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## ALTERGLOBALIZATION AND THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

A SERIES OF MONOGRAPHS ON THE ECUMENICAL INTERPRETATION  
OF GLOBALIZATION PROCESSES IN THE ACTIVITIES  
OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Piotr KOPIEC, *Chrześcijańska alterglobalizacja. Światowa Rada Kościołów na rzecz budowy globalnego społeczeństwa obywatelskiego* [Christian alterglobalization: The World Council of Churches promoting the construction of a global civil society], Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2016, 250 pp. ISBN 978-83-8061-362-1.

Rev. Przemysław KANTYKA, *Chrześcijańska alterglobalizacja. Człowiek wobec globalizacji w antropologicznoteologicznej wizji Światowej Rady Kościołów* [Christian alterglobalization: Man facing globalization according to the theological anthropology of the World Council of Churches], Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2016, 114 pp. ISBN 978-83-8061-363-8.

Rev. Marcin SKŁADANOWSKI, *Etyka ekumeniczna w warunkach globalizacji. Główne rysy refleksji etycznej i działalności społecznej Światowej Rady Kościołów* [Ecumenical ethics in the conditions of globalization: An outline of ethical reflection and social activity of the World Council of Churches], Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2016, 218 pp. ISBN 978-83-8061-364-5.

Piotr KOPIEC, Przemysław KANTYKA, and Marcin SKŁADANOWSKI, *Christian Alterglobalization in the Ecumenical Documents of the World Council of Churches*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2016, 172 pp. ISBN 978-83-8061-365-2.

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The series of monographs by Piotr Kopiec, Rev. Przemysław Kantyka, and Rev. Marcin Składanowski, employees of the Ecumenical Institute of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), is the outcome of the authors' research project titled "Ecumenical Interpretations of Globalization Processes in the Activities of the World Council of Churches," financed by the National Science Centre, Poland, with funds granted in the OPUS 5 competition. In their study, the authors present many aspects of the contribution of the World Council of Churches, the most important international ecumenical organization, to the contemporary social, political, and economic debate, pointing out that the phenomena accompanying the process of globalization provoke Christians to offer cross-denominational evaluation and require them to engage in new forms of commitment.

On the one hand, Christians are observers of the global and local changes taking place, also experiencing their results, such as new international political relations, the development of supranational economic relations, or growing social and economic problems. In many ways, these problems amount to a crisis and give rise to anxiety about the future or about the direction of the world's further development, particularly in the context of armed conflicts, terrorism, and violence, which constitute a significant part of experience for a considerable proportion of humanity. At the same time, however, the changes associated with globalization lead to the growth of knowledge about the socio-cultural bonds between people and to the development of new strategies of action for the improvement of living conditions, especially those of rejected or socially excluded people.

On the other hand, Christian communities feel that their task is not only to observe and evaluate the changes taking place in the light of faith, but also to consciously engage in faith-motivated social commitment as active participants in public debate. This imperative of social commitment is particularly well visible in the work of the World Council of Churches, functioning since 1948.

The series of monographs under discussion addresses issues related to the Christian evaluation of globalization processes and to the religiously motivated commitment of the World Council of Churches to the solution of the main contemporary social, cultural, political, and economic problems rooted in globalization.

In the monograph titled *Chrześcijańska alterglobalizacja. Człowiek wobec globalizacji w antropologicznoteologicznej wizji Światowej Rady Kościołów* [Christian alter-globalization: Man facing globalization according to the theological anthropology of the World Council of Churches], which opens the triptych, Przemysław Kantyka introduces his readers to the structure of the World Council of Churches and its programmes, with a special focus on achievements concerning globalization and its interpretation. In the main part of the study the author makes an attempt determine the theological anthropology underlying the interpretation of globalization phenomena that is offered in the Council's documents. Next, he addresses selected specific issues strictly related to the teaching about man in the context of challenges posed by globalization. The author's reflection induces him to conclude that the reductionist view of man-as-producer (*homo oeconomicus*) has failed, to propose a way to free man from the trap of the neoliberal ideology paradigm, unjust debt, poverty, and migration, and—finally—to acknowledge man's responsibility for preserving the creation. The author is critical about the

reconstructed anthropology, but he is not content with criticism alone. His observations also offer a different perspective on economy and sociology. What should be stressed is the interdisciplinary nature of the monograph as well as its highly concise, precise, and condensed linguistic expression. Although the study is not particularly large in terms of volume, its substantive quality is high.

In his monograph titled *Chrześcijańska alterglobalizacja. Światowa Rada Kościołów na rzecz budowy globalnego społeczeństwa obywatelskiego* [Christian alterglobalization: The World Council of Churches promoting the construction of a global civil society], Piotr Kopiec relates the socio-political category of global civil society to the assumptions and activities of the World Council of Churches, answering the question of whether the Council can become an active participant in alterglobalization processes as well as presenting its contribution to the building of a global network of organizations and movements anxious about the social, cultural, and ecological condition of the world and actively engaging in the implementation of changes. In this context, what becomes important to the author is analyses of the phenomena of globalization, alterglobalization, and deglobalization, as well as reflection on the concept of global civil society. The author also discusses the tensions within the ecumenical movement itself that are related to the attitude towards globalization changes. Finally, he attempts to show a Christian view of global civil society.

In the monograph titled *Etyka ekumeniczna w warunkach globalizacji. Główne rysy refleksji etycznej i działalności społecznej Światowej Rady Kościołów* (*Ecumenical ethics in the conditions of globalization: An outline of ethical reflection and social activity of the World Council of Churches*), Marcin Składanowski places emphasis on the Council's contextualized ethical reflection that motivates it to undertake specific socio-political commitments. The author addresses the problem of the relationship between ethics and Christian testimony in the work of the World Council of Churches in a multifaceted way; he also draws attention to the changes taking place in the theological orientation of the Council's documents and in the directions of its activity. With this aim in view, he begins by focusing on showing the significance of ethical issues for the ecumenical movement, then proceeds to outline the ecumenical ethical reflection of the World Council of Churches, and finally offers a detailed presentation of selected ethical issues that are objects of the Council's interest. In this way, the author tries to evaluate the socio-ethical engagement of the World Council of Churches in the context of globalization processes.

The series of monographs under review should be welcomed with a great deal of appreciation, mainly due to the fact that it addresses issues which are still not known well enough to Polish scholars. While sociological, ethical, and theological reflection on the consequences of globalization yields new research results also in Poland, little attention has been devoted to how the ecumenical movement is involved in analyzing and solving important issues associated with the transformations that the contemporary world is undergoing. The value of the presented series consists, first of all, in the emphasis placed on the fact that Christians are not passive participants in social life. Faith motivates them to engage in specific forms of activity for the sake of genuine human good. Moreover, despite the differences stemming from their subject matter and the research conceptions adopted by the authors, all three parts of the series place

emphasis on the fact that globalization is not a homogeneous process and that, by socio-theological reflection and the resulting actions, Christians can contribute to the building of a civil society matching the dignity of the human person. It must also be acknowledged that the series of monographs is methodologically sound.

The last element of the series is an English translation of fragments of the three monographs discussed above, published in Polish. They were prepared in accordance with the three perspectives making up the approach to globalization adopted by the World Council of Churches: anthropological, sociological, and ethical. This is a good point of departure for continuation and for the extension of the topic to include the theological, political, scientific, and cultural perspectives. Although the approach of the World Council of Churches to the subject of alterglobalization was not to propose building it strictly on theological foundations, the contribution presented in the series of monographs is based on the axiology and epistemology defined by Christian dogmas. The borders of the discussed perspectives on the phenomenon are not sharply defined or final, and therefore the studies together contribute to creating a more comprehensive and comprehensible picture of the issue. This is why the sections selected for this book make up a complementary whole. In his foreword, Piotr Kopiec stresses that the World Council of Churches is not against globalization, but rather tries to find a version of globalization integrating the desire to build a society of peace and equality on a global scale—in accordance with the frequently cited words from St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians: "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it" (12:26). As a result, for this organization, globalization means extending Christians' responsibility to the entire world in the geographical and political sense, not only in the theological dimension but also in the social, cultural, and ecological dimensions.

The series is innovative at the levels of both national and international reflection. It was therefore a valuable move to publish its main achievements in the form of a separate volume in English. The series is devoted to matters that are difficult but require thorough reflection and responsible decision making. There are good reasons to hope that it will be noticed and used not only by readers interested in theory but also by those who have actual power of influence, for building a better world.

*Translated by Piotr Czyżewski*



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