PART I

Social reality and social analysis

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

JUSTICE-SEEKING IN A CHANGING WORLD

This book by a Catholic layperson and sociologist has been written with the aim of contributing to the on-going and developing debate about the search for social justice. I commenced writing it in the week following the devastating attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001. This was a brutal act of violence which shocked the world but which also raised important issues of justice. It demonstrated the interrelatedness of the issues of peace, human rights, economic structures and inequalities, the uses and misuses of technologies, and power differentials in a global context. It pointed to the need not only to react with compassion but also to analyze and understand the causes of the persistent structures of injustice and the conflicts and violence they promote.

When there are evident injustices the traditional Christian response has been one of compassion for the poor, suffering and oppressed and the attempt to ameliorate their suffering. But in recent years there has been a growing awareness that this is not enough. The *causes of persistent structures of injustice* and sin need to be analyzed and understood so that social, political and economic policies to address those causes can be sought. It is the first aim of this book to offer such an analysis, however tentative, as an aid to those seeking a more just society and world.

In recent years various social movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged, many of them inspired by Christian beliefs and commitment, to raise awareness about a wide range of matters from homelessness, poverty, racism and social exclusion in our own society to the arms trade, international trade relations, starvation and ill health in developing societies.[1] In practice most of the Christian NGOs in the areas of both domestic and international justice are working in strategic alliances

[1] Mich 1998.

with other Church and secular bodies. They all campaign for changes in social and economic policies in the area of their special concerns. This may retard the development of a more comprehensive understanding of unjust and sinful structures within the Christian community with the consequence that the imperative to seek the kingdom of God 'on earth as in heaven' fails to become a central feature of the commitment of Christians and of the Church.

The result is that the real interconnections between local and international structures of injustice, are not clearly made or perceived. Examples of this are legion. The terrible atrocity at the World Trade Centre in New York was seemingly associated with Arab resentment at the failure of the USA to push for a just settlement between its client state, Israel, and the Palestinians and to the continuing influence of the USA in the 'Gulf States' a decade after the first Gulf War. Arms production in the major industrial nations is a major source of foreign earnings and of employment but these arms are frequently used by authoritarian regimes to oppress their own populations. The flood of refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants to 'fortress Europe' can only be understood in the context of the historical legacies of colonialism and imperialism. The striving for cost reductions by transnational corporations (TNCs) and the ease of transfer of capital from one part of the world to another means that the opening of new plants in one country often means the closing of similar plants in another. And so on.

A second aim of this book, therefore, is to seek to show to what extent *national and international structures of injustice are intimately connected* and to argue that this needs to be recognized if a proper analysis is to be undertaken as a preface to an informed social action response. The interdependence of all the peoples on earth now, and, particularly when considering ecological concerns, cross-generationally, is an integral part of a Christian belief that we are all children of the one creator God, made in His image and likeness. Following the tsunamis in 2004, people all over the world intuitively understood this and there was a 'globalization of compassion'.

A third aim of this book is to offer *a Roman Catholic contribution* to the debates about justice-seeking. This is not to retreat into a confessional defensiveness but to stress that there is a long and dynamic tradition of Catholic social thought which is intrinsically valuable and relevant to our present concerns with the structures of sin and injustice which disfigure our society and today's world. In a recent essay Stanley Hauerwas offered some 'unsolicited advice from a Protestant bystander' and pleaded: 'I do not want Catholics to be good ecumenical citizens – I want them to be Catholics . . . Catholics have been so anxious to be like us that they have

failed in their ecumenical task of helping us see what it means for any of us to be faithful to the Gospel on which our unity depends'.[2] It is in that spirit that I hope, therefore, that this book might be of value not only to students of Catholic social thought and justice and peace activists, but also to politicians and other decision-makers and to all those of good will, not only fellow Christians but also those of other faiths or none, who are concerned with the struggle to make our world a better place not only for present generations but also for those generations still to come.

This is a large task and in a book such as this can only be addressed in outline. It involves a wide range of disciplines including Church history, economics, philosophy, political science, sociology and theology. I am very conscious of my many inadequacies in all of these areas. While I hope this book will be of value to a wide readership, there will be many who will wish to take the analysis much further. Hence a fourth aim of the book is to offer *suggestions for further reading and study* and invite contact with the multiplicity of NGOs working in specific areas. These often publish informative journals, periodicals and reports with more detailed analyses and information about them is readily available on the internet. I hope this book will be a valuable resource for all those who are seeking to further God's kingdom here on earth by striving for justice for poor, deprived and oppressed people.

Against those who suggest that religion is entirely a private affair and should have nothing to do with politics, this book holds with the Synod of Bishops who taught in 1971 that:

> Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.[3]

Justice-seeking is no optional extra but an essential element in Christian discipleship.

The world has changed significantly in the four years this book has been in the writing. There have been wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and terrorist atrocities in places as far apart as Bali, Istanbul, London, Madrid and Beslan. The World Social Forum of grass-roots organizations and a global justice movement aiming to 'make poverty history' are now beginning to challenge the decisions taken by economic institutions set up to serve the interests of powerful nations half a century ago. The possibilities of cloning human beings draws ever closer. Recent legislation has been seen as

[2] Hauerwas 1995: 221. [3] O'Brien and Shannon 1992: 289.

legalizing euthanasia by starvation and neglect. The 'people of God' are having to interpret the meaning of the teaching of Jesus in circumstances never met before in human history. In these changing times, how can Catholic social thought help people make key moral choices? What key principles underpin this thought and how can they be translated into social, economic and political policies which are faithful to the call to 'bring the Good News to the poor' and oppressed both in our own society and, indeed, throughout the whole world?

In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that we live in a relatively fragile world and that, for better or worse, our lives and those of others who share our planet are inextricably linked. For decades after the Second World War most people in the northern hemisphere were conscious of the dangers of nuclear war and that its consequences would be far more catastrophic than the world had ever experienced in historical times. Recent developments in communications technology, particularly the ubiquitous television with its instant coverage of news of famines or disasters all over the world, have exposed people to the realities of suffering, need and oppression throughout the whole world. In spite of some 'compassion fatigue', it is clear that the awareness of needs and injustices has also generated attempts to respond both by ameliorating suffering and need and by attempting to prevent them happening by understanding their causes and responding politically. Thus there has been the emergence of an environmental movement concerned to address such problems as climate change and the loss of animal species resulting from our present economic arrangements. More recently, the awareness of a widening of the gap between rich and poor countries has led many to challenge the acceptability of our present institutional arrangements for regulating trade and investment and the present distribution of political and economic power which serves to maintain such injustices. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 demonstrated as never before that traditional assumptions about power and security were obsolete and that in order to tackle transnational terrorism, it was necessary to construct international coalitions. In a very real sense we are all interconnected and we increasingly sense this.

For Christians this comes as no surprise. They believe that all people on earth have been born in the image of their creator God. Not that human history has demonstrated a deep consciousness of our common humanity and brotherhood with our Saviour over the two millennia since Jesus of Nazareth became our Emmanuel, God-with-us. The Holocaust is under one lifetime ago. Historically, Christians have frequently failed adequately to love their neighbours as themselves. In the past this may have resulted

partly from ignorance of things happening on the other side of the world about which they knew nothing. But in the modern world, this is no longer the case and there is an increasing awareness that the way we live our lives, the consumer choices we make, the energy we consume and the trade relations and regulations concerning migration flows we tolerate, all impact on the lives of others, sometimes with extremely harmful consequences. So how should Christians respond?

This book has been written on the basis of six major convictions:

1. There are numerous *social injustices* in the world in which we live, from torture and discrimination to poverty and social exclusion, and from war and oppression to unequal development and environmental damage.
2. These different types of injustice are all, in some way, interlinked and related to the dynamics of *liberal capitalism*, and this has become increasingly the case as the processes of globalization have accelerated in recent years.
3. Quite apart from the personal injustices and evil of individuals, there are *sinful social structures*, such as trade relations or discriminatory laws, which are unjust and evil.
4. There are two distinct types of compassionate response to social need or suffering:
   - *amelioration* of the suffering or satisfaction of the need, such as feeding the hungry or providing shelter for the homeless; and
   - *seeking justice* by addressing the causes of injustices and changing the structures which oppress. It is the latter which is the main concern of those who thirst for justice and it is essentially a political response involving advocacy and struggle with those who wield political or economic power.
5. The Christian imperative to love our neighbour as ourselves is best developed through a social action cycle which consists of four successive and interlinked stages:
   - the identification of the *social reality*: needs and social injustices;
   - the *social analysis* of their causes and the concrete reality;
   - *theological reflection* on these in the light of scripture and the developing social thought of the Church and its members; and
   - the *social action* response to the needs and injustices in the light of the social analysis and Christian reflection.
6. While in recent years, Christians and people of good will and a social conscience have increasingly worked closely together, Catholics have a *special contribution* to make on the basis of their rich heritage of social thought which is worth sharing.

These six convictions have determined the structure of this book and the sequence of its argument which is offered to all people of good will and to all who are involved in various ways in what Catholics call the Justice and Peace Movement. This chapter offers a brief account of the social realities in our contemporary world and aims to provide an overview of both domestic and international injustices. Chapter 2 will endeavour to provide some tools for a social analysis of the causes of these injustices, necessary if appropriate responses are to be identified. It will introduce a consideration of processes of globalization and the current dominant model of liberal capitalism. It will also point to issues of social, economic and political power which serve to perpetuate and extend structures and patterns of injustice both domestically and throughout the world.

Part II aims to provide a set of tools for Christian reflection on the social realities we face in our present world. Chapter 3 will offer an account of the kingdom of God which Jesus urged his followers to seek and which exists but remains to be fully realized. Chapter 4 will address some key themes in secular pluralist societies such as the entitlements and responsibilities of citizenship and the three great revolutionary aims of freedom, equality and solidarity. In Chapter 5, an outline of Catholic social thought as it has developed over the centuries, but especially since the Second Vatican Council, will be presented and a number of key principles identified.

The multitude of social injustices which face us in the modern world have been clustered in Part III under six broad headings. Each of them will be considered in the light of the principles and resources identified in Part II. Chapter 6 will address the challenges of human rights, including such issues as torture, the death penalty, asylum seekers, and racism. Prominence has always been given in Catholic social thought to the family as the primary social unit of all societies. In Chapter 7, some of the issues of concern, including abortion, euthanasia, social and welfare policies affecting the family, recent developments in genetic engineering and bioethical issues will be considered. Chapter 8 will outline Catholic approaches to economic life. The right to private property, work and employment and to associate in trade unions will be discussed. Issues of social exclusion, including poverty and inequality, homelessness, discrimination and participation, will be addressed in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 will consider the range of matters involved in the notions of authentic and sustainable development. Apart from issues of trade relations and aid, and the role of the major international institutions for the regulation of global trade, investment and financial flows, consideration will also be given to the concerns for the environment and climate change. Chapter 11 will address the issues of war

and peace and the impact of the trade in arms. It will also consider the challenges of international terrorism and the need for appropriate international institutions for the regulation of conflicts between nations and ethnic groups.

Chapter 12, which constitutes Part IV of this book, will attempt to draw some conclusions for social action responses to the injustices outlined in Part III. In particular, it will note the large number of NGOs, many of them Christian in origin and in their operative ideologies, which together constitute at least an embryonic global social justice movement. While there are numerous activists involved in 'doing good' in particular areas, it is a major plea of this book that their actions as committed Christians will be greatly enhanced to the extent that there is a growing awareness of and conversion to a continuous process of social analysis and theological reflection on social needs and action responses to them in the light of that reflection.

This book aims to offer *a* Roman Catholic contribution to justice-seeking. While it will include an account of 'official' Catholic social teaching, insofar as it has been articulated in recent years in papal encyclicals or pastoral letters from Bishops' Conferences, it also aims to offer a lay critique of such teaching and indicate in addition a range of theological and secular analyses of both domestic and international injustices. The focus will be on the situation in the UK, though some account will also be taken of the special position of the USA. Reference will also be made to key writings from other (mainly Christian) traditions and also to relevant secular contributions.

Before commencing this task a few words about the changing nature of Catholicism is appropriate. In the first place, it must be admitted at the outset that the historical role of institutional Catholicism has been ambiguous. In the past it was often closely associated with ruthless, violent and destructive secular quests for imperialist expansion, for example in South America, or with authoritarian forms of social control, as in European fascism. It has also frequently had a strong bias in favour of established secular powers, however corrupt and unjust they might be. For the better part of two centuries it resisted the forces of modernity as articulated in the Enlightenment and the democratic impulses of the French and American revolutions. But the ravages of the Industrial Revolution gradually led to a more dialogical relationship between Catholicism and the modern world.

A major transformation can be dated from the Second Vatican Council in 1962–65 which recognized the contribution of scientific advances and by interpreting the Church as the People of God, encouraged the legitimate

autonomy of lay people in their special tasks of bringing the world closer to the vision of the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. Furthermore, the Council recognized that God's spirit was at work in the world, in history and in society. It was the task of the Church to discern the 'signs of the times'. Hence it encouraged the emergence from a fortress model of the Church, embattled against the evils of a secular world, to a more respectful, though critical, relationship with it and a greater readiness to work with other people of good will. Thus there has been a great development of ecumenical collaboration in recent decades, not only in terms of individual contacts but also institutionally, in order to address specific needs and injustices ranging from poverty and homelessness to international development and famine relief.

CATHOLIC APPROACHES

There is clearly a need for a serious consideration of the ethical dilemmas posed by contemporary social and economic arrangements. Catholic approaches to injustices and evils have historically emphasized individual sin and responsibility. An awareness of 'structural sin' is relatively recent. It can perhaps be traced from the Second Vatican Council though it was not fully embraced until Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (§§36–39) in 1987. It recognized flaws in the social order resulting 'in part from the natural tensions of economic, political, and social forms' though it saw these as flowing 'from man's pride and selfishness, which contaminate even the social sphere' (*GS* §25). There is, however, a 'risk of conservative bias' and attachment to the *status quo* in too individualistic an approach to social injustices. What is necessary to counter structural injustices is collective action, organized pressure to amend legislation, and the mobilization of countervailing power.[4] The South African theologian, Albert Nolan, has pointed out that 'all sin has a social dimension because it has social consequences. Sin affects other people and becomes institutionalized in the structures, laws, and customs of society. In turn, society then shapes and influences the sinner'.[5] Similarly the Dutch theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx has insisted that 'the Christian understanding of sin ... includes the recognition of systematic disruptions of communication like sexism, racism and fascism, (and) antisemitism' and that 'Christian love which is the basis of community ... (requires) deep involvement in present-day work of political, cultural and social emancipation'.[6]

[4] Boswell 2000: 102. [5] Quoted in Fuellenbach 1995: 86. [6] Ibid: 88.

The main elements of Catholic social thought have been outlined in the three chapters of Part II which presents the fundamental values and principles of this thought as it has developed over the past twenty centuries.[7] In general terms two different approaches have been used in this development: scripture, which privileges faith, and notions of natural law, in principle accessible to all people of good will. The relative emphases between these two approaches has varied over time. The articulation of official papal and episcopal social *teaching* can be seen to be largely *reactive* to the major problems of the day: the condition of the working class at the height of nineteenth-century industrialization, and authentic development and environmental concerns in the last decades of the twentieth century. Many people have contributed to the emergence of this teaching including popes, bishops and theologians but also lay people with relevant expertise.

Our starting point is the understanding that Jesus came to preach and initiate the kingdom of God, 'on earth as in heaven'. This kingdom, which is both present among us but not yet fully realized, is the subject of Chapter 3. This is a kingdom of justice, truth, freedom, love, peace and joy. In this chapter particular attention is paid to the notion of justice, seen as 'love structured in society'. The biblical concept of justice has to do with *right relations*, in the sense of what God intended, with God and with our neighbours throughout the world. God's justice is, challengingly, more than fairness, as is clear in the parable of the vineyard. It has a transformative and restorative quality and is subversive of popular views which take existing social arrangements as deserved and proper. This chapter also reviews some important secular approaches to justice such as those proposed by the philosopher, John Rawls, who saw justice as fairness, and Friedrich Hayek who, on the other hand, saw the striving for justice as corrosive of personal freedom.

Catholic social thought is dialogical in that it has emerged in implicit dialogue with key secular ideas. Chapter 4 aims to take this dialogue seriously. For example, what does it mean to be a citizen of the kingdom of God, in terms of rights but also responsibilities? It is suggested that the secular concept of citizenship, which is still very much in the process of development, offers a valuable framework for the exploration of civil and legal, political, economic and social, and even environmental, citizenship and dimensions of justice in a global context. The chapter also explores the

[7] Throughout this book reference will be made to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in 2004. See also the two documents *Prosperity with a Purpose* published by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland in 2005.