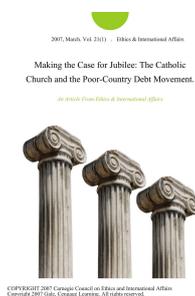


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MAKING THE CASE FOR JUBILEE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE POOR COUNTRY DEBT MOVEMENT EBOOKS 2019



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The pledge by the Group of 8 (G-8) in July 2005 to cancel all the debt owed by eighteen, and ultimately more, heavily indebted poor countries to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the African Development Bank was the most recent victory in a series of campaigns by a broad-based coalition of churches and NGOs that had begun more than twenty-five years before. In the late 1990s, the movement grew considerably and achieved its most extraordinary mobilization in the Jubilee 2000 campaign, which successfully touched masses of people around the world with a moral message that politicians could not ignore. There are not many instances in modern history in which moral appeals based on religious principles drive political change (albeit limited). The civil rights movement in the United States may be one example. The struggle against apartheid in South Africa may be another. The anti-debt movement may be a third. To better understand why the appeal has been so strong, this essay examines the ideas and ethical argumentation of the Catholic Church that have guided its involvement in the global debt campaign since the early 1980s. The focus is warranted because the Church played a leading role from the earliest days of the campaign by virtue of its size and vast array of resources. Its actors on the debt question have included individual Catholics, parish-based justice and peace groups, church personnel (especially missionaries), religious orders and their social action offices, relief agencies, academics and universities, national episcopal conferences, the Vatican's justice and peace office, and Pope John Paul II. The global coalition's most extensive and best-known moral arguments for debt reduction originated at Catholic bishops' conferences and the Vatican. Statements from the Church leadership especially were addressed to both Catholics and non-Catholics among the general public and policy-makers. By stimulating discussion in policy circles, they strengthened the legitimacy of the fundamental claim that excessive sovereign debt servicing was unjust. The essay looks more closely at the two most widely disseminated and influential Church statements-by the Vatican and by the U.S. bishops which have served as benchmarks in the Church's long engagement with the anti-debt campaign.

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