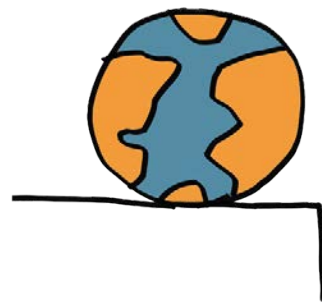


**SEIZING AN ALTERNATIVE**  
**Toward an Ecological Civilization**  
**June 4-7, 2015**  
**Section I: The Threatening**  
**Catastrophe:**  
**Responding Now**



# The Importance of the World's Religions

Rick Clugston (**RC**), presenting to Section 1; Track 1

01:32 to 03:41 **RC**: The reason I started this job at Union Theological Seminary, with a newly formed Center for Earth Ethics, headed by Karenna Gore, Al Gore's daughter. My portfolio is really mobilizing religious / spiritual/ and values-based groups to weigh in on climate change, and the Pope's 2015 UN's development events. In terms of my background, for about 25 years, I've been working to mobilize these types of groups to weigh in on sustainable development policies at the United Nations. So a lot of my focus has been leading up to the Earth's Summit, formation of the Commission on Sustainable Development, reporting on the Jesuit's Agenda 21 chapters, Johannesburg, which was Rio plus 10, and then the lead up to Rio plus 20, which was back in Rio again. The World Conference on Sustainable Development. So, in that process, the two main things that I've done are; one, work on the Earth Chart process, drafting and implementing the Earth Chart, which is an integrated ethical vision for what development, and also working primarily with the Forum on Religion and Ecology with Mary Evelyn Tucker, helping to put together books and the Harvard Conference. After that, sort of focused on mobilizing for action.

03:41 to 06:27 **RC**: What I will talk about today is the road to and through Paris, particularly what the role of the religious/spiritual/value-based organizations are and could be in that context. A kind of central point in that is the Pope's Encyclical. It is due out on the 16th. I don't know how to explain the content of it. The theme of it is what he calls Integral Ecology. The title (all in Latin) pulled from something from that Pope's vision. What it is is words from the first line of the Pope's XXX. So, for those of us trying to make that a profound transformation in the way that we look at development and economic growth will mean the people and the planet, not just now, but for future generations. This is a big deal. So half the religious communities, not just Christian, are organizing around this. After the Encyclical is released, particularly doing events in connection to the Pope's visit to the U.S., speaking to the joint session of Congress on the 24th of September, then coming up to New York and speaking at the U.N.'s General Assembly. There's vigils and marches. Last year, the reason I'm at Union Theological Seminary, because I helped organize the religions for the Earth Conference. which was the weekend of that climate march in New York, with 400,000 people, there to demand climate justice. And, the climate summit, with Ban Ki-Moon, the U.N. Secretary General, brought together business and government leaders actually tried to lift up real action for climate change.

06:27 **RC**: And just a month ago, there was a big gathering of scientists and religious leaders at the Vatican, and they came out with this statement: Climate Change and the Common Good, which is really quite a wonderful statement. And minimally what this will do is, it certainly changes the balance perspective within the Roman Catholic community about the reality of climate change. A very strong statement, if this is real, we have to act. It's a moral responsibility for a Catholic to do all that they can to mitigate against rising above 2 [degrees], and so the interesting thing is that a lot of this is imbedded in a whole other process that's shaping the sustainable development, the post 2015 sustainable development agenda. Basically, what this will argue — I'll read you a paragraph.

The whole beginning is the seriousness of the climate crisis. I'll read this paragraph which is particularly good:

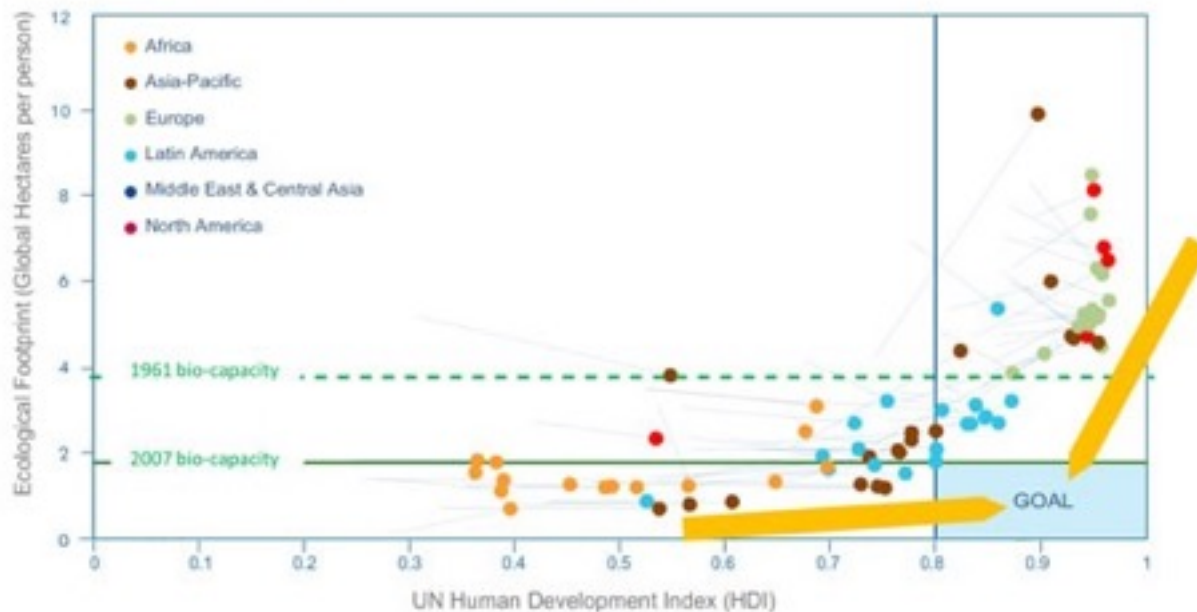
“In contemplating these needed decarbonization transformations, ...etc., however, we must not ignore the underlying socioeconomic factors that are responsible for our current economic predicament. Our problems have been exacerbated by the current economic obsession that measure human progress solely in terms of Gross Domestic Product, a practice that could be justified only if natural capital were of infinite size. Present economic systems have also fostered the development of unacceptable gaps between the rich and the poor. The latter still have no access to most of the scientific and technical benefits of the modern age. During the twentieth century, by far the greatest emitters of carbon were the world's rich nations. In the twenty first century, again, it is the rich that are doing most of the greenhouse polluting. But, the rich are no longer confined to the rich world. The three billion poorest people continue to have a minimal role in the global warming pollution and are certain to suffer the worst consequences of unabated climate change.”

09:35 **RC:** So, in a sense, these are the themes that certainly will be in the Encyclical and elaborated. Catholic XXX teachings, many from previous Popes. a may have made a profound appeal to reorient economic development in ways that actually serve people, all people. Preferential options But what's new in this a recognition, and this goes back to Saint Francis, that humans aren't above and apart from nature, but, embedded, we are part of nature, and that all life, all beings, all creatures, have some kind of intrinsic worth, are loved by God, are seen as good on the sixth day, without human beings being involved. And so, the Pope will definitely emphasize this whole caring for the planet as a core moral responsibility.

10:50 **RC:** So, what I wanted to do was mention a little bit, a couple of what I was going to put on the board. How many of you are familiar with the ecological footprint? (See Human Development Index and Ecological Footprint of Nations chart.) This was what was worked out in Rio Plus 20.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: 1980-2007

Human Development Index and Ecological Footprint of Nations



This is ecological footprint on the vertical axis, and human development on the horizontal axis. As you go higher on horizontal scale, quality of life is improving, access to clean water, food, education, rights and all that, And as you go up the vertical axis, the units near the bottom are two planets, and it keeps going up. As development proceeds, the plot all the countries. The goal is the lower righthand area. Overall, it shows we haven't structured our economic system to promote an outcome of that goal.

13:39 **RC:** The other chart is the Oxfam Donut



Source: Oxfam, inspired by Rockström et al (2009b)<sup>6</sup>

14: 29 **RC:** In the hole of the donut is the social protection core, what we would want to be able to provide to all people. That's things like jobs, education, water, food, health, gender, politics, social justice, energy, The idea, we need to get into this zone, the donut, you know, the part of the donut you eat — it is the safe operating space for humanity. You have to provide the basic social protections to everybody, without crossing the planetary boundaries. So this is all embraced by the United Nations.

The rhetoric now, the intergovernmental negotiations are going on. Leading up to Rio plus 20, and since then, there's been an immense effort to come up with this new set of goals. 17 of them have been developed. These replace the millennium development goals; they expired essentially. This year, they were only there for 15 years. Okay, now we are going to do a whole set of goals, but these aren't just about lifting people up out of poverty. This is about challenging the whole development paradigm. Sustainable production and consumption. Equitable distribution of wealth. Alternatives to GDP. Pricing goods and services. So, the big idea, this year we have these two great interconnecting opportunities. To create a new development paradigm. Shape it up, improve, get it in place, and then demand its implementation.

18:37 **RC:** So, we have these two pivotal events determining the quality of life of people and the planet. One is the COP 21 in Paris. This is the 21st Conference of the Parties for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. And only two of them have been about creating an actual binding treaty. Kyoto Protocol is the first treaty, this is the second one. So, in a way, in the trajectory of efforts to mitigate against climate change, this is the second and most unique opportunity. What ever gets adopted now, maybe they can tweak it a little bit. So, the idea is, let's not make the same mistake we made at Kyoto, and that has a good side and a bad side. The good side is, maybe governments will ratify or honor their pledges. The idea, nation states are going to make voluntary pledges. When President Obama was in China, they came up with an agreement on caps, which are fairly good. But the big challenge is, 1) financing (The countries that are going to reduce their carbon emissions in the developing world are expecting there will be a large climate neutrality fund.), and 2) getting some sort of fee and dividend structure, rather than a Carbon Tax. But, as in the quote I just read, it is the deeper context and that it even exists, that will tell how well we can respond to any of this. It relates to the planetary boundaries. So, if we don't get to the heart of the beast, which is this economic modeling that defines what growth is. If we don't weigh in to change that, alternatives to GDP that then get mainstreamed, we won't be able to do much of anything. If you could internalize costs, including social and environmental into the pricing of goods and services, you would have a whole different economic world. Another one is getting rid of fossil fuel subsidies. And the third one, which is coming out of the religious, spiritual and values-based communities, which they've been lobbying for it at the U.N., is in creating new structures (trusteeship structures, ombudspersons, that actually representing the interests of future generations. The whole community of life). A part of it is giving voice to those interests. On this road through Paris, in this case, the U.S. elections in 2016, the idea is to pull together and mobilize people morally to the religious / spiritual / and values-based ideas. In many ways, have a vision of what development is for, that's what we've been talking about.

23:30 **RC:** So there are a lot of activities going on. The issue that the Center for Earth Ethics is particularly focused on in this road to Paris is food and food systems. And of course, at the moment, agriculture accounts for 36 to 40% of greenhouse gas emissions. Now some of that is deforestation, thus, loss of carbon sink. But, certainly, and often most horribly, the most inefficient way to produce food, and the largest component of the GHG coming from that

system, are coming from animal agriculture, which are basically creating all these crops that are going to be eaten by animals. Your calorie-in / calorie-out ratio is much lower. So that's just one of the issues. So one of the things in the faith communities are doing on the road to Paris is on eating. Good for you is good for the planet. Eating with compassion. All these different kinds of campaigns, so that people would actually look at their dietary choices that are lower on the food chain, fair trade, fair made, etc.

25:22 to 28:27 **RC:** But then, a whole other set of tasks is then to lobby our representatives, our senators, who are not inclined to ratify anything. And that's where we're hoping the Pope can make some difference. He was invited by the House and Senate to speak at a Joint Session. And, I think, roughly 40% U.S. representatives and senators are Roman Catholic. So, however hard he pushes on them. I do think we're at a potential turning point, and it behoves us to do all we can to weigh in on this. Part of this might be what we are doing, a couple of things. We're doing a conference at the Union Theological Seminary the 16th of September that's focused on the Encyclical's sustainable development goal, and also, there's a group called Our Voices. They are coordinating a global campaign reaching out to religious/spiritual groups to weigh in. They've got a set of efforts focused on climate justice, as well as series of activities, visuals, prayers. There'll be a march in D.C. and a march in New York when the Pope comes to town. There will be a visual around the reflecting pool, the Lincoln Memorial. So check Our Voices, and check Green Faith. Green Faith is an organization that provides training for people who want a more ecological emphasis into their preaching and ministry.