

See-judge-act : the reality of globalization as a sign of the times

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3. See-Judge-Act: The Reality of Globalization as a Sign of the Times

Franz Segbers, Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht

In the 1950s and 1960s it was commonly assumed that the first world revealed the future of the third world, but in the current era of globalization, this expectation has been reversed. Today, indeed, the third world (the global South) is showing the first world (the global North) its own future. One must now look to the South to discern the future of the North. Meanwhile the so-called structural adjustment programs that the West forced on the South during the 1960s and 1970s by means of the International Monetary Fund – programs to reduce social welfare, to deregulate the markets and make them more flexible, and to open the economies of the Southern nations to the world – have turned out to be the future of the West. From the beginning of this process, the World Council of Churches has clearly distinguished between globalization as a multifaceted historic process and globalization in its present form as a pernicious economic and political project of global capitalism, since 1838 called neoliberalism or new liberalism by its protagonists (Friedrich August von Hayek, Alexander Rüstow, Walter Eucken, Wilhelm Röpke, and others of the network called the Mont Pelerin society) (see Walpen 55–85; Ptak; Segbers, *Hausordnung* 226–97).

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the basic principles of an “agenda for the economic and social renewal of Europe” have been established at numerous EU summits (Lisbon European Council). Even with national differences taken into consideration, Europe has fixed a common agenda: the step-by-step dismantling of the welfare state. The resulting social disintegration will see an overall drop in income levels, a disruption of the social rights of those dependent upon wages, a subversion of democratic and social rights, and the destruction of trade unions.

Globalization and Social Welfare

In 2000 the European Council, focusing on how to modernize the European model and achieve the European Union’s strategic goal for the next decade, decided at Lisbon “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sus-

tainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.”¹ The consequence of this goal was that social welfare, social security, and beneficial working conditions were all reduced in order to increase Europe’s competitiveness. During this time, therefore, the European governments have allowed reduced salaries, increased working hours, and expansion of the low-wage sectors of the economy. At the same time, they have lessened the burdens on globally mobile capital by tax cuts and by sanctioning tax evasion by means of tax havens. The welfare state has been demolished as an offering to the global economy.

In every European country, resistance against such social destruction has grown in recent years. The so-called reforms are part of a greater project, part of a worldwide neoliberal offensive and a program of adjusting the European concepts of justice, social security, and social welfare to the demands of globalization. By adopting these practices, the European governments have contributed to the destruction of the welfare state. Unemployment, increased working hours, lowered wages, and worsening working conditions are responses to the global market. Someone is always earning a lower wage or working under worse conditions. There is always a country where factories can get away with paying lower taxes. Competition puts additional pressure on the countries with more welfare and social security.

The welfare state is being transformed according to the logic and desire of the global market. More and more people are being laid off, no longer needed for production of goods and profit. The global economy has created lower-paying and unreliable work around the world. Globalization is driving more and more people in the North to despair as victims of economic fatalism, a belief that, in the words of Margaret Thatcher, “There is no alternative” – now generally referred to as the TINA principle.

Wealth and Poverty

Germany, along with Europe in general, is at its highest level of increasing wealth. Never before have Europeans been so rich (see, e.g., Krysmanski). But this wealth is unequally distributed, with a wide gap between the rich and the poor. European society faces two major paradoxes of prosperity. First, most Europeans have become more prosperous in the past twenty

¹ europarl.europa.eu/summit, acc. 12 Dec. 2009.

years, yet the gap between the rich and the poor has widened, with the result that European social and economic groups are more unequal than ever. While more and more people are unemployed or working for low wages, others are earning more and more.

While economic growth promotes prosperity, new prosperity gives rise to grave inequalities (see Zhu; International Monetary Fund). This reality is linked to the wider issue of global inequalities among nations and among individuals, because increasing global prosperity is creating increasing divisions between the richest and the poorest.

Plutonomy: Economy and Pluto, the God of Money

Throughout the world more and more added value and welfare are occupied by capital, with devastating consequences:²

- The economy is increasingly taking on the characteristics of a “Plutonomy,” with the rich appropriating a disproportionate amount of the economic output.
- Rich consumers are few, but their economic role is disproportionately large in terms of their portion of income and consumption. The others, the non-rich, the multitudinous many, account for surprisingly small slices of the national pie.
- The world is becoming divided into two blocs – the plutonomies, where economic growth is powered by and largely consumed by the wealthy few, and the majority of the world’s population, in what is called the global South.
- Plutonomies are especially found in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Plutonomies represent a break with social-market economies. Their economies are oriented not to welfare for all but to welfare for only some.
- In 2006, for the first time, not a single millionaire appeared on the annual Forbes list of the richest hundred people in the world – only billionaires.³ This fact illustrates the reality that the rich are becoming

² The statistics in this section come from Citi Group, “Equity Strategy: Plutonomy; Buying Luxury—Explaining Global Imbalances,” 16 Oct. 2005; billcara.com/archives/Citi%20Oct%2016,%202005%20Plutonomy.pdf. See also wider.unu.edu/events/past-events/2006-events/en_GB/05-12-2006, acc. 5 Jan. 2010.

³ forbes.com/2009/03/11/worlds-richest-people-billionaires-2009-billionaires_land.html, acc. 9 Dec. 2009.

richer and richer, with their wealth increasing at the expense of the poor. While reducing taxes for high-income populations, governments have at the same time reduced social security for the unemployed, the sick, and the disabled.

- Between 2003 and 2006, in Germany wages decreased by 8.2 percent (see Bosch, et al. 10; for Austria, see Onaran). Germany is one of the world's most powerful economies. More than 10% of all goods traded worldwide are produced by German companies. From 2002 to 2006, Germany was the world leader in exports. But employees paid the cost of this high level of business competitiveness with reduced salaries and expanded working hours (see Joebges; Schmalzbauer; Zwiener).

The Effects of Inequalities

The growing economic gap between the rich and the poor is resulting in numerous destructive consequences, including the following:

- Widespread poverty and hunger: in the face of difficult social and economic conditions, in 2009 soup kitchens served more than ten million people in Germany (von Normann 93; Segbers, Hartz IV 102–9).
- Rapidly increasing growth in household debt among low-income families, who are vulnerable to any kind of crisis of expenditure. More than twenty million people in Europe are profoundly in debt.⁴ The rapidly growing indebtedness is particularly damaging for the poor.
- Involuntary exile as many people, especially Africans, enter Europe even at the risk of their own lives. Currently there are from five hundred thousand to a million undocumented immigrants in Germany alone, and many millions in Europe as a whole. Undocumented and documented migrants all over the world transfer about 300 billion dollars a year to their families (Steinbäck). As the value of all official development assistance is less than half the value of these private remittances, these workers contribute more than twice as much to the battle against poverty in their countries of origin as does governmental aid (Fisch 11–13). Their willingness to work in exile for rock-bottom wages in order to assist their families at home has the unintended consequence of contributing to widespread unemployment and low salaries in Europe.

⁴ prnewswire.co.uk, acc. 12 Dec. 2009.

- Widespread illegal immigration as hundreds of thousands of immigrants, many of them women, work in domestic or medical positions in Europe without documentation and with no legal protection. Without the labor of workers from the Philippines and from Eastern Europe, many people needing care would suffer. The European social system, which has significant gaps, is able to function only through the exploitation of undocumented immigrants.
- In Europe taxes are being lowered for the well-to-do but raised for those least able to pay.⁵ The governments of Europe and of the United States have embarked upon a neoliberal course that is equally deadly whether with or without war. In this economic situation, the pursuit of capital holds center stage. Some of the consequences are
 - Wages, social benefits, taxes, and rights of employees have been reduced in order to provide profitable places for capital investment;
 - Markets for capital, goods, and services have been opened up and public services and companies privatized in order to provide capital to new areas for profitable investment;
 - Poverty, indebtedness, the destruction of the environment, war, disfranchisement of refugees, and attacks on fundamental social and democratic rights – all result from the deeds of the world’s most powerful.

Margaret Thatcher has declared that today’s globalized world offers no opportunity for new political directions: “There is no alternative.” The core of the argument is what Adam Smith referred to as “the invisible hand” that leads the market, which by itself produces welfare and justice as long as all strive for their own economic advantage and gain: “He is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was not part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it” (Adam Smith 371).

According to this theory, if politics stays away from the economy, the economy will operate effectively to create public welfare. Democratically elected governments succumb to the pressure, while politics adapts more and more to the overwhelming power of the market. The former president of the National Bank of Germany, Hans Tietmeyer, has therefore declared:

⁵ Re. tax competition, see Giegold; taxjustice.net; Report.

“Most politicians have still not realized to what extent they are controlled by the financial markets and are even ruled by them.”⁶ Because governments are no longer sufficiently powerful or willing to resist international forces, they choose instead to adapt.

Globalization as Ideology

Neoliberal globalization leads to unemployment, pressure on working conditions, and the exploitation of creation. People often explain what is happening in the world by referring to globalization rather than naming specific interests and purposes. Europe and the United States are globalization’s winners, though even their populations include more and more losers. Globalization is an ideology that defends, protects, and advances the interests of the powerful.

The so-called social reforms of globalization are accompanied by a debate over a new definition of justice. Von Hayek formulated the theory: “Inequality is not regrettable, but most welcome.” He went on to explain: “Those who attack the rich forget that most of them created jobs in the process of becoming rich; in this way they helped more people than they would have done by giving their money to the poor” (von Hayek 38). This modernized concept of justice is supposed to acknowledge and even enhance the inequalities among humans, because it shows that some have truly grasped their chances.

Precisely at a time when Europe is richer than ever before, distributive justice is being considered old-fashioned, requiring replacement by a view of justice oriented to a capability approach rather than to distribution.⁷ The Evangelical Church in Germany takes a complex understanding as its starting-point when addressing the topic of justice: “Without distributive justice in terms of income, equal opportunity cannot come about at all. But without a just system of participation in society – particularly in education and the labour market – the traditional welfare state is incomplete” (EKD Council 2).

Conclusion 1: Globalization is not simply a process with chances and risks but a project aiming at a worldwide expansion of the capitalistic market, along with its logic and spirit. The logic is that of competition and

⁶ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 Feb. 1996.

⁷ See Sen; Segbers, *Biblische Gerechtigkeit*; Segbers, *Gerechtigkeit* 98ff.

its tools: deregulation, privatization, and a reduction in the role of the welfare state. Its spirit consists of producing more and more money. It is also necessary to distinguish between two opposed kinds of globalization. The globalization of the market opposes the other kind, which seeks to turn the planet that God has entrusted to us into a habitable earth where justice and peace may embrace each other. The one project compels humans to adopt the praxis, logic, and spirit of economic competition; the other seeks to create the just structures of a global village.

The world has never before been so rich. During recent decades incredible riches have come into existence on the earth. Global trade has more than tripled in the last twelve years, and the global gross national product has nearly doubled. For the first time in the history of humankind, objective scarcity has been overcome. Materially speaking, the utopia of a common happiness for all is possible. No one need go hungry. The agricultural sector could without difficulty feed twelve billion people. There is plenty for all.

What globalization has treated as dross – social security, increased social benefits, ancillary wage costs, and protection against job loss – must be seen in the light of human life and well-being as important social and civil achievements. Those structural adaptations in the South and the North that are currently being referred to as reforms are poised to bid a definitive farewell to the social and economic achievements that have been developed over the course of many centuries.

Judging the Reality from a Biblical Perspective

That the economy should serve life is the fundamental starting point of the ethics of economy, echoing Jesus' dictum that the Sabbath exists for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath (Matt 2:27). This understanding leads to the necessity of an alternative to globalization, which changes the world into a marketplace. The axiom that the economy should serve life raises two questions: for whom does the economy further life, and from whom does it demand sacrifice even to death? In its concern for justice, the Judeo-Christian tradition orients itself according to a "preferential option for the poor." The Evangelical Church in Germany takes the "preferential option for the poor" as its starting point in the Memorandum "Just Participation":

From the very beginning, the Christian church has stood by the side of the poor. Time and again, it has been reminded of its calling and taken practical action, as witnessed in the dedicated action of churches, congregations, diaconal ministries, and a great many individuals. The liberation theology of Latin America convincingly characterised this biblically founded mission as a “preferential option for the poor”, and brought it into sharp focus. In general terms this phrase conveys the consensus that poverty must be avoided in the first place, but where it does still exist it must be alleviated. (EKD Council 1)

A little later the document declares that “In the understanding of justice ‘the preferential option for the poor’ has taken on ‘central significance in ecumenical social ethics’” (EKD Council 24).

God the creator has created humankind in his image. The understanding that humankind is created in God’s image constitutes the foundation of the fraternity of all people – a relationship that expresses hope for a form of human life together, with all people respected without precondition as individuals, irrespective of personal achievement, without distinction of class, gender, race, or origin. All people – rich or poor, enslaved or free – are brothers and sisters.

This biblically based model of “fraternity” contains three elements:

- Recognition of the value of each person, irrespective of achievements. Everyone has the right to participate fully in society simply because he or she lives.
- Justice as the creation of fair and equal conditions for all, through which all may use their freedom.
- Solidarity as support for the possibilities of the lives of all people and a commitment to their well-being.

Justice is the recognition of what human beings owe each other. The preferential option for the poor means that the poor cannot be required to pay the price for the ever-increasing well-being of the rich but must rather draw the attention of the rich to their responsibility for the lives of others.

Jesus himself conveys the idea of the preferential option for the poor when, for example, he says in the Gospel of Luke, “blessed are the poor” (Lk 6:20). Of course the Bible does not condemn material blessings. The biblical evaluation of wealth rests upon the fundamental view that wealth is the product of God’s gifts and of human work. The participation of all in this wealth, if it is shared, leads to the blessings of wealth. Shared wealth is blessed, but when it is not shared, it is a disaster. Justice is therefore part of the cycle of blessing (see Deut 24:14).

The five hundred greatest multinational companies today control more than fifty-two percent of the world's gross national product. Only forty-nine are nations (Ziegler 213). The majority of these globally operating companies – fifty-eight percent – have their seats and registered offices in the United States or in Europe. They are neither legitimated nor controlled democratically. This concentration of power and influence is the world's new empire. The rulers of this empire secure their interests and aims militarily and politically, thereby manifesting a kind of structural violence against the poor. This is exactly what the World Alliance of Reformed Churches declared in 2004 during the twenty-fourth General Council in Accra, Ghana:

We recognize the enormity and complexity of the situation. We do not seek simple answers. As seekers of truth and justice and looking through the eyes of powerless and suffering people, we see that the current world (dis)order is rooted in an extremely complex and immoral economic system defended by empire. In using the term "empire" we mean the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests. (Accra Confession)

Trusting the Invisible Hand

The globalization of the market is rationalized by Smith's idea of the invisible hand. Avarice, the accumulation of capital, and the satisfaction of self-serving interests, Smith explained, produce the common welfare. The unswerving certainty with which many live according to this economic policy and proclaim it to allow no alternative derives from trust in the invisible hand of the market, but the ruler of the universe to whom Smith refers is not the Christian God. Faith in the market is a religion; it is idolatry. The Tenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Winnipeg 2004 declared in its "Message": "This is idolatry and leads to the systematic exclusion of those who own no property, the destruction of cultural diversity, the dismantling of fragile democracies and the destruction of the earth."⁸ The metaphor of the invisible hand is an ideology of an organized absence of alternative. It implies that the market is following autonomous inherent laws that demand that certain things be accepted as unavoidable. Such an acceptance renders the vis-

⁸ www.wkairoseuropa.de/english/Message, acc. 12 Dec. 2009.

ible hands of acting subjects invisible. The expression *invisible hand* depoliticizes and reconceptualizes dominant capital-oriented interests as neutral, unavoidable necessities, before which all rational beings must bow as though they had no alternative.

The Bible speaks of creation as a household, which humankind inhabits with other creatures:⁹ “They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights” (Ps 36:8); “You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you ordained it” (Ps 65:9; cf. Ps 104:14–15, Ps 34:11, 146:7, 147:14). The housemates must toil the soil, care for livestock and farming, and provide for all who live in the house. According to this image, humankind has a fiduciary task: “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” (Ps 24:1). Since God, like a good economist, has provided the earth with an abundance of resources and goods, economic action takes not scarcity of goods as its starting point but rather the abundance already present in creation. If all people respond economically to the creation entrusted to them, there will be plenty for all. Biblical social laws are a kind of house rule for the protection of life in the household of God. The Bible contains concrete instructions for the protection of life as necessary in its day.

Of course our contemporary world is more complex than the world of the Bible. Nevertheless, the fundamental question remains: do we take the right of life for all as a point of orientation, accepting solidarity and justice as measuring rods for living together, or do we accept the market as a competition that serves the accumulation of profit and allows money to rule?

Conclusion 2: In the context of globalization, the perspective of justice makes us ask what human beings owe each other and especially what we owe the poor. Globalization changes the earth into a marketplace, changing all goods into commodities and buying and selling them. Globalization has been effective in its production of wealth. Never before has the world been so rich. During the last decades incredible wealth has come into existence. However, this wealth has come into being at the cost of the poor, the weak, and creation. They are the victims. Their possibilities for life have been sacrificed to the increase of profit.

⁹ See Segbers, *Hausordnung* 118ff; Segbers, *Wirtschaftsethik*; and Meeks 33ff., 75ff.

The Bible is realistic when it says, “The lover of money will not be satisfied with money, nor the lover of wealth with gain” (Eccle 5:10). The letters to the Ephesians and Colossians even refer to this attitude of always wanting more as idolatry (Eph 5:5, Col 3:5). When money becomes the all-determining reality to which humankind bows the knee, the Bible speaks of Mammon (Matt 6:24). The critique of Mammon is a theological critique of the accumulation of money. If the continuous accumulation of money is regarded as the first principle and the world acts accordingly, the monetary system rules at the expense of humankind. This theological phrasing identifies a fundamental mechanism still at work today, changing everything into money by reducing pensions, retrenching social services, weakening laws protecting jobs, and lowering taxes. The consequences are disastrous: the measuring rod is no longer that which serves the life of humankind and of all the creatures inhabiting the earth, but only what serves the most profit.

The choice between God and Mammon poses a fundamental opposition: God is worshiped where life and justice grow, while Mammon is worshiped where everything is subordinated to the accumulation of money. Theologically, the critique of Mammon says that we cannot abandon everything that is good for humankind and for humans living together to those who would change everything into commodities and money. The dance around the golden calf has gone wrong before.

Conclusion 3: We need a politics derived from the critique of Mammon, demonizing not the economy but rather the fundamental mechanism of the multiplication of money. *Plutonomics* means orienting economic behavior to profit alone, and its advocates proclaim “welfare for the happy few.” But we need an economy that serves the life of all.

Globalization Destroys the Unity of Humankind

At the center of the logic of economic globalization stands trust in competition as the motor of social and societal development. Competition is a process that necessarily eliminates those who cannot keep up. Competition is all about a battle for advantage over others. In this confrontation, the weak lose. Competition is anything but neutral; it follows a logic that serves the strong and harms the weak. Of necessity, a logic of victory and defeat, of winners and losers, results in the elimination of the weak. This logic of power, with the strong ruling over the weak, leads structurally to violence. Defeating this kind of economic globalization and its inherent violence constitutes the true challenge.

God has created this earth and equipped it with abundance. Nobody is excluded from this abundance. The earth and all the goods of the creation are there for all. Therefore economic globalization is not only an economic challenge but also a spiritual challenge to our understanding of catholicity.

Acting on the Practice of Globalization: Catholicity

To be church means living a new kind and quality of relationships; it signifies a new community in Christ that embodies the alternative to the forms of power and violence defined by globalization. The Creed's confession of "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church" preserves the memory of that earlier form of globalization in the Roman Empire (Raiser, *Katholizität*). Roman globalization was founded upon the principle of unity: one God, one Emperor, one Empire, and also one language and one currency (see Rieger 23–68; Carter 176–203). Over against this kind of imperial unity, the early church presented an alternative vision of the *oikoumene* as a conciliary and synodical community of local churches that retained their autonomy and their diversity. This vision was expressed in the church's praxis of solidarity with the poor and the victims of imperial globalization.

The model of the church's unity is thus not the empire headed by an emperor and having dependent provinces, but a synodical federation of local churches with equal rights. Catholicity is thus the counterpart to the *Imperium Romanum*. Catholicity/*kathólos* is an alternative ecumenical vision, understood as a conciliar community of local churches. The ancient church represented this type of community over against the principle of unity established by the Roman Empire.

The church is integrated into God's mission, the *Missio Dei*, for the salvation of humankind. Catholicity is the characteristic of the church as she engages in this mission. It is the recovery from the destitution of humankind, seeking the salvation and the well-being of all through justice, peace, and the conservation of creation: the Shalom of God. Solidarity with the poor is therefore an expression of catholicity.

God's plan is that people of all ages, races, and places may come to unity in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The church catholic is a sign of the unity of humankind beyond all boundaries. Therefore the church has the task of working for the unity of humankind through ecumenical engagement and commitment. Catholicity is the vision of an alternative human unity. It is an eschatological sign that shows and announces itself in a corresponding praxis. The church that wishes to be true to its characteristics

– its *nota* – is part of God’s movement in history towards the kingdom. Church is therefore church for others, including the poor.

The catholic vision of the unity of humankind is supported by the conviction that a world without poverty and exploitation is not only possible but even in accord with the *Missio Dei* for this world. Catholicity has to do with multiplicity and continuity – the unity that pertains to the whole church and the unity of humanity (Rüppell 230ff).

Contexts of the Origins of Our Churches

The Old Catholic churches arose as protest movements, protesting against the power of the supremacy of Rome at a time when people were fighting for freedom, including liberalism, freedom of the press, democracy, and the right to vote. The Old Catholic protest had emancipatory dimensions. Ignaz von Döllinger, a famous nineteenth-century theologian, protested against the doctrines of the First Vatican Council. He was involved in the constituting of the Old Catholic Church. The following quotation from his letter of 31 March 1871 to Gregor von Scherr, the Archbishop of Munich, illustrates the interrelationship of the political and theological aspects of the resistance against the doctrines of Vatican I:

As a Christian, as a theologian, as an historian, and as a citizen I cannot accept this teaching [on infallibility and primacy]. I cannot do so as a Christian as it is irreconcilable with the spirit of the Gospel and with the clear statements of Christ and the apostles: it aims at building up a this-worldly empire, which Christ rejected; it wants the rule over all communities, which Peter denied himself and all others. I cannot do so as a theologian since the entire authentic Tradition of the Church irreconcilably opposes it. . . . I cannot do so as an historian, since in that capacity I know that the persistent striving for the realization of this theory of world dominion has cost Europe rivers of blood, has thrown entire countries into chaos and destruction, has shattered the beautiful organic structure of the earlier Church and spawned, fed, and retained the worst abuses in the Church. Finally, as a citizen I have to reject this teaching because by means of its claims to the subjection of states and monarchies and the entire political order to papal authority and the exceptional status that it demands for the clergy, it provides the basis for endless and destructive strife between state and church, between clergy and laity. I cannot hide from myself that this teaching, whose consequences led to the fall of the old German empire, should it become dominant among the catholic part of the German nation, would immediately also transplant the seed of an incurable illness into the just rebuilt new empire. (Küry 62)¹⁰

¹⁰ Trans. Daniel Conklin.

The Iglesia Filipina Independiente was formed in the beginning of the twentieth century as part of the struggle against Spanish colonialism and American imperialism. A public protest spearheaded by the Union Obrera Democratica, the nation's first labor confederation, publicly proclaimed the IFI on 3 August 1902.

Both of these protests against Rome's centralism and power were expressions of a search for a local inculturation and autonomy that Rome, distanced by space and history, could not provide.

What does conciliarity mean for the relations between the IFI, the Union of Utrecht, and the Episcopal Church? Globalization brings to life the treasure of conciliar community. Conciliarity contains the recognition of the other in his or her otherness. Conciliar community is the Christian churches' counter-model to neoliberal globalization. Communion of churches – community of churches – is an oikoumene of cooperation and solidarity. Conciliarity is unity in plurality and plurality in unity.

Conciliar community with the IFI is the price of catholicity that must be paid by the Union of Utrecht. It requires the risk of investing in an experience of a cultural catholicity of churches. The Old Catholic concept of synodality, catholicity, and conciliarity contains the ecclesiological chance that in a pluralistic and global world, cultural autonomy and particular traditions will be valued. We can only be the church of Jesus Christ when we live in solidarity with human beings.

Eucharistic Ecclesiology and Eucharistic Ethics Belong Together

The unity of the churches is fulfilled and made visible in the celebration of the Eucharist. The church points to Christ, shown as the sign of the unity of the faithful, and also to the unity of human beings, who are divided through hunger, poverty, and riches. In the eucharistic celebration the celebrating community answers the challenge of Christians and of the church of the present. In a world of hunger, Christ takes the form of bread (Segbers, Plädoyer).

The celebration of the Eucharist responds to the hunger of human beings for bread and for unity in the face of the divisions between poor and rich. Eucharist – thanksgiving – begins with the fundamental presupposition that people must have something to eat and drink. In the Eucharist the universal, catholic dimension of the church beyond its local manifestation is experienced and celebrated.

Resistance of Churches and the Alternative Catholic Globalization

Catholic ecumenism pushes for establishing an alliance with those who are committed to a globalization of solidarity. We Christians understand ourselves as part of a worldwide Christianity. In our various partnerships we come to know the consequences of globalization through its global victims. Together we listen to what they have to say. We join them in seeing the consequences of globalization, and together we consider what kind of answer our mutual faith in the one God, who showed his *φιλανθρωπία* to us in Christ, demands from us (Tit 3:4). We know ourselves to be connected with the whole community of worldwide Christianity. In times of globalization, this solidarity places us beside its victims in both North and South.

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it” (Ps 24:1). The churches are therefore coworkers for the Shalom of God, and together with others throughout the world we stand for justice, peace, and the conservation of creation.