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Establishing the Context: “The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. An Ongoing Conversation on Catholicity and Globalization” (Tagaytay, October 2016)

Eleuterio J. Revollido/Franz Segbers

The conference “The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. An Ongoing Conversation on Catholicity and Globalization” took place at Angels’ Hills Conference Centre, Tagaytay, Philippines, on October 4–7, 2016. The event was the joint effort of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) and the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht. Members of the Faith and Order Commission of the Word Council of Churches were also invited to accompany the participants, to take part in the discussions and to join the conversation as part of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace initiated by the WCC. The Old Catholic Churches and the IFI’s aim for this consultation process is to develop ecclesiological access to the question of globalization beginning with the catholicity of the church.

Susan Durber, moderator of the Faith and Order Commission, was asked to facilitate the opening session and to help the participants to set the stage for the reflections. The consultation highlighted the fruits of commitment and testimonies of struggle and hope, and held them alongside the Faith and Order document, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. Susan Durber said:

To be alongside churches from the global North and from the global South thinking, praying and reflecting on what God is saying in the face of poverty and the effects of the dominant economic systems of our world brought vividly into focus the good news that the church is called to proclaim.¹

The historical context of the 2016 Manila conference is extraordinary.

1. Historical Context

In 1989, two great theories about the future of this world were formulated. Francis Fukuyama forecasted the end of history with the victory of West-

¹ Unpublished. See also her contribution in this issue: ‘Catholicity for the ending of poverty’, 219–231.

ern capitalism,² while Samuel Huntington spoke of the clash of civilizations.³ The global financial crisis of 2008 exposed globalization to be a failed endeavor. Indeed, there are winners and losers. Three different responses are of interest here: the Lutheran, the Reformed, and the overarching notion of catholicity.

In 2003, the Lutheran General Assembly in Winnipeg came to the following conclusion:

As a communion, we must engage the false ideology of neoliberal economic globalization by confronting, converting and changing this reality and its effects (...). This is idolatry and leads to the systematic exclusion of those who own no property, the destruction of cultural diversity, the dismantling of fragile democracies and the destruction of the earth.⁴

The Lutheran World Federation considered the significance of the church as *koinonia* oriented toward life and the other. While in the Accra Confession of 2004, the Twenty-Fourth General Council in Ghana of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) developed a confession like the Barmen Theological Declaration challenging the Nazi regime in 1934. The agreement claims that economic and environmental justice are not merely social, political, and moral issues but a matter of faith affecting the integrity of the church:

We believe that God is sovereign over all creation. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Ps 24:1). Therefore, we reject the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God’s covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life. We reject any claim of economic, political and military empire which subverts God’s sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God’s just rule.⁵

² Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Penguin: London, 1992).

³ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?* (New York: F. Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁴ Message from the Tenth Assembly of the LWF, to be found on: http://www.lwf-assembly2003.org/lwf-assembly/htdocs/PDFs/LWF_Assembly_Message-EN.pdf (accessed 30.08.2017).

⁵ The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *The Accra Confession*, 2004, in: <http://wcrc.ch/accra/the-accra-confession> (accessed 29.08.2017).

The Accra Confession calls Reformed Christians to engage injustice as part of their witness and mission.

The concept of Catholicity is a third response to globalization. The premise is that the Church is a church catholic. Globalization challenges the Church particularly because catholicity combines the local and the global. Catholicity denotes the connectedness and universality of the whole Church. Catholicity brings ethics and ecclesiology together. The ethical issues are not at first an ethical obligation for the Church but a reality that derives from being Church. Justice and peace are not primarily a moral or political issue for the church because they precede the acts of the church. Ethical issues become ecclesial matters and the ecclesia an ethical one. Church is mission, and participation in the *missio Dei* is essential to the church. Catholicity is thus an inspiring ecclesial paradigm for the pilgrimage of justice and peace, which is compatible with the intentions of the WCC.⁶

2. Toward Tagaytay in 2016

The process began in 2006 when Joris Vercammen, Archbishop of Utrecht and president of the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference (IBC), invited representatives from the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, the Episcopal Church in the USA and the Iglesia Filipina Independiente to engage in a theological conversation. Each church was bound by the Bonn Agreement (or Bonn Concordat as it is called in the USA) in full communion with each other. Later, also the Church of Sweden participated as an observer. The group discussed the question of what it means to be Catholic Churches in the era of globalization. The call began a process or series of consultations, as mentioned above.⁷ Between 2006 and 2008, the conferences aimed to build a united understanding of the concordat churches with attention to catholicity in regard to social issues of neoliberal globalization from the perspective of theology and ecclesiology. A eucharistic vision for a globalized world united them

⁶ Peter-Ben Smit, 'Imagining a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. Catholicity and Contextuality, *The Ecumenical Review* 66 (2014) 214–225.

⁷ Documented in Marsha L. Dutton with Emily K. Stuckey (eds), *Globalization and Catholicity: Ecumenical Conversations on God's Abundance and the People's Need* (Beiheft zu IKZ 100; Bern: Stämpfli, 2010).

to an enlarged awareness of the ways in which all nations and churches are implicated in and affected by globalization and its many destructive effects (...) contributes to and worsens pre-existing and local conditions of inequality and injustice.⁸

The devastating collapse of the Lehman Brothers occurred only a few days after the end of the consultation in 2008, which only underscores the prophetic importance of this message and the Manila conference. Many economists consider this collapse to be the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Recent research shows that the world's eight richest men together own the same wealth as the entire poorest half of the planet.⁹

The tenth Assembly of the WCC in Busan, Republic of South Korea, in 2013 brought new relevance for a continuous theological conversation under the theme "God of Life Lead us to Justice and Peace." While condemning an unjust economic system, the WCC Assembly stated, "The planet sits at the brink of disaster and life itself is imperiled. A stumbling global economy leaves millions of people idle and exacerbates inequality and poverty in both North and South."¹⁰

Only a few days after the WCC Assembly did Pope Francis publish an Apostolic Exhortation with the title "Evangelii Gaudium." The Pope shocked the world with his famous sentence: "Such an economy kills."¹¹ In similar words the WCC stated in its message "Economy of Life, Justice, and Peace for All":

Our present stark global reality is so fraught with death and destruction that we will not have a future to speak of unless the prevailing development paradigm is radically transformed and justice and sustainability become the driving force for the economy, society, and the Earth. Time is running out.¹²

⁸ 'Bishop Ramento Statement: A Eucharistic Vision for a Globalized World', in: *ibid.*, 237–242: 240.

⁹ See <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/economy-99> (accessed 30.08.2017).

¹⁰ 'An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, 8 July 2014', in: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2014/an-invitation-to-the-pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace> (accessed 30.08.2017).

¹¹ See https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (accessed 18.10.2017), para 53.

¹² See <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/poverty-wealth-and-ecology/neo>

Catholicity and globalization are a conversation with a history; they are also a discussion that must be continued for the future of our world.

In 2015, the “Ramento Conference on Catholicity and Globalization,” was held in Manila to commemorate the ninth anniversary of the martyrdom of IFI Bishop Alberto B. Ramento (1936–2006). The event resulted in the “Unity Statement.”¹³ This led to the first steps toward the Tagaytay conference in 2016. The World Council of Churches and the concordat Churches planned the conference on “The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. An Ongoing Conversation on Catholicity and Globalization”, taking the WCC document “The Church: Towards a Common Vision” into consideration. This conference released unanimously the Statement “Catholicity as Witness to God’s Justice and Peace in a Globalised World”.¹⁴ The following contributions by William Henn, Eleuterio J. Revollido, Andreas Krebs, Susan Durber, Franz Segbers and Francis Gealogo are papers from this conference.

The curricula vitae of E. J. Revollido and of F. Segbers can be found on p. 212 and p. 246 respectively.

Zusammenfassung

Die Beiträge der Konferenz «The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. An Ongoing Conversation on Catholicity and Globalization» (2016 in Tagaytay, Philippinen) fragen nach einem ekklesiologischen Zugang zur Globalisierung von der Katholizität der Kirchen her. Bezugspunkt der Beiträge ist die Studie der Kommission für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung des ÖRK «Die Kirche auf dem Weg zu einer gemeinsamen Vision».

Key Words – Schlüsselwörter

Accra Confession – Busan WCC Assembly – Catholicity – Eucharistic Vision – Globalization

liberal-paradigm/agape-call-for-action-2012/economy-of-life-justice-and-peace-for-all?set_language=en (accessed 30.08.2017).

¹³ Unpublished. See about the conference the report by Franz Segbers in: *IKZ* 106 (2016) 122–123.

¹⁴ The statement is documented on p. 274–279 in this issue.