

Globalization, Climate Change, and the Modern World-and-Life-View

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I am indeed greatly honoured that you have invited me to present the Lamblight Lecture today in your midst. But alongside that awareness of honour and thankfulness this event has awakened a special memory. I am reminded of a visit I once made to St Paul's Cathedral in London, many years ago, where you find a remarkable painting on one of its pillars. Someone is walking on a path in almost complete darkness, but he carries a lantern with him. The subscript says: *Jesus, the light of the world*. It is not only a beautiful and unusual painting of the Lord Jesus, the lamb of God, but converts into a message to all those who are passing by. It is as if this painting says: it is on the concrete ways of this world, which are often dark, that you may meet your Lord and Saviour with his own burning Light with Him. This may be not so very far away, but instead very near to us, and in the very places where we no longer see any possibility to keep going, and to walk on.

I call this image to our remembrance because it has a particular reference to our main topic, globalization. Is there not also a light available here on our path, perhaps even this unique Light? You might want to suggest to me that this is not likely. For after all, globalization is a process which mainly evolves outside of our will and intentions and, moreover, is it not too complex to deal with it in a truly spiritual way? Or let me try to get at this from another angle: we hear much about climate change and global warming - a theme which since the impressive movie by Al Gore is accompanied by a great deal of hype in the US, Canada and Europe. The movie, and the hype, increases our awareness of this problem, and it may even move us to think with others about possible solutions. But these solutions are mainly of a technical or fiscal nature, like the improvement of energy efficiency, and reductions in CO₂ emissions in our production and consumption; and is that not too far away from the world of our Christian faith? Of course, we have to find and to implement those solutions, but there seems to be no reason in this specific and separate case to refer explicitly to the Gospel, or to the need to follow Christ.

Yes, I can share this feeling with you, but only as a first impression. For is climate change indeed a separate case? Is it for instance fully isolated from the entire process of globalization and our appraisal of that? Modern people - and we are all in some sense modern people in our way of thinking and acting - have indeed a tendency to see each problem primarily as an isolated problem, as a case in itself, because that makes it easier for us to come to effective solutions. But, in reality, problems are often connected. And if we nevertheless treat them as isolated cases, then often we have to conclude later on, and not without pain,

that our solutions are not working at all. Globalization and global warming are, for instance, deeply interconnected. Just look to the simple fact that globalization, which in its most simple definition stands for the opening and widening of all our economies to the international or global arena, also implies strong and continuous growth of industrial production in most countries. And in that way globalization also directly contributes to the growth in fossil fuel and energy usage. And that worldwide increase, as you surely will remember, is seen by all experts as the main reason for the increase in the emission of greenhouse gases which leads to further increase in global warming. If globalization and climate change are indeed closely intertwined, then there is at least some reason to also deal with them as some kind of interconnected realities. And that, perhaps, also has deeper ramifications. It could even have some spiritual or religious connotations.

Let us therefore take another look, a close and careful look, at what globalization is, and what it really stands for. And after that we will try to combine what we have learned with the burning issues of accelerated climate change, which as you know, is connected to the rising sea levels and with the melting of ice caps also here in the Northern parts of Canada. It could also be, after seeing the deeper connections between these problems, that the Light of the Gospel unavoidably enters into our discussion. For neither globalization nor accelerated climate change are value-neutral problems. There is surely more at hand!

With *globalization* there are so many definitions and descriptions. It would take too many costly minutes to name them all for you. But one thing is clear, and that is that all of these descriptions indicate the many *dimensions* of Globalization. It is not only an economic phenomenon, namely that national economies are increasingly opening themselves to each other and to the international arena. Nor is it, only or mainly, a technical phenomenon, that modern technologies, especially in the field of transport and electronic communications like the internet, are now spreading over the entire earth; nor even is it merely that citizens of various nations and cultures are linking much more easily than before. Globalization also has a cultural dimension. It is related to a growing worldwide exchange of cultural products like movies and fashions, and it has already led to world-wide hit parades and huge global music festivities.

Next to this, it is also important to see that globalization changes over time, so that new dimensions are regularly popping up. I would particularly mention at this point the rapid expansion of world-wide financial markets. They have not only grown remarkably in size, but they have also begun to dominate, to some considerable extent, the future of many business firms and even entire economies. In other words, Globalization is a highly dynamic process of mutual international interaction on several levels, but even more than that, it is also a

multi-level form of global *interference*. And that aspect is not usually mentioned in the many definitions that have been put forward.

In sum, it is not a matter of what happens when we, with our economies and societies, enter the world scene, , but just the opposite: it is what the world, what the world-markets, the world-economy, the world of global finance is doing *with* our economies and ourselves. It is a dynamic reality that is interfering with our daily affairs. Indeed, it sometimes looks as if a completely new layer of existence has been added to our human lives. It is a level of which we have become a part in a dynamic world without giving our permission, and sometimes even without our immediate awareness. *Time* stated some years ago in a special issue, that Globalization was leading to a “global awakening” of mankind, and that, I think, is a very accurate description.

Let me take my home country, the Netherlands, as an example. In the last year the number of take-overs of classical major Dutch firms like Stork, the Dutch State Mills, and the biggest Dutch Bank, ABN Amro, has multiplied. But not only that: it is not that these firms or banks are being bought by other solid banks or companies, but rather they are financially attacked and later on dissolved by so called global venture-capitalists, global hedge funds or international private equity funds. That is the infringing movement, the *interference* that is coming from the global level itself. I am confident that here in Canada you have similar experiences. Financial speculative globalization begins now to overwhelm concrete national economies, subjecting them to the will of mainly speculative global investors and to the laws of short-run profitability. That is also a part of globalization, and most of us may feel it is a very undesirable part of this dynamic reality. For now our economies seem to stand on the threshold of becoming more dependent than ever before on the will and the whims of the worldwide financial markets.

And what can we do? It seems as if globalization belongs to that piece of history which just comes over us, and for which there is no real alternative available.

That makes it indeed very urgent that together we try to take a deeper look into the non-neutral, perhaps even ideological, roots of this rapidly growing worldwide new reality. But before doing that, with your permission, I want to prevent a possible misunderstanding. In our time we see the emergence of several anti-globalization movements, which see and describe the entire process of globalization as intrinsically bad and even demonic. That is not what I have in mind. I think that from a Christian point of view we should be more careful in our judgments. For the process of globalization brings, and has already brought, some very good things with it to us. I mention the increasing communication between citizens of all nations, and access to better modern medicines for the sick and the handicapped. Globalization has also offered to some nations of the South the possibility for further economic growth and less poverty. It is neither

all good nor all bad. Perhaps, and that is to take us a few steps further, we can say that we should distinguish between different *styles* of globalization, not only bad ones but also good ones. But let us not run ahead too fast. It may however be important to note from the outset that some of the major rich countries of the North, with most of the large transnationals, view Globalization as more than just an interesting process. They often also see it as a very desirable *project*, which has to be developed and promoted by all means and in all directions, especially towards and into the countries of the East and the South. That does not sound innocent and indeed it is not innocent. I will come back to this aspect somewhat later on.

In our search for the deeper roots of the process of globalization, two possible avenues look promising, and we will follow both of them. The first avenue is that we start with looking more carefully at the intrinsically *modern* character of this whole process. It is after all a way or method of modernisation. **But what does that mean?** That will be our first avenue (1). And the second avenue will be to question the incredible dynamic that is so much a part of the Globalization process. **How to explain that?**(2).

(1) **Globalization:** By saying that that globalization is an intrinsically modern process nothing new or surprising seems to have been added to our discussion. Of course it deals with modern economies, with modern technology, and modern culture. But are words like modern, modernization really as empty, and as hollow as we might think? No, and it must be said, that these are historical terms which are also deeply value laden! Modernity originated from the very heart of western culture. It was, as it were, born in the West before the time of the Enlightenment.

Fortunately, there is no need here for me to rely on my own wisdom. Already for many years, western philosophers and historians - I can just mention the names of Adorno, Habermas, Walter Benjamin, Stephen Toulmin, Paul Hazard - have presented profound discussions about the origins of modernity in western culture. They differ - of course they differ; philosophers always differ - by suggesting different years for the beginning of Modernity. The year 1600 (the time of Descartes) is mentioned, also 1650 (the time of Hobbes), and even 1700 (the time of Locke). But their description of the start of this typical Western modern sense is after all very similar. Modernity's cradle stood there and was rocked at a time of deep insecurity.

Just try to imagine that you had to live as a simple citizen in Western Europe in the fifteenth century. It was the century of the many wars between brand new nations, the century, too, of the clash between Rome and the Reformation, the century of the Spanish invasions of Latin America, and last, but not least, the century of the new natural sciences, developed by Copernicus, Galilei, and Kepler. Can you imagine any more reason for feeling insecure? There was the insecurity about the nation to which you belonged, the insecurity about your

place in society after the breakdown of feudalism, the insecurity with respect to the faith to which you have to turn, and even deep insecurity about what your own eyes are seeing! For let us not underestimate what it meant for ordinary people when scientists began to write that your own eyes are deceiving you if you see that the sun goes up or down. For as they stated: the sun does not rotate around the earth, but the earth around the sun.

All kinds of deep insecurity emerged and came together: ***What then can I believe? Where do I belong What is true and not true?*** So it is quite understandable that in that time of deep insecurity - and in that respect not so very different from our own time - there was also a deep longing to find new forms of security. And the answer to that question was indeed: Modernity!

Descartes, as it were, started the process by simply reasoning: if everything has become so insecure, that even my own eyes are deceiving me, then nevertheless one thing remains sure: that is that at this very moment I am thinking about this, and that my act of thinking is a convincing proof that I am, that I exist. *Cogito ergo sum.*

Hobbes, about fifty years later added to this newly found rational security by appealing to the great achievements of the new natural sciences. These found natural laws which stood for ever, and their mechanistic view on the universe was not only a very secure view, but perhaps also a view which you can use and implement for the rational organisation of the human society.

Locke we can say completed the row by pointing to the unique role of human beings as individual persons and citizens in their own rights, in their thinking no longer dependent upon any old tradition or any religious category, and therefore developing the capacity to participate in an infinite progress.

And so Modernity was born and it has even grown over the ages. So now, we can easily recognize the influence of Modernity in our own modern way of speaking and thinking. For what has taught us to see markets primarily as well functioning mechanisms? Modernity. And if we reflect about the solution to our modern problems, what motivates us to start always with the question about what we as individuals can do, or what technology can do? Modernity. And what creates in us the hope that we can help poor nations out of their present miseries? It is the mood and the spirit of modern development-aid, expressed in our will to bring some kind of progress there in the form of modernisation.

Modernity and modernisation are however not self-evident. They are rooted in some kind of self-created rational interpretation of the world around us. That is important if we are to become aware of the fact that without Modernity the present modern process of globalization would not have been possible. For Globalization is a thoroughly Western rational process, mainly individualistic in nature, and built on the acceptance or promotion of rational societal institutions like the democratic mechanism or the market mechanism. All this may look

quite acceptable to us, but is it as evident for the cultures and the nations of the South? Can we truly demand from them that they should value Western Modernisation - and Globalization as its child - as *a priori* 'good' for their own societies?

(2) *With this question I come also to a possible second avenue to understand the true roots of Globalization. We note the incredible **dynamic** of globalisation which mainly derives from its market-orientation.*

Also here the question may arise as to what this might possibly add to our understanding. For since the time of the Renaissance there always was a strong dynamic element present in Western society, related to a deep desire, not only to know everything which can be known, but also to conquer the world, to fill it with one's presence. That element was present in the invasion of

Latin America by the Spanish *conquistadores*; it was present in the race between the European states to vest their colonial power all over the world, it was present in the American frontier with the opening of the West. And so it does not look like an overstatement if we were to say that globalization is also some kind of late secularized missionary activity of the West, namely to fill the world with our presence, to bring the good news of our style of modernisation to even the most remote corners of the earth. But that, in my view, does not explain fully the dominant dynamic element in this entire effort. If we, for instance, look at the way that the financial markets in today's globalization take a leading role, then there is no doubt that this leading role has much to do with the extremely dynamic characteristic of those markets. They are the most dynamic, and thus they take the lead. Is there perhaps not some kind of over-emphasis in our time upon what is economically and technologically powerful; do we not search for a dynamism by which our societies can identify themselves to some extent, so that they can even try to enforce their progress with the highest possible speed?

To test this idea I want to introduce you to a - perhaps interesting - metaphor (analogical thought experiment?). It is based on the image of the latest, the most modern, train, which travels at a fantastic speed through the countryside.

In relation to such a high speed train there are two positions, two perspectives which are, in principle, possible. The first possible perspective I would like to call the way of looking or viewing *from within*. Just imagine that you are travelling in such a high speed train, and *en route* you are sitting in a comfortable chair. From that position everything looks quite stable and peaceful. There is no thought about any need for an emergency stop, the journey seems to be continuing uninterrupted. Of course, if you look outside through the windows, you will perceive great movement there, but it is a virtual movement of the landscape itself. It looks as if it is moving backwards, as if it is staying **behind**. This is, of course, an illusion, created by the fact that your own speed

seems to you to be stable, a firm frame of reference; it is what makes that which really stands still seem as if it is moving away behind you.

But now imagine a second possible position in relation to the same high speed train. Now you are standing in the open air outside the train, only meters away from the tracks where this vehicle will pass by. This is the *view from the outside*. What will then be your impression? What will dominate your view of the train? Of course, it will be that this train is travelling so very fast, with great momentum, passing by in just one or two moments, and with much noise. Perhaps you will be looking, if you can see it, at some spot just ahead of the train, to note whether it is travelling safely, and not threatening some children who are trying to cross over the tracks.

This metaphor demonstrates clearly that in relation to dynamic processes you can have at least two different opinions, which are specifically related to the point of view from which you perceive the movement. If you stand outside the train, with your feet firmly rooted in real sand or clay, your view will be very different from the view within the train.

Let us now suppose, for a moment, that we as modern human beings are inclined to identify ourselves easily with our own dynamic patterns and so we tend to see ourselves as an intrinsic part of that dynamic world. Then you will agree with me, I trust, that also our own personal outlook on reality can presuppose such a dynamic standpoint. We will then be inclined to judge the entire outside world from that dynamic point of view. That implies at least two things. Firstly, that we will see and appreciate strong dynamic patterns in our societies as completely normal. But, secondly, we will also be inclined to see what is not moving as rapidly as we are as somehow staying behind, and therefore to some extent abnormal. If we begin to identify ourselves with all dynamic movements then these tendencies will of course increase. Then the equilibrium we experience within the train will have become our only point of orientation, and we will have decided to view what happens outside in terms of our momentum, rather than considering any possible alternative perspective.

Does this high-speed train metaphor have any significance for our evaluation of our current accelerating dynamic patterns of globalization? Yes, I think it does. Firstly : it is indeed striking how easily, particularly modern people, modern politicians and modern economists are inclined to see the dynamic pattern of ongoing globalization as purely and simply a normal and natural pattern. They are obviously inclined to prefer the view from the inside. But secondly : how easily they, and often we ourselves, tend to perceive also poor countries which just stay where they are as under-developed, as lagging behind. Poor men and women in the midst of modern societies are also often seen by many of us as just under-performing. And if we take our relation to nature as a criterion, then we also can observe that the dominant view is usually not one of deep respect for our environment. Modern people often feel irritated if nature or the environment

gets in the way by just staying where they are. Nature seems to pose limits to what we wish or desire. And we modern people will often look at those restraints as barriers which need to be overcome by our own technology or scientific achievements.

What I am trying to communicate here is, of course, that we modern Western people can simply not say or suggest that Globalization is purely and simply a process which overcomes us, a process which has nothing at all to do with our own world-and-life-view. We should be aware of the simple fact that as modern people we are brought up and educated in a rational universum of mainly self-created and progress-related institutions, so that we have a natural tendency to prefer the view from the inside, and so to identify our own dynamic world with the real world. And thus we will be inclined to choose for the project of rapid globalization, even if it creates a lot of tensions with all the adaptation that is required around us. We live by making progress and prefer the rapid way. And that fits fully with what Modernity deep down is: an attitude and perspective on life which starts from self-made rational securities, but also lives in the hope of an enduring perspective of growth and progress, made possible by the works of our own hands. And that hope in growth and progress trusts in the good and efficient working of the market mechanism as our final orientation point within a moving universum.

But is it wise to live with this perspective? Is it wise to look to other more traditional countries, which have often older cultures than our own, as countries which are merely under-developed? And to look at poor people primarily as those who are staying behind - who also have the smell of some kind of abnormality? Some of us will say: "No!", but perhaps others will concede: "Yes!" For we should not forget that this view, which I have already called the dominant Western dynamistic view - is indeed deeply optimistic. For in this view dynamic progress, whether technological, economic or scientific, will always be with us. And that progress will, in this view, always enable us to overcome possible limits as if they were merely temporary restraints. Whatever, or whoever, tends to lag behind, therefore, has a moral obligation of their own. It is to adapt as soon as possible to what is normal in the dynamic sense, joining our march towards a better future for all, which is now often called: Globalization.

It is at this point, dear listeners, that the choice of our hearts and minds begins to matter, and here I want to reintroduce the problem of climate change and of global warming of the earth. Why do I choose this problem, and not just some other problem like, for instance, world poverty? Well, the reason is not only the strong interlinkage between globalization and global warming which has been pointed out already. It is also, and even more so, to confront you, and myself, with a very interesting but also embarrassing new situation. In global warming and the accelerated climate change, we meet probably for the first time in our

civilization a problem for which the modern perspective, the outlook from **within**, no longer really helps (that is: it no longer leads to any final satisfactory solution). *Of course, let us not misunderstand each other here: in relation to global warming and climate change there is still a lot that can be done in terms of improving, by all possible technological means, the level of energy-efficiency and carbon-efficiency of our present level of production and consumption.*

We can and should build windmills, mobilize other types of energy, use all kinds of energy-saving devices. I wish to fully support all those efforts, but my main comment is that final solutions cannot and will not be found in that way. For as long as the expansion of industrial production across the world goes on and on, not only in the rich countries, but also in, for instance, China and India, then any kind of improvement in our energy- and carbon-efficiency will be fully counterbalanced by the growth in the worldwide volume of industrial production and consumption, and by the energy demands related to that. Just to give you an indication of what is involved here: between 1950 and 1990, that is within a forty year period, the world population doubled, the use of energy rose by a factor of 5, and the world industrial production grew by a factor of 7. This translates roughly to a six-fold increase in the impact of total human activity on our natural environment. Can, will nature and the world survive, if this process of multiplication goes on for the next forty years? And look at what is now already happening in the near East and Africa: consider how the rich countries and China have started their big stampede to mine the last available stocks of fossil fuels, and surely this is not in a peaceful way. Where will the poor nations of the world be should that kind of process continue unabated? What will happen to the coral reefs, to the forests, to the ice caps and the polar bears?

Therefore, we can conclude that no lasting solution is possible if our own modern societies go on identifying themselves with their own dynamic achievements and economic potentials. What makes the issue of global warming and climate change so extremely sensitive and even critical is that they are both directly connected with the use of energy, that kind of resource which alone forms the heart of our modern industrialised societies! For energy cannot be recycled like other natural resources, and that already makes energy unique. But energy can also make or break the dynamics of modern economic growth, and thus also the dynamics of globalization itself. Said otherwise: we, as modern people, are now indeed reaching the limits of our own modern dynamistic outlook on life and the future. Given the present combination of a limited availability of fossil fuel resources, and of a growing deep vulnerability of the earth and the environment from the warming process, we seem compelled to give up our isolated outlook from the inside. A new, deeper and broader view on reality has to come in.

But are we able, as modern people in a modern society, able to gain a new, deeper and broader view on reality? Can we somehow jump over our own

shadow, by going beyond modernity? Was not modernity itself already born as the last possible way out during a time of deep, existential insecurity? I hope that you feel the problem here and become aware with me that we are reaching in fact to religious questions, questions about hope, about our destiny, our final meaning. Indeed, this is a serious time when we must be in earnest. But is it hopeless?

Here I want to remind you again of the possible second view, the perspective from outside. This is the perspective which has an open eye for the possibility that a train travels too fast. Or, said otherwise, it is a view which admits that some forms of our present economic dynamics are too extreme to be fully sustainable, given the risks of accidents for nature, for the poor, and also for our own children. But where do we find the foundation for that other look, that perspective from the outside? And if we find it, can this view also be made truly effective for our contemporary social life ?

The growing number of responsible scientists in our time who warn that we are now breaching serious limits confirm how significant these questions are. They warn us about the threats to a number of vulnerable eco-systems, about the further breakdown of bio-diversity, and prove that we are creating additional hunger in the North of Africa and real risks for all low countries, especially Bangladesh and the Pacific islands.

But there is another question of course, and that is: do these experts have good solutions that will bring about a turn-around in perspective which is so obviously and sorely needed. We cannot and should not expect from them answers concerning how we can turn away from the dominant mentality by which we have set our hearts upon our own infinite progress.

But there is a real answer available even to that painful question. An answer which indeed goes to the depth of our new insecurity. Here I would like to call a witness who is perhaps unexpected to come forward into our court. I call here the voice of the churches of the South, specifically the voice of the churches of South Asia. Let me quote some parts of a letter, written in Bangkok in 1999, by the delegates of these churches. It is a letter specially addressed to the churches and societies of the North. And so it is indeed addressed to us! They wrote:

Next to the pain and suffering in the South, there are the threats in the North. We heard about poverty, coming back in even your richest societies; we received reports about environmental destruction also in your midst, and about alienation, loneliness and the abuse of women and children. And all that, while most of your churches are losing members. And we asked ourselves: is most of that not also related to being rich and desiring to become richer than most of you already are? Is there not in the western view of human beings

and society a delusion, which always looks to the future and wants to improve it, even when it implies an increase of suffering in your own societies and in the South? Have you not forgotten the richness which is related to sufficiency? If, according to Ephesians 1, God is preparing in human history to bring everyone and everything under the lordship of Jesus Christ, his shepherd-king – God's own globalization! – shouldn't caring (for nature) and sharing with each other be the main characteristic of our lifestyle, instead of giving fully in to the secular trend of a growing consumerism?

Strange, isn't it, to be confronted here in the midst of our own considerations with this obviously very religious argumentation? You might even ask me whether this excerpt is of help to us in dealing with the problem we are discussing. I think it does. But then we should first try to understand this letter in its significance.

The date of this letter is 1999, and that was the time just after the so-called "Asian crisis". Churches are thus speaking here from the depth of their own miseries. It was a crisis directly related to the unexpected movements of global capital. Several capitalists were speculating on the sudden fall of the currencies of Thailand and other South Asian countries, and their plan succeeded, the value of these currencies dropped, indeed dropped dramatically. And a deepened poverty in Thailand and Indonesia was the result. There is thus a cry in this letter, addressed to the churches of the North, to give due attention to what has happened to them, to the poor: to the impoverishment of the South at least partially caused by the enrichment of the North. But there is more. It is as if from here we stand on "the outside" and hear a deeply spiritual word spoken to the heart of our own restless modern society. I read this text saying something like this: "If you know all this and see this growing misery for us as just a natural fate, then is there not something really wrong in your whole outlook on life? Are you not, within your own modern societies, not caught by an illusion, an illusion which brings you repeatedly to hasten towards an always better future for yourself, but at the same time forgetting reality as it really is, filled with the continued suffering of so many?" *The Lordship of Jesus Christ is also mentioned here in a very concrete way. And it is for me at this point that I am reminded of that painting in St Paul's Cathedral. If Jesus is Lord of the globe, should we then not prefer to follow Him in His style of caring and sharing, instead of putting our trust in the unlimited potentials of our self-constructed dynamistic universum. For that will, after all, turn out to be something like chasing after the wind!*

Is this just a kind of spiritual language, sounding fine, but devoid of any real content? No, certainly not, for it is full of real content! And explaining this will lead me to the end of this lecture.

Just note with me the kind of argumentation which is followed here by the churches in the South. They refer to another type of Globalization than the one which is now dominant in the world, and they call it: God's own globalization. What do they mean by that expression? It is in fact a quotation from a Sermon on Ephesians, Chapter 1, which was once delivered by Dr Philip Potter, the former Secretary-General of the World Council of Churches. In Ephesians 1:9 St Paul reveals a mystery, a hidden plan of God, namely, that our Lord by His own administration (οικονομιῶν , economy!) of the times has the purpose to bring to fulfilment (unite , collect) all things in heaven and on earth under the Headship of Jesus Christ. That is what Philip Potter once called: God's own globalization! Our Lord has a living engagement with our history, in which He is busy in preparing for the coming of the Kingdom of his own Son as the Lord over all that is on earth and in heaven. But that Kingdom is a very special Kingdom. It is the Kingdom of a shepherd, the Good Shepherd as we know Him from the Gospels. A shepherd takes care of all the sheep, not only the strong ones. He even takes special care for the weak and for those with young, and heals their wounds. That perspective has, in my view, a direct significance for our time. Not only for us ourselves , but also for the kingdoms and states, powers and authorities of this present world. They all make way for, and sometimes even promote, a style of globalization which is oriented to the survival of the fittest, to the conquering competitive power of those who are already strong. They give priority to their own economic and political expansion. But a Shepherd King is concerned with the survival of the weak. In this Kingdom the healing of the wounds of the poor stands in the centre, and the restoration of all the damage done to God's own creation. That rule, that Kingdom, is on its way to us. This means, that already now states and peoples which fear the Lord, should already reorient their lives and action-patterns to that coming Reign.

Is it not a fantastic opening, which is offered here to us in the rich North by the God-believing poor churches of the South? It is as if they say: till now you have oriented your economies to the utmost goal of becoming richer and richer, and have looked at the world from that perspective. But it has not brought you more satisfaction. On the contrary, your problems are heaping up. But there is another way, another perspective, and that is the view which starts from the real *outside* world in its present suffering and from that point of view looks to a new responsible place and role for our own modern economies. It is the direction of our looking and acting which has to change. Not going from inward to outward, but from outward to inward, from *outside* to *inside*. And this not only for the wellbeing of others, but also for our own wellbeing.

It is as if now all pieces fall together . The piece of a responsible pattern of globalization; the piece of a good and effective answer vis-à-vis global warming

and climate change, together with the piece of our own role of Christians in this time.

Just take the issue of global warming and climate change. Of course it can be handled in a good way, if next to all the measures of saving energy the societies which are already rich make a serious and prolonged step back in their consumptive desires, which up until now are related to an always rising level of material production and consumption. Each gross domestic product, as you may know, consists basically of only two types of production and expenditure: consumption and investment. So if the space destined for consumption goes down relatively, then there will always emerge an increased economic opportunity to enlarge the level of investment. But here we should make a place for one specific type of investment; the investment needed for the preservation of our natural, social and human capital. These are investments to promote the care for people and for nature, which could also lead to a growing diminution of the financial burdens of the poor nations of the South. Or, said more simply, our own economic train which careers along toward an always higher level of material production, consumption and income has to accept a lower speed. Only in that way we will be able to diminish the direct use of fossil fuels and this reduction is so badly needed in order to prevent further global warming. But we can also use this opportunity to create more economic room for the preservation of the environment and the care for the poor. All of this will surely not imply a lower degree of employment, if there is some acceptance in the midst of our rich societies of the need for strong moderation in the further rise of income levels. For most of these activities of prevention and preservation are by nature labour-intensive, though they do not generate additional incomes.

There is in my view indeed *shalom* to be found on these ways of economic reversal, which are sorely needed to overcome the problems generated by our contemporary overheated economies. It in fact asks for no more than that our leading actors in these economies have the will and the courage to come gradually to their senses. And they should be challenged to do so by a Christian community, which is not only willing to unmask the prevalent modern dynamistic goals as sheer illusions, founded on un-belief, but which also itself has already taken a choice: the courage to choose for saturation, for the goodness of a simpler life style. For that would indeed imply a true blessing for the whole world.