

ETHICS OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

This paper probes both the shifting contours of the debates and struggles over globalization(s), and the impacts of the shifting contours of globalization(s) on ethics. Specifically, it outlines one very influential pole in the debates and struggles over globalization, the “Washington consensus” as some of its architects call it, or “neoliberal globalization” or “corporate power” or “capitalist globalization” as its critics refer to it; an increasingly visible second pole in global debates and struggles, the “anti-globalization” or “global social justice” movements; the spreading processes of discernment and dialogue and growing volume of church statements concerning “globalization” or some aspect of it, like debt cancellation or free trade proposals; and some ways debates about and struggles over globalization are globalizing ethics.

Clash of Horizons

Globalization Babel

In a now classic essay in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 Samuel Huntington postulated a “clash of civilizations” replacing the clash of essentially Western ideologies defining the bi-polar post World War II Cold War world, now pushing “culture” to the fore and pitting “the West” against virtually all non-Western cultures.¹ Far less noticed, and more fundamental in my judgment, is the clash of standpoints, perspectives and horizons within civilizations, including “Western” civilization and Christianity in all its expressions.

Even the most cursory observation reveals an extraordinary diversity of standpoints, sensibilities, concerns, perceptions, and claims haunting the debates over globalization, among scholars, reporters, and lay people alike.

Over the last fifteen years the term has moved to the center of efforts to discern what is changing and what remains the same within societies and globally, and it lies at the center of debates over an extraordinary range of issues and choices.

But the term is also remarkably plastic and plastic. It is used by different authors in widely different ways. And the boundaries of the discourses of globalization--economic, cul-

tural, political, religious, ecological--are remarkably permeable, and shifting. Probably the most frequent is economic, concerning the globalization of corporations, markets and finances. But developments in science and new technologies (e.g., global communications and transportation), new institutional forms (e.g., networks), forms of management and accounting frameworks and procedures, culture (including the increasing significance of culture industries) and politics (e.g., the increasing role of "civil society") are identified as central to these developments. And in various ways these are claimed to be changing the contours and dimensions of the "economy," for example in discussions of the "information economy" and the centrality of new forms of capital, the brain power and intellectual property of the "information economy," replacing traditional forms of capital like natural resources, in the process collapsing the whole distinction between capital and labor.²

The term is everywhere. And it is like a black hole which "omnivourously gathers the effects of often very different political, military, cultural, economic, social and personal processes under the common term of globalization, treating them as instances of a wider phenomenon."³ Over the course of the 1990s, in social theory as well as in politics, it became the new central metaphor and grand theoretical framework.⁴ It is impossible to escape the word. It is also remarkably elusive.⁵ And, for many thoughtful commentators like world-systems theorist Immanuel Wallerstein, "it is meaningless as an analytic concept and serves primarily as a term of political exhortation ..."⁶

For these reasons, in the following pages, except when citing others, the terms globalization and economic globalization will appear in quotation marks, to signal their ambiguous and contested character.

Never-Ending Progress

At the heart of clashing perspectives and claims concerning "globalization" lie clashing horizons of hope.

At one pole is the horizon of endless progress in virtually every dimension of existence. Global economic growth is fueling the development of entrepreneurial spirit, new technologies, greater efficiencies, vast new wealth, and growing prosperity in which all can participate.

New information technologies like the internet are making available to all the fruits of the vast expansions of knowledge in the natural and social sciences.

Scientific breakthroughs and new technologies are transforming medicine, improving health and increasing life spans, and providing solutions to environmental problems through the invention of new materials and methods of cleaning up and containing old problems.

Individuals everywhere will experience expanding horizons of freedom and opportunity, free to pick and choose among expanding arrays of options in forging their unique life course.

In all of this, some prominent commentators proclaim, we are witnessing nothing less than the birth of a new neo-biological civilization. "The realm of the *born*--all that is nature--and the realm of the *made*--all that is humanly constructed--are becoming one. Machines are becoming biological and the biological is becoming engineered." Of course, old forms of nature--including human nature--are doomed. But this is "the dilemma all gods must accept: that they can no longer be completely sovereign over their finest creations."⁷

Moreover, scientists and technicians are developing the capacity, in the words of Stephen Hawking, to "design an improved human."⁸ In the foreseeable future we will be able not only to

"cure ourselves but transcend the human condition..."⁹ And even "immortality" is increasingly on the horizon.

These developments, some prominent voices widely proclaim, signal nothing less than the transcendence in history of spirit over matter.¹⁰

And they have truly universal implications--implications for the whole universe! For we are also witnessing a revolution in space technology which will make real "the dream of expanding the domain of life from Earth into the universe."¹¹ In the words of Joel De Rosnay, director of the City of Sciences in Paris, "the curtain is going upon the fourth act [in the history of the universe], an act covering the next thousand years in which humanity will play the starring role..."¹²

Emergent Apocalypse(s)

At another pole of debates about "globalization" lie a wide array of frightening, even apocalyptic visions of the future. Indeed, for many voices, apocalypse is an already emergent reality.

Gaps in income and wealth, within countries and between them, are rapidly growing. And, most importantly, so are the opportunities for the fullness of life as determined by the current state of knowledge and technological development.

Social turmoil, conflict, and wars are driving uprooting millions of people, sending them streaming across borders, and threatening the fabric even of wealthy countries.¹³

Ecological crises loom on ever horizon, threatening the fabric of life on the planet.

"Resource wars " over oil, fresh water, other natural resources, and to escape ecological catastrophes, are inevitably on the horizon."¹⁴

And new chemical and biological technologies of mass destruction threaten devastation as bad or worse than the nuclear winter haunting the buildup of nuclear weapons in the 1980s.

In the hothouse atmosphere of global human civilization biological evolution is actually speeding up,¹⁵ and frightening new diseases are also brewing.¹⁶ In sub-Saharan Africa HIV/Aids is an already-emerging apocalypse devastating whole generations who are dying before their time, and creating an impossible legacy of deficits and problems for their descendants.¹⁷

Haunting all the new breakthroughs in knowledge and technologies, in the eyes of some thoughtful commentators, lies "the infrequently acknowledged, more encompassing worry that human beings have created circumstances--from the info-glut in our offices to financial crises that flash around the world in the blink of an eye--whose complexity, unpredictability, and pace exceed the cognitive abilities of the human brain."¹⁸

And, for some at the cutting edge of these developments, it becomes easier and easier to imagine that developments in genetics, nanotechnology and robotics (including artificial intelligence), full of such great promise, will escape human control, unleashing unimaginable horrors on humanity, other species, and the planetary eco-system, perhaps even leading to a future which "doesn't need us."¹⁹

Conflicting Discourses of Globalization

The Babel surrounding “globalization” does not mean that some uses of the term are not more prominent and influential than others. Since the late 1970s one pole has been especially prominent; in recent years a second pole has emerged more prominently.

Neoliberal Globalization or Washington Consensus

Named neoliberalism (less frequently “neoconservatism”) by some and the “Washington Consensus” by others,²⁰ this perspective emerged with in Thatcher governments and Reagan administrations and their supporters in the early and mid-1980s (though some point to the Pinochet dictatorship beginning in 1973 in Chile, under the influence of economists at the University of Chicago, as the first national experiment with this agenda). This perspective and the far-reaching agenda was forged in opposition to the “old left” in socialist movements and labor unions, old liberals with their social programs and Keynes-inspired agenda for managing the economy, Third World liberation movements, and the “new social movements” in the First World, like the feminist movement, the civil rights and black power movements, environmental and ecology movements, and peace movements. At best, in this view, they were profoundly misguided, urging their countries and the world down hopeless paths.

In their view, breakthroughs in science and new technologies are fueling developments in industry favoring flexibility and speed in developing new goods and services, quickly making outdated older, rigid forms of production and management. And the increasing speed of global communications and transportation means that companies can relocate anywhere, rendering government interference in the economy increasingly ineffective.

According the new priorities center on cutting government programs and taxes to reduce unhealthy dependency on government, unleash the entrepreneurial spirit, put money into the hands of investors and consumers, and spur new rounds of initiative and innovation. Lowering barriers to free trade and investment stokes the fires of international competitiveness and the quest for increasing efficiencies, hastens technology transfers and a new international division of labor in which everyone can find niches of comparative advantage, and drives rapid expansion of the global economy and vast new wealth.

International financial institutions (IFIs), like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and agreements, like the North American Free Trade Agreement linking Canada, the U.S. and Mexico (NAFTA), are playing increasingly important roles in setting the rules of trade and investment, and in general promoting rules-based negotiation of differences.

In the course of these developments the distinctions among “First,” “Second” and “Third” Worlds, which defined the post-World War II era, are disappearing as people everywhere face the same challenges and opportunities for previously undreamed of levels of prosperity.

Over the course of the 1980s and into the 1990s this radical agenda came to be known simply as “globalization,” and it achieved the status of orthodoxy in the centers of power around the world, in governments and corporate headquarters, think tanks and business schools, IFIs, and the major media, as the label “Washington Consensus” suggests. And by the mid-1990s a version of this agenda could be promoted and implemented in Ontario under the slogan of “the common sense revolution.”²¹

Through the 1990s, though, critical voices grew louder in response to the series of financial crises in Mexico, Brazil, East Asia, deepening poverty and spreading turmoil and conflict in sub-Saharan Africa, shrinking middle classes and deepening gaps between rich and poor even in

wealthy countries, and ecological concerns all over the world. And the global Jubilee 2000 movement gathered 17,000,000 signatures around the world supporting debt cancellation for poor countries, and confirming growing suspicions that the workings of the global economy are not simply natural, inevitable, and good. And even some influential figures in the centers of power began to voice serious criticisms of the neoliberal perspective and agenda.²²

But the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, using hijacked airliners, on September 11, 2001 overwhelmed this growing chorus of critical voices. They provoked, in addition to widespread sympathy for the victims, a massive reaction in the US in particular. And issues of security and peace moved back to the center of the agenda, with President Bush's designation of "an axis of evil" and proclamation of a "war on terror," including vast expansions of police and military powers, the waging of a short war in Afghanistan, and (as of this writing) preparations for a much bigger war in Iraq.

Another World Is Possible: "Anti-Globalization"--or Global Social Justice--Movements

Over the course of the late 1990s and early 21st century a second pole has emerged more clearly in worldwide debates about "globalization," associated with the demonstrations, dubbed "anti-globalization" by the media, at world meetings of G-8 leaders, IMF, World Bank, WTO and APEC (the confusingly named Asian Pacific Economic Co-operation) summits, in Vancouver (1997), Birmingham (1998), Seattle (1999), Prague (2000), Washington (2000), Quebec (2001), and Genoa (2001). Far from being simplistically "anti-globalization," and heavily dependent on instantaneous global communications capacities of the internet, these groups, in addition to organizing public demonstrations, also organized popular summits exploring alternative perspectives and proposals addressing a broad range of issues. In them the idea arose for an annual gathering of popular movements, the World Social Forum (WSF).²³

Negatively, the idea for the WSF emerged as an alternative to the annual meeting of the world's corporate and political elites at the World Economic Forum each January in Davos, Switzerland (in 2002 in New York City as a signal of support for residents in the wake of 9/11). The first WSF encounter of representatives from movements from all over the world was held in Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil in January 2001; organizers expected 3000-5000 participants, but 15,000 came. The second WSF was held in the same city in 2002, with organizers expecting 15,000-20,000 participants and 60,000 came. The third will be held later this month, again in Porto Alegre, with organizers anticipating 100,000 participants. And organizers hope to move WSF IV to India.

Participants in these forums and the broad array of movements they represent are driven by a sense that: they have long been excluded from dialogues, negotiations, and policy-making of the world's economic and political elites, at meeting places like the World Economic Forum and similar venues, like the IMF, WB, WTO, negotiating tables for free trade agreements; they and their constituencies have been marginalized in the development of the agenda for a certain kind of globalization preached and practiced in these circles of power and influence: suffering is growing for the majority of the world's peoples, thousands of other species, and the earth itself, to apocalyptic proportions.

I have followed the development of the WSF, and participated in WSF II, and in local Social Forum processes in Toronto as one among the rapidly growing regional expressions of the WSF. Positively, in my experience, WSF participants are inspired by: options for the poor (though the term is not used), for the earth, and for peace; profound respect for diversity of con-

stituencies, causes, movements, politics; participation of all, and commitment to finding common ground, nurturing broader solidarities, and developing more effective form of collaboration in practice; transformation of the discourse(s) of economics and “development” to include the ethical and political dimensions of theory-making, debates, policy-making, structuring, institutionalization, and governance; and a strong sense that an alternative expressions of globalization, of another kind of planetary civilization, is possible, indeed already emergent in many different expressions, to be celebrated, shared, and expanded.

In the words of the Charter of Principles, the WSF is an “open meeting place,” a “permanent process of seeking and building alternatives,” “in opposition to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions;” it is “a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context,” respecting the “diversity of activities and ways of engaging the organizations and movements that decide to participate, as well as the diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities;” it is a forum for debate, “opposed to all totalitarian and reductionist views of economy, development and history and to the use of violence as a means of social control by the State;” it seeks to strengthen and create new national and international links among organizations and movements of society, that--in both public and private life--will increase the capacity for non-violent social resistance to the process of dehumanization the world is undergoing.”²⁴

Determined not to fall into the trap of global-trotting elites, WSF organizers have encouraged regional processes of dialogue and exchange. And, taking off like wildfire, in recent months social forum processes have erupted in Argentina, Europe, India, the pan-Amazon region of South America, Spain, Quebec, Palestine, Morocco, Victoria, BC, Toronto, ON;²⁵ and the list is continually expanding.

Emergent Planetary Civilization

It is not possible here to address all the issues dividing--and sometimes linking--these two poles in debates about “globalization,” or the myriad other voices not identified with either pole. However, two issues are key.

1) Problematic Character of “Globalization”

Use of the term “globalization” generally fails to distinguish among: (i) the overall project of neoliberal globalization, (ii) the variety of specific expressions of this agenda in specific times and places; (iii) the many expressions of resistance to this agenda--conscious and unconscious, covert and overt, “traditional,” conservative,” “radical” and other; (iv) the concrete effects of this resistance; (v) other dynamics stitching together global links, including popular efforts, for example in the efforts of refugees and immigrants to maintain links with their places of origin; (vi) the real effects of all these and other forces, which are many, diverse, contradictory, and full of gaps; and (vii) the extraordinary challenges even to “seeing” these realities, and the radical inadequacies of existing categories, frameworks and methods in all the sciences, as well as popular culture and religion--we are all like blind persons touching different parts of the elephant, and not even clear whether it is one or many creatures.

As an alternative, I propose the term “emergent planetary civilization.” “Planetary” signals recognition of the processes stitching together relatively constant and intensive interaction across distances, in this case the globe. “Emergent” suggests that this process is far from complete, in many respects only beginning. And “civilization” something looser than the image of

an organism or system, which has informed most social science perspectives on “societies,” and their “cultures,” “economies,” and “politics.” Recently, a growing number of theorists, like Benhabib, have pointed to the “radical hybridity and polyvocality of all cultures: cultures themselves, as well as societies, are not holistic but polyvocal, multilayered, decentered, and fractured systems of action and (25) signification.”²⁶ This has been true in the past, and perhaps it is ever truer now. However, “culture” is usually understood to refer only to the realm of ideas; “civilization” suggests the “material” (institutions and structures) as well as “ideal” dimensions of these dynamics, and their interaction with (the rest of) nature.

In particular, I wish to signal agreement with a growing range of analysts insisting that “globalization” is not a single process, and not linear. Rather, there are many forces, social actors, and dynamics, cross-cutting conventional maps of “culture” and “religion,” “politics” and “economy,” and “nature,” interacting in myriad ways, moving in different directions, with varying intensity, reach or extensity, velocity, and impacts, some profoundly contradictory.²⁷

“Above all,” as Arrighi and Silver note, “there is no consensus on what kind of world order, if any, we can expect to emerge from the *combination* of whatever changes are actually occurring in the global configuration of power.”²⁸

2) Inescapable Dialectic of Fear and Hope

It might be imagined that the clashing horizons of hope outlined above correspond to the two poles of neoliberal globalization and global social justice movements. It is true that neoliberals do paint a picture of hope for great progress on every front, and that the most ecstatic expressions of hope resonate with the spirit of neoliberalism. It is also true that the critics of neoliberalism paint pictures of growing suffering, chaos, death, sometimes, especially in ecology movements, apocalypse. But neoliberals sometimes also paint grim pictures of decay and decline, even apocalypse, and a global battle of military forces leading to a final Armageddon precipitating the end of history and the lifting up of the faithful to heaven. Such images, tied to (largely fictitious) claims of a huge Soviet lead in the arms race threatening a nuclear war which would destroy Western civilization, inspired the formulation and implementation of the neoliberal project, the thinking of President Reagan, and the agenda of his administrations.²⁹ And in the wake of 9/11 they have again moved to the center with images of a global “axis of evil” necessitating a “war on terror” at all costs, which could trigger the ultimate conflagration, and the final salvation of the elect.³⁰

Clashing horizons of dangers and possibilities, fears and hopes, and the faiths which ground them, are internal to both poles in the debates over emerging planetary civilization. In ways which positivist social science frameworks and theories of increasing secularization, these “religious” concerns are at the heart of each perspective in the debates over “globalization.”

Church Initiatives

Expanding Dialogues in the Churches

The development of Christian social teachings over the last forty years is marked by the profusion of centers, offices, networks, coalitions linking different groups of Christians, within denominations, across them in ecumenical coalitions, and increasingly beyond, within countries and internationally, like: social justice and eco-justice desks and offices within denominations; in the Catholic church in particular commissions of national conferences of bishops, diocesan offices, and offices of religious communities or groups of them like the Jesuit Center of Concern in

Washington,³¹ the (now defunct) Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice in Toronto, Network and the Maryknoll Office for Social Justice in Washington; the Eighth Day Center in Chicago, ecumenical coalitions like the Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy in Washington, the thirteen Canadian ecumenical interchurch social justice coalitions developed over the 1970s and 1980s and recently folded into Kairos: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, the Institute for Contextual Theology in South Africa, Centro Ecumenico Diego de Medellín in Santiago, Chile, Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones of San José, Costa Rica, Kairos Europa, international movements like Jubilee 2000, and local movements linked to them, like Jubilee 2000 UK, Jubilee South, the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative and Jubilee USA. Increasingly "the church" speaks in plural voices from many different contexts around the world.

These voices speak with increasing sophistication in terms of specialized discourses and technical debates concerning various facets of "globalization" and related developments, like Third World debt, the IFIs, and climate change.

And increasingly they are institutionalizing dialogue on these issues across the worldwide church in processes of education and reflection, discernment and decision-making. The following is a very un-scientific sample, in no particular order, and I urge you, drawing on your own experience, to add to the list.³²

1) **World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)**

Since its 22nd General Council in Soul, Korea in 1989, WARC has been wrestling with the issues of global economic justice in the light of Christian faith. In 1994 the Executive Committee of the WARC, meeting in Pittsburgh, adopted a programme of regional conferences: in Manila, Philippines in March 1995;³³ at a meeting of the European Area Council in Edinburgh, Scotland in August 1995;³⁴ in Kitwe, Zambia in October 1995;³⁵ in San José, Costa Rica in May 1996;³⁶ also in May 1996 an international consultation was held in Geneva, Switzerland attended by 33 participants from 22 countries.³⁷

In August 1997 the delegates at the 23rd General Council of the WARC meeting in Debrecen, Hungary unanimously passed a resolution launching a *processus confessionis*, expressing their conviction that the time had come to write a confession of faith which rejects injustice and struggles against it, reflecting continuing faith in the triune God who promises a new creation in Christ.³⁸ "We now call," they said, "for a committed process of progressive recognition, education and confession (*processus confessionis*) within all WARC member churches at all levels regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction." And they called upon WARC and its member churches "to give special attention to the analysis and understanding of economic processes, their consequences for people's lives, and the threats to creation, [and] to educate church members at all levels about economic life, including faith and economics."

Since Debrecen, WARC has collaborated with other ecumenical groups and councils of churches in hosting a series of consultations (cited below). And last year WARC's Department of Cooperation and Witness organized a theological consultation aiming to help member churches and the wider ecumenical family to understand the theological basis of the *processus confessionis* on "Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth" and to develop ways to be engaged in the confessing movement, in Cape Town, South Africa, 26-31 March 2001.³⁹

2) **World Council of Churches (WCC)**

Since its origins the World Council of Churches (WCC) has been a global center of dialogue among Christian churches worldwide, with special concern for issues of social justice. As "globalization" moved to the center of debates in the late 1980s and 1990s the WCC has been actively promoted research, dialogue, and participation of representatives of the churches in im-

portant international dialogues, like the United Nations assemblies and summits, like the Earth Summit on reducing greenhouse gases in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1992), on social development at Copenhagen (1995), and on women in Beijing, China (1995). At the WCC's 8th Assembly at Harare, Zimbabwe (3-14 December 1998) delegates affirmed that they had heard the cries of the poor that "globalization is not simply an economic issue. It is a cultural, political, ethical and ecological issue;" and they recommended that "the challenge of globalization should become a central emphasis of the work of the WCC." They expressed appreciation for WARC's "committed process of recognition, education and confession (*processus confessionis*) regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction," and encouraged WCC member churches to join this process.⁴⁰ And at its meeting in Potsdam, Germany 29 January to 6 February 2001 the WCC's Central Committee recommended that member churches and the WCC "develop a comprehensive ecumenical theological analysis of economic globalization and its impact on the churches, and provide a theological basis for the search for alternatives..."⁴¹

In fulfilling this mandate, the WCC has become a major source of research and publication, many in popular formats for wide use in churches, on "globalization"⁴² and related issues, like indigenous peoples,⁴³ racism,⁴⁴ debt,⁴⁵ uprooted peoples,⁴⁶ and ecology.⁴⁷ The WCC has also collaborated with other groups in organizing a series of consultations on globalization involving participants from in different regions around the world involving local participants speaking from their own contexts (see below).

3) The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

At its Eighth Assembly in 1990, participants affirmed a commitment to be better informed about the dynamics at work in the present global economic system, seeking to develop, together with ecumenical partners, appropriate and realistic means by which definable injustice can be addressed. In particular, the LWF and member churches participated in the Jubilee 2000 movement which emerged in the mid-1990s. LWF member churches began study projects and dialogues leading to statements and stances on global economic matters. And, in part inspired by processes underway in the WCC and WARC, in 2000 the LWF launched a process of worldwide reflection on globalization with the title "Holding Economic Globalization Accountable: Challenges and Possibilities through the Communion." One major fruit of this process was *Engaging Economic Globalization as a Communion* (2001), "a working paper intended to stimulate a process in member churches of the Lutheran World Federation, and in their relationships (with other churches, faiths, sectors in society), for reflecting on the dynamics and effects of economic globalization and discerning how to respond in light of the faith we confess, the values we uphold, and the communion which we embody."⁴⁸

The drafters of the document affirmed that "when assumptions, dynamics, and outcomes of economic globalization go against what God intends, this becomes a matter of faith. We must name, reflect on, and seek effective ways of responding to the challenges raised by economic globalization - if we really believe what we profess." The challenge, they said, "is now to engage economic globalization in ways that reflect who we are as a communion - as the body of Christ *throughout* the world - rather than in ways that are driven primarily by our economic self-interests." And they encouraged individuals and member churches to organize discussions, to write responses and to share them with those in other parts of the Lutheran communion. And they encouraged people to send these responses to LWF offices, where they will contribute to the further work that is done leading up to and beyond the next LWF General Assembly in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada (21-31 July 2003).

4) Ecumenical Consultations

In recent years, the WCC, WARC, and LWF have jointly sponsored consultations, with national councils of churches in different regions, the Conference of European Churches (CEC), and other ecumenical agencies like the Ecumenical Coalition for Alternatives to Globalisation (ECAG, comprising organizations based in Geneva: WCC, WARC, LWF, World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), YMCA, YWCA, Pax Romano, and Frontier Partnership in Mission). (Some are listed below by regions.)

5) Global Consultations

Kairos Europa, along with the WCC, WARC and Pax Christie International, sponsored an international colloquium involving participants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America as well as Europe, Canada and the US in Hofgeismar, Germany (9-16 June 2000).⁴⁹

Building on earlier consultations churches' response to economic globalization in Bangkok, Budapest and Fiji (see below under regions), the WCC, LWF, WARC, Conference of European Churches (CEC), and the WARC European Area Committee, with the National Council of Churches of the Netherlands serving as host, jointly sponsored a international consultation on "Economy in the Service of Life" in Sosterberg, The Netherlands (15-19 June 2002).⁵⁰ This consultation featured significant contributions from European churches, and documentation concerning the whole process of worldwide dialogues on globalization (see below under headings for regions, and specifically Catholic contributions).

6) European Contributions

In addition to the support from European churches for the WCC, WARC, LWF and numerous other agencies, for consultations in many parts of the world, and for hosting global dialogues, European churches have also initiated their own processes of study, reflection and dialogue, in Germany,⁵¹ Italy,⁵² and Sweden.⁵³ NGO networks and organizations like CAFOD have been involved in a variety of consultations and efforts.⁵⁴ Kairos Europa⁵⁵ and the European Jubilee network⁵⁶ have linked groups and efforts across the region, helping to organize consultations, training workshops, and producing educational resources. The WCC, WARC, CEC, and the WARC European Area Committee, accompanied by the Lutheran World Federation, hosted a consultation in Budapest, Hungary (24-28 June 2001).⁵⁷ And in convergences of worldwide "anti-globalization" movements, like the confrontation with G-8 leaders in Prague, Czech Republic (September 2000)⁵⁸ and the WSF-affiliated European Social Forum in Florence, Italy (6-10 November 2002)⁵⁹ church activists and leaders continued their process of sharing information, dialogue and commitment in the global quest for alternatives.

7) Roman Catholic Contributions

The Roman Catholic church is global, perhaps the first global organization,⁶⁰ but in some respects it is also less centralized, with no centers or organization with ongoing worldwide participation and representation like the WCC or WARC. And so far no processes of reflection, discernment and commitment concerning "globalization" have been initiated.

On the other hand, Pope Paul's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (*On the Development of Peoples*, 1967) affirmed that "the social question has become world-wide"⁶¹ The critical concerns articulated in this document widely resonated with concerns then becoming more vocal in the Third World among those associated with the movement of non-aligned nations, dependency theory emerging in Latin American social science and reflected on in early Latin American liberation theology, and the growing chorus of voices in the North and the South in the 1970s calling for a "new international economic order." In his *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (*On Social Concern*, 1987) Pope John Paul II reaffirmed "the enduring relevance" of this encyclical.⁶² In his *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (*As The Third Millennium Draws Near*, 1994)⁶³ the Pope launched a

worldwide process of preparation for celebrating the millennium in the spirit of jubilee, involving a series of synods drawing together bishops of different regions (Europe; Africa; Asia; and “America”--North, Central, South America and the Caribbean) in reflecting on their changing contexts, in particular the promise of jubilee for debt cancellation for poor nations. And he has continued to speak out concerning growing debt, gaps between rich and poor more generally, and global peace, for example in his World Day of Peace messages of 2002⁶⁴ and 2003.⁶⁵

Without officially instituted covenanting processes or *processus confessionis*, study, reflection, dialogue and renewed commitment are proceeding in Catholic circles in less formal and more local or network specific ways, if not on “globalization” as such on related issues. For example, the Commission of the Bishops Conferences of the European Community sponsored a study on global governance, which was shared with participants at the Sosterberg consultation.⁶⁶ The Under-Secretary for the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace of the Vatican City has reflected on the theme of a “Theological Response to Globalisation and the Role of the Church.”⁶⁷ And the Focolare movement is working on the notion of the “economy of communion.”⁶⁸ (Some other Catholic contributions are listed under regions below.)

8) Contributions from Africa

African voices have been especially significant in the expanding dialogues on “globalization,” especially in the WARC consultations in Kitwe, Zambia and Cape Town, South Africa referred to above. The bishops of Africa have long been prophetic voices addressing the issue of debt.⁶⁹ And the South African Council of Churches and the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference have recently published a detailed response to NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, launched by African heads of state and approved by the Organisation for African Unity as policy with a new governing structure (23 October 2001).⁷⁰ This document reflects deep appreciation of the initiative and visionary scope of NEPAD. But it also expresses severe criticisms of the economic path set out in NEPAD, which is “bound to fail.” And it expresses commitment to promoting “broad-based popular dialogue on NEPAD,” calls on NEPAD’s governing structures to do the same, and affirms that “the church must also continue to raise the collective public conscience about the ethical choices that lie at the heart of the current global financial, trade, and political systems in which NEPAD proposes Africa should participate more actively.”

9) Contributions from Asia and the Pacific

Asian voices have also been especially significant in the expanding dialogues about “globalization.” In addition to WARC’s Manila Consultation referred to above, WARC, the WCC, the Christian Conference of Asia, the Asian Cultural Forum on Development, and the Church of Christ in Thailand hosted an international consultation in Bangkok, Thailand (12-15 November 1999), preceded by a mini conference in Seoul, Korea.⁷¹ The WCC, WARC and the Pacific Council of Churches hosted a consultation in Nadi, Fiji (12-16 August 2001).⁷² And the National Council of Churches in India, the Indian Network on Ethics and Change, and the WCC sponsored a consultation in Bangalore, India (10-15 December 2001) on the theme “The Earth is Our Home: A Religious Response to Climate Change,” and produced a statement “Land, Water, Air: People Struggling for Life in a Globalising Economy.”⁷³

10) Contributions from Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin American voices have been significant as well. For example, the Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias (CLAI) has contributed significantly to discussions of debt.⁷⁴ The Bishops of Panama, among many other Catholic groups, also published critical perspectives on debt.⁷⁵

CLAI, along with the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana* and the *Consejo Mundial de Iglesias* (WCC) collaborated in reflecting on “jubilee in times of globalization,” and helping to prepare members for dialogues with the Interamerican Bank for Development.⁷⁶

Earlier, in connection with the Catholic bishops Synod of America, Amerindia, a Latin American-wide network of Catholic theologians and pastoral activists, published *Globalizar la Esperanza (Globalizing Hope)* (1997).⁷⁷

More recently, CLAI collaborated with the WCC and other church groups in developing expertise and helping to make church voices heard in the UN’s International Conference on Financing Development.⁷⁸ And, in view of recent crisis in their country, Argentinian Christians have sent a letter to churches in the North, reminding them that Argentinians have endured “a history of 500 years of painful and unjust international relations,” which is “full of sin” reflected in the “huge transfer of natural resources, products of all kinds and labor from the South to the North.” They called Christians in the North to recognize that “any proposal for change of situation in the South implies some deep changes in the lifestyle of the North.” And they called on them to join in educating church members, organizing to “build up commercial and economic international relationships based on justice and equality,” and to adopt “concrete signs of self restriction favoring the need in the South” and to implement other “concrete signs of solidarity.”⁷⁹

11) Contributions from Canada and the United States

Canadian churches have long been involved in research, education and advocacy around many concerning many social justice issues, and engaged in international dialogues and solidarity with Southern partners in particular. In the mid-1990s for example, the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative nurtured broad ecumenical dialogues on biblical texts concerning jubilee and their relevance as an overarching symbol of hope for a Canadian and global new beginning at the dawn of the third millennium; and it educated and organized a broad cross-section of Canadians in support for the global Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt cancellation and other campaigns.⁸⁰ Concerning the theme of “globalization” in particular, at the Synod of America (Rome, 1997), Canadian Bishop Goudrault spoke to fellow bishops on “The Globalization of the Economy.”⁸¹ The Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Conference of Bishops published a letter on the common good or exclusion to members of Parliament (2001).⁸² They also published a pastoral statement on the occasion of the Summit of the Americas involving G-8 leaders in Quebec City (April 2001),⁸³ and another on the occasion of the G-8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta (2002).⁸⁴ These events were also significant occasions in the growing confluence of “anti-globalization” movements; and, besides raising serious questions about the G-8 agenda, the bishops welcomed them: “We appreciate the worldwide movements of so many thoughtful people, especially youth, who participate in the development of a planetary social conscience through means as varied as educational meetings or colourful and creative street demonstrations.”⁸⁵ And in the context of the US government’s agenda for a free trade area of the Americas, Canadian bishops prepared a background paper on “Humanizing the Global Economy,” for a conference jointly sponsored by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano* (CELAM), and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, at the Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, 28-30 January 2002.⁸⁶

From its origins in 1925 the United Church of Canada has had a history of involvement in social justice issues, and international solidarity. And more recently Church members have turned explicitly to “globalization,”⁸⁷ and in particular developed a policy statement adopted by the 37th General Council (August 2000) concerning energy use and climate change in Canada

and globally.⁸⁸ A former moderator also initiated an ongoing study and reflection process on faith and the economy.”⁸⁹

In the United States churches too there is a long history of involvement and international solidarity around social justice issues, and since the early 1990s there is increasingly explicit attention to “globalization” and related issues. For example, inspired by South African Christians who articulated a Kairos statement challenging apartheid in 1985 and Central American and other Third World Christians who proclaimed a Kairos in opposition to US policies in 1989, an ecumenical group of Christians proposed a Kairos for the USA appealing to the biblical image of jubilee to inspire hope for a new beginning in the US too, and launched a group to nurture dialogue, discernment and decision-making among US Christians;⁹⁰ and subsequently they focused on land in particular.⁹¹ The Religious Working Group on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund published a powerful theological reflection on the effects of policies of the Bank and IMF on the poor as a “way of the cross,”⁹² and advanced discernment of the moral imperatives involved in criticizing and opposing structural adjustment policies in particular.⁹³

The US bishops have also published on global climate change;⁹⁴ and in particular they have issued a call to solidarity with Africa.⁹⁵

In addition ecumenical groups like the Sojourners’ collective continue educating and organizing, in connection with G-8 and II summits and in other contexts.⁹⁶

And Jubilee US, the main force organizing US involvement in the global Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt cancellation, continues supporting research, education, and mobilizations in hope for “another world.”⁹⁷

12) Contributions to United Nations’ Summits and Assemblies

In pursuing its mandate to address global economic injustice, the WCC, often in collaboration with other church organizations and non-church groups, continues to produce highly technical research, organize consultations, and facilitate Christian voices in United Nations assemblies and summits: for example, the Special Session on Social Development (known as Copenhagen+5, or Geneva 2000);⁹⁸ and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (26 August - 4 September 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa).⁹⁹ Organizing in the churches in relation to the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002) offers a good illustration of the expanding church links and networks involved in addressing “globalization” and the increasing technical sophistication: the list of partner churches and organizations included the WCC, the LWF, the Canadian Council of Churches, the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church (USA), the Sisters of Mercy, the Latin American Council of Churches, the Anglican Communion, and the International Shinto Foundation (illustrating the good fruits and possibilities of dialogue and mobilization across the gaps and barriers historically dividing religions!). This ecumenical team encouraged research,¹⁰⁰ promoted education, and helped prepare church voices for participation in the succession of United Nations Preparatory Committees for the International Conference.¹⁰¹

Signs along the Path of the Spirit

I wish to suggest four defining marks of the exploding concern in the churches about “globalization.”

1) **Hermeneutical Privilege of the Marginalized**

The historically marginalized, especially in the South, voicing their perspectives, experiences, suffering and hopes, and the hopes of the earth too, are increasingly central. This does not

mean that any one voice or all of them together are automatically “right” about the complex world of “globalization” or about the Gospel truth and its implications for today. But it does mean that they are respected, listen to, and taken seriously, especially when they are testifying to growing gaps and suffering, deepening turmoil, emergent chaos and apocalypse, and also hope for a different future.

2) Deepening Criticism of Neoliberal Globalization

Virtually all of these voices cluster at the global social justice movements pole of debates over “globalization.” They are increasingly knowledgeable in the technical discourses of the MNCs, the IFIs and governments at every level. And they are increasingly critical of every aspect of the neoliberal agenda.

3) The Quest for Alternatives

Like the myriad groups convening in the WSF--which increasingly involves participants from churches and other faith communities--church voices are addressing more and more dimensions of global hopes for a different future, from the most personal to the most global. For example, in launching the *processus confessionis*, delegates in WARC’s 23rd General Assembly (Debrecen 1997) called upon the churches “to develop a lifestyle which rejects the materialism and consumerism of our day; to work towards the formulation of a confession of their beliefs about economic life which would express justice in the whole household of God and reflect priority for the poor, and support an ecologically sustainable future; [and] to act in solidarity with the victims of injustice as they struggle to overcome unjust economic powers and destructive ecological activities.”¹⁰² And in recommendations adopted at the eighth General Assembly (Harare 1998) WCC delegates recommended exploration and development of a similar range of alternatives, from formulating alternative responses to the activities of TNCs and the IFIs, advocating and campaigning for the cancellation of debt, promoting a new global financial system, promoting local alternative forms of production, fair trade, banking systems, and nurturing changes in lifestyle and consumption patterns.¹⁰³

4) Stitching Together Broader Solidarities

Also evident in these efforts is commitment to nurturing broader solidarities crossing traditional gaps and barriers of geography, religion, nationality, and ideology, and, centrally, serious commitment to forging more effective forms of collaboration in practice in various coalitions and movements. For example, at its Potsdam, Germany meeting (2001) the WCC’s Central Committee affirmed that work on globalization should “build upon and strengthen existing initiatives by churches, ecumenical groups and social movements, support their cooperation, and encourage them to take action and form alliances with other partners in civil society working on issues pertinent to globalization.”¹⁰⁴ There are efforts to study social movements and to reflect on them as expressions of the Spirit and bearers of hope in the world.¹⁰⁵ The *processus confessionis* or covenanting processes within the churches reflect increasing sophistication concerning “participation” as a core value within our own communities and institutions, in ecumenical relations, and in relations with other non-church organizations and movements. And organizers and officials in the churches are planning their work with a view to important dates in the future on the calendar of the churches, in particular the assemblies which are so important in church discernment and decision-making: CEC (Trondheim 2003), LWF (Winnipeg 2003), WARC (Accra 2004) and WCC (Porto Alegre 2006).¹⁰⁶

Compared to the voices of neoliberal globalization so powerful in the centers of power including the major media, these voices often appear to be lone voices crying in the wilderness. But their volume is growing. And they are becoming more central in the church.

Here I suggest six focal issues which, in my judgment, lie at critical junctures in the search for the path of the Spirit into the future.

1) What Is the “Economy”?

The tendency towards casting issues in terms of specific “values” which “should” be “applied to” the “economy” presumes a mapping of social reality into separate spheres of economy, culture and religion, and politics. This is understandable, in terms of the modern constructions of separate discourses and academic disciplines for the economy, culture, politics, and society, as if these were distinct spheres operating according to their own dynamics and laws. In recent years though a growing number of scholars in a variety of disciplines have exposed this map as a particularly modern, Western, liberal¹⁰⁷ and neo-liberal¹⁰⁸ one, which profoundly distorts our images of societies both past and present.

Concretely, there simply is no “unregulated” economy, as if the economy evolves naturally and only secondarily involves questions about whether and how to moderate its workings in favor of “non-economic” values/ends, along with debates about which values/ends and how much they will “interfere” with the natural workings of the economy. (And there is certainly no discourse of the economy--“economics”--that is not profoundly shaped by culture and politics.) As the Canadian bishops recently pointed out regarding markets, they are “social constructions.”¹⁰⁹ And, more generally, theorists like Immanuel Wallerstein affirm that “all economic activity assumes socio-cultural rules and preferences, and works within political constraints. Furthermore, markets are socio-political creations.”¹¹⁰

One way in which this is becoming clearer is through study of the specific ways in which private property, corporations, and markets are institutionalized in law. Law professor Neil Brooks has clarified the legal dimensions of these processes of social construction.

“What conservatives refer to the free market is in fact comprised of commercial exchanges that are regulated by countless detailed and complex rules of property and contract law. At Osgood Hall Law School [where Brooks teaches], for example, we offer over a dozen courses dealing with the basics of these rules. None of these rules sprang from nature or were ordained by God. They are all the result of legislative outputs shaped by the political process.”¹¹¹

Accordingly, Brooks continues elsewhere,

”There is simply no possibility of a “neutral,” “unregulated” or “free” market... [T]he whole notion of an unregulated market is incoherent: markets are created by the state, they necessarily favour some over others, and they are necessarily coercive.... [T]he market is every bit as socially and politically constructed as tax law, or any other form of government regulation... [T]he private market should be viewed as a particular form of government intervention or a type of public ordering process. [And] the conventional assertion that there is a choice between bargaining and regulation, or between markets and government intervention, is a misleading way of framing social choices. In fashioning policy instruments in the pursuit of societal goals, the choice is more accurately described as a choice among types of regulatory regimes...”¹¹²

These studies make clear that, like any social process, the social constructions of various aspects of the “economy” are “political,” involving different constituencies and social actors,

with their often unequal constellations of resources and power, in ongoing processes of negotiating and re-negotiating, more or less peacefully or violently, norms and arrangements. And, in contrast to the conventional notion of separate spheres of economy and culture/religion which leaves those with explicitly ethical concerns struggling to get into the conversation long after the most fundamental “economic” decisions have been made, it points to the conclusion that explicitly ethical concerns ought to be present from the beginning.

2) Single Issue, or Shifting Horizon of All Issues?

From many perspectives and for many reasons, I wish to argue, it is increasingly clear that “globalization” is not an “issue.” Rather, developments in knowledge, technologies, forms of global and local social links, management and accounting systems of emerging planetary civilization form the new, dynamic and shifting contexts for all of human action (and interactions with continuing Divine creativity and redemptive processes in history).

There is a growing chorus of voices calling attention to the magnitude of these shifts, indeed calling attention to the “end of nature.”¹¹³

In other words, increasing global interconnectedness is one dimension of a broader, cascading constellation of changes associated with expanding knowledge, new technologies, and new modes of social relation, in interaction with myriad expressions of the rest of “nature.” These changes are truly epochal, in civilizational, biological, evolutionary, even geological terms. They are changing the fabric of life on earth, and in the heavens above. And they form the changing context for all human experience and discernment, choosing and acting.

3) (Re)Marginalization of Gender, Ethnicity and Race, Sexuality and Sexual Orientation?

Though tensions among social movements with their separate frameworks and agendas are being transcended in the convergences of social movements represented in WSF processes, the tendency remains toward addressing as separate issues: economy; gender, sexuality and sexual orientation; race, ethnicity, uprooted peoples; and ecology. However, human experience of these “other” domains or spheres do not involve any less “social constructions,” with all their diversity. The social constructions of these domains clearly both influence and are influenced by social constructions of “the economy.” They are not being any less undermined and transformed by the changes associated with emerging planetary civilization. The constituencies and social movements associated with these concerns are not any less under attack in neoliberal globalization and related tendencies. Their concerns are central to envisioning promising alternatives. These constituencies and movements are essential in the debates and struggles for a different future. These voices and perspectives are increasingly central in the convergences among global social justice and eco-justice movements. And this development confirms the multiple doorways and paths to the central dynamics of emergent planetary civilization, the irreducible diversity at the heart of these dialogues, along with an increasing sense of shared Spirit and key values.

4) Beyond Science?

The tendency remains to underestimate the hermeneutical, epistemological, and methodological challenges associated with emergent planetary civilization, and the corresponding relativization of “science.” There is no question that the sciences were decisive factors in the 20th century, both the natural sciences, with their many contributions to technology, and the social sciences, with their many contributions to the social technologies of envisioning, organizing and managing large scale organizations. And from very indication the sciences will play increasingly weighty roles in the future.

Nevertheless, limits of science are also increasingly clear. As Wendell Berry points out, “the radii of knowledge have only pushed back--and enlarged--the circumference of mystery.”¹¹⁴

And in the midst of expanding wonder and new questions at the frontiers of every science, it is increasingly clear, as Giddens points out, that “science and technology create as many uncertainties as they dispel—and these uncertainties cannot be ‘solved’ in any simple way by yet further scientific advance.”¹¹⁵ Ulrich Beck echoes this growing appreciation for the limits of science: “As knowledge and technology race ahead, we are left behind panting in ignorance, increasingly unable to understand or control the machines we depend on and so less able to calculate the consequences of their going wrong.”¹¹⁶ And, writing from Latin America where some trends are even clearer, Martín Hopenhayn meditates on the double crisis marking progressive social science of “intelligibility” (unable to make sense of the world) and “organicity” (knowing where, how and with whom to connect understanding and social action), raising the prospect of the social scientist as “a mistake of history...”¹¹⁷

More generally, as Wallerstein argues, “at the most fundamental level, a transformation of the world of knowledge is intrinsically linked to the process of transformation of the world-system itself.”¹¹⁸ And in the midst of the turmoil within disciplines and across them in modern universities, there is also growing awareness of the partial and limited character of all knowing. It also means that, beyond “science,” other discourses of meaning and significance have increasingly important roles to play in discerning the magnitude, character, and significance of the changes sweeping the world, and of the choices confronting us. And since, as Peterson has recently pointed out, “religion remains the primary way that most people conceptualize the ‘big questions’ of ethics and metaphysics,”¹¹⁹ this means religious voices.

5) (Re)Marginalization of Theology and Ethics?

At the heart of the *processus confessionis* and related processes underway in the churches lies the conviction, in the words of the Kitwe consultation, that

“the African reality of poverty caused by an unjust economic world order has gone beyond an ethical problem and become a theological one. It now constitutes a *status confessionis*. The gospel to the poor is at stake in the very mechanism of the global economy today.”¹²⁰

However, the agenda of theology and ethics in this process remains unclear. At times it seems to consist primarily in reiterating biblical truths and Christian “values,” and to challenging Christians and our churches to conversion. In my view, these remain important tasks.

But this familiar approach can also divert attention from the magnitude of shifts underway, the limits of science, and increasing significance of hope(s) and faith(s) in shaping and misshaping the course of life on earth and in the heavens above.

In the process it diverts attention from probing the magnitude of challenges confronting theology and ethics, and the church.

And in these ways it can contribute to re-marginalizing theology and ethics in public discourse too.

The alternative, increasingly evident in liberationist and post-colonial biblical studies, is to probe the bible and Christian traditions for insight into how our forbearers in faith responded in analogous contexts, for example the Jews who faced annihilation in the wake of defeat by Babylon, destruction of the Temple and exile of governing elites, or the Jews again and those sects on their way to becoming Christian in the wake of another apocalypse in the Roman destruction of the Temple, crushing of resistance and Jewish hopes for the future.

And in these ways, and recognizing in the bible the requirement for creativity at the heart of fidelity to the tradition, theology and ethics are contributing to probing the changing fabric of

existence, in the 21st century, discerning the most promising paths into the future, and informing our choices and practices.

6) Final Word or Deepening Inter-religious Dialogue?

The convergence of movements associated with WSF and similar processes, which draw together representatives of movements from around the world, confirms, on a historically unprecedented scale, the possibility--the growing reality!--of mutual respect among peoples of many cultural, religious and political traditions (and no religious tradition at all), new links of global solidarity, and increasing capacities to act together in witnessing to the emergence of another world.

These are experiences of Pentecost in our time, powerful new experiences of the Spirit, poured out across the differences, gaps and barriers which have traditionally divided peoples, in the different tongues, accents and dialects of the peoples of many places, cultures and languages, religions and politics, calling for repentance and conversion, inspiring us to broader solidarities and more inclusive identities, and pointing the way forward together.

And in this Spirit, re-thinking of issues of syncretisms, contextualization, indigenization, multiculturalism and inter-religious dialogue are moving to the center of theology and ethics.

Globalization of Ethics

In my judgment, the most important conclusion is recognizing, in the words of Orthodox theologian Emanuel Clapsis, that

“There is an emerging ecumenical consensus about the need to address the injustices and the suffering that economic globalization generates. The churches, through the World Council of Churches and through the witness of their specific traditions, participate in the search for alternative visions to economic globalization.”¹²¹

I do not wish to suggest that Christianity or any other religious tradition has the “answers” to 21st century questions. Coward and colleagues addressing different traditions have pointed out, for example, that no religion in history has ever before confronted the dilemmas posed by the interlinked phenomena of human population growth, consumption patterns especially among the middle and upper classes, and ecological stress.¹²² Creativity within religious traditions and respectful dialogue among them and with the “secular” disciplines of the natural and social sciences are necessary in establishing broader solidarities and collaboration in action transcending historic gaps and barriers. But, I do wish to conclude, on the basis of these and other dialogues about “globalization,” with affirmation of the rich resources within these traditions for addressing these epochal challenges, including the renewal of religious tradition itself. I wish to identify seven key ways in which religious discourses are enriching debates about the future of planetary civilization. I draw especially on my experience wrestling with Hebrew and Christian traditions in the bible; but I trust that similar insights are being drawn in other traditions too.

1) Magnitude and Significance of Change

Efforts to probe the dimensions, scale and pace of change are multiplying, but widespread appreciation of their magnitude and implications remain incomplete and scattered. So far, it seems to me, only religious stories, like the story of creation in Genesis, suggest the magnitude of re-creation underway, in this time when the whole creation is groaning in the labor pains of new birth (Rom. 8:22).

2) Profound Ambiguities at the Heart of Human Knowledge and Creativity

Here too the creation story helps to reveal the fundamentally ambiguous, contradictory character of human knowledge and creativity, the inescapability of choice, and the magnitude of the stakes. At the dawn of the 21st century, the moral of the creation story in Genesis rings truer than perhaps ever before--in human hands increasingly rests responsibility for the whole of creation!

3) The Allure and Power of Idolatry

Liberal and now neoliberal faith in progress, which has been incarnated in so many powerful ways in the modern world, is really trinitarian; at its heart lies faith in science, technology, and the market. The problem with this trinity, as with all idols, is the genuine progress associated with developments in each of these areas, and the promise of further advances in disciplined forms of knowledge, new technologies, and markets (articulated, institutionalized, and managed in new terms). The allure is real, powerful, almost irresistible. The problem arises when these partial goods are absolutized, when faith turns from being critical and questioning to absolute. This is what happens in market fundamentalism, and in the scientific and technological fundamentalisms associated with so much biotechnology. As Berry points out, "in the process that carries knowledge from the laboratory to the market there is not enough fear. And in the history of that process there has not been adequate accounting."¹²³ The results are deafness to the cries of so many victims, blindness to the many bad fruits of its priorities even when they are destroying the foundations of life of the successful and powerful, and enduring fidelity brooking no doubts--blind faith! And, as Beck hopes, "politics and morality are gaining--have to gain!--priority over shifting scientific reasoning."¹²⁴

4) New Dialogues with Natural and Social Scientists

This path is quite different from "neo-orthodox" and "radical orthodox" dismissals of social science and re-assertion of "pre-modern" truths of the bible or earlier tradition as sufficient to addressing contemporary dilemmas, and of "mixing" faith and politics (as if Jesus who in the face of the Roman empire, announced the coming of another empire/kingdom and was executed for it was not "political"). Rather, it affirms the centrality of natural and social sciences in the processes of discernment, and in the spirit of the endless quest for truth their relative autonomy from priesthoods of orthodoxy (though in recent decades truth is suffering far more at the hands of corporate power than of religious or political orthodoxy). It also recognizes the inescapable partiality and incompleteness of scientific perspectives, frameworks, and claims. And it affirms the contributions of the religious discourses of theology and ethics.

5) Challenges to Conversion Within Tradition(s)

In the midst of emerging planetary civilization, established expressions of knowledge and institutions are all in profound transition, involving many crises and false starts in charting paths forward. These are many signs of these crises in politics, and in the churches too, including theology and ethics. But there are also rich resources in the bible and tradition concerning creative ways of facing these challenges of this magnitude, and recognizing the path of the Spirit into the future. In the words of martyred Salvadoran theologian Ignacio Ellacuría, "only a church that lets itself be invaded by the Spirit renewer of all things and that is attentive to the signs of the times can become the new heaven that the new human being and the new earth need."¹²⁵

6) Recognizing Hope in History

The majority of theologies remain insufficiently incarnational (e.g., abstract and ahistorical), underestimating the transcendent capacity of specific actions in specific times and places, like those of Jesus, to radically transform established social patterns, constellations of power, and prevailing trends in inaugurating a genuinely new beginning in history. In this news of the Spirit

moving in the churches, and in the broader convergence global convergence of movements associated with the WSF processes there are many reasons for joy and celebration, and faith that another world is possible.

7) Absolute Centrality of Joy and Celebration

And celebrating this good news is essential to the conversions, clarity of vision, renewed commitments, and life-long discipleship at the heart of witnessing to hope in history.

Reflecting on the convergence increasingly evident in denominational and ecumenical initiatives within the churches, a group of activists affirmed that

“All these initiatives represent the new form of the conciliar process of mutual commitment for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Different ecclesial traditions express this commitment in the context of extreme challenges to the being of the church in relating to different biblical paradigms. What the churches of the Reformation call *status confessionis* prepared by a *processus confessionis* Baptists call ‘living God’s covenant’, Orthodox churches ‘serving God in the liturgy after the liturgy of the eucharist’ the communion of which we cannot participate in for our own salvation without sharing the goods of life with our sisters and brothers (1 Cor 11). Also Pope John Paul II, at the end of the Jubilee Year 2000, said that poor Lazarus should have an equal share at the table of the rich. Liberation theology says that the church can only be church as a prophetic church and a ‘church of the poor’. The historical Peace Churches call the same ‘radical discipleship’, which means we cannot take part in the gifts of the Messiah without following Jesus on the way.”¹²⁶

In these and other ways, the churches, and a growing array of social movements, are witness to hope--the increasing reality--that another world is being born in the midst of the old. And this truth brings joy and celebration.

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⁴Grahame Thompson, “Economic Globalization?” in *A Globalizing World? Culture, Economics, Politics*, ed. David Held (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 123.

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- ¹⁹Bill Joy, "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us," *Wired* 8.04 (2000): http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.04/joy_pr.html.
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- ²³See <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br>.
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¹⁰⁸See for example Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York, NY: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research/Simon and Schuster, 1982).

¹⁰⁹Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Common Good or Exclusion: A Choice for Canadians*, An open letter to the Members of Parliament (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2001), para. 15, [Http://cccb.ca](http://cccb.ca).

¹¹⁰Immanuel Wallerstein, "World-Systems Analysis: The Second Phase," Immanuel Wallerstein, in *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), 271.

¹¹¹Neil Brooks, *Left Vs. Right: Why the Left is Right and the Right is Wrong* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1995), 25–26. For concrete illustrations of the ways the "economy" is embedded in specific cultural and political contexts, see Fred Block, *Postindustrial Possibilities: A Critique of Economic Discourse* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

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¹¹⁴Wendell Berry, *Life is a Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2000), 135.

¹¹⁵Anthony Giddens, "Risk Society: The Context of British Politics," in *The Politics of Risk Society*, ed. Jane Franklin (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1998), 28.

¹¹⁶Ulrich Beck, "Politics of Risk Society," in *The Politics of Risk Society*, ed. Jane Franklin (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1998), 13.

¹¹⁷Martín Hopenhayn, *No Apocalypse, no Integration: Modernism and Postmodernism in Latin America*, eds. Cynthia Margarita Tompkins and Elizabeth Rosa Horan (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), xvi, 120.

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