Zeitschrift: Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift : neue Folge der Revue internationale de théologie

Band: 100 (2010)

Heft: [1]: Globalization and catholicity : ecumenical conversations on god's abundance and the people's need

Artikel: Catholicity and globalization in the anglican tradition

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-422219

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12. Catholicity and Globalization in the Anglican Tradition

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Life becomes real when we face our own responsibilities.
J. H. Oldham[1]

Three Views of Globalization and Catholicity

Three views of the relationship between catholicity and globalization have emerged in recent theological literature. Some argue that globalization sheds light on the church's life and work, particularly with regard to evangelism, ecumenical reconciliation, interfaith dialogue, and the struggle for justice (Marzheuser 179).[2] In this view, globalization is defined as the ever-expanding awareness of an ever-shrinking world. This view informs a vision of catholicity as "diversified unity" – the more culturally and regionally differentiated particular churches are, the more catholic the universal church will be. Globalization therefore represents an invitation for the church to live into a catholicity as wide and varied as the world itself.

Further, according to this view globalization encourages an expansive view of the biblical references to God's creation and redemption of the inhabited earth (*oikoumene*, meaning 'the whole world') and a retrieval of the original understanding of catholicity (*kath' holou*, meaning 'in general' or 'on the whole') advanced during the patristic age, in which, says John Evans, the church was "the first truly transnational corporation" and a "parallel organization to the infrastructure of Empire" (Evans 15–16).[3]

According to the second view, globalization is antithetical to "true catholicity" (Cavanaugh, Balthasar 325).[4] The "unholy trinity"[5] of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Or-

[1] Oldham 149.

[2] Besides the documents cited in the body of this text, other examples of this view, which includes many variations of liberal and conservative positions, are found in the articles by Browning, Lundy, and Burrows.

[3] See also Staples, and Raiser, Oikoumene.

[4] See also Moe-Lobeda, and Papathanasiou 39–97.

[5] This phrase is from Unholy Trinity 55.

ganization, and regional agreements such as the 1992 North American Free Trade Agreement have enabled transnational corporations to supercede national structures of accountability in order to enable the unencumbered, rapid movement of capital, commodities, goods, and production across the globe. According to this view, in addition to threatening natural resources, biodiversity, and the world's poor, globalization generates its own homogenized culture and anthropology: particular cultures are commodified, and human agency is constrained to live according to the logic of late capitalism, in which flourishing is defined in terms of individual consumption (Moe-Lobeda 19–45). William T. Cavanaugh argues that such globalization "enacts a universal mapping of space typified by detachment from any particular localities; it produces fragmented subjects unable to engage a catholic imagination of space and time" (Cavanaugh, World 182).

Such globalization, says Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, must be resisted by a catholicity encountered in the "complex social space" of particular eucharistic communities, which enact a counter-narrative of the "collapsing of the world into the local assembly" instead of globalization's inverse (Moe-Lobeda 19–45). This situation enables a "subversive moral agency" gained by participation in communities marked by the eucharistic values of generosity, equality, mutuality, and sustainability (100–32).

A third view sees globalization and catholicity interacting with each other in dynamic, complex, and accelerating ways (e.g., Vanhoozer; Van Engen). In this view, catholicity is composed of global and local networks that are continually initiated, negotiated, and realigned, much like interpersonal relations on Internet social networking sites.[6] Over and against "monocentric" visions of ecclesiology and predominantly Western theology (Van Engen 173), a polycentric, polycultural vision has emerged. Particularly in the Anglican Communion, these evaluations have led to new configurations of catholicity made possible by globalization. The alliances of Anglicans in the global South with conservative dissidents in the Episcopal Church in the United States, says Miranda K. Hassett, engage the "global context in many respects," such as "its use of transportation and communication technologies, its efforts to build cross-cultural solidarity, its denial of the relevance of distance and geographical boundaries," and the overarching "express goal of re-

[6] Here I develop Van Engen's image, "Global Church" 161–62.

placing the Anglican Communion's Eurocentric structure with transnational networks" (Hassett 6).[7]

These views demonstrate some of the difficulties involved in speaking about catholicity in the context of globalization. They obviously involve differing definitions of globalization and catholicity, and these differences reflect the contested nature of these terms in wider discussions. In each view, globalization refers to aspects of a complex field of economic, cultural, and social interactions. Consequently, there is enough overlap among these definitions of globalization to make conversations possible but not enough to make them conclusive, because the term *globalization* refers to a common set of disagreements as much as to a common set of agreements with regard to this interconnectivity.

Similarly, each view defines catholicity within what Robert J. Schreiter refers to as the "two poles" of "universality and orthodoxy," and in each definition there is just enough overlap with the others to make conversations both possible and irresolvable (Schreiter 121). In each view, catholicity is taken as a belief in a church that is embodied culturally but that also transcends these embodiments in ways visible, mystical, or eschatological. It is even possible to discern in each view an overarching understanding of catholicity that spans the denominational spectrum: catholicity is – to draw from Cardinal Avery Dulles – the church's "created participation in the fullness" of God's Triune unity-in-diversity manifested in Christ's incarnation as "a mystery of plenitude" and of "reconciled opposites" (Dulles, Catholicity 30, 33).[8] But it is also clear that each view draws different implications and responsibilities from this overarching understanding, and there appears no straightforward way to resolve these normative differences.

Finally, in each view, there is a specific understanding of the relation between globalization and catholicity concerning the church's relation to the world, and these relational differences are at least as fundamental as the definitional differences just noted. Schreiter offers three typologies for the church's relation to the world, corresponding to the three views: universal (first view), liberation (second view), and contextual (third view).

[7] See also Jenkins, New Faces, and Next Christendom.

[8] Marzheuser (183–87) argues that Dulles's catholicity is largely congenial to a theological understanding of globalization.

Praxical Catholicity

Indetermination, then, attends discussions of catholicity. The heuristic that shapes this essay is grounded in the normative determination that the purpose of theological reflection on globalization and catholicity is to serve those who suffer as a result of globalization – those who experience globalization as disruptive, "uneven, asymmetrical, unequal, and violent" (Schreiter 55). This determination has particular affinities with the second – liberation – view of globalization, particularly with regard to its belief that the church is an *alterna civitas*, an alternative city founded on the love of God and neighbor rather than merely on self-love, and that maintaining this "complex social space" is imperative (Cavanaugh, World 183). But unlike that view, this approach is not confined to strategies of subversion but is open to a multidimensional approach that draws from the first and third views as well.[9]

The view developed below is properly called *praxical*, referring not only to the emphasis in liberation theology on the knowledge based in praxis, or lived experience, but also to the general shape of knowledge in a contemporary, technological, and globalized world, in which embedded agents develop their understanding by interacting with pre-existing networks that pre-determine the field of reflection and action.[10] As opposed to merely "practical" knowledge, which is non-theoretical, praxical reflection seeks to develop wider theories and approaches that are nonetheless contextually grounded.

Ideally, it should be possible to discern in every church this praxical approach, grounded in the life, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ and in the giving of the Holy Spirit. But it is important to explore how a particular church performs the approach in a specific cultural and social context. In this essay, I explore this normative commitment and praxical view from the perspective of the development of middle axioms in the Anglican tradition and the 2000 commitment to the Millennium Development Goals in the Anglican Communion. I focus on Anglicanism

[9] Schreiter (108–10) argues for such a multifaceted approach for liberation theology, which must adopt multiple strategies of resistance, denunciation, critique, advocacy, and reconstruction in order to remain viable in the contemporary context of globalization.

[10] For examples of the term *praxical* in liberation theology and the philosophy of technology, see González, and Ihde.

because it offers a distinct performance of catholicity in the context of globalization, worthy of the wider church's defense and embrace.

Middle Axioms in Anglicanism

In his discussion of catholicity and globalization, Schreiter calls for new strategies, including "new forms of cooperation in the name of justice and in the hope for a renewed situation for humanity" (Schreiter 110), and for the development of "middle axioms," which he defines as "evolving principles reshaped by the continuing encounter with an evolving society" (111).

Middle axioms were first proposed by J. H. Oldham in "The Function of the Church in Society," the second part of *The Church and its Function in Society*, written in preparation for the 1937 Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State sponsored by the Life and Work movement. Oldham argued that if the church was to continue being salt and light in an increasingly secular, idolatrous, and murderous world, it had to develop an ecumenically based social ethics to speak in the public sphere. Seeking to avoid untenable appeals to natural law and the idealism of the social gospel, Oldham argued that the church and the world existed in a dialectical relationship that reflected the eschatological tension inherent in the belief that the "rule of God" is real and yet unrealized (Oldham 135). Drawing from Reinhold Niebuhr, Oldham saw this eschatological tension played out in balancing the demands of love and justice, the willingness to engage in human activity and to trust God's providential initiative, following the dual imperatives of law and gospel (137–38).

But Oldham went beyond Niebuhr in locating the church as the site in which these tensions were most authentically played out: "The church is the true center of social renewal, and it can become this in fact so far as it places itself unreservedly at God's disposal" (139). This open stance of the church, Oldham argued, demanded receptiveness to God's commands at particular points in history, and it also required that the church engage in active listening to understand how "the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments may . . . bring about transformations in the life of society" (143).

Although the church's dialectical relation to the world entails opposition between the two, Oldham said (132), the church must listen to criticisms and movements of the wider society as sources of correction and revelation: "If religious belief is to be kept free from onesidedness and

perversion it must have constant criticism from without"; "If God is not absent from the world which he has created, . . . the profound distinction between the church and the world cannot be treated as identical with the difference between two sociological groups," but as between opposing perspectives and loyalties concerning the nature of things (129). Therefore, despite evidence to the contrary, the world itself is a source of grace – "The universe is sacramental" (128).

For Oldham, then, the church was primarily constituted through worship: "The church is by its nature a worshiping community, and its necessary function as an organized society is to provide opportunities for common and public worship and to educate its individual members in the spirit and practice of worship" (143). So constituted, "The church is the realization of true community," for its worship provides the basis for a common love that is the source of peace and reconciliation between its members (147).

To achieve this ecclesial vision internally, Oldham explained, required that the church develop and support "the growth of smaller groups who will seek to realize among themselves the relations of mutual trust and support and responsibility which are characteristic of the Christian society" (149). These smaller groups would be able to explore more inclusive vehicles for worship, theological reflection, administration, evangelism, and outreach, with greater lay participation (149–61). Their development would lead to continuous rebirth: "The church has to be continually reborn as the living church within the church as an organized society" (149).

Externally, the church must use its "prophetic and teaching office" to empower the witness and action of Christian laity by providing them with grounded direction for advancing the rule of God in the world:

> between purely general statements of the ethical demands of the gospel and the decisions that have to be made in concrete situations, there is need for what may be described as middle axioms. . . . They are not binding for all time, but are provisional definitions of the type of behavior required of Christians at a given period and in given circumstances. (193–94)

Because Oldham was writing a preparatory volume for an ecumenical conference, he refrained from offering specific middle axioms. Instead, he provided a framework for developing them. Because of his distrust of natural law, he argued that middle axioms operate within an ethic that favors obedience over outcomes: "The primary concern of the Christian ethic is not with ends, purposes or programs, but with faith and obedience" (221).

For those living in England on the verge of world war, this position meant that the church was to fight against "evils such as the exaltation of the material over the spiritual and the indifference to material injustice in capitalist societies, the demonry of nationalism, and the destruction of human values by dictatorships" (222). To resist these evils involved accepting the truths inherent in their companion ideologies of communism, national socialism, and fascism as "secularized forms of the Christian expectation of the kingdom of God" (224). The foundation for all Christian action, he said, was "the truth expressed in the earliest of Christian confessions, 'Christ is Lord.' . . . All knowledge derived from other sources, however valid within its own range, must be viewed in the light of this unique revelation" and grounded in "the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection" (227–28).

The best example of the middle-axiom approach is found in a later volume that Oldham edited, *The Churches Survey Their Task*, the official report of the Oxford Conference. It is comprised of reports from the conference sections on church and community, church and state, the economic order, education, and international relations. The report addressing the economic order bears close examination not only because it is a particularly fine example of how middle axioms are developed but also because it resonates with some of the forces of globalization previously noted.

The report begins by stating that "The Christian Church approaches the problems of the social and economic order from the standpoint of her faith in the revelation of God in Christ." It points to "The nature and will of God" as revealed in the incarnation and the commandments to love God and neighbor. Such love, it says, mandates a commitment to "the dignity of man as made in the image of God," which is also based on the revelation that human dignity has been restored by Jesus Christ (Churches 92). Human dignity, then, is not discovered by examining the nature of things but is revealed in humanity's inherent goodness as well as its sinfulness. Translated into the mode of justice, human dignity and neighbor-love are realized in the "harmonious relation of life to life," but they are impeded by "the sinful tendency of one life to take advantage of another." Justice is therefore established

> by defining the rightful place . . . which each life must have in the harmony of the whole and by assigning the duty of each to each. Justice . . . seeks to define and to maintain the good which each member of the community may rightfully claim in the harmony of the whole. (93)

The report then considers "The present economic situation" (98). Noting that there is "no *one* economic order" (97), the report nonetheless discusses "the capitalist economic system" in depth (98) and treats communism and socialism as "a protest against the evil results of the capitalist economic order" (102). It defines "the present economic situation" as "a product of the emancipation of the individual" during the Enlightenment, which created increasing levels of material well being. By enabling "industrial development" and encouraging "technological improvements," the "system of free enterprise" had raised "the general standard of consumption" and "reduced the physical labor of the manual workers." Further, it defined "the system of free enterprise" as the driving force of what is now called globalization: "For the first time in history it has brought all parts of the world into interdependence with each other and has made the idea of the unity of mankind a fact of common experience" (98).

But capitalism had serious downsides, the report noted. Although its first architects had argued that "this new economic order would . . . establish social justice," the report declared that "The same forces which had produced material progress have often enhanced inequalities, created permanent insecurity, and subjected all members of modern society to the domination of so-called independent economic 'laws'" (99). In the process of industrialization, traditional societies had been destroyed, wealth had become concentrated in the hands of a privileged few, large numbers had been impoverished and forced into urban slums, employment had become sporadic, and labor had lost its sense of vocation. As a result, "hostility" had arisen "between the members of different groups in their economic relationships" (100).

Given this state of affairs, the report called on all churches to "repent for their blindness to the actual situation" (102). Churches needed to acknowledge that capitalism had eroded human dignity by encouraging "acquisitiveness as the creator of a false standard of economic and social success," by creating "Indefensible inequalities of opportunity in regard to education, leisure, and health," by enabling economic centers "not responsible to any organ of the community," and by eroding in many workers a "sense of Christian vocation in their daily life" (88, 104–9).

Therefore, the report suggested that "The Christian message should deal with ends, in the sense of long-range goals" and should test them by the gospel. More important, it called for the churches to undertake an internal reform, considering their "sources of income, methods of raising

money, administration of property," and terms of employment so that they might "avoid the evils that Christians deplore in secular society" (112–13, 126). The churches needed to develop regional and ecumenical centers "for study and research, as well as for witness and action in appropriate circumstances" (127). And the churches should work with "national and local government" and "co-operative movements" to enlarge their opportunities "for social action." Finally, the churches should encourage alternative patterns of more faithful economic living (128–29).

Remembering Middle Axioms

The middle-axiom approach gave the reports from the Oxford Conference an uncommon level of breadth, depth, and insight.[11] Although in the short run its specific imperatives went largely unheeded on account of the Second World War, and liberation theology eventually inspired more radical calls for social change, the middle-axiom approach influenced the form, content, and initiatives developed at subsequent ecumenical conferences sponsored by the World Council of Churches for the next thirty years (see Abrecht, From Oxford).

However, there is little agreement over what precisely constituted the middle-axiom approach. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, author of the first half of *The Church and its Function in Society*, later wrote:

> Oldham's method can be summarized in four points:
> 1) to discover the men and women who can best help the churches understand the nature of the crisis of society;
> 2) to arrive . . . at a definition of the fundamental issues with which the churches should be concerned in order to render their witness to society;
> 3) to promote an interdisciplinary approach to these issues and particularly a dialogue between theologians and lay people;
> 4) to present the results to the churches for study and appropriate action. (Visser 't Hooft 4)

In contrast, Ronald H. Preston argued that the middle-axiom approach could be reached by bringing about "the total Christian understanding of life and an analysis of an empirical situation" (Preston, Middle Axioms 40) and avoiding "utopian" appeals "to an ideal social and political order

[11] For a review of the other reports by a former participant at Oxford, see Bennett, Breakthrough.

which bore no relation to the parameters of immediate and necessary decisions" (Preston, Confusions 19).

John C. Bennett considered middle axioms to be concrete "goals," such as "responsibility to maintain full employment" or the prevention of "private centers of economic power from becoming stronger than the government." For him, then, middle axioms operated under the following eschatological proviso: "the Kingdom of God in its fullness lies beyond our best achievements in the world but God does have purposes for us that can be realized" (Bennett, Christian Ethics 77, 81). Finally, Paul Abrecht argued that middle axioms were born of the recognition that "in the Bible" there is "no direct solution for contemporary political and social problems." Therefore, middle axioms "outline tentative or approximate ethical positions" that reflect "the encounter of faith with social issues" (Abrecht, Evolution 107).

Each of these definitions has some purchase on Oldham's original account, but each neglects the centrality of the church as the community out of which middle axioms are properly generated. Therefore, each overlooks the fact that middle axioms are not merely strategies for translating Christian imperatives into proximate goals that could appeal to a wider audience but also a performance of a praxical catholicity that sees the church operating in the world through many members and multiple strategies of engagement. Middle axioms developed a model of catholicity that was praxical rather than merely contextual, because it involved the church's own recognition of the imperative to act against injustice, a determination that was clear in its orientation around the conviction of the Lordship of Christ and the Kingdom of God. At the same time, this catholicity was not universal in the conventional sense, as the model understood that unity, or even consensus, could not be assumed from the start but had to develop through concerted efforts that would with growing clarity reveal the way forward to participating churches.

Finally, this catholicity was not merely pragmatic, because the proposals generated through the churches' engagement with pressing issues of social concern would be part of their own theological self-understanding and spiritual revitalization, not only in willingness to begin with repentance regarding their own moral failures but also with the conviction that the church had to engage the world for the sake of its own actualization.

Politically, Oldham wrote, it is impossible to lay down clear rules for actions: "the right course for a Christian individual or assembly to take in a particular instance cannot be determined in advance by any abstract

rule but must be an act of obedience to God in face of the concrete situation" (201–2). Nonetheless, the one constant at every level should be the centrality of worship, which was itself a political activity: "The church is a worshiping community in whose worship every relative political judgment is brought to the searching test and scrutiny of an absolute and divine judgment" (202). At the same time, "As a church it unites men in a loyalty which transcends the relativities of political action" (203). As a political community the church does not represent an ideal society – a true *polis* – that can simply dictate principles that should be the measure of all other political organizations. Rather, the church is an assembly – an *ekklesia* – dedicated to making the Kingdom of God known in the world.[12]

Properly understood, Oldham wrote,

> Worship is adoration issuing in action, and the unity of adoration and action transforms life into a sacrament. A worshiping community dedicated to the fulfillment of God's purpose becomes the means through which God's purpose may be realized in the world in all the relationships of human life. (144–45)

This sacramental vision of worship and political engagement provided the church with an important mark of catholicity, for thereby – as Karl Barth put it – "every single Christian community is as such an ecumenical (catholic) fellowship, that is, at one with the Christian communities in all other places, regions, and lands" (Barth 150).

Performing Traditions of Catholicity

The middle-axiom approach cannot be simply invoked to resolve all the tensions previously noted surrounding catholicity in the context of globalization. Oldham's middle axioms occupied a specific place in the history of the ecumenical movement – they were adopted and eventually discarded as a method of social reflection. Any serious project of retrieval, then, requires considering the ways ecumenism has changed since their heyday.

Ecumenism is no longer driven, as it was in Oldham's time, by a predominantly privileged, male, Western, European, and mainline Protestant perspective. As many have noted, Oldham's analysis and the Oxford Conference operated with a limited constituency that did not reflect the

[12] Here I draw from Wannenwetsch.

true diversity of persons and cultures or the plurality of interpretations on how the church rightfully engages the world. Consequently, despite its sensitivity to issues of social justice, the Oxford Conference as a whole displayed a lack of actual engagement with those who differed in race, national origin, or gender from the traditional participants it sought to welcome as members of the universal church. Current WCC bodies on the global, national, and regional levels have a membership much more reflective of the membership of churches worldwide, and they tend to favor involvement by those who are numbered among the world's poor, oppressed, and marginalized.[13] As a result of this enlarged constituency, the broad consensus developed by the middle-axiom approach has become much more elusive. Konrad Raiser argues that Oldham's view of what Raiser calls "a Christian universalism" is incapable of the pluriformity and complexity of the world *oikoumene* that has emerged since the Oxford Conference (Raiser, Ecumenism 86).

In such a context, Raiser argues that the church is no longer the primary instrument of God's saving mission but one community among many in God's *oikoumene*. This expanded understanding of the world in turn provokes a "wider ecumenism" that can include interfaith relations. Hence S. Wesley Ariarajah argues that "unless what is 'ecumenical' is not simply *about*, but in some measure *constitutes*, the whole inhabited earth, it has too little to say to, and much less to do with, the majority of the world's population" (Ariarajah 328).

One unforeseen consequence of such theological proposals is that WCC work on economic issues has suffered. Writing fifty years after the Oxford Conference, Abrecht argued that in economic discussions the WCC failed to take account of its own history and was therefore doomed to "the repetition of past errors" (Abrecht, From Oxford 147). This repetition is evident in the transition from a time of prophetic idealism, which issued demands for radical change in the economic order, to a time of realism, which provided comprehensive proposals to transform the economic order. The transition proved difficult, however, because, said Abrecht, "the ecumenical movement seems more deeply divided and polarized than ever before about the theological-ethical basis of ecumenical social thought and action" (Abrecht, From Oxford 166).

[13] For a short overview of the limited constituency at Oxford, see Bennett, Breakthrough 132–34.

In the twenty years since Abrecht rendered this verdict, little has changed in the work of the WCC to suggest that new learning has taken place. In a paper presented on November 5, 2007, at an AGAPE consultation in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania,[14] Rogate Mshana surveyed recent WCC reports that committed member churches to "embrace a spirituality of radical sharing of resources in order to do justice to the poor." Noting that such commitments have "remained on paper" and are "hardly implemented," he asked, "What was the problem? Why is it difficult to practice what the gospel calls churches to do?"

The answer to these questions, Mshana argued, requires renewed research on inequality and the establishment of a "greed line" that could serve as a counterpoint to the "poverty line" to provide a point from which economic "reparations" to developing countries could be established (Mshana).[15] Even if such a proposal satisfies the outrage felt by those who find global inequalities repugnant, however, it is unlikely that it will generate cooperative ventures like those called for by Oldham and the Oxford Conference. Further, efforts to establish economic reparations are likely to perpetuate rather than alleviate Mshana's frustration with the lack of responsiveness among member churches.

Given this state of affairs, a retrieval of the middle-axiom approach would be more viable if it were located in worldwide denominational communions and federations rather than in the current ecumenical structures of the WCC, because such bodies share an ecclesiology within which the middle-axiom approach could be retrieved and developed. Despite its own recent history of division and tension, the Anglican Communion provides a particularly good candidate for this development. Given that Oldham himself was an Anglican, his vision of the church and its sacramental relation to the world through worship already has roots in Anglicanism. The adoption of the praxical catholicity of middle axioms, then, would represent another chapter in Anglicanism's performance of its own tradition. Indeed, middle axioms would represent a part of the Anglican tradition from the recent past that has been so forgotten as to appear radical once it is remembered and performed anew.

[14] AGAPE (Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth) is a project directed by WCC's Justice, Peace and Creation team. It was instituted as a preparation process for the 2006 WCC assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and continues to hold consultations worldwide.

[15] See AGAPE Consultation.

Another reason that the Anglican Communion represents a good ecclesial context for the retrieval of middle axioms is that elements of this approach are already evident in the concerted efforts by Anglican churches with regard to the Millennium Development Goals. The MDG developed as the result of a Millennium Summit held at the United Nations headquarters in New York City in 2000. At that meeting, representatives from 189 countries affirmed their "collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level." Participants also recognized the responsibility "to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people," as opposed to the current state of affairs, in which globalization's "benefits are very unevenly shared" and its "costs are unevenly distributed" (Investing).

The Millennium Declaration, issued at the conclusion of the Summit, made an explicit commitment to help those in the world's poorest countries achieve a better life by the year 2015. The MDG represent a framework of eight goals for achieving the Millennium Declaration:

> Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger,
> Achieve universal primary education,
> Promote gender equality and empower women,
> Reduce child mortality,
> Improve maternal health,
> Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases,
> Ensure environmental sustainability,
> Develop a global partnership for development with targets [for aid, trade, and debt relief]. (Investing xviii–xix)

The MDG built on agreements made at United Nations Conferences in the 1990s, but they have increasingly captured the attention of many. One reason they have done so is the leadership of Jeffrey Sachs, an American economist, who has declared that the political and economic frameworks are already in place to achieve the MDG and end extreme poverty. Among other claims, Sachs argues that if wealthy countries increased their combined foreign-aid budgets to between $135 billion and $195 billion for the next decade, extreme global poverty (defined as individual incomes of less than $1 per day) would end by 2025. He has calculated this amount to be about "0.7 percent of the gross national product of the high-income world" (Sachs 288).

This cause has resonated not only with many audiences worldwide but also with a large number of Anglicans at the global, national, diocesan, and parish levels. At the global level, lay and clergy leaders from

many branches of the Anglican Communion gathered in Boksburg, South Africa, in May 2007 to reflect on what role its member churches and ecumenical partners could play in the advancement of the MDG. In his Foreword to the report of the conference, known as TEAM (Towards Effective Anglican Mission), Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane of Cape Town argued that in the context of global poverty and disease, "the Anglican Communion must act," particularly given that the "Church as an institution has unparalleled presence at the grassroots level" that "can meaningfully impact efforts to end poverty." With regard to the MDG, the conference report acknowledges that they represent an inclusive "starting point" for thinking through "the Anglican Communion's mission as the body of Christ" so that "actionable plans and strategies" are "developed to instill new hope and vision in the Church and the world at large."[16]

At the national level, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori of the Episcopal Church has delivered several sermons and addresses regarding the MDG and has made political advocacy for the MDG her main public-policy objective. In an address celebrating the 2007 opening of the Desmond Tutu Center at The General Theological Seminary in New York City, Jefferts Schori argued that the MDG are a "sacrament of justice" and "the best global example of what the Reign of God could look like in our own day." They are a "twenty-first-century version of what Jesus meant when he walked into the synagogue in Nazareth, read from Isaiah about preaching good news to the poor, and said, 'today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'" Although the MDG do not use "overtly theological language," she said, they offer a way to achieve the "wholeness for which we were created," reflecting Christian teaching "about the Incarnation" (Jefferts Schori).

Finally, at the diocesan and parish level, there have been numerous efforts to support the work of the MDG through liturgies, political advocacy, micro-financing initiatives, and direct support to other church-related development and capacity-building organizations. This work has provided a point of commonality among those who otherwise disagree over the issues currently dividing members of the Episcopal Church.[17]

[16] team2007.org, acc. 12 Nov. 2007.

[17] For a listing of the different projects connected to the MDG, see Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation, e4gr.org/mdgs/fast_facts.html, acc. 23 Jan. 2010.

The excitement over and commitment to the MDG in many parts of the Anglican Communion indicate that a retrieval of Oldham's middle-axiom approach could help inaugurate a new and more productive era of reflection and action on economic issues of social justice. Indeed there is a sense in which Oldham's middle-axiom approach indicates what the churches in the Anglican Communion must know in order to learn from the recent excitement over the MDG. The middle-axiom approach would demand, among other things, the following: more sustained, disciplined reflection on the spiritual, theological, and ecclesial basis for social action at the global, national, and diocesan levels; more interdisciplinary coordination among clergy and lay leaders, as well as academics and activists; a thorough review of the policies and internal decisions of the church regarding its finances at every level of organization; collaboration with other organizations and initiatives, and the willingness to participate in communities that explore alternatives to current economic relationships.

With greater cooperation, a new way of living as the church in society will begin to emerge, one that may even hold together the Anglican Communion as it searches for ways to avoid schism over divisive issues of sexuality and polity. Elements of this multidisciplinary, multifaceted approach are already at work. They are examples of the performance of a praxical catholicity that may, with God's grace, heal the church as the church seeks to be an agent for healing and reconciliation in the world.