 29, 30.
remains a fact that information alone does not automatically translate into equality of opportunity and choices. They make it known that the information highway currently existent in globalization is simply beyond the reach of the poor. Hence, in spite of the globalization, nagging questions of social inequality remain.

The Philippine bishops particularly draw attention to the fact that globalization as it exists today is mainly guided by the "Western" model of economic development that emphasizes free trade and encourages competition. They make it known that the idea behind such a model is to produce higher and better quality returns than one's competitors, to be open to foreign investments, protect property rights, liberalize regulations, privatize government business corporations and have minimal government intervention. They observe that unfortunately, many of the developing countries that had rushed to embrace this model have suffered most in the crisis.

b. **Absolutising of Economic Issues:** Another negative factor identified by the Church in globalization is “the absolutising of the economy.” Affirming this, the Synod of Bishops remarks that globalization of the economy and the process of modernization do not always take into account the primary needs of the people. Hence, little attention is given to such important issues as unemployment, reduction and deterioration of public services, and destruction of the environment and natural resources. The bishops particularly point out some dangers of such a principle, saying that “the phenomenon of globalization, often guided solely or primarily by the logic of commercialism and geared to the advantage of the powerful, can be the harbinger of greater inequalities, injustices and marginalization.” They further note that this situation can also lead to an increase in unemployment and pose a threat to society, tending towards inequality not only between industrialized nations but within them as well. Furthermore, it can also raise the question of what can be tolerated in development; cause new forms of social marginalization, instability and insecurity; place in question the harmony among economy, society and politics; lessen national authority in economic matters, and introduce a kind of unrestrained "hyper-competition."

c. **Widening of the Gap between the Rich and the Poor:** It has already been pointed out above that the Church sees in globalization a positive value of promise of

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30 Ibid., 31-32.
31 Ibid., 34.
32 Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Asia, Jesus Christ the Saviour and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia, *Lineamenta*, Vatican City, 1996, 6.
34 Synod of Bishops, II Special Assembly for Europe, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 12.
unity among different nations and peoples. Doubts have been expressed, however, on the ability of globalization to offer true unity. For Wilfred, for instance, there are doubts on whether globalization can contribute anything towards the movement of unity through dialogue and inter-cultural encounters. He feels that it can do very little on this. He shows one of the basic reasons to be the fact that, unlike in dialogue, where recognition of the equality of partners is required, globalization operates on the basis of inequality. In short, in globalization, there is basically an asymmetry in power relationship because the project is mainly controlled by the consortium of advanced industrialized nations, who merely tolerate the weaker ones. In other words, it is a globalization among unequal partners.\(^\text{35}\)

It is thus a globalization with discrimination. This could be easily seen in the manner in which the different nations are allowed to participate in the different activities of the global society. Odozor has rightly pointed out that after the first Gulf War of 1991,\(^\text{36}\) George H. W. Bush, US President 1989-1993, started talking of "a New World order," which some people, however, understood as a mere *Pax Americana* in which the wish of America was uppermost. What is more, the grades of participation in this American hegemony depended on how much economic power a country had. After Europe came the so-called emerging markets of South East Asia, the former communist block countries of Eastern Europe, Australia, and Latin America. Africa had literally no place in this New World order. She appeared to have been simply there as an irrelevant appendix remarkable only for numerous local problems, such as tribal wars, corrupt political leadership, and many dangerous diseases.\(^\text{37}\)

Following issues of discrimination like this, the Church expresses the fear that globalization may not be able to achieve the promised unity, as its manner of existence today seems rather to be enhancing the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor.\(^\text{38}\)

The Bishops of the Philippines have drawn attention to the Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) that shows the rules of international


\(^{36}\)The First Persian Gulf War, January – February 1991, was an armed conflict between Iraq and a coalition of 32 nations including the United States, Britain, Egypt, France, and Saudi Arabia. It was a result of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990. Iraq had annexed Kuwait, which it had long claimed. The UN Security Council called on Iraq to withdraw. When Saddam Hussein, the President of Iraq, refused to comply, Operation Desert Storm was launched on 18 January 1991 under the leadership of U.S. Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf. The main coalition forces invaded Kuwait and S Iraq on 24 February and, over the next four days, encircled and defeated the Iraqis and liberated Kuwait. Cf. *Columbia Encyclopedia*, 2001 ed. s.v. “Gulf War.”


trade to be biased against poor countries. The Report particularly observes that even "the Uruguay Round" has hardly changed the picture.

d. Cultural, Social and Demographic Dislocation: The Church has also expressed the view that globalization leads to "cultural, social and demographic dislocation." It has indeed been observed that there is a possibility of corrosion of inherited or constructed personal and cultural identities of people through the intrusion of new ideas engendered by globalization. This is because, in globalization, civilizational, societal, ethnic, communal and individual life-style differences are exacerbated, while, on the other hand, there is crystallization of the world as a whole, sociologically and geographically. It is in accordance with this observation that the Church expresses the view that globalization leads to cultural dislocation.

The Congregation for Catholic education has particularly pointed out that globalization of the economy, along with rapid structural changes and profound technical innovations affects human life more and more throughout the world, and that rather than prospects of development for all, one witnesses not only the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor, but also massive migration from

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39 The Uruguay Round is the last of the eight rounds of special negotiations undertaken by General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to arrive at an agreement on reduction of tariffs on manufactured goods by one third, and in which the World Trade Organisation was formed. GATT, on the other hand, was a specialized agency of the United Nations and was established in 1948 as an interim measure pending the creation of the International Trade Organisation. After World War II, the United States played a leading role in the formation (1948) of the GATT and in negotiating the several rounds of multilateral tariff reductions. The GATT evolved into an ongoing mechanism for reducing trade barriers, and after eight rounds of negotiations, the Uruguay Round (the last round, 1995) created the World Trade Organization, which, among other things, is responsible for monitoring national trading policies, handling trade disputes, and enforcing the GATT agreements, which are designed to reduce tariffs and other barriers to international trade and to eliminate discriminatory treatment in international commerce. Columbia Encyclopedia, 2001 ed. s.v. "The Uruguay Round," and "World Trade Organisation."


41 Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Asia, Lineamenta, 6.

42 It is noteworthy, however, that globalization, on the other hand, has been shown to encourage the revitalization of particular identities as a way of gaining control over "systemic power." Odozor has pointed out, for example, that the resurgence of Islam or the spread of fundamentalist Christianity can be partly explained by this fact. He remarks that in these and similar instances, religion is used both as a mode of collective identity and as a relatively independent resource for the legitimation of collective action. Thus the so-called politicization of religion can sometimes be no more than attempts by groups of people who feel the ground shifting from under their feet through the corrosion of identity consequent upon globalization to re-assert themselves and make their voices heard again. Odozor, "Globalization and Mission," 13 -14. See also Roland Robertson, Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 27.

43 Cf. Ibid., 283-284.
underdeveloped to highly-developed countries. It is also observed by the Synod of Bishops that in globalization, a completely new culture is seen in which there is a growing tendency to think and act merely for the satisfaction of immediate desires and the acquisition of economic security. They observe further that in it, individual freedom becomes a false absolute and there is a denial of any comparison with truth and goodness beyond one's own environment or group. The Bishops remark that consequent on this situation of cultural dislocation, although a Marxism imposed by force has collapsed, practical atheism and materialism are present throughout Europe, and though they are no longer imposed by force or explicitly proposed, people still think and behave as if God does not exist.

It has also been pointed out that globalization’s tendency of homogenization of cultures and values have the danger of leading to loss of individual identity. In short, the Church seriously resents the danger observable in globalization of “the loss of the values of local cultures in favour of a misconstrued homogenization.”

e. **Repercussions on Human Dignity:** By human dignity is meant the quality or state of human beings by virtue of which they are worthy of esteem or respect, the inherent nobility and worth of human beings. One of the principal reasons for which the Church is apprehensive about globalization is its tendency to work against the dignity of the human person. With the excessive attention it tends to give to economic affairs and to the welfare of the economically powerful nations, as well as its penchant for subjective morality, it possesses the danger of easily overlooking the dignity of some people because of the economic worth of their person or locality. John Paul II has made it very clear, however, that while the Church is always ready to give support to any movement or phenomenon that promotes the dignity of the human person, she does not waste time in showing her opposition to any one that works against the human dignity. Accordingly, he makes it clear that the Church is not ready to approve of any negative effect of globalization that has hitherto appeared in the forms of exploitation and oppression of the poorer or weaker nations and people.

**Towards Resolving the Problems of Globalization**

Following the foregone problems and others identified in globalization, the Church officials, especially Pope John Paul II and the Synod of Bishops, have proposed some ways in which the phenomenon could be made more beneficial to the human race. Among such ways are the following:

a. **Due Attention to Ethical and Moral Questions:** It has been clearly pointed out by Odor that globalization “destroys the traditional morality, spirituality, order

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45 Synod of Bishops, II Special Assembly for Europe, Instrumentum Laboris, 13.
47 Cf. Ibid.
and positive values of foreign nations and imposes American individualism, subjectivism, relativism, materialism, hedonism and permissiveness on the nations.\footnote{Pieray Odor, “Globalization and the Rights of the Child,” Vanguard, Nigerian Daily Newspaper, 4 December 2002, 35.}

As a consequence of evil effects like these, Pope John Paul II teaches that the ethical and moral aspects of globalization need to be more directly addressed by the leaders of nations and by organizations concerned with human promotion.\footnote{John Paul II, Ecclesia in Asia, 13.}


She teaches that man is endowed with a special dignity by the creator, and that this could be seen, above all, in the manner in which he was created. The Book of Genesis clearly shows that the origin of man is very unique. It shows that after God had created other various creatures on earth and saw all to be good, he said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth”... (Gen. 1:25-27) “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” (Gen. 2:27. See also Job 33:4). This dignity of man was further enhanced when the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, came to the earth in the form of man. Following these and other related reasons, the Church understands man to be endowed with a special dignity, and his life as sacred.\footnote{The Catechism of the Catholic Church succinctly explains the sacredness of human life thus: “Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves ‘the creative action of God,’ and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end.” The Catechism of the Catholic Church (Ibadan: St. Paul Publications, 1994), 2258.}

In accordance with this understanding of the dignity of the human person, the Church has in various ways expressed the view that the only form of globalization worthy of adoption is the one that stands for human dignity and all that it implies. Affirming this, Pope John Paul II teaches that the globalized economy must be analysed in the light of the principles of social justice, respecting the preferential option for the poor who must be allowed to take their place in such an economy.\footnote{John Paul II, Ecclesia in America, 55.}
c. **A Spirit of Solidarity:** One of the most prominent principles proposed by the Church as a way out of the evil effects of globalization especially on poor nations and people is that of solidarity. By solidarity is meant unity or fellowship arising from common responsibilities and interests. Pope John Paul II makes it clear that in line with the Church’s principle of preferential love for the poor and the excluded, she is “duty-bound to promote a culture of solidarity at every level of society: government institutions, public institutions and private organizations.” He makes it known that by so doing, the Church, among other things, contributes to “reducing the negative effects of globalization, such as the domination of the powerful over the weak, especially in the economic sphere, and the loss of the values of local cultures in favour of a misconstrued homogenization.”

Offering further explanations on why solidarity is very important in dealing with the problems associated with the process of globalization, the Pope points out that the very fact that humanity, called to form a single family, is still tragically split in two by poverty means that there is urgent need to reconsider the models that inspire development policies. He makes it well understood that there will be peace only to the extent that humanity as a whole rediscovers its fundamental calling to be one family, a family in which the dignity and rights of individuals - whatever their status, race or religion - are accepted as prior and superior to any kind of difference or distinction. He believes that recognition of this fact could give the world as it is today - marked by the process of globalization - a soul, a meaning and a direction.

The Synod of Bishops offers also some reasons for the need for solidarity in globalization. Among other things, the Bishops show that the increased number of persons in society due to migration requires a proper response in form of solidarity in society. They observe that with the growth of globalization, the claim by groups and minorities to the right of citizenship and full acknowledgment of their identity and diversity calls for recognition.

d. **Elimination of Marginalization:** Related to the above principle of globalization, with a spirit of solidarity, is that of globalization without marginalization. To marginalize means: to leave on the fringes of society, to keep by the side, and thus to consider unimportant. As the Church officials emphasize the principle of “globalization in solidarity,” they also express the need for a process of globalization without marginalization. In other words, they have always taught that in the process of globalization, no nation or state should be treated as unimportant, and so neglected while making crucial decisions. Pope John Paul II, for example, in one

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53Ibid. See also Pontifical Council for Culture, Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture, 23 May 1999, 21.

54John Paul II, “Peace on Earth to Those Whom God Loves,” 17.

55Ibid., 5.

56Synod of Bishops, II Special Assembly for Europe, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 74.
of his post-synodal apostolic exhortations says: The Church insists upon the need for "globalization without marginalization." 57

He makes it known that if the aim is globalization without marginalization, it can no more tolerate "a world in which there live side by side the immensely rich and the miserably poor, the have-nots deprived even of essentials and people who thoughtlessly waste what others so desperately need." 58

e. Respect for the Independent Identity of Each Culture: It has been pointed out by Wilfred that in the face of the wave of globalization, the cultures and traditions of peoples cannot make effective resistance. Hence, questions arise on how these cultures and traditions could be integrated within the "mainstream" constituted by the process of globalization. In other words, how can there be integration of local culture and the global culture, and how could inter-cultural communication take place today within the framework provided by globalization? He remarks that if any local culture or people fail to get integrated in this all-embracing process, it will be left behind, suffer isolation and stay in its "primitivism." 59

It has also been remarked by Schrijver that authors who are specialized in the study of cultural change have begun to raise the question as to the extent to which local cultures, especially those in the "Third World," 60 will be able to withstand their absorption into the commodification of culture, which, under the impact of flexible economic systems, is going to grow global. He observes that facing up to this question, most of them repel the prospect of a "McDonaldization" 61 of cultures. Instead, they expect the rise, all over the globe, of specific types of creolization 62 in

59 Wilfred, "Globalization and Cultures," 42.
60 The term "Third World" has come to be used in the years following the World War II to describe the less economically advanced nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, most of whom had once been dominated by the West in the age of imperialism. The Third World countries were distinguished from the "Western," or non-Communist, bloc of industrial nations in which the United States predominated, and the Communist bloc of industrial or industrializing nations, dominated for the most part by the Soviet Union. *Columbia Encyclopedia*, 2001 ed. s.v. "Third World."
61 By McDonaldization is meant the uniform spread of fast-food chains and amusement theme parks around the world (Disneyland everywhere!) through the Mcdonald Fast Foods Company with its peculiarities.
62 Creolization is a broad anthropological term describing any coming together of diverse cultural traits or elements, usually in the context of the West Indies or Lousiana, to form new traits or elements. The concept of creolisation first came into prominence after the European discovery of the Americas to describe the process by which Old World life forms became indigenous in the New World. Today creolisation appears in writings on globalization and post modernity as a synonym of 'hibridity' and 'syncretism' to portray the mixtures occurring amongst societies in an age of migration and telecommunications. History shows that creolisation did not refer centrally to mixture, but just to the adaptive effects of living in a new environment. *Encyclopedia of Cajun Culture*, 1997 ed. s.v. "Creolization;" Online edition; available from http://www.cajunculture.com/Other/creolisation.htm; Internet. Accessed on 2.12.2004.
which particular, local culture and the universal, international culture in one way or the other will have to come to merge.\textsuperscript{63}

The Church equally recognizes these problems connected with the relationship of particular cultures and the universal culture of globalization. In response, she continually emphasizes the need for a globalization that respects and promotes the identity of individual cultures.\textsuperscript{64}

f. Creation of International Monitoring Agencies: John Paul II draws attention to the fact that the rapid advance towards the globalization of economic and financial systems also illustrates the urgent need to establish who is responsible for guaranteeing the global common good and the exercise of economic and social rights.\textsuperscript{65} He remarks a growing feeling that the increasing ‘internationalization’ of the economy ought to be accompanied by effective international agencies that should 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.\textsuperscript{66}

Conclusion

This is globalization and the teaching of the Catholic Church on it. From such a teaching, one could see that the Church, in accordance with the instruction of the Vatican Council II, has been truly following the signs of the times.\textsuperscript{67} The Church has rightly observed that the process of globalization is something very current and exercises great influence over many things in the world of today, especially the determination of the quality of lives of people in poor nations. Accordingly, like John the Baptist, she has been crying in the wilderness of the world of today, calling on all the leading nations to be mindful of what they are doing with globalization. She sees in globalization some positive factors that could contribute to the welfare of all, and at the same time, negative factors that could work towards the undoing of many children of God. Accordingly, she has been calling for special consideration of the poor and for adoption of solidarity of action in dealing with the process - solidarity of the rich and the poor, of the North and the South, and of industrialists and consumers. She rightly believes that only through such a solidarity can one clearly perceive the evil effects inherent in globalization and thus be able to effect the biblical teaching that all should learn to treat others as they themselves would like to be treated (cf. Mt. 7:12; Lk. 6:31; Tb. 4:15).

\textsuperscript{63}Cf. Schrijver, “Contextual Theology,” 50.
\textsuperscript{64}Cf. John Paul II, Ecclesia in America, 55.
\textsuperscript{65}Id., “Respect for Human Rights,” 9.
\textsuperscript{66}Id., Centesimus Annus, 58. See also id., “Respect for Human Rights,” 9.
\textsuperscript{67}Vatican Council II, Gaudium et Spes, 4.